

**THE ARMY OF THE LORD: PRINCIPLE, PRECEPT, AND PRACTICE IN  
ADVENTIST "SPIRITUAL ABOLITIONISM," 1849-1865**

by

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**ABSTRACT**  
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Title The Army of the Lord: Principle, Precept, and Practice in  
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This thesis reconstructs the antislavery principle, precept, and practice of early Seventh-day Adventists based primarily on the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* and published writings of Ellen G. White. The central argument suggests that Adventists' spiritual abolitionism, like immediate abolitionism, arose from theological underpinnings. However, unlike evangelical reformers, Adventists distanced themselves from earthly civil and religious institutions. Between 1849 and 1861 Adventists published a radical, principled critique of America's slaveholding hypocrisy but looked to Christ as the executor of justice. Eschewing social reform and political action, they emphasized their unique mission to proclaim and prepare for the imminent Advent. Wartime exigencies and internal organizational needs influenced many Adventist leaders during the Civil War to moderate their public opinion and shift their locus of moral reasoning from principle to pragmatism. This thesis traces the Millerite origins of Adventism, Adventist antislavery writings of the 1850s, and significant modifications during the Civil War.

Abstract Approval: Committee Chair Ree E. Williams, III  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Once when Joshua was by Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing before him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you one of us, or one of our adversaries?" He replied, "Neither; but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and he said to him, "What do you command your servant, my lord?" The commander of the army of the LORD said to Joshua, "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy." And Joshua did so.

Joshua 5:13-15, NRSV

In their sustained struggle to end slavery, Northern evangelical abolitionists saw themselves as God's "holy warriors."<sup>1</sup> Immediate emancipation, they insisted, would not only extend the benefits of freedom and democracy to the enslaved; it would also perfect America, launch a thousand years of earthly peace, and ultimately bring about the postmillennial return of Christ. Abolitionists were one of many nineteenth-century reform groups inspired by theological reflection to take an oppositional stance to the perceived sins of the nation.<sup>2</sup> Not least among such groups was the nascent Seventh-day

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<sup>1</sup> James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976).

<sup>2</sup> Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Abzug argues that reformers responded to social, economic, and political changes in America based on a religious

Adventist Church, a budding remnant of mid-century Millerism. However, unlike their reform-minded contemporaries who joined religious conviction with political action,<sup>3</sup> Adventists distanced themselves from the corrupt civil and religious institutions of the earth. Adventists embraced the premillennial apocalyptic worldview of first-century Christians and believed they stood on the doorstep of Christ's Second Advent.<sup>4</sup> Their immediate expectancy, along with their understanding of prophetic history, led them to a different antislavery position than the abolitionists. Between 1849 and 1861 Adventists published a radical, principled critique of America's slaveholding hypocrisy but looked to the return of Christ as the ultimate executor of justice. Eschewing social reform and political action, they emphasized their unique mission to proclaim and prepare for the soon-coming Christ. Wartime exigencies and their own organizational needs influenced many Adventist leaders during the Civil War to moderate their public opinion and shift the locus of their moral reasoning from principle to pragmatism. Like Christians after Augustine, Adventists conceded the need to live in the present world even as they hoped for the world to come.<sup>5</sup>

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cosmology that compelled them to make secular structures sacred. In his analysis, Abzug includes temperance, sabbatarianism, manual labor, abolitionism, health, and women's rights.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 8. For an insightful discussion of how Liberty Party voters joined perfectionist theology with political party activism, see Douglas M. Strong, *Perfectionist Politics: Abolitionism and the Religious Tensions of American Democracy* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> See John J. Collins, ed., *The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, Vol. 1 of *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* (New York: Continuum, 1998); J. Paul Sampley, *Walking Between the Times: Paul's Moral Reasoning* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991): 25-26, 107-116.

<sup>5</sup> David Brion Davis offers a brief but fruitful discussion of Augustinian accommodation in "Slavery and Sin: The Cultural Background," in *The Antislavery*

Adventists' response to the problem of slavery was intimately tied to how they viewed themselves as a people "set apart." Indeed, the church may have been too successful at setting itself apart; American historians are largely unfamiliar with Seventh-day Adventist denominational history and their positions on social issues such as slavery. However, the relatively recent interest in probing the moral and theological underpinnings of the antislavery movement provides a timely context for studying Adventists' ideas.<sup>6</sup>

Historians of abolitionism have had a longer history of subordinating theology and identifying less flattering impulses.<sup>7</sup> Revisionist historians of the 1920s and 1930s

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*Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists*, ed. Martin Duberman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965): 27-30. Davis concludes, "As Christians looked less to an imminent millennium and more to the need of accommodating themselves to the world, they tended to accept the institutions of state and society as a necessary framework for controlling sin and allowing the Church to perform its sacramental functions" (29). Ironically, Davis demonstrates that this accommodation led to Christianity's acceptance of the institution of slavery.

<sup>6</sup> Several recent treatments of the connections between religion and antislavery activism have influenced this thesis: Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*; Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); John R. McKivigan, "The Northern Churches and the Moral Problem of Slavery," in *The Meaning of Slavery in the North*, ed. David Roediger and Martin H. Blatt (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998); John R. McKivigan and Mitchell Snay, eds., *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998); Strong, *Perfectionist Politics*. Important earlier studies include Gilbert Hobbs Barnes, *The Antislavery Impulse, 1830-1844* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964 edition); David Brion Davis, "The Emergence of Immediatism in British and American Antislavery Thought," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 49 (1962); Anne C. Loveland, "Evangelicalism and 'Immediate Emancipation' in American Antislavery Thought," *Journal of Southern History*, 32 (1966); John R. McKivigan, *The War against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches, 1830-1865*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Stewart, *Holy Warriors*; Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism after 1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

<sup>7</sup> This treatment of antislavery historiography is based on a number of important studies: Merton L. Dillon, "Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond: An Appraisal,"

considered abolitionists to be extremists whose abstract moralizing unnecessarily brought the nation to war.<sup>8</sup> Consensus historians in the 1950s and early 1960s applied a psychological approach to the abolitionists, describing them as fanatical, neurotic, self-righteous, mentally unstable, and motivated by personal psychological needs. This caricature eroded in the 1960s when historians of the Civil Rights era began to focus on the moral nature of abolitionist protest and narrated their achievements with a new-found respect for social activism. By the mid-1970s historians had come to agree that abolitionism “was a crusade based on moral sensibilities” energized by revivalism, moral culture, social reform, and youthfulness.<sup>9</sup> While historians of the last two decades emphasize the diversity of participants within the abolitionist movement and its

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*Reviews in American History* 21 (1993): 539-552; Merton L. Dillon, “The Abolitionists: A Decade of Historiography, 1959-1969,” *Journal of Southern History* 35 (Nov 1969): 500-522; Martin B. Duberman, “The Abolitionists and Psychology,” *Journal of Negro History*, 47 (July 1962): 183-191; Betty L. Fladeland, “Revisionists vs. Abolitionists: The Historiographical Cold War of the 1930s and 1940s,” *Journal of the Early Republic* (Spring 1986): 1-21; Lawrence J. Friedman, “‘Historical Topics Sometimes Run Dry’: The State of Abolitionist Studies,” *The Historian* 43:2 (Feb 1981): 177-194; James L. Huston, “The Experiential Basis of the Northern Antislavery Impulse,” *The Journal of Southern History* 56:4 (November 1990): 609-640; Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman, “Introduction,” *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979): vii-xvi; Tung-Hsun Sun, *Historians and the Abolition Movement* (Nankang, Taipei, Republic of China: Institute of American Culture, Academia Sinica, 1976); Ronald G. Walters, “The Boundaries of Abolitionism,” in *Antislavery Reconsidered*, 3-23.

<sup>8</sup> In 1933 Gilbert Hobbes Barnes made an early connection between abolitionism and evangelical Protestantism in *The Antislavery Impulse*. Dwight Lowell Dumond challenged the interpretation of revisionist historians like Avery Craven in his presentation of abolitionists as moral activists in *Antislavery: The Crusade for Freedom in America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961).

<sup>9</sup> Huston, 613. Huston criticizes earlier historians, and especially those preoccupied with socioeconomic approaches, for divorcing abolitionists from slavery itself. He argues that many abolitionists were also motivated by their experiences of personally witnessing the horrors of slavery.

socioeconomic influences, evangelical theology is still regarded by many as a primary contributing factor.<sup>10</sup>

Seventh-day Adventist historians, on the other hand, have historically focused their attention on Adventist theology to the exclusion of other issues. As might be expected, denominational historians have written extensively on doctrinal development, church organization, and the lives of the pioneers. The Civil Rights movement prompted several church historians to a greater interest in the church's position on slavery and other social issues. However, no scholar has yet produced a full-length treatment of Adventists' antislavery position. Current works emphasize broader theological or political themes and treat slavery as one component in a larger picture. The most influential treatments present a polarized view of Adventists as either amoral theologians or as social activists.<sup>11</sup> Such descriptions rely on categories of evangelical reform as the basis for evaluating Adventists' antislavery ethics.

While it is crucial to consider the development of Adventists' antislavery position in the context of evangelical abolitionism, it is equally important to differentiate them by

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<sup>10</sup> Abzug, Goodman, and Strong present complex theses of abolitionist motivations that interweave socioeconomic forces in a general abolitionist orientation that remained highly theological. Goodman especially emphasizes abolitionists' experience with Northern free blacks, whose strong criticism of gradual emancipation won white abolitionists over to their immediate cause.

<sup>11</sup> While Adventist antislavery historiography is treated in detail in the conclusion, it is helpful here to mention the historians who established the contours of the modern debate. In 1970 Roy Branson wrote two articles presenting Adventists as radically antislavery in the same vein as William Lloyd Garrison: "Ellen G. White—Racist or Champion of Equality?" *Review* (9 April 1970): 2-3; "Slavery and Prophecy," *Review* (16 April 1970): 7-9. Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart took the opposing stance in *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism & the American Dream* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989): 111-112. Bull and Lockhart argued that Adventist leaders preoccupied themselves with doctrine and possessed no true concern for the plight of the enslaved.

explaining their distinct motives, which were based in their unique sense of identity and purpose. This thesis seeks to do both by briefly considering the developmental pattern of evangelical abolitionism and examining in detail its manifestation in the emerging Seventh-day Adventist Church. To simplify, both movements took shape in three dimensions. Evangelical abolitionists and early Adventists came into being as discrete movements after going through intense periods of religious awakening and new theological formation. Out of a fresh doctrinal base, both groups identified slavery as a sin and developed unique antislavery positions. The general principles of their theology combined with the more specific principles of their stance against slavery to produce ethical imperatives that were tested by and accommodated to their changing societies. The essential movement was from principle through precept to practice.

The categories of “principle,” “precept,” and “practice” provide a useful construct for presenting a simplified description of the complex development of the evangelical and Adventist antislavery positions. “Principle,” in a general sense, refers to the ideological or theological bases of antislavery sentiments. Before they were antislavery, both Adventists and evangelical abolitionists were theologians, reconstructing their reality in biblical strokes. In the context of an evangelical community obsessed with spiritual perfectionism and the ubiquity of the divine in every social institution, Adventists and evangelical abolitionists grounded their social concerns in theological principle.<sup>12</sup> While their social standing, political and economic concerns, and democratic values also informed their antislavery stance, the language of their “symbolic universe” was

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<sup>12</sup> Abzug, 7-8.

religious.<sup>13</sup> In his preface to *Cosmos Crumbling*, Robert H. Abzug eloquently defends religion as an independent variable in the historical interpretation of reformers, including abolitionists:

All too often, scholars have been guided by the assumption that “religion” exists largely as a conscious or unconscious cover for something else: status anxiety, the quest for control of one class by another, personal or collective neuroses, a reaction to the shocks and realities of new social and economic environments, or some other psychological or material concern....I do not reject the importance of social, psychological, or political aspects of reform, nor do I underestimate the impact of economic change in nineteenth-century America. Yet we can only understand reformers if we try to comprehend the sacred significance they bestowed upon these worldly arenas. For even as some of today’s scholars glean mostly “secular” significance from religion, the antebellum reformer saw mainly transcendent meanings in politics, society, and the economy. We must concentrate on the religious imaginations of reformers in order to grasp the essential nature of reform.<sup>14</sup>

When Adventists and evangelical abolitionists looked at the structures of the world around them, they voiced their criticisms and solutions with the vocabulary of their respective cosmologies.<sup>15</sup> Thus, from their general theological principle and foundational doctrines, both groups formed specific theological principles regarding the institution of slavery.

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<sup>13</sup> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann define “symbolic universes” as “bodies of theoretical tradition that integrate different provinces of meaning and encompass the institutional order in a symbolic totality....an all-embracing frame of reference, which now constitutes a universe in the literal sense of the word, because *all* human experience can now be conceived of as taking place *within* it” (emphasis supplied). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966): 95-96.

<sup>14</sup> Abzug, viii.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

Theological “principle,” conceived both generally and specifically, gave birth to “precept” and “practice.” “Precept” refers to the moral counsel that Adventist and evangelical abolitionist leaders gave to their constituencies. Precept answers the questions: What is the ethical imperative of principle? What is the right way to live? What is one’s moral responsibility in this particular situation? Adventists and evangelical abolitionists applied their theologies to the question of moral responsibility regarding slavery and developed distinct ethical directions. From their precept, both groups put into practice varying and sometimes conflicting methods. “Practice” is the dimension that considers what both groups actually did. As they attempted to practice what they preached, changing social circumstances and internal tensions also proved influential. What Adventists and evangelical abolitionists did when faced with historical exigencies reveals the strengths and limitations of their religious ideology.

The great part of this thesis considers how principle, precept, and practice developed in Adventist antislavery writings. The development of evangelical abolitionism is treated as context during each period of change. By way of introduction the formation of both movements is briefly described here. Recognizing the complexity of variables that contribute to any movement’s progress, this description emphasizes the centrality of religion as a motivating agent.

Evangelical antislavery principle originated in the revivalism and perfectionist theology of the “Second Great Awakening” at the turn of the nineteenth-century. Many Americans began to believe that they and their social institutions could be purged of all sin. Success at this enterprise would usher in one thousand years of perfect peace and human harmony at the end of which Christ would return. Slavery came to be identified

as a sin as Northern whites were sensitized to the brutality of the institution following several violent slave revolts. The sinfulness of slavery and the need for repentance became the core of radical abolitionist principle and translated into forceful precept. Many abolitionists called for immediate emancipation and rejected the gradualist positions of conservative and moderate contemporaries. As the movement continued, abolitionists began to disagree on appropriate practices. Many abolitionists spent the thirty years before the Civil War using techniques of moral suasion to convert the churches to the antislavery cause. Others left the mainstream denominations and formed “come-outer” churches that made uncompromising denunciations of slavery. In the 1840s a number of abolitionists embraced political participation, and a minority moved toward anarchism and disunion. As slavery expanded westward in the 1850s, a few abolitionists turned to direct confrontation, civil disobedience, and violence. The coming of war solidified the movement toward forceful action as many abolitionists accepted battle as the means by which emancipation would finally be accomplished.

The principle, precept, and practice of evangelical abolitionists reveals a group consumed with temporal reform but with diverse means of achieving their goal. Adventist antislavery sentiment, as expressed primarily in their periodical, the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, can also be described in terms of principle, precept and practice. Adventists differed from evangelical abolitionists in specific theological motivation, and, thus, in moral instruction and ethical action. Ignited by William Miller’s preaching of Christ’s imminent return, Adventists persisted in their expectancy even after their great disappointment in 1844, when Christ did not return at the predicted date. The small band of believers developed a theology that remained premillennialist. They

believed that the world would deteriorate progressively until Christ came and inaugurated a heavenly millennium. The “signs of the times” showed that this would be soon. Adventists identified the sin of enslavement as a primary sign of the evil of current human structures and the near end of the world. Writers in the *Review* taught that the proper ethical response was to prepare themselves and others for Christ’s imminent return, which meant disassociating themselves from fallen civil and ecclesiastical power structures, exercising private conscience in legal matters, and publicly proclaiming the sin of enslavement. Unlike the reformist position of some postmillennialists, the Adventist position avoided national political entanglements. Adventist precept called believers to live based on God’s ultimate control over deteriorating human history and the promise of Christ’s imminent return. Many articles in the *Review* advised readers not to vote, participate in political parties, or condone violence. Although situated in the North, antebellum Adventists published scathing criticism directed at the entire nation; they expected divine retribution on both the North and the South for their shared participation in the institution of slavery. However, faced with the Civil War in 1861 and ensuing socio-political change, the *Review*’s editors and contributors began to adapt their antislavery stance to the times. The pure principle that characterized their early precept and practice was tempered by the needs of an emerging institution in a hostile wartime climate.

Thus, Adventists were akin to evangelical abolitionists in that theology motivated their antislavery position. However, because their theological principles differed, their precept and practice were unique. While evangelical abolitionists emphasized God’s acting through their human agency to bring about the eradication of sin and the perfect

society, Adventists emphasized divine agency. Adventists saw the ultimate agent in human history as God acting through Christ. Their antislavery sentiment expressed what may be called “spiritual abolitionism,” for they believed that God’s agency through Christ’s imminent Advent would bring an immediate end to enslavement. Furthermore, they believed that they had an indirect role to play in that day of liberation. In this way, Adventists practiced a sort of indirect activism; that is, they believed that emancipation of the enslaved would take place at the Advent and that their moral response should be directed at preparing themselves and others for the central liberating event. As they struggled to know how to live in relationship to their theological understandings, most believed that their work of preparation, evangelism, and societal critique was an appropriate response to God’s agency.

This study reconstructs the antislavery principle, precept, and practice of early Seventh-day Adventists based primarily on the *Review* and the published writings of church co-founder Ellen G. White.<sup>16</sup> Other sources such as diaries, letters, and church records were less prevalent in the period under investigation but are utilized where available and relevant. The primary limitation of relying on the church periodical is that it tends to reveal the views of leaders and editors more than of the laity, which makes it difficult to assess whether the antislavery position expressed was widely accepted. This problem is somewhat mitigated by the presence of letters to the editor and glimpses of

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<sup>16</sup> Several important articles were published simultaneously as tracts but are not cited as such in the thesis due to overlapping content. To ensure a fair research base in the *Review*, I utilized the collection’s subject index, performed key word searches of machine readable documents, and read widely, especially in periods of prolific antislavery writing. For descriptions of Adventist organizational and theological development and the abolitionist movement, I rely on the extensive scholarship available in secondary sources.

debate among the readership.<sup>17</sup> While editorials, articles, and letters published in the *Review* demonstrate a fair amount of certainty in Adventists' theological convictions, they also reveal some ambivalence about how these convictions should be applied. Thus, the antislavery sentiment voiced in the *Review* reflects at least two moods: strong, clear statements of principle and varying, coalescing, questioning statements of precept and practice. Adventists may have been clear on what Christ would accomplish in the world, but they had a developing sense of what their role should encompass.

This thesis arranges the antislavery positions expressed in the *Review* and other sources in large chronological units that reflect major changes over time. Chapter II traces the origin of the Advent movement in Millerism, the development of their distinctive theology, and early antislavery activities. Chapter III describes the development of their antislavery writings in the 1850s, focusing on their principled critique of the United States and the sin of slavery. Chapter IV covers the same period, considering how theological principle was applied to ethical formation in their precept and practice. Chapter V assesses the significant modifications to the Adventist position which took place during the American Civil War. Chapter VI discusses the historiographical relevance of Adventist "spiritual abolitionism."

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<sup>17</sup> Although not the task of this thesis, a full exploration of the views of *Review* subscribers would contribute to a more accurate understanding of Adventists' antislavery position. Published letters to the editor, which are signed, dated, and located geographically, would provide fertile ground for this task.

## CHAPTER II

### COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE

#### RELIGIOUS AWAKENING AND THEOLOGICAL FORMATION

1839-1849

And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

Revelation 18:1-4, KJV

The roots of the Adventist antislavery position were in the denomination's development out of the Millerite movement and its subsequent formation of unique theological principles. Adventists were among those who "came out" of the mainline Protestant churches in the 1840s in anticipation of Christ's Second Advent. By early in the twentieth century, Adventists had become a large denomination with health and educational institutions spanning the United States and several other countries, but in the 1840s they were a small, struggling band with less than one hundred members. The Millerite movement functioned for them as a religious awakening akin to the Second

Great Awakening of several decades earlier. When Christ did not return as expected on October 22, 1844, Millerites fragmented into several groups of quarrelling Adventists, one faction of which developed into the modern Seventh-day Adventist Church. These Adventists, located then in New England and upstate New York, spent the first years after the Great Disappointment probing the Bible to explain what had gone wrong. The theology they developed during this time and in the early 1850s distinguished them from their ecclesiastical peers. Adventists underwent a second stage of “coming out”; with a fundamentally altered view of God’s activity in history and their role in God’s cosmic order, they began to define themselves as essentially “other,” in the context of American Protestantism. This distinctive, self-proclaimed identity would have significant impact on the way they critiqued the American institution of slavery and how they perceived their ethical responsibility.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Sources for Millerism and early Adventist formation include David Tallmadge Arthur, *“Come Out of Babylon”: A Study of Millerite Separatism and Denominationalism, 1840-1865*, Ph.D. Dissertation (Rochester, NY: The University of Rochester, 1970); Jerome L. Clark, *1844* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1968); Everett N. Dick, *William Miller and the Advent Crisis, 1831-1844* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1994); P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1977); Ruth Alden Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Edwin S. Gaustad, *The Rise of Adventism; Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); George R. Knight, *1844 and the Rise of Sabbatarian Adventism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1994); George R. Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1999); George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993); Gary Land, *Adventism in America: A History* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1986); Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler, eds., *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1993); David L. Rowe, *Thunder and Trumpets: Millerites and Dissenting Religion in Upstate New York, 1800-1850* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985); Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of*

The counterpart to Adventists' awakening in the Millerite movement was the Second Great Awakening that revived American Christianity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Revival preachers such as Charles Grandison Finney and New England clergymen such as Lyman Beecher and Nathaniel Taylor started preaching an evangelical message that brought Americans back to church in droves.<sup>19</sup> Their theology emphasized the perfectibility of humankind and free moral will. Individuals believed they possessed the ability and the responsibility to reform themselves and their societies, of all sin.<sup>20</sup> Success at this enterprise, they argued, would usher in one thousand years of perfect peace and human harmony at the end of which Christ would return.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time that postmillennial revivalism was taking hold, violent black protest in the South drew increased Northern attention to the institution of slavery. The slave revolts of Denmark Vesey in 1822 and Nat Turner in 1831, along with David Walker's famous appeal in 1829, shook awake a sleeping Northern public. Beyond their fear of increased violence, some Northern whites became sensitized to the brutal nature of an institution that could prompt so fierce a response. In the 1830s early white Christian leaders such as Theodore Dwight Weld in Ohio and William Lloyd Garrison in Boston began publicly to identify slavery as a sin.

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*Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

<sup>19</sup> Loveland, 176-177. See Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District; The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Strong, 30.

The Second Great Awakening had reached its pinnacle and immediate abolitionist activity was long underway by the time Millerism became a significant force in American religious history. However, the general Protestant revival had captured the attention of the New England farmer who became a reluctant messenger of Christ's soon return. In 1816 William Miller, a former Baptist turned Deist, began a close investigation of scripture, especially the apocalyptic prophecies in the Old Testament book of Daniel. Based on his investigation, Miller came to the conclusion that Christ would return for the second time to earth and cleanse the earth with fire in the year 1843. He was at first hesitant to share this message with others but after nearly two decades of additional study, he began publicly to preach the near Advent, judgment of the earth, and heavenly millennium. In 1839, Miller was joined by Joshua V. Himes, a minister in the Christian Connexion, who had been an influential interdenominational leader in postmillennial reform causes in Boston. Himes launched a sweeping publicity campaign, starting two periodicals, publishing books, pamphlets, and tracts, organizing a general conference of believers, and developing Adventist camp meetings. The impact of Himes' collaboration was to spread Miller's teaching around New England, North America, and into numerous other parts of the world.<sup>22</sup>

Because Miller's message was premillennialist, teaching that Christ would return to earth and then bring about a heavenly millennium, his widespread preaching and publications faced eventual opposition by Protestant ministers and members who were postmillennialist. Most American Christians of Miller's day believed that personal and social perfection would bring about an earthly millennium at the end of which the Advent

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<sup>22</sup> Knight, *Brief History*, 13-19.

would occur. By 1843, when Christ did not appear, mainline Protestants increasingly scorned Millerism and cast many Millerites out of their congregations. In response, Charles Fitch, a well-known Millerite preacher, delivered a sermon with the message from Revelation 18, "Come out of her, my people," calling Millerites out of "Babylon," that is, out of a relationship with Catholics or Protestants who did not accept the near Advent of Christ. Many Millerites heeded this call and began organizing into their own nondenominational body.<sup>23</sup>

After resetting the expected date of the Advent to the spring of 1844 and experiencing a subsequent disappointment, the new date of October 22, 1844, was set by Millerite leader S. S. Snow. Millerites enthusiastically accepted this new date and spent their few months left on earth preaching the news, neglecting their crops, shops, and jobs. Tens of thousands of Advent believers waited through the anticipated day, only to be gravely disappointed when Christ never appeared. Hiram Edson, who later joined the Seventh-day Adventist movement, wrote, "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."<sup>24</sup> The great majority of Millerite believers surrendered their hope in the Second Advent. Those who retained Adventist faith became divided amongst different leaders who voiced conflicting interpretations of what had happened and what it all meant.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 19-21. See also Arthur, *"Come Out of Babylon."*

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 25. Quotation from Hiram Edson manuscript.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 21-26.

Three main groups developed out of the “Great Disappointment” of October 22, 1844. The first, led by Himes, held that nothing had happened on that day. Organizing in Albany, New York, this group forsook time-setting but continued to believe that the Advent was near. A second group believed that Christ had indeed returned at the predicted time, but that his coming had been spiritual instead of literal. The third group also came to the conclusion that the date had been correct, but they offered a different and more complex interpretation of the nature of the event that had taken place. They believed that the event on October 22 took place in heaven instead of earth, concluding that Christ had moved to a new apartment in a literal heavenly sanctuary. Later adherents to this position added the idea that this action on Christ’s part began an “investigative judgment,” that is, an ongoing pre-Advent judgment to be completed before Christ actually returned to earth. Over the next two decades, this third group of ex-Millerites were the individuals who developed in the modern Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>26</sup>

The three individuals recognized as co-founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church were Joseph Bates, James White, and Ellen Harmon White. Bates was a retired sea captain and reformer from Connecticut who had been heavily involved in immediate abolitionist activities before turning his energies to Millerism. James White, the son of a farming family in Palmyra, Maine, was in his early twenties when he became a traveling preacher with the Christian Connexion. Like Bates, White joined the Millerite movement and turned his attention to preaching the Advent. Ellen Harmon, who later married James White, was the youngest of the three but came to have the most influence. After a series of visions following the disappointment, Bates, White, and other leaders recognized her

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 28-34.

as a prophet. She left her family's home in Gorham, Maine, to join James White on public speaking tours. Early believers were especially interested in her description of a vision that showed they had been on the right path in 1844. Leaders of the movement took Harmon's visions to be divine support of their new biblical view of the Sanctuary and investigative judgment.

By 1848 Sabbatarian Adventists, as they now called themselves, had reached agreement on five "pillar doctrines." Denominational historian George R. Knight provides an apt summary of Adventists' distinctive beliefs:

- (1) the personal, visible, premillennial return of Jesus; (2) the cleansing of the sanctuary, with Christ's ministry in the second apartment having begun on October 22, 1844—the beginning of the antitypical day of atonement; (3) the validity of the gift of prophecy with progressively more of the believers seeing Ellen White's ministry as a modern manifestation of the gift; (4) the obligation to observe the seventh-day Sabbath and the role of the Sabbath in the great end-time conflict prophesied in Revelation 11-14; and (5) that immortality is not an inherent human quality but something people receive only through faith in Christ.<sup>27</sup>

Sabbatarian Adventists saw themselves as the bearers of the third angel's message of Revelation 14. The first angel's message had been fulfilled in the Millerite announcing of the Second Advent; the second angel's message had been fulfilled in Fitch's message, "Babylon is fallen....Come out of her, my people"; the third angel's message would be fulfilled by themselves, offering "God's last message of mercy to the world just prior to the great harvest of souls at the Second Advent." This prophetic self-understanding

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 43-44.

placed Sabbatarian Adventists in the “flow of prophetic history,” giving them, as they understood it, a special end-time mission distinct from other Christian bodies.<sup>28</sup>

This sense of mission, however, was limited at the beginning of the movement. Sabbatarian Adventists believed that only those who had heeded the Millerites’ initial call could be saved. Thus, as they solidified their understanding of biblical truth, they focused on preaching their new doctrinal understandings to other ex-Millerites who had suffered through the great disappointment.<sup>29</sup> By 1852, they had revised their understanding of the “shut door” of salvation, and due in part to the emergence of new converts from outside the Millerite tradition, they began to see their mission as “open” or extended to all. Eventually, this sense of mission broadened to include the entire world.<sup>30</sup> At the end of the 1840s, Sabbatarian Adventists numbered approximately 100. Increased organization and missionary zeal in the next decades dramatically increased their number.<sup>31</sup> By the formal organization of the denomination in 1863, total membership numbered approximately 3,500.<sup>32</sup>

Sabbatarian Adventists by 1849 had developed what they saw as a distinctive identity out of their experience during and following Millerism. Adventists retained from

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 45-46.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 47-50.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 64-67.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>32</sup> Bull and Lockhart: 111-112. The 1863 statistic is from early church leader Uriah Smith, quoted in Borge Schantz, “The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Missionary Thought: A Contemporary Appraisal,” Ph.D. Dissertation (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1983), 232. The first real census, taken in 1867, shows 4,320 members (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 28 May 1867).

Millerism several key commitments that would have a significant impact on their antislavery position of the subsequent decade. The first commitment was to Miller's way of reading the Bible as its own key to interpretation and as literally predicting through apocalyptic prophecy the course of human history. Second, Adventists retained a sense of the imminent premillennial Advent of Christ. While they no longer predicted the exact date of this event, they still centered their hope on its certain immediacy. Third, Adventists retained a sense of themselves as having "come out" of mainline Protestant churches. They believed that their new identity offered them the freedom to obey the true teachings of the Bible without being prohibited or expelled by the mainline Protestant churches. Finally, Adventists retained what historian Ruth Alden Doan termed "radical supernaturalism." For the first years of their denominational formation, they believed, like the Millerites, that God's purposes in history would be accomplished by God and not by human beings.<sup>33</sup> They did not just believe this as an abstract concept or as a way to escape from public participation. It was their core ideology, the root of their premillennial hope, the basis of their understanding of Scripture, and the framework for their new identity apart from Babylon.

Not until the early 1850s did Adventists turn their attention to the institution of slavery. However, two leaders, before and during their involvement in Millerism, had been active abolitionists. Their experience shifting from social reform to Advent expectancy is a useful preamble to Adventists' more fully developed antislavery position in the next decade. A Methodist circuit rider prior to joining the Sabbatarian Adventist movement, John Byington was a strong opponent of slavery. Adventist tradition tells that

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<sup>33</sup> Doan, 54-82. Although Doan used the term "radical supernaturalism" in her description of Millerite thinking, the concept is applicable to Adventists as well.

he used his home in Buck's Bridge, New York, as a station on the Underground Railroad even after he became an Adventist. Byington was so adamantly antislavery that he named his three sons after Methodist antislavery preachers: John Fletcher, Luther Lee, and William Wilberforce. Byington's family also highly esteemed Sojourner Truth and Will Locket, another former slave.<sup>34</sup> Byington joined the Advent movement in 1852, having been intimately involved in the Wesleyan Connexion, even serving as its General Conference president for a time. Byington also became the first president of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference in 1863.<sup>35</sup>

Before joining the Millerite movement, Joseph Bates likewise actively involved himself in reform causes. He was especially concerned with slavery and was initially sympathetic to the American Colonization Society. He grew to find that position inadequate and became involved in the Fairhaven Antislavery Society in Connecticut.<sup>36</sup> Bates gave up his reform causes when he became convinced of the nearness of Christ's Second Advent. However, this did not eliminate his concern for the enslaved. Bates made at least one missionary journey to Maryland where he and another Millerite preacher proclaimed the Advent message to slaves and slaveowners alike. Bates expressed some initial concern that they would be physically attacked by Southerners assuming they were abolitionists, but wrote in his autobiography that "imperative duty

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<sup>34</sup> *Lest We Forget*. 2:1 ([np]: Adventist Pioneer Library, 1992): 2.

<sup>35</sup> John O. Waller, "John Byington of Bucks Bridge: The Pre-Adventist Years," *Adventist Heritage* 1:2 (July 1994): 5-13.

<sup>36</sup> Joseph Bates, *The Autobiography of Elder Joseph Bates* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1868): 235-237. For a biography of Bates see Godfrey T. Anderson, *Outrider of the Apocalypse: Life and Times of Joseph Bates* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1972).

and a desire to benefit them and unburden my own soul, overbalanced all such obstacles.”<sup>37</sup> Bates reported that at the end of one public meeting, attended on the outskirts by slaves, the message of Christ’s soon liberation was received with great joy.<sup>38</sup> Bates wrote, “But the poor slaves feasted upon it, especially when they learned that the Jubilee was so near at hand. They seemed to drink it down as the ox drinks water, and from what I have since heard, I believe that many of them will be ready when Jesus comes.”<sup>39</sup> In another location, Bates expressed happiness when one slaveholder ordered his slaves to attend the meeting because, “This was just the thing we wanted, for we had ere this learned that the great burden of our message was to the down trodden and oppressed slave, and we trust some will be found there on the *rock* when Jesus comes.”<sup>40</sup>

Bates’ concern for immediately seeing the end of slavery continued into his Adventism, but his new faith in Christ’s soon coming redefined what he perceived as his ethical responsibility toward those in bondage. He viewed his new role as evangelistic so that those in bondage might be ready for the near Advent. He described his response to friends who became critical of his decision to leave the work of reform:

Some of my good friends that were engaged in the temperance and abolition cause, came to know why I could not attend their stated meetings as formerly, and argued that my belief in the coming of the Saviour should make me more ardent in endeavoring to suppress these growing evils. My reply was, that in embracing the doctrine of the

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 276-286.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Bates, *Second Advent Way Marks and High Heaps. Or a Connected View of the Fulfillment of Prophecy, By God’s Peculiar People, from the Year 1840 to 1847* (New Bedford: Press of Benjamin Lindsay, 1847): 55.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-56 (emphasis supplied).

second coming of the Saviour, I found enough to engage my whole time in getting ready for such an event, and aiding others to do the same, and that all who embraced this doctrine would and 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. And further, I could not see duty in leaving such a great work to labor single-handed as we had done, when so much more could be accomplished in working at the fountainhead, and make us every way right as we should be for the coming of the Lord.<sup>41</sup>

Bates' comments imply that he had not left reform, but had accepted what he believed to be the ultimate reform that would take place through the ultimate Reformer. Bates saw the Advent of Christ as realizing the goals he had previously seen as primarily achieved through his own work. While his colleagues with postmillennial assumptions saw his choice as a shirking of duty, Bates saw it as the only hope for a better future.

The experience of Joseph Bates illustrates a pattern undergone by several Millerite reformers like Joshua V. Himes whose public work began in reform and then transferred to Millerite Adventism.<sup>42</sup> These Millerite leaders, like Bates, continued to sympathize with the abolition of slavery, but chose to spend their time working at what they viewed as the fountainhead. With their conviction in radical supernaturalism, and especially in the soon-coming of Christ, their transition to Millerism can be seen as a commitment to spiritual abolition, although their reform-minded contemporaries viewed it as an evasion. Sabbatarian Adventist publications in the 1850s would voice a similar position, emphasizing the liberating activity of Christ in a nation that was doomed to fail in any moral progress.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>42</sup> Ron D. Graybill, "The Abolitionist-Millerite Connection," *The Disappointed*.

## CHAPTER III

### SLAVERY AND THE TWO-HORNED BEAST

#### DECRYING THE NATIONAL SIN

1849-1860

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by [the means of] those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Revelation 13:11-17, KJV

Following their religious awakening through the Millerite movement and their early theological formation, Sabbatarian Adventists began to develop a full-fledged antislavery position. Adventists' specific antislavery principles stemmed from the general principles of their premillennial theology. The institution of slavery connected intricately with their assessment of the nation and the times in which they lived.

Adventists presented a solution to the problem, not in the hope of an earthly millennium, but in the near Advent of Christ and the coming judgment, which would both condemn the wicked and vindicate the righteous. As the decade of the 1850s progressed, writers in the denomination's periodical, the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, stated their theological principle strongly, confidently, and with increasing frequency.

Adventists' published antislavery writings came out of their increased organization between 1849 and 1860. Their first step toward stronger organization was a series of Sabbatarian Conferences held in upstate New York in the late 1840s. The second step was the publication of tracts with the purpose of uniting post-Millerite believers in the five doctrinal pillars. After his wife, Ellen Harmon White, described a vision depicting an active Adventist publishing enterprise, James White began printing a small paper called *The Present Truth* in July 1849 from Middletown, Connecticut. The initial purpose of the paper was to comfort and strengthen believers in the Advent and Sabbath message, securing them in the "present truth," and to admonish them to keep all of the commandments of God, distinguishing them from other nominal Christians.<sup>43</sup> James White combined *The Present Truth* and his short-lived *Advent Review* in 1851 to form the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, which became the primary organizing force of the group until 1863.<sup>44</sup>

The *Review* was initially printed in Paris, Maine, but the location of the publishing office switched many times, moving through Rochester and other towns in

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<sup>43</sup> James White, "Dear Brethren and Sisters," *The Present Truth*, (July 1849): 6.

<sup>44</sup> J. N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement: Its Rise and Progress*, 1905 Edition ([np]: Adventist Pioneer Library): 343-357; Knight, 15-66. See also Andrew G. Mustard, *James White and SDA Organization: Historical Development, 1844-1881* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987).

upstate New York, and finally settling in Battle Creek, Michigan. The earliest conditions of the *Review* office were described by J. N. Loughborough in the first history of the Advent movement. The small staff worked for no salary, only for board and clothing, and performed the manual and laborious tasks of production. For instance, paper trimming was done by hand with a pocketknife. Furthermore, the staff, headed by James White and later Uriah Smith, lived in the same house in which the paper was written, type set, and published. Furniture was makeshift, and food was simple.<sup>45</sup> Although significant improvements were made as the Advent movement expanded, the Adventist press of the 1850s was a far cry from the denomination's current multi-million-dollar publishing companies.

In their development of a religious press that also was antislavery, Adventists were two decades behind evangelical abolitionists. Abolitionists had begun publicizing their antislavery message after the Second Great Awakening when they began viewing slavery as a sin. The sinfulness of slavery and the need for repentance became the core of radical abolitionist principle and translated into forceful precept. Because the young abolitionists viewed slavery as a sin, and because their theology held that sins must be immediately identified, repented, and reformed, they preached that slavery should be immediately eradicated.<sup>46</sup> Failure to take this necessary spiritual step was thought tantamount to forsaking one's eternal salvation, preventing millennial dawn, and inviting divine wrath.<sup>47</sup> In the view of radical evangelical abolitionists, moderates or

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<sup>45</sup> Loughborough, *Advent Movement*, 312-317.

<sup>46</sup> Loveland, 182-185.

<sup>47</sup> Davis, "Emergence of Immediatism," 222.

conservatives who advocated gradual emancipation were essentially advocating “gradual repentance” or the “gradual abolition of wickedness.”<sup>48</sup> Those radical abolitionists who were theologically motivated strove for holiness and temporal perfection. Their burning conviction made them willing to take a public stand in the face of an unsympathetic and sometimes violent Northern populace. Abolitionists in the 1830s met with social ostracism and ridicule, but they believed the immediate emancipation of the enslaved and their own celestial reward worth the sacrifice.

Contrary to popular historical stereotypes, the posture of most Northern whites regarding abolitionism was resistance. Antislavery sentiment within the Northern churches formed a continuum, stretching from those of outright proslavery members, who used literal interpretations of the Bible to support the morality of slavery, to those of radical antislavery members, who accepted no less than immediate repentance and commitment to immediate emancipation.<sup>49</sup> These extremes encased the dominant conservative and moderate middle ground. Conservatives believed that slavery was morally neutral and that any action related to it belonged only in the secular sphere.<sup>50</sup> Moderates viewed slavery as an evil but avoided any immediate or direct action. They believed in gradual emancipation and resented antislavery disturbers of the *status quo*.<sup>51</sup> Some conservatives and moderates were economically dependent on Northern industry,

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<sup>48</sup> Loveland, 187.

<sup>49</sup> McKivigan, “Northern Churches,” 79-80.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

which, in turn, was economically dependent on slavery in the South.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the majority of Northern Christians were reluctant to take a public position against slavery. As some abolitionists turned to politics and direct action to end slavery, others tirelessly strove to persuade the churches to become a powerful antislavery voice.<sup>53</sup>

In their critique of proslavery government and churches, Adventists were closer to radical abolitionists than to conservatives or moderates. They believed slavery was a sin and that those guilty of perpetuating it would be brought to justice. Unlike radical abolitionists, however, Adventists believed action to end slavery was futile. While abolitionists believed that civil and ecclesiastical structures of the world were perfectible, Adventists believed just the opposite—that all governments, including the United States, were hopelessly corrupted. What is more, they believed that this corruption was predicted in biblical prophecy and thus was not alterable.

Writers in the *Review* viewed the morality of slavery from within their apocalyptic worldview. John Nevins Andrews, a young contributor and eventual member of the publishing committee, was the first to articulate an integrated position in “Thoughts on Revelation XIII and XIV,” published May 19, 1851.<sup>54</sup> In the context of demonstrating the Advent movement as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, Andrews articulated four themes that would pervade all discussion of slavery in later issues. First,

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<sup>52</sup> Myron O. Stachiw, “‘For the Sake of Commerce’: Slavery, Antislavery, and Northern Industry,” in *The Meaning of Slavery in the North*, eds. David Roediger and Martin H. Blatt (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998): 33-43.

<sup>53</sup> McKivigan, “Northern Churches,” 85-87.

<sup>54</sup> J. N. Andrews, “Thoughts on Revelation XIII and XIV,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (19 May 1851): 81-86. This article was reprinted in 1855 with new information on the Fugitive Slave Law and slave-power expansion. J. N. Andrews, “The Three Angels of Rev. XIV, 6-12,” *Review* (3 April 1855): 201-204.

he identified the United States of America as the “two-horned beast” of Revelation 13:11: “And he had two horns like a *lamb*, and he spake as a *dragon*.” America was a nation that, like the beast, “arose from the sea,” showing astonishing progress in its early years.<sup>55</sup> Andrews described the two horns of the beast as Republican civil power and Protestant ecclesiastical power. The proof of the character of the United States was chattel slavery and religious intolerance, specifically the experience of Adventists who had been kicked out of their denominations for believing in the near Advent. Regarding slavery, Andrews penned: “If ‘all men are born free and equal,’ how do we then hold three millions of slaves in bondage? Why is it that the Negro race are reduced to the rank of chattels personal, and bought and sold like brute beasts?”<sup>56</sup> Thus, the central characteristic of the lamb-like nation was moral hypocrisy.

Second, Andrews discussed the identity of Babylon as Catholics and Protestants who had “united with the kingdoms of the world.”<sup>57</sup> A principal characteristic of Babylon, and Protestants in particular, was dealing in “slaves and the souls of men.”<sup>58</sup> Andrews suggested that the church was as complicit in chattel slavery as the nation and reaffirmed the decision of Adventists to “come out.”<sup>59</sup> Third, Andrews undercut the

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<sup>55</sup> Andrews showed a total disregard for Native American displacement, seeing the settling of the United States as a peaceful act on a barren land.

<sup>56</sup> Andrews, “Three Angels,” 84. Andrews’ discussion of slavery in his initial article was limited to this passage. The article was primarily concerned with laying out a total apocalyptic view for the times. However, this structure became the seed for future articles which put a greater degree of emphasis on slavery, albeit still in an apocalyptic framework.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

notion of American religious and civil progress and argued against postmillennialism.<sup>60</sup>

He viewed the so-called progress as a deception most people had accepted: “They dream that the earth with all its progress, and with all its improvements, is far too lovely and excellent for God to destroy. Peace and safety is the delusive dream in which men indulge whilst the wrath of God hangs over them.”<sup>61</sup>

Fourth, Andrews described the coming judgment in its negative and positive aspects. God would judge the wicked upon the return of Christ, in the worst judgment ever seen in human history. Later articles expanded on this point and included slaveholders among those to be judged.<sup>62</sup> The judgment would also be the salvation of the righteous. He described this with liberation language: “The true kingdom of the Lamb, - the King of kings, - is not set up on the earth, until the wicked are destroyed out of it. Then the Jubilee will end the bondage of the saints. God speed the right.”<sup>63</sup> Later articles included slaves among those saints in bondage who would be liberated. Andrews concluded with the seventh-day Sabbath as the special sign of the faithful believers who would be sealed by God before the day of wrath.

Perhaps the most common theme that developed out of Andrews’ influential article was the imagery of slaveholding America as a “two-horned beast.” The nature of this beast was that its motives, intentions, and desires were all like a dragon, but its outward appearance, its moral profession, was like a lamb. The character of the “voice of

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 83-84.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 84.

a dragon” was to profess one thing and practice the reverse, to be two-faced, forked-tongued, and hypocritical. Its lamb-like appearance was a deception, hiding a dragon’s heart within a mild and innocent exterior.<sup>64</sup> The mild, lamb-like profession of the United States was symbolized in the two horns of the beast, which Andrews took to mean civil or ecclesiastical rulers who appeared innocent.

Slaveholding was a primary trait of the United States that revealed its identity as the two-horned beast. In 1853, Uriah Smith, a young *Review* editor, published a poem about the rise of the Advent movement, and included a vivid condemnation of the two-horned beast and its practice of slaveholding.<sup>65</sup> Smith showed concern for the suffering of slaves and announced God’s vengeance on their oppressors:

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 has given  
 The lie to all thy loud professions, fair,  
 Of justice, liberty and equal rights;  
 And thou has 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.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> “The Two-Horned Beast.—Rev. xiii. Are the United States a Subject of Prophecy?” *Review* (19 March 1857): 156.

<sup>65</sup> Uriah Smith, “The Warning Voice of Time and Prophecy,” *Review* (23 June 1853): 17-19.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

Smith's description of slavery indicates that he did not view blacks as inherently inferior, but degraded by forced brute labor. His poem emphasized listening to the slaves' own voices, their cry for freedom, instead of the false professions of the nation. Slavery demonstrated the real nature of the beast.

Some contributors who discussed slavery and the two-horned beast related it to their belief that the government would eventually take away their religious liberty. J. N. Loughborough, a 22-year-old Adventist preacher who had just joined the movement, referred to the nation's attempt to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.<sup>67</sup>

Loughborough argued that the government would ultimately impede freedom of worship just as it was currently stealing civil liberties through the Fugitive Slave Law. In a letter to the editor, J. B. Frisbie of Battle Creek, Michigan, also asserted that slavery revealed the nation's capability of persecuting Sabbath keepers even though it currently seemed tolerant.<sup>68</sup> These writers seemed to be more concerned with the potential for their own persecution than with the present persecution of slaves. Unlike Uriah Smith, who described the suffering of those in bondage, these writers discussed slavery as a portent of ills to befall themselves.

Loughborough did not maintain this position for long. In 1854, he wrote an expanded article on the two-horned beast, describing slavery as a moral sin.<sup>69</sup>

Loughborough did more than briefly list slavery as one sign of the identity of the beast;

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<sup>67</sup> J. N. Loughborough, "The Image of the Beast," *Review* (20 September 1853): 85.

<sup>68</sup> J. B. Frisbie, "From Bro. Frisbie," *Review* (8 November 1853): 141.

<sup>69</sup> J. N. Loughborough, "The Two-Horned Beast," *Review* (21 March 1854): 64-67.

he emotionally described the wrongness of both slavery and the fugitive slave law. In pointing out the hypocrisy of the Declaration of Independence, Loughborough wrote, "Slaves, what are they! men like ourselves, except perhaps in their complexion."<sup>70</sup> Loughborough indicted Protestants and Republicans for condoning slavery and for worshipping with slaveholders.<sup>71</sup> He also included a sentimental narrative that described the peril of the fugitive slave fleeing north in search of freedom. The narrative ended with a white onlooker going to jail because of the Fugitive Slave Law. In this story, Loughborough demonstrated concern for the escaping slave and for the civil liberties of Northern whites who viewed slavery as wrong.

In 1857, Loughborough expanded his article into a series on the two-horned beast. The two "horns" in the United States were "Protestant ecclesiastical power" and "Republican civil power." He asked, "Where is a government to be found more lamb-like in its appearance than our own nation, with its Republican and Protestant rulers?"<sup>72</sup> He demonstrated Republican profession by quoting the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be *self-evident*: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, *liberty*, and the pursuit of happiness."<sup>73</sup> Protestants, of course, also said "amen" to the Declaration of Independence and added freedom of conscience and the Bible as the only

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>72</sup> J. N. Loughborough, "The Two-Horned Beast of Rev. XIII, A Symbol of the United States," *Review* (2 July 1857): 65. See also, "The Two-Horned Beast.—Rev. xiii. Are the United States a Subject of Prophecy?" *Review* (19 March 1857): 156.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. (emphasis supplied).

standard of faith. "Against the profession of Protestants and Republicans we have nothing to offer: their profession is right. We might expect a millennium indeed, were their profession lived out."<sup>74</sup> Of course, Adventists did *not* expect a millennium, and so Loughborough's comment revealed scarcely concealed sarcasm.<sup>75</sup> Loughborough was in fact arguing that Republican and Protestant profession was inherently flawed, that they would not live it out, and no millennium would appear.

Loughborough contrasted the nation's lamb-like profession with dragon-like action. Slavery demonstrated the true nature of the entire nation:

Yes, that very national executive body, who have before them this Declaration of Independence, and profess to be carrying out its principles, can pass laws by which 3,200,000 slaves can be held in bondage. The Declaration of Independence was professedly based on *self-evident* truths... But it is a *self-evident* truth now that a large number of our race are born into slavery. To produce a harmony between our laws and their professed basis, the Declaration of Independence should read, All men are created *equal* except 3,200,000.<sup>76</sup>

Loughborough, again ironically, suggested that black slaves were as much human as he, a white man, and that if the Declaration of Independence were truly upheld, their freedom

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Bull and Lockhart misinterpret Loughborough's comment as it first appears in identical form in the *Review* of March 21, 1854. They read it literally as an admission by Loughborough that an earthly millennium was in fact possible. As this would have punctured a hole in Adventist theology, Bull and Lockhart argue that Loughborough denounced America as a way of protecting the distinctive "Adventist hope" (48). An ironic reading is supported by the presence of other ironic millennial comments. Cf. Wm. S. Foote, "Notes on Men and Things: Bible Vs. Modern Theology," *Review* (8 January 1861): 64.

<sup>76</sup> Loughborough, (2 July 1857): 65 (emphasis supplied). See also J. N. Loughborough, "The Two-Horned Beast of Rev. XIII, A Symbol of the United States (Continued)," *Review* (25 June 1857): 56-60; J. N. Loughborough, "The Two-Horned Beast of Rev. XIII, A Symbol of the United States (Continued)," *Review* (9 July 1857): 73-76.

would be likewise secured. Loughborough also argued that enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law violated individual conscience. A person who believed that “thou shalt not deliver unto his master, the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee” (Deuteronomy 23:15) was by law not allowed to follow his conscience.<sup>77</sup>

Following Loughborough’s article by about a year, an unsigned article developed further evidence for his premise. The author organized “Lamb-Like Profession” and “Dragon-Like Action” into two columns, which systematically exposed national contradictions regarding enslavement. Under “Profession” was the proclamation of equality from the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution’s claim that it shall be the supreme law of the land over all the states. Under “Action” was a quote from the law of South Carolina declaring slaves to be “chattels personal.”<sup>78</sup> Under “Profession” was the constitutional guarantee of a Republican government, which Thomas Jefferson defined as preserving the “*equal rights of every citizen, in his person and property.*” Under “Action” was Judge McLean’s Supreme Court Act of 1740 setting the legal status of “Negroes” as “absolute slaves.”<sup>79</sup> The list continued for several columns, ending with a selected poem:

Are you republicans?—away!  
 ‘Tis blasphemy the word to say.  
 You talk of freedom? Out for shame!  
 Your lips contaminate the name.  
 How dare you prate of public good.  
 Your hands besmear’d with human blood?  
 How dare you lift those hands to heaven,  
 And ask, or hope to be forgiven?

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>78</sup> “Our Government,” *Review* (22 April 1858): 179.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

How dare you breathe the wounded air,  
 That wafts to heaven the negroe's prayer?  
 How dare you tread the conscious earth  
 That gave mankind an equal birth?  
 And while you thus inflict the rod,  
 How dare you say there is a God  
 That will, in justice, from the skies,  
 Hear and avenge his creature's cries?  
 "Slaves to be sold!" hark, what a sound!  
 Ye give America a wound,  
 A scar, a stigma of disgrace,  
 Which you nor time can e'er efface.<sup>80</sup>

Other authors repeatedly supported the identification of the United States as the "two-horned beast" of prophecy with evidence from current political events.<sup>81</sup> Any situation involving enslavement and/or internal national contradiction became evidence of dragon voice and action. The dragon spoke through the three-fifths clause, the Fugitive Slave Law, the coastal slave trade, and the Dred Scott decision. The dragon acted by trying to expand slavery in Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, Missouri, Texas, Utah, New Mexico, and "bleeding" Kansas.<sup>82</sup>

The implication of these repeatedly exposed contradictions was that the moral profession of the United States was nothing but a pretence. American claims of liberty, democracy, and freedom possessed no inherent meaning except as a deception for the nation's true nature. Thus, Adventists theologically rejected the notion that the United States was a God-ordained political enterprise. Unlike other Protestants who rooted

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> See "The Nebraska Bill," *Review* (7 March 1854): 56; *Review* (13 June 1854): 160; "Signs of the Times," *Review* (1 May 1855): 220-222; "Our Monitors," *Review* (26 June 1856): 68; Joseph Clarke, "Signs of the Times," *Review* (22 September 1859): 141-142.

<sup>82</sup> "The Dragon Voice," *Review* (5 February 1857): 106; "The Two-Horned Beast," *Review* (19 March 1857): 156.

themselves theologically and politically in the belief that the nation was founded on providence and divine will, Adventists believed that no government was godly. God might allow governments to hold authority, but this did not signify a divine commission.

Some writers in the *Review* went so far as to question the United States Constitution itself. In 1857, Joseph Clarke, a regular contributor to the *Review*, challenged the viewpoint of a prominent Protestant preacher who claimed that “the constitution of the U. S. A. does not degrade the black man.” Clarke argued that the constitution itself was a proslavery document due to the three-fifths clause and that

to assert that our constitution does not legalize slavery is simply absurd, and the effort by professed teachers to exalt the constitution as faultless is most certainly criminal. Let the axe be laid at the foot of the tree. The Christian prays, Thy kingdom come, or in other words, for a Theocracy. Can he then be a consistent Democrat who in his heart is praying for the coming of Christ’s kingdom? Let us come out fearlessly and honestly, lay aside the mark of hypocrisy, and shout, Live forever glorious King!<sup>83</sup>

Clearly, enslavement was at the heart of early Adventists’ principled critique of existing political power structures.

Like their evangelical counterparts, Adventists condemned slavery because they viewed it as a sin. In their articles through the 1850s, Adventist writers assumed the sin of slavery more than they gave reasons why it was a sin.<sup>84</sup> Before full development of the concept in the 1860s, those Adventist writers who explicitly discussed the sinfulness of slavery did so in a limited sense and primarily in comparison with their larger concern

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<sup>83</sup> Joseph Clarke, “Two Baals: Which is the Best?” *Review* (4 June 1857): 37.

<sup>84</sup> In 1861, the *Review* began printing a substantial series by Methodist minister Luther Lee, who methodically treated the idea of slavery throughout the Bible and concluded that all of Scripture condemned slavery.

of the sinfulness of Sabbath-breaking.<sup>85</sup> Writers argued that even though the New Testament, and Christ himself, did not explicitly condemn slavery, it was still a sin; and likewise for Sabbath-breaking. This rhetorical strategy may indicate that Adventist editors expected that a significant portion of their non-Adventist readers were antislavery. Placing the seventh-day Sabbath, a new belief, in the same biblical context as one already embraced would be persuasive. In any event, Adventist writers believed that the Bible condemned slavery. One article described the Bible as the standard by which all moral questions must be judged:

By what standard may we judge of the acts of men, whether they are moral or immoral? By the law of the land, public opinion, or the word of God? If by the law of the land, then it is immoral not to aid in the capture of the fleeing bondman. If by public opinion and custom, then where slavery exists, it is morally right. But if by the word of God, then undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free. "Thou shalt not return to his master the servant that is escaped from his master unto thee."<sup>86</sup>

For Adventists, like radical abolitionists, the Bible was no refuge for slavery. Rather, it declared unmistakable disapproval.

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<sup>85</sup> See J. N. Andrews, "Faith Works by Love, Which is the Fulfilling of the Law," *Review* (17 February 1852): 92-93; J. N. Andrews, "The Sabbath. Letters to O. R. L. Crozier," *Review* (10 June 1852): 18; J. N. Andrews, "The Sabbath," *Review* (5 August 1852): 49-52; John Byington, "The Fourth Commandment," *Review* (20 December 1853): 187-188; E. R. S., "Christ's Teachings and the Sabbath," *Review* (30 May 1854): 149; N. G. Sanders, "Are We Morally Bound to Keep the First Day of the Week?" *Review* (12 August 1858): 102; "Man-stealing and Sabbath-stealing," *Review* (28 April 1859): 177-178.

<sup>85</sup> "The Decalogue," (Reprint from *Bible Examiner*), *Review* (13 December 1853): 177.

<sup>86</sup> N. G. Sanders, "Are We Morally Bound to Keep the First Day of the Week?" *Review* (12 August 1858): 102.

Accepting slavery as sin meant rejecting mainline Protestant churches that refused to confess and repent of this sin. Politicians, as they saw it, might be expected to violate biblical principle, but certainly not fellow believers and ministers. Adventists agreed with Reverend Albert Barnes of Philadelphia who famously charged that American churches were the very “bulwarks of slavery.”<sup>87</sup> Like Barnes, Adventists did not limit their critique to Southern proslavery churches; in fact, they volleyed their fiercest critique at the North.

The profession of Protestant churches was the second horn of the lamb-like beast. According to Loughborough’s article of July 2, 1857, one practice that already revealed the church’s true draconic identity was its expulsion of hundreds of dissenting believers from their communion for “no other reason cause, than believing and talking to others the Bible doctrine of the near, personal return of the Saviour.”<sup>88</sup> In this passage, Loughborough referred to the experience of many Adventists during the Millerite movement. But his evidence did not end there. He summarized: “Protestants and Republicans, both unitedly and separately, speak as a dragon. We inquire, Who are Republicans? To a greater or less extent they are Protestants. Protestants aid in making and carrying out laws, that hold men in slavery.”<sup>89</sup> Additionally, Southern Protestants who owned slaves were frequently accepted into church fellowship by Northern

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<sup>87</sup> *Review* (12 June 1856): 55.

<sup>88</sup> Loughborough, (2 July 1857): 66.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

Protestants who did not. Loughborough implied that fellowshiping slaveholders was unacceptable.<sup>90</sup>

The proslavery sympathies of Northern Protestant churches and their union with the government made them, according to many *Review* articles, part of the fallen Babylon.<sup>91</sup> A. P. Lawton wrote from Herkimer County, New York, that slavery was a prominent characteristic of Babylon.<sup>92</sup> He lamented that if churches had rejected it, it never would have flourished:

Every intelligent person whether in the church or out, knows that if the church had taken the right position when she first understood her relation to this sin, it would long since have been numbered with the things that were not; but alas for her and the poor bondmen, it is not so. She has nursed a viper in her bosom, whose poison has diffused itself through the whole system, till the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint, without sufficient vitality to restore a healthy action.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, American churches, especially those of the North, were largely to blame for the present large and powerful system of slavery.

The *Review* took many of its articles against Northern religious hypocrisy from other newspapers. The *Review* editors, for the most part, took such articles and gave

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<sup>90</sup> In her letter to the church in Roosevelt, New York, Ellen White argued that Seventh-day Adventists should not fellowship pro-slavery members (Letter 16, 1861).

<sup>91</sup> B. Clark, "What is Babylon?" *Review* (21 February 1854): 36-37. Quote on page 36; "Babylon a Symbol of the Professed Church United to the World," *Review* (20 February 1855): 178; "The Fall of Babylon," *Review* (6 March 1855): 185-187; Francis Gould, "The Wise Shall Understand," *Review* (31 July 1856): 99; R. F. Cottrell, "Appeal to Seventh-Day Baptists," *Review* (4 December 1856): 37; "Random Thoughts," *Review* (1 March 1860): 114-115.

<sup>92</sup> A. P. Lawton, "Babylon," *Review* (6 March 1855): 190.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

them Adventist import. Some articles were introduced or concluded with editorial comments that showed their relevance to “the last days” or the soon-coming Christ. One article reprinted in the *Review* criticized the common Northern church practice of inviting slaveholding ministers to speak in their pulpits and sit at their communion tables.<sup>94</sup> Another expressed dismay that many Northern churches disallowed members from publicly praying for slaves for fear of causing commotion and tension in the congregation.<sup>95</sup> A news story mixed in an indictment of Northern churches for their contradiction between profession and practice which caused many to lose respect for Christianity. Who then could blame the “infidel” for wanting nothing to do with a contradictory religion?<sup>96</sup> The *Review* even included an article by Harriet Beecher Stowe denouncing the Northern churches for their complicity in slavery and the slave trade and arguing that their unwillingness to speak out was tacit affirmation of slaveholding. “Not to condemn is to approve.”<sup>97</sup>

Adventists were not alone in their diatribes against religious and civil hypocrisy. Most evangelical abolitionists believed that the United States was in a state of corruption due to the unrepented sin of slavery. Adventists were distinct in that they did not expect the character of the nation to improve over time. Biblical prophecy predicted that the

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<sup>94</sup> “So It Goes: All Right! All Honey!” (from *Golden Rule*), *Review* (8 December 1859): 19.

<sup>95</sup> “How Dwelleth the Love of God in Such?” (from *Wesleyan*), *Review* (14 October 1858): 163.

<sup>96</sup> “Dr. Cheever’s Sermon: Slavery and the Pulpit,” (from *Tribune*), *Review* (14 April 1859): 162.

<sup>97</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, “The Church and the Slave Trade,” *Review* (20 November 1860): 2.

“dragonic” character of the lamb-like beast would not change before Christ’s return.<sup>98</sup>

Hence, the person who “looks for good, or hopes for reform in the legislative or executive departments of this government is doomed, we think, to utter and hopeless disappointment.”<sup>99</sup> Uriah Smith argued that prophecy necessitated the downward course of American history as evidenced by slavery and other calamities of the present age.<sup>100</sup>

Smith mused”

We sometimes almost wonder why such a diabolical abomination as slavery should ever have been permitted to take such deep root in the very bosom of this country, and how a nation can act so signally contrary to its own profession; but we must remember, that, to fulfill the prophecy, this two-horned beast *must* speak as a dragon.  
Rev. xiii, 11.<sup>101</sup>

Such a view of prophecy gave Adventist articles on slavery a distinctly fatalistic tone.

Smith and other writers, however, did not leave Earth in a permanent descending spiral. Adventists firmly believed that upon Christ’s return, oppressors would be judged and the oppressed righteous would be redeemed. Smith described the coming of Christ as the setting up of a new kingdom that would replace the corrupted kingdoms of the Earth. At that time, “the man of sin will be destroyed only by the brightness of Christ’s coming; and evil will only be eradicated by Him, who was manifested that he may

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<sup>98</sup> Editor’s note, *Review* (2 September 1858): 124. This note accompanied an extract from a speech by Abraham Lincoln, promising that the Union would cease to be divided and become either for or against slavery. See also J. N. Loughborough, “Temporal Millennium,” *Review* (12 August 1858): 101.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Uriah Smith, “The Present State of the World,” *Review* (20 June 1854): 164-165.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 165. Smith then applied the same argument to impending religious persecution.

destroy the works of the Devil.”<sup>102</sup> The coming of Christ, which meant judgment for the wicked, would mean “blessed hope” for believers. Smith saw the growing evils of the Earth as “evidences of our hope confirmed” and the day of “redemption to all God’s people.”<sup>103</sup> Believers could “look up and lift up our heads and rejoice, knowing that our deliverance is near.”<sup>104</sup>

In their descriptions of the wrathful and redemptive sides of Christ’s judgment, many writers in the *Review* included slaves and slaveholders among those who would stand before the throne. A letter from E. Harris from Vernon, Vermont, described the “recognitions of woe” that would take place, when oppressors and their victims stood next to each other.<sup>105</sup> Among the others listed, Harris described “iron-hearted oppressors standing by the side of the slave, on whom they had inflicted every injury that pride, anger and lust, could invent or perpetrate.”<sup>106</sup> The day of judgment would mean bitterness for the slaveholder but joy for the liberated slave. Thus, there would also be “recognitions of gladness” when pious parents would see their redeemed child, when godly wife would reunite with sainted husband, and when “the emancipated from slavery, poverty, sorrow and sin, will there meet and bless those who prayed and laboured in their behalf.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> E. Harris, “Recognitions at the Judgment,” *Review* (10 October 1854): 71.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

Adventist writers in the *Review* declared that God's wrathful judgment would be visited upon the wicked and the oppressors of slaves.<sup>108</sup> H. L. Hastings wrote that God would also judge the "sickly" and "hollow" religion of the present day for its fellowship of slaveholders and their refusal to name slavery as a sin.<sup>109</sup> At the judgment, "the voice of the oppressor shall be heard no more, and the weary captives and bondmen shall be forever free."<sup>110</sup> The hope for bondmen was not in "a rotten system of government" nor in "the devices of office-seeking politicians and slimy demagogues" nor in the "long delayed promise of human help."<sup>111</sup> Those who suffered in the "rice swamps and cotton fields of the South" would be consoled with the message, "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh!" and "The Judge standeth before the door." Christ, "the Great Emancipator," was the "apostolic consolation" that would allow those in chains to maintain faith and hope:

And the groans and sighs of the bond-men shall never cease until the great Emancipator shall "proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of prison doors to them that are bound." Isa. 1xi,1. Surrounded by oppression—remembering those in bonds as bound with them, and convinced by this that we are now in the last days, we look with longing hearts and eyes for the appearance of the great Deliverer, whose coming draweth so nigh. To the sighing bondmen we say, "Be patient until the coming of the

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<sup>108</sup> B. M. Adams, "From Bro. Adams," *Review* (12 November 1857): 6-7; R. Rockwood, "The Kingdom of God," *Review* 11:5 (10 December 1857): 38-39.

<sup>109</sup> H. L. Hastings, "The Three Worlds," *Review* (21 November 1854): 118-119.

<sup>110</sup> Reprint, H. L. Hastings (from *Cross and Crown*), *Review* (21 August 1856): 121-122.

<sup>111</sup> H. L. Hastings, "The Last Days," *Review* (1 October 1857): 171.

Lord"—soon shall the glory of the ascending day-star guide  
each child of God to liberty and rest.<sup>112</sup>

Those in bondage could also be consoled that the slave master who presently seemed to be in power was not in fact the highest power.

In a poem, L. C. Hutchins of Ganges, Michigan, described the brutal conditions of slavery and offered hope in the promise that over the oppressors, "there be/ Higher far, than they".<sup>113</sup>

Yet the downcast slaveman,  
Clanks his galling chain,  
In this land of freemen—  
(Such alone in name.)  
Hear the voice of captives,  
Groaning 'neath the chain,  
See the blood of martyrs,  
Slavery hath slain.—

...  
Sadly maid and mother,  
Seek their daily bread,—  
Husband—father—brother—  
With the martyr'd dead.  
Parents, too, and children,  
Fondest hopes to mock,  
Sold by rank oppression,  
At the auction block.  
Pines thy heart in sadness,  
O'er oppression's power?—  
Lift thy head in gladness,  
For the coming hour.  
"Higher than the highest,"  
Sits the Holy One;  
Of the poor, the humblest,  
May approach his throne.  
And their wail of sadness,  
With the voice of blood,  
Tells the oppressor's madness,

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 171. B. M. Adams also wrote of Christ as the "True Emancipator," *Review* (13 November 1856): 15.

<sup>113</sup> L. C. Hutchins, "There Be Higher Than They," *Review* (4 August 1859): 86.

In the ear of God.  
 Slow, but sure, his anger,  
 With oppressing man,  
 And judgment will not linger,  
 In his righteous plan.

...  
 Ne'er the vile oppressor,  
 Can endure his face.  
 What though slavery's minions,  
 Vaunt their power, and pay?—  
 Joy to the oppressed—"there be  
 Higher far, than they."

Hutchins' poem, too, suggested that the near Advent would rescue slaves from their demeaned condition and could be a source of present hope.

Beyond their belief that God would punish the oppressor and free the slave, the Adventists who wrote the above articles implied that many slaves would be saved and taken to Heaven with Christ.<sup>114</sup> Church prophet Ellen White stated this position most forcefully based on visions she recounted concerning Christ's Second Coming. In 1847 and again in 1851 and 1858 she wrote

Then commenced the jubilee, when the land should rest. I saw the pious slave rise in triumph and victory, and shake off the chains that bound him, while his wicked master was in confusion, and knew not what to do; for the wicked could not understand the words of the voice of God. Soon appeared the great white cloud. On it sat the Son of man.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Two articles indicated that some slaves would not be saved, but would hide their faces from Christ at his coming. "The Hundred and Forty and Four Thousand," *Review* (3 July 1856): 76-77; J. N. Loughborough, "The Two-Horned Beast of Rev. XIII, A Symbol of the United States (Continued)," *Review* (9 July 1857): 76.

<sup>115</sup> Ellen G. White, *A Word to the "Little Flock,"* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1847 facsimile): 20; Ellen G. White, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (Saratoga Springs, NY: James White, 1851): 193; Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 1, 1858 (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1945 facsimile): 206.

Her version of the Advent included “pious slaves” among those who would be saved and “wicked masters” among those who would not.

In a later statement, White described what God would do with slaves who had been extremely degraded and “who knew nothing of God, or the Bible,” and the slave master who had so brutalized them:

I saw that the slave-master would have to answer for the soul of his slave whom he has kept in ignorance; and all the sins of the slave will be visited upon the master. God cannot take the slave to heaven, who has been kept in ignorance and degradation, knowing nothing of God, or the Bible, fearing nothing but his master's lash, and not holding so elevated a position as his master's brute beasts. But he does the best thing for him that a compassionate God can do. He lets him be as though he had not been; while the master has to suffer the seven last plagues, and then come up in the second resurrection, and suffer the second, most awful death. Then the wrath of God will be appeased.<sup>116</sup>

What White viewed as God’s act of compassion, modern readers may view as her own preconception of the state of human beings kept in captivity in the South. Strangely, White allotted to degraded slaves a place neither in Heaven nor in “the second death.”<sup>117</sup> Her intention seemed to be to place moral accountability for the forced sins of slaves in bondage on the slave masters. Thus God’s wrath would be doubly visited upon them.

Like Ellen White, the writers in the *Review* who voiced concern with slavery did so out of a symbolic universe consumed with the Second Advent of Christ and his attending judgment. Adventists believed that they were on the brink of radical divine

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<sup>116</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 193. See also “The Hundred and Forty and Four Thousand,” *Review* (3 July 1856): 76-77.

<sup>117</sup> Adventists did not believe in a literal, eternally burning hell. They believed that Christ would destroy the earth with fire to cleanse it, and then make a new home for the righteous there. The “second death” refers to this final destruction of the earth and all its wicked inhabitants.

intervention: what would mean destruction for oppressors like slaveholders and nominal Christians would mean liberation for the enslaved and for themselves. Even though they fundamentally placed themselves outside the bounds of action toward temporal reform, Adventist writers in the *Review* consistently, and often eloquently, voiced a principled, public attack on the United States of America for its slaveholding hypocrisy. At the same time, they struggled with the moral imperative of their principles.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE POLITICS OF SPIRITUAL WEAPONS

### DISCERNING THE ETHICAL IMPERATIVE

1849-1860

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4, KJV

Out of their antislavery principle, Adventists formed unique ethical imperatives in the form of precept and practice. Adventist antislavery ethics expressed themselves in a manner less consistent than Adventist principle. Editors and writers struggled to apply principles in their interaction with their society. Two precepts, however, were voiced strongly. First, Adventists should trust in the activity of the liberating Christ. Second, in light of the first, was their responsibility to wield spiritual instead of carnal weapons. Adventist precept discouraged voting, participation in party politics, and using violence to achieve their goals. Adventist precept emphasized “coming out” from association with fallen civil and religious institutions and declared the necessity of exercising one’s individual conscience and collective ecclesiastical conscience in moral matters. In other

words, Adventists had the duty to speak out against evil. While the primary antislavery practice of Adventists was publishing the *Review*, there is also some evidence that individual believers took a more active role. Even so, all antislavery activity took place in the shadow of Adventists' central concern which was to proclaim the third angel's message, including the near Advent of the great liberator.

Evangelical abolitionists in the first years of their campaign had agreed that immediate emancipation was the only moral solution to slavery. As the movement progressed disagreements arose regarding appropriate antislavery practice. The earliest antislavery approach focused on claiming Protestant churches for the crusade against slavery. Radical abolitionists attempted to convince conservative and moderate churchgoers of the sinfulness of slavery and the need for personal and corporate repentance. They hoped that an antislavery position among church authorities would convince Southern church members to voluntarily emancipate their slaves.<sup>118</sup> These early abolitionists exclusively used peaceful techniques of moral suasion, forming antislavery societies, delivering sermons and lectures, and publishing tracts, pamphlets, and newspapers.<sup>119</sup> The determined message of radical abolitionists prompted sectional schisms over slavery in the Methodist and Baptist denominations in 1844 and 1845 respectively. Even so, most Northern church leaders remained reluctant to take a committed antislavery stance and continued to fellowship border state slaveholders.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> McKivigan, *War against Proslavery Religion*, 7, 13-17.

<sup>119</sup> McKivigan, "Northern Churches," 77, 85-86; Stewart, *Holy Warriors*, 151.

<sup>120</sup> John R. McKivigan, "The Sectional Division of the Methodist and Baptist Denominations as Measures of Northern Antislavery Sentiment," in *Religion and the Antebellum Debate over Slavery*, 343-363.

When immediate abolitionists sensed the determined resistance of the churches, many came out of their denominations and formed new sects that maintained purity in their membership.<sup>121</sup> These “come-outer” churches were radical ecclesiastical bodies that made uncompromising denunciations of slavery.

The American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS), formed by black and white abolitionists in 1833, was the most prominent organization to court the moral vigor of the Northern churches. Led by William Lloyd Garrison and Arthur and Lewis Tappan, the AASS advocated immediate emancipation and racial equality and opposed the American Colonization Society. Frederick Douglas became an active member, especially as one of the society’s agents who traveled on lecture tours to increase membership. The AASS also sponsored massive campaigns to send antislavery petitions before Congress and antislavery publications into the South. In 1840, the AASS fractured over issues of means and ends. The Tappans and other evangelicals formed the new American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (AFASS) to continue the abolitionist campaign in the churches. Garrison, on the other hand, moved toward anarchism and disunion, believing political parties and churches hopelessly flawed, the Constitution a proslavery document, and voting futile.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> John R. McKivigan, “The Antislavery ‘Comeouter’ Sects: A Neglected Dimension of the Abolitionist Movement,” *Civil War History*, 26 (1980): 142-143. The come-outer sects broke away from mainline Northern churches before, during, and after the sectional schism of the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and other denominations in the 1840s and 1850s.

<sup>122</sup> Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, “Confrontation and Abolition in the 1850s,” *Journal of American History*, 25 (1959): 923-4. For a more recent treatment of Garrison see Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1998).

Other abolitionist leaders began to support antislavery political action through the Liberty Party and eventually through the Free-Soil and Republican Parties. At the same time, the dominant American political parties attempted to blunt the antislavery crusade and appease Southern critics by passing the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. These proslavery legislative acts, in addition to the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852, increased antislavery sentiment in the North. Abolitionists such as John Brown, who led an attack on slaveholders in 1859, embraced the previously unacceptable measures of direct confrontation, civil disobedience, and violence.<sup>123</sup>

Adventist ethical formation in the 1850s did not advocate greater political or direct action. Surrounding the election of 1856, numerous articles and letters appeared in the *Review* that discouraged participation in politics and reform causes. The argumentative tone of these articles suggests that Adventists' reform colleagues might have expected them to vote for John C. Frémont, the first Republican presidential candidate. Frémont ran on a campaign that called for the repeal of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and opposed slavery's extension in the territories. Adventists had been criticizing the government on just these points. However, the precepts that emerged in the pages of the *Review* directed Adventists away from even apparently good political causes and encouraged steadfastness in their distinct mission.

Writers in the *Review* cautioned Adventists against voting because voting in a corrupt system was useless, as the system was prophesied to fail. In 1856, D. Hewitt of Battle Creek, Michigan, warned that even those politicians who professed to be

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<sup>123</sup> Pease, 927-937.

antislavery were not authentically concerned with the plight of slaves. What is more, they had no genuine intent to liberate slaves.<sup>124</sup> One of the *Review*'s corresponding editors, Raymond F. Cottrell, followed Hewitt's personal counsel the next month with a rather complex argument against voting. Cottrell reiterated a common theme in Adventist apocalyptic writing: that the Protestant Church would eventually don the garb of civil authority and thus "constitute an *image* to the beast" of Revelation 13.<sup>125</sup> That is, the Protestant churches would join with the secular government and take on the authority that had once allowed the Catholic Church to be a great persecuting power. Protestant leaders would then, according to prophecy, begin a reign of persecution against religious dissenters. Cottrell believed that voting for the "formation of the image" would be voting for persecution; but voting against it would be voting against prophecy's fulfillment.<sup>126</sup> Likewise, voting against slavery would be vain because prophecy showed slavery would exist until Christ returned. Signs of emancipation would "only exasperate their masters, and cause an aggravation of those evils it was intended to cure."<sup>127</sup>

Implicit in the rejection of voting was a rejection of political parties. Hewitt characterized politicians as dishonest and foretold that "all political parties" would be cast "into the great wine press...of the wrath of God."<sup>128</sup> Cottrell summarized his position against institutional politics: "Again, I cannot vote for a bad man, for that is

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<sup>124</sup> D. Hewitt, "The Vine of the Earth," *Review* (11 September 1856): 150.

<sup>125</sup> Raymond F. Cottrell, "How Shall I Vote?" *Review* (30 October 1856): 205 (emphasis supplied).

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Hewitt, 150.

against my principles; and, under the present corrupt and corrupting state of politics, I could not wish to elevate a good man to office, for it would ruin him.”<sup>129</sup> Joseph Clarke, who wrote that Christians could not be Democrats *and* followers of God, subsequently added that any activity in the sphere of institutional politics was contrary to Christian faith.<sup>130</sup>

B. M. Adams of Philadelphia wrote of the 1856 election. He expressed hope that not one Adventist would

be found with the name of the beast or his image in their hands, by recording their votes for any other Deliverer than the King whom they voted for in October 22, 1844. It gave my drooping spirit a reviving thrill of “joy unspeakable,” to think that he, whom I then (in 1844) voted for was the one only and True Emancipator of the down-trodden sons of Africa... With this reflection my soul felt to renew its covenant with the Holy One of Israel, to whose commonwealth I desire to continue a citizen.”<sup>131</sup>

Adams linked himself and the Adventist movement in general only to the “commonwealth” of “the Holy One of Israel.” His pessimism of the American government was matched by his optimism regarding the expected “Deliverer.”

Joseph Clarke of Portage, Ohio, argued that Christians could not vote at the election because the American government was corrupt on numerous counts. Among other vices, the United States legalized Sabbath-breaking and sanctioned slavery at the deepest legislative level. Clarke denounced the Fugitive Slave Law and, like Garrison, called the Constitution a pro-slavery document. Native Americans, he believed, were

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<sup>129</sup> Cottrell, 205.

<sup>130</sup> Clarke, “37.

<sup>131</sup> B. M. Adams, “Communications,” *Review* (13 November 1856): 15.

also victims of the American government who had stolen their land and left them to drunkenness.<sup>132</sup> Clarke reasoned that if he registered as a voter, that would be an endorsement of the government. He wrote, "If my name is entered upon the poll-book I then become a part of the body-politic, and must suffer with the body-politic in all its penalties." Clarke believed he should "come out and be separate" and "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."<sup>133</sup>

Some writers in the *Review* expressed fear that if Adventists joined political parties or otherwise aligned themselves with the government, they might be expected to kill in defense of the government. E. Everts argued that it was indeed the Christian's duty "to help suppress all oppression and evil" and "to do your utmost to propagate and diffuse good laws." But, biblically, Christians could not serve two masters. Aligning oneself with the government would inevitably mean breaking the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill."<sup>134</sup>

Adventists believed that the Bible forbade killing even for noble causes. J. H. Waggoner, a frequent contributor and author of several books, wrote in 1858 that slavery was wrong but that violence was not the right way to end it.<sup>135</sup> Responding to the bloody situation in Kansas, Waggoner chastised the Protestant ministers and church-

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<sup>132</sup> Joseph Clarke, "'You Will Vote at Our Spring Election, Won't You,'" *Review* (23 April 1857): 198-199.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>134</sup> E. Everts. "Follow Me." *Review* (14 August 1856): 119.

<sup>135</sup> J. H. Waggoner, "The Nature and Tendency of Modern Spiritualism," *Review* (4 February 1858): 97-99.

members who had sent rifles to “redeem the territory from the curse of slavery.”<sup>136</sup> He called them “worldly, aspiring, ambitious, and proud” and claimed that in their reform causes they gave up “the cause of God” and became “political bodies.” They might “profess to be reformers, but they carry on their proposed reforms even as the most wicked of the earth.” In their “non-Christian means” such as violence, these reform leaders were, in fact, “infidels.”<sup>137</sup>

They boast of their connection with politics as an evidence that they are going to evangelize the nation. But they are not elevating the politics of the nation to a level with Christianity; they are lowering down christianity [sic] to the level of the most degenerate national policy. They swear to maintain, and vote for men to execute, a constitution and laws which authorize a declaration of war, and sustain the institution of slavery. At the same time they raise arms and equip soldiers to put down an institution which the constitution upholds, while the scripture says, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual.<sup>138</sup>

Waggoner summarized reform values as an “unhallowed connection with politics and religion,” clearly demonstrating his own preference to keep the two separate.<sup>139</sup>

Waggoner and other writers had expressed skepticism concerning reform in their articles prior to the election in 1856. They also discussed the relationship of Adventists to reform causes and, in some cases, even placed themselves in the same moral stream. One Adventist contributor, like Joseph Bates, placed Adventists in the same movement as other nineteenth-century reformers with their advocacy of the seventh-day Sabbath. He

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

wrote, “We claim to be in advance of all reformers, and to labor for those true reforms which are especially essential to this perishing world.”<sup>140</sup> The author declared support for other reforms, but felt that Adventists were uniquely striking at the root of the problem; Adventists were “engaged in the noblest and most essential reform—even that of restoring the claims of the royal law of God, that men may conform their lives thereto.”<sup>141</sup> He argued that Sabbath-keeping was of utmost importance because it was a part of the Ten Commandments, that it was a special sign of the last-day faithful, and that Adventists were called to be “repairers of the breach.”<sup>142</sup> The author said he was sympathetic to antislavery reform, but that prophecy showed it would not solve the problem of the inherent nature of the United States:

We say we bid all reforms, God speed! but some are laboring for reforms which they never will see accomplished. As much as any one, from our very soul we detest and abhor that foul blot of our country—slavery! and our sympathies are with those in whose hearts burns the love of freedom, and who would desire to see the bondman loosed from his chains. But he who expects to see the land freed entirely from this curse, or even to see slavery contentedly confine itself within certain limits, we can but regard as laboring under a false hope; for the character which the prophetic pencil has given to the two-horned beast, [Rev.xiii,11] a symbol of our country, is that *he shall speak as a dragon!*.... Prophecy gives us no ground to hope for reform here: the beast speaks like a dragon. People may caress him never so fondly, or threaten him never so fiercely; they cannot reform his mouth: he will speak like a dragon still. The prophecy does not say that at first he spake like a dragon, but at a length reformed his speech, and breathed forth a just and Christ-like spirit. His future history presents no redeeming feature. He will

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<sup>140</sup> “True Reforms and Reformers,” *Review* (26 June 1856): 68.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

continue to bellow forth his dragon voice, till he shall be cast into the burning flame, and the remnant whom he will persecute shall take their stand of victory on mount Zion with the Lamb.<sup>143</sup>

The author saw Christ “the Lamb” as the one who would have final victory over the dragon voice of America. He argued implicitly that the moral responsibility of Adventists was to keep themselves separate from “false hope” and corrupting influences, even if their “sympathies” went out to those in chains.

Waggoner followed this article several months later with an expanded description of the relationship Adventists should have to reform.<sup>144</sup> He believed that the reform movements, such as antislavery and temperance, had replaced the gospel and become their own religion. Waggoner argued that Christians should be careful about joining any “party, sect, or society whose aim was short of true biblical Christianity.”<sup>145</sup> Against the argument of a friend who said that ameliorating the human condition was more important than the observance of the Sabbath, Waggoner prioritized the law of God. First, he argued, Christians should show duty to God, as in keeping the Sabbath, and then to their fellow human beings, as in the antislavery cause. Waggoner made sure to emphasize that he was supportive of social reforms, as, in his opinion, all Christians should be.<sup>146</sup> However, he did not believe that the nature of the problem of the world resided in any one reform.

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> J. H. Waggoner, “The First Great Commandment,” *Review* (21 August 1856): 125.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Waggoner also noted that correct antislavery sentiment could not support the colonization society.

Thus, Waggoner argued for Christianity as a larger principle than any single cause. Even if slavery were abolished, he wrote that there would be many other evils that would prevent the hoped-for millennium. The great mistake of reformers, in his opinion, was that “instead of regarding temperance and opposition to oppression as Christian graces, they make them *substitutes for Christianity*.”<sup>147</sup> He suggested that temperance and opposition to oppression were necessary to Christian practice, “but not every temperance and anti-slavery man is a Christian. Christianity includes both principles; but they are far from being the sum of Christianity.”<sup>148</sup> More important than doing good to one’s fellow human beings was keeping the portion of the Ten Commandments that showed honor to God. In Waggoner’s reasoning, Adventists, if they supported any reform, supported Sabbath-keeping.

The next month an unsigned article showed more sympathy to reformers than did Waggoner.<sup>149</sup> The author said that he understood why, believing in “a long future before the world,” reformers would use every means to stop the expansion of slavery. They could not be blamed for their actions, for they were acting in a manner consistent with their views. All Christians, the author argued, should be on the side of freedom over slavery and Republicanism over tyranny, as these were “essential elements of religion” and mandatory to the “title of christian [sic].”<sup>150</sup> All Christians should be sympathetic with “those who desire to see the chains of the bondman broken, and the slave go free; or

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid. (emphasis supplied).

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> “Politics,” *Review* (11 September 1856): 152.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

who desire that the foul demon, Slavery, should at least be confined to its present limits.”<sup>151</sup> The author said that the acts of “Pro-Slavery Demagogues” and “modern Democrats” aroused his feeling as one who had formerly participated politically. However, he now felt compelled to confine himself to “questions of paramount importance to this age of the world.” The character of the United States would not improve over time, and thus laboring “to hasten or retard the fulfillment of prophecy” was not part of Adventists’ duty. He concluded by expressing conviction in God’s saving activity and the tasks committed to Adventists in the present time: “preparing ourselves, and others... for the great and final issue already pressing upon us—the revelation of the Son of man from heaven, the destruction of all earthly governments, the establishment of the glorious, universal and eternal kingdom of the King of kings, and the redemption and deliverance of all his subjects.”<sup>152</sup>

In 1860, William Foote discussed specifically why Adventists could not be involved in the abolition of slavery.<sup>153</sup> Like other Adventist writers in the *Review*, he expressed a fatalistic view of progress based on the prophetic prediction of slavery’s presence at the end of the world. He believed that the country was in the hands of Satan and that Jesus was the only power strong enough to gain victory. Foote said that slavery should not occupy his mind “to the exclusion of things of greater import” and that he had no right to “enter into the political field and get into discussion with pro-slavery men.” There were particular activities he felt he could do: “I should let the ‘two-horned beast’

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> William S. Foote, “Slavery,” *Review* (1 March 1860): 114.

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.”<sup>154</sup> Foote believed that the Advent would be so soon that there would not “be time enough to revolutionize public sentiment” to put an end to slavery. Therefore, he presumed that the “ameliorating of the condition of our slave population is entirely out of our reach.” Foote ended with a prayer of sorts: “Lord hasten the day, for our souls are sick with every day’s report of wrong and outrage with which the earth is filled.”<sup>155</sup>

Adventist antislavery ethics to this point can be summarized in their constant rejoinder to “*come out of Babylon*,” to forsake the corrupting influence of the national beast with the twin horns of civil and ecclesiastical power.<sup>156</sup> Adventist writers in the *Review*, like the antislavery come-outer churches, showed special concern for maintaining their own moral purity. They were worried that participation in organized politics by voting would join them with the doomed two-horned beast. Voting was futile, and alliance with reform movements that used infidel means such as violence would sabotage their own moral character. Article after article reminded Adventists of their unique place and purpose in the world. Clarke reaffirmed this uniqueness when he wrote

Let men who work for God work legitimately and in their sphere. Let not Paul or Peter attempt the reformation of the Roman form of government, but rather the purification of the church and the interests of those who are ready to crucify the flesh. Let teachers and shepherds look to the lost sheep, and not to the taming of wild beasts.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> See J. H. Waggoner, “Babylon Is Fallen!” *Review* (5 September 1854): 29-30; “The Fall of Babylon,” *Review* (6 March 1855): 185-187.

<sup>157</sup> Clarke, 37.

Adventists were to forego the carnal weapons of secular and supposed sacred powers and wield instead “Gospel weapons.”<sup>158</sup> They were to fulfill their divine commission to prepare the way for the soon-coming of Christ and not be distracted by their sympathies into efforts to end oppressive tyrannies that were destined to flourish until Christ overcame them.

In their precept, Adventists extended themselves beyond their private sphere in two ways. In addition to carrying out their special mission, Adventists were to disobey immoral human laws and to denounce sin without compromise. In this sense, Adventists’ ethics bore strong resemblance to Paul’s admonition to first-century Christians. Believers were to avoid conflict with earthly authorities so they could carry out their gospel work, but at the same time they were to adhere to divine law when in conflict with human law. In other words, if a human law was felt to contradict “higher law,” Adventists should break the human law and suffer the consequences.

In this line of reasoning, a number of Adventists, and especially Ellen White, advocated breaking the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. All Adventist authors who wrote of the law condemned it as unbiblical.<sup>159</sup> In his descriptions of America, the two-horned beast, Loughborough repeatedly denounced the law as evidence of dragon action. While his portrayal of the law’s robbery of civil liberty and personal conscience did not specifically admonish believers, he expressly declared, “Well, I as a Christian profess to have my conscience in accordance with the Bible, which says, ‘Thou shalt not deliver

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<sup>158</sup> Everts, 118-119.

<sup>159</sup> See Andrews, “Three Angels,” 201-204.

unto his master, the servant who is escaped from his master unto thee.' Deut. xxiii,15.

Now that is my conscience on that point."<sup>160</sup>

E. R. Seaman, a regular Adventist contributor from Rochester, New York, described the Fugitive Slave Law as one of the worst sins of the age. He especially condemned the law's recent enforcement in Boston:

A man made in God's own image is torn from friends and society and all that is dear in life, and dragged back into slavery by the power of that atrocious bargain, the fugitive slave law, the foulest stain that ever blotted the history of any nation, especially one whose professions are entirely of an opposite character. And while the unfeeling slave-catchers are acting upon the authority of this law, the military are called out to support them with loaded guns and canon. Efforts were made to purchase this slave's freedom; but it is not to be bought. The mouth-piece of the two-horned beast, (the president) must show his power and dragon authority. Hear him speak to the U. S. Marshall: "Your course is approved. Enforce the law at *any* expense."<sup>161</sup>

Following his condemnation of the law, Seaman asked, "What has God to say to these slave-catchers?" He answered with the frequently quoted passage found in Deuteronomy 23:15 that fugitives should not be returned. He moved beyond that verse to verse 16 and added that the fugitive "shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him." Thus, harboring fugitive slaves *and* living with them constituted "God's fugitive slave law to-day."<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Loughborough, "The Two-Horned Beast," *Review* (21 March 1854): 66.

<sup>161</sup> E. R. Seaman, "The Days of Noah and the Son of Man," *Review* (13 June 1854): 157 (emphasis supplied).

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

An unsigned article entitled, "What Laws We Should Obey," argued that the Bible presented divine authority over human laws. In regards to "the rendition of fugitive slaves," the author wrote, "we cannot mistake our duty."<sup>163</sup> In a separate tract, Ellen White forcefully declared Adventists' duty in regard to the Fugitive Slave Law and human laws in general:

We have men placed over us for rulers, and laws to govern the people. Were it not for these laws, the condition of the world would be worse than it is now. Some of these laws are good, others are bad. The bad have been increasing, and we are yet to be brought into strait places. But God will sustain His people in being firm and living up to the principles of His word. 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.<sup>164</sup>

Most articles in the *Review* never took as strong a position as Ellen White's; however, those that addressed the Fugitive Slave Law never once suggested that obeying it was acceptable.

While there is no evidence to suggest that any Adventist was ever called upon to violate this law directly, there is substantial evidence in the form of the *Review* to show that Adventists were quite active in practicing another aspect of their ethical imperative. That is, Adventist writers in the 1850s used the pages of their periodical to unflinchingly voice the true nature of slavery and society. They combatted social and spiritual silence

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<sup>163</sup> "What Laws We Should Obey," *Review* (24 November 1859): 8.

<sup>164</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, 1855 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948): 201.

when they published their antislavery articles in the 1850s. Although they were opposed to institutional politics in principle and precept, their practice of publishing a radically antislavery paper *was* political. The *Review* was political in its *publicizing* of unpopular ideas. The fact that the *Review* was banned in many slave states demonstrates the sometimes-radical nature of using one's "spiritual voice."<sup>165</sup> Although the *Review* served the function of theological development and church organization, it also served the larger purpose of moral suasion.

Indeed many articles in the *Review* were exceedingly critical of religious bodies that refused to take public stands on moral issues. Writers were especially critical of the American Tract Society, which in their estimation had forsaken its moral duty to publish the sinfulness of enslavement with the rationale that such action would halt their work in the South.<sup>166</sup> Immediately following an eloquent indictment of the Tract Society by evangelical reformer John G. Fee, Adventists ran a general piece entitled "Hypocrite."<sup>167</sup> A subsequent article by an Adventist author used the biblical examples of Paul, Jonah, and John the Baptizer to demonstrate that the Tract Society's expediency argument

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<sup>165</sup> R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant: Denominational History Textbook for Seventh-day Adventist College Classes* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1979): 98.

<sup>166</sup> "The Tract Society," (from *New York Tribune*) *Review* (15 October 1857): 185; John G. Fee, "Good Tidings—To All People," (from *Christian Press*) *Review* (21 October 1858): 171. See also "How to Make Infidels," (from *Golden Rule*) *Review* (21 May 1857): 19; "American Tract Society," (from *Am. Missionary*) *Review* (1 July 1858): 50-51; "The South Carolina Branch of the American Tract Society," *Review* (8 July 1858): 64; M.E. Cornell, "Babylon Fallen," *Review* (4 November 1858): 192; Joseph Clarke, "Signs of the Times," *Review* (22 September 1859): 141-142.

<sup>167</sup> "Hypocrite," *Review* (21 October 1858): 171.

functioned to “crucify the gospel.” According to the writer, a gospel that sanctioned sin with silence was worse than no gospel at all.<sup>168</sup>

In its letters to the editors and contributions from special correspondents, the *Review* offers glimpses of the practices of Adventist members and leaders. Most members, like Almira Preston of Fitz Henry, Illinois, described themselves as waiting on the Advent and encouraging each other in the faith. Preston, the sole Adventist in her town, discussed her approach to the difficult times of the last days:

I am striving to keep all the Commandments, though all alone. My prayer is that I may be kept from the snare and love of the world, while time lasts. People are filling up the measure of the iniquity very fast. We hear of wars and rumors of wars; and slavery is increasing in our own land. These things lead me to cry, O Lord, prepare me for that awful day that is just before us. Sometimes I am in darkness, living here alone, having no one to meet with on the Sabbath; but I praise the Lord that he is able to keep me, and wants me to stand alone and not trust in an arm of flesh.<sup>169</sup>

Preston reflects the Adventist tendency to stay in one’s own sphere, concentrating on personal preparation for the Advent. Christ would be the solution to wars, slavery, and her own loneliness.

Other writers expressed a more outward focus. Joseph Bates, church co-founder, wrote from Middletown, Connecticut, about Adventist tent meetings he was holding in the area.<sup>170</sup> He described his encounter with a black preacher from Canada:

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<sup>168</sup> “The Tract Society and Slavery, Illustrated from Paul, Jonah, and John,” *Review* (25 November 1858): 2-3.

<sup>169</sup> Almira M. Preston, “Communications,” *Review* (2 October 1856): 175.

<sup>170</sup> Joseph Bates, “Tent Meetings,” *Review* (4 September 1855): 36-37.

At our first meeting a colored preacher from Upper Canada attended, and added his testimony in favor of a closer walk with God. He is lecturing in the State of Connecticut, to obtain means to ameliorate the condition of our oppressed countrymen, escaped from the slave power of our boasted land of freedom, who have found refuge from their cruel bondage in the British dominions. When about to leave he declared himself fully settled on the belief of the Sabbath of the Lord our God, and said he should teach it. He was supplied with a few such books as he desired, and said he should pass through Rochester, N. Y., on his way to Canada, and call at the office for the *Review*. Thank the Lord, that he is qualifying teachers who have influence with this class our fellow men who are now free, and have the privilege to keep the weekly Sabbath of the Bible when they hear it taught.<sup>171</sup>

This article shows that Bates and perhaps other Adventist preachers welcomed interracial audiences at their tent meetings. Bates considered this minister to be his fellow worker and supported his ministry to freedmen, considered fellow “countrymen.” While Bates supported the preacher’s ministry to ameliorate the conditions of black people in Canada, he did not indicate personal commitment to doing the same. Rather, he showed special interest in the man’s acceptance of the Sabbath and was thankful that the message would be spread to freedmen who now had the freedom to keep the Sabbath.

Like Bates, other Adventist ministers who described their outreach to marginalized groups emphasized the necessity of sharing the Advent message over improving their socioeconomic condition. This tendency is consistent with Adventists’ emphasis on the return of Christ as the effective agent of social change. In another such instance, R. F. Cottrell preached the Advent message to a group of Seneca Indians.<sup>172</sup> He

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> R. F. Cottrell, “Sermon Preached to the Seneca Indians,” *Review* (14 May 1857): 12-13. See also R. F. Cottrell, “A Discourse,” *Review* (10 June 1858): 28-29.

appealed to them to believe in Christ so they too could “inherit the earth.” He also acknowledged the wickedness of the Christian churches and suggested that all should “turn away” from that form of Christianity which tolerated slavery. In a bolder move, Cottrell preached racial equality in Christ: “all Christians, whether white, red, or black, are joint heirs with Christ, to the estate promised to Abraham.”<sup>173</sup>

Joseph Clarke, who so frequently chastised the slave power, offered his home state of Ohio as a good field for evangelism to slaves in the border states. He suggested that since Ohio was “bordered on the south-east by slavery, by a single leap the message may find its way to the slave; and could the message find its way into Ohio pretty generally, it might rapidly spread east and west, and perhaps south, as the current of her waters tends to the gulf.” Thus, from Ohio, the message could potentially reach slaves in the Middle South as well as the Deep South. Clarke appealed to his colleagues to extend themselves beyond their spheres of comfort: “Come brethren, let us go cheerfully to the work, and when we pray and labor, think of this great State and how many have not heard of the third angel’s message. Do not confine your ideas to the little spot called home, but think of the world; and as the means of spreading it over the earth, pray and labor for Ohio.”<sup>174</sup>

A year after Clarke’s appeal, L. Morrison of Victoria, Daviess Co., Missouri, requested that Advent preachers come South to hold meetings. “You may perhaps think there would be danger in bringing the tent here into a slave country. But we would say that we think there is none at all, and fully believe you would have as many warm-

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>174</sup> Joseph Clarke, “Ohio,” *Review* (21 July 1859): 72.

hearted friends here as elsewhere, and also some of the largest audiences perhaps you ever had.” Adventist minister Moses Hull had come two years previous and convinced Morrison of the Sabbath and the Law. Morrison had been a member of the Campbellite church in Indiana, but had chosen to leave after accepting some Adventist teachings. Morrison claimed he was the first in the state of Missouri to embrace the Sabbath, but he now had a “little band” who were interested in attending a tent meeting, having never attended one before.<sup>175</sup>

Hull responded to Morrison’s call and went to Missouri. He sent word back to the *Review* that “meeting-houses were open to him when not wanted for *political* purposes.” He further stated that he was not permitted to sell Adventist publications or to say that slavery was wrong, under a penalty of fifty dollars fine, and six months imprisonment. The *Review* editors took this as another opportunity to disparage the United States: “In connection with these facts it seems necessary to remind the reader that this is the country where liberty of conscience is guaranteed to all, as otherwise he might not be aware of it.”<sup>176</sup> While the article does not say what Hull’s response was, one can presume that he obeyed the law to avoid the penalty.

Like Hull, Adventists who intended no conflict with political authorities sometimes found them anyway, especially in relationship to their hard antislavery stance and criticism of the American government. M. E. Cornell, who had been holding a series of meetings in Marion, Iowa, was defamed in a local newspaper for many reasons, among them, allegedly denouncing “the people of Marion as being supporters and apologists of

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<sup>175</sup> L. Morrison, “Call for a Tent-Meeting in Missouri,” *Review* (3 July 1860): 54.

<sup>176</sup> “A Hard Chance for the Gospel,” *Review* (6 November 1860): 200.

slavery.”<sup>177</sup> To this charge, Cornell replied, “I have not once referred to the position of the people of Marion on that subject. I spoke of the number of slaves held in the United States by professors of religion, but declared that I was no politician, and therefore did not plead for men or measures.”<sup>178</sup> The article also charged Cornell with attributing the Fugitive Slave Law to George Washington. He replied that he had said that the law came from Washington, D.C., not the President Washington, and that he had “ever believed that George Washington was a good man and a Christian.”<sup>179</sup> Finally, the article accused Cornell of “preaching rebellion, denouncing the United States government, advocating treason, ridiculing religion, exhorting men and women with his oily tongue to break the Sabbath, &c.” Cornell responded, “No man has heard me say one word against the Declaration of Independence, or the Constitution of the U. S., but I have called some of the late actions of the government Dragon-like, but to advocate treason or to resist the powers that be, I have not, and shall not.”<sup>180</sup> Clearly Cornell’s Adventist message had touched the political sensitivities of his hearers, whether he intended it to or not. His self-defense, however, suggests a desire to avoid controversy for what he called “the cause I advocate.”

These windows into Adventist practice reveal dual tendencies to stay within a safe Adventist circle and to preach the Adventist message to all people regardless of race even in hostile areas. Especially noteworthy are the few Adventist ministers who wished to

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<sup>177</sup> M. E. Cornell, “Letter from Rev. M. E. Cornell,” *Review* (10 May 1860): 193.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

spread the message to slaves and freemen. Their emphasis on evangelism rather than reform harkened to their firm conviction in the liberating activity of the imminent Christ. They wanted to afford black people the opportunity to be ready for the Advent.

Adventists' commitment to the Advent as the means of social change was met with criticism from one reader in 1859. Anson Byington, the brother of John Byington, wrote from Nicholsville, New York, and challenged editor Uriah Smith on the *Review's* counsel not to try to end slavery. Byington was active in the abolitionist movement and had until the last two or three years viewed the *Review* as an "auxiliary." He now wanted to discontinue his subscription. Byington explained, "I dare not tell the slave that he can afford to be contented in his bondage until the Saviour comes however near we may believe his coming. Surely the editor of the *Review* could not afford to go without his breakfast till then." Byington suggested that because of their understanding of prophecy, Adventists shirked their Christian duty to aid the slave in prison and excused themselves from emancipation efforts. He ended by stating that he was a Sabbath-keeper.<sup>181</sup>

Following Byington's letter, Smith published an editorial comment. He stated that the *Review's* position on slavery had not changed, and that perhaps Byington was referring to the sentiments expressed in regard to political nonparticipation during the 1856 elections. To this Smith replied, "we have only to say that such has always been the position of the REVIEW; there is no change in this respect." Smith went on to reaffirm his belief in the sinfulness of slavery: "Slavery as a sin we have never ceased to abhor; its ravages we have never ceased to deprecate; with the victims locked in its foul embrace, we have not ceased to sympathize." Smith, however, suggested that Adventists were

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<sup>181</sup> Anson Byington, "From A. Byington," *Review* (10 March 1859): 124.

prevented from aiding slaves because of the South's "tyranny of oppression." Their duty, he believed, was to keep the Ten Commandments, attempting to enforce their principles on their "fellow-men," and working on reform causes in the North "where our voice can be heard, and our efforts may be instrumental in saving some." Smith presented what he called a "practicable philanthropy" in which Adventists should direct their efforts where they would do the greatest good for the greatest number.

Smith then went on to say that he had concern for the enslaved, but that their emancipation would come through Christ:

[We] do not tell the slave that he can afford to be content in slavery, nor that he should not escape from it whenever he can, nor that all good men should not aid him to the extent of their power, nor that this great evil should not be resisted by any and all means which afford any hope of success. All this should be done. 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. We would proclaim to him the near approach of the great Jubilee, and bid him not despair under his accumulated woes.

But this gigantic evil will still exist. Men and things will continue to grow worse and worse; and the end draweth nigh. What better then can we do than to endeavor, as the primary object of our efforts, to emancipate our fellow-men, from that worst of all bondage, the service of sin, the wages of which is death, and lead them to a preparation for the coming Kingdom.<sup>182</sup>

Smith's lengthy response reaffirmed the principles of Adventist "spiritual abolitionism."

Simultaneously, however, he subtly changed the basis of moral reasoning from the principle of Christ the liberator to utilitarian evangelism: the greatest good for the greatest number.

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<sup>182</sup> Uriah Smith, "Remarks," *Review* 13:16 (10 March 1859): 124.

Byington's reply was printed two weeks later. In it he became even more explicit about his complaint with the *Review*:

[No] press, no pulpit, no ecclesiastical or political combination of men, however fervent in its prayers, or beneficent in its alms, however earnest and fearless in its rebuke of the slave-owner as a violator of the divine law, can be an available auxiliary in the cause of emancipation, while it makes no effort to give the slave the protection of human law. If we would ever see the laws of our land protect all its inhabitants, our moral suasion must be brought to bear on those who make them, on law-makers, and on makers of law-makers.<sup>183</sup>

Byington's own ethical interest was in changing America's laws to afford better protection to slaves as fellow human beings. Byington also denied that slaves were beyond the reach of those in the North; he suggested that antislavery legislation and the election of the right civil officers would tame the two-horned beast and allow for much improvement in the lot of the slave. He admitted that the nation's "dragonic" record warranted applying the prophecy of the two-horned beast to it, but he defended the Constitution as a document that could nullify Sunday laws, slave laws, and secure liberty and justice for all. No matter how close the Advent, he argued, all people had the responsibility to hold administration accountable to the Constitution. Byington further argued that the secondary status to which Adventists seemed to relegate morals, or issues of duty to their fellow human beings, was wrongly placed and might make them accountable for the blood of the slave. "Loving thy neighbor," he asserted, was as important as one's love for God. "Higher law" dictated that moral people hold their

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<sup>183</sup> Anson Byington, "Communication from Bro. A. Byington," *Review* (24 March 1859): 174.

governments and fellow citizens accountable to “God’s holy law.”<sup>184</sup> He suggested aiding fugitive slaves as an appropriate cause for Christians in the North. Byington finally closed by saying that if Adventists could prove that the Constitution was in fact a corrupt, proslavery document, then they would indeed have no obligation to act under it. But, if, as he believed, human government was “an ordinance of God,” then Adventists must work to reform or revolutionize it. The only way they could maintain their current position was if they truly believed all government was “of the Devil.”<sup>185</sup> A brief comment followed Byington’s letter, saying that the editor had no stricture to place on Byington’s position: “Our brother has made a declaration of his position, as we have of ours. Time will shortly determine the best policy.”

After one month’s time, J. H. Waggoner wrote a reply to Byington’s affirmation of God’s place in human government. Waggoner noted that he had been involved in politics years earlier, but had left it for reasons he would not take the time to explain in his letter. He proposed two questions to Byington: “In case of war, would you kill your fellow-man if required by the authority of the United States?” and “If you were appointed a United States Commissioner would you remand a fugitive to slavery?”<sup>186</sup> Waggoner’s questions suggest his concern that any participation in government put one at the mercy of that government. He thus implied that he indeed believed all government to be corrupt and corrupting.

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> J. H. Waggoner, “Note to Bro. Anson Byington,” *Review* (28 April 1859): 181.

Byington replied several months later. In this his final letter, he argued that self-defense was justifiable so long as it did not turn into revenge, and so long as the end never sanctified “unholy means.” Violence might sometimes be called upon as the penalty for breaking the law. Regarding the Fugitive Slave Law, Byington expressed surprise that he had even been asked the question due to his abolitionist reputation. He wrote that he would never aid in returning a fugitive to captivity because he saw that act as defying God’s law and the Constitution. Quite the opposite, he would “hazard much in aiding the slave to escape.”<sup>187</sup> A brief editorial comment followed Byington’s letter: “If we try to do right, those who mistake us will find the truth in due time; or if they do not, it will be of little consequence, so long as our own consciences acquit us.”<sup>188</sup>

The debate between Byington, Smith, and Waggoner offers valuable insight into the contemporaneous implications of Adventist principle, precept, and practice during the 1850s. Clearly, the positions of Byington and the *Review* staff presupposed incompatible beliefs regarding the nature of human government and the role of believers in the light of premillennial prophecy. Smith and Waggoner held to Adventists’ pessimism of earthly structures and faith in divine intervention through the Advent of Christ. They reaffirmed Adventists’ distinctive duty to be about mission and preparing the way for the Advent. In this their precept and practices remained consistent with their purist principles. However, in Smith’s advocacy of a “practicable philanthropy,” he revealed weaknesses in the Adventist position. If they were willing to amend principle for the sake of utility, why only do so for the expediency of the Advent message? Why not embrace reforms, even

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<sup>187</sup> Anson Byington, “Reply to Bro. Waggoner,” *Review* (3 May 1860): 190.

<sup>188</sup> Editorial Comment, *Review* (3 May 1860): 190.

active abolitionism, as a means of preparing for the Advent? Surely a nation without the institution of slavery would make it easier to minister among former slaves and ensure their hearing of the good news of Christ's return.

Byington's criticisms likewise reveal holes in Adventists' moral position regarding slavery. Byington argued that the imminent Advent of Christ did not excuse Adventists from alleviating present suffering. Adventists' fatalism regarding prophecy did not give them license to forego all social responsibility. To remain consistent with their view of the fallen nature of government and the predicted degeneracy of the nation, Adventists could not have embraced Byington's perspective in its entirety. To do so would have changed the very premise of their movement. They could, however, have acknowledged his emphasis, that is, Jesus' emphasis on ministering to "the least of these," while awaiting the fulfillment of God's plan. While their manner of assisting those in chains would necessarily have taken a different form than Byington's reform zeal, any systematic approach would have lent greater credibility to their eloquently expressed concern for the welfare of slaves. Interestingly, the exchange between Byington, Smith, and Waggoner was the context in which Joseph Clarke invited Adventist ministers to launch an Ohio-based evangelism campaign to slaves in the South. Such a campaign would have been a viable option for concerned Adventists in addition to their regular denouncements of slavery in the *Review*.

## CHAPTER V

### RENDER UNTO CAESAR

#### ACCOMMODATING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

1861-1865

Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Matthew 22:21, KJV

When South Carolina seceded from the Union in the winter of 1860, few Americans envisioned the devastating and prolonged conflict ahead. However, on January 12, 1861, exactly three months before the first gunshots at Fort Sumter, Ellen White predicted the impending national crisis with startling accuracy. The United States, said White, was on the brink of “a most terrible war” that would bring unimaginable “trouble” to the nation and to the Seventh-day Adventist believers sitting in that meetinghouse in Parkville, Michigan. Accepted as a prophet by her Adventist associates, White counseled her church “to earnestly pray that wisdom might be given them to know what to do in the trying times before them.”<sup>189</sup> Trying times did indeed face the young denomination. Radically counter-cultural, pre-organizational Adventists had espoused

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<sup>189</sup> Loughborough, *Advent Movement*, 337-339.

through their newspaper an antebellum antislavery theology that eschewed national loyalty, political action, and military participation. Fearing that such opinions would threaten their identity and mission, not to mention survival, in time of war, Seventh-day Adventist leaders moderated their public position and shifted their locus of moral reasoning from principle to pragmatism. Ellen White proved a crucial exception.

At the outset of the American Civil War, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was still in its organizational infancy. In the 1840s and 1850s, Adventists had been skeptical of religious organization. Calling it “Babylon,” Adventists had associated church hierarchy with abuse of power.<sup>190</sup> During this time the *Review* and intermittent gatherings formed the only real church structure. In 1860, amongst heated debate, a general assembly of members voted a denominational name: the Seventh-day Adventists. They also formed the denomination’s first legal institution, a publishing association.<sup>191</sup> James White was largely responsible for leading the charge toward church organization. Besides launching the publishing house and securing a denominational name, White also supported the organization of several state Conferences and developed a procedure for Seventh-day Adventist ministerial credentialing and salaries.<sup>192</sup> White’s rationale for organization was pragmatic: the church had to hold property under a legal entity, ministers had to get paid and assigned to congregations, church members had to have

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<sup>190</sup> George R. Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil: The Development of Adventist Church Structure* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2001): 15-27.

<sup>191</sup> Loughborough, *Advent Movement*, 350-351.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 351-353.

doctrinal unity, and evangelistic mission had to have structure.<sup>193</sup> In 1863, the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference officially organized.<sup>194</sup>

As Adventists moved toward increased organization, the coming of war solidified many abolitionists' movement toward direct action to end slavery. The war reunited the divided ranks of abolitionists who had been torn between political and spiritual forms of resistance. Differences paled between radicals and reformers, politicians and ministers, pacifists and revolutionaries, as all accepted the war as the means by which emancipation would finally be accomplished.<sup>195</sup> Although an exceptional few remained committed to nonresistance, most abolitionists embraced the war itself as the new abolitionist tactic.<sup>196</sup> Historian James McPherson describes the shift from peace to war: "When confronted by a choice between a (potentially) antislavery war and a proslavery peace, most abolitionists did not hesitate to choose war. Much as they loved peace, they hated slavery more."<sup>197</sup> McPherson's bracketing of the phrase "(potentially) antislavery" is telling. Abraham Lincoln, whose Republican platform held unprecedented promise for the eradication of slavery, insisted on dragging his heels when it came to making emancipation a war aim.<sup>198</sup> In the first years of the war Lincoln committed himself to the

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<sup>193</sup> Knight, 33-66.

<sup>194</sup> Loughborough, *Advent Movement*, 354-355.

<sup>195</sup> Stewart, 183.

<sup>196</sup> James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964): 52-54.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>198</sup> Stewart, 181.

preservation of the Union and the preservation of slavery.<sup>199</sup> Further, he attempted to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law, instructing Union officers to capture and return runaways to their owners.<sup>200</sup> Confronted with a President who seemed more concerned with appeasing slaveholders than liberating the enslaved, abolitionists debated their political commitments.

Nevertheless, most abolitionists lined up behind the Republican Party, especially supporting radical Republican congressmen.<sup>201</sup> Their burning goal until Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 was to persuade the Northern public and the Republican administration that emancipation should be the primary war aim. To promote an antislavery war, abolitionists returned to tactics of moral suasion, utilizing newspapers, rallies, pamphlets, and petitions.<sup>202</sup> Many Northern churches, for their part, finally began to take a strong antislavery stance and even participated in lobbying the Republican Party to make emancipation the war's goal.<sup>203</sup> Sentiment among the Northern public in general took a dramatic turn in favor of the previously unpopular abolitionists; never before had so many called for emancipation.<sup>204</sup>

Even so, the belated commitment, coinciding with the advent of war and resulting anti-Southern militancy, reveals a Northern emancipationist position more grounded in

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<sup>199</sup> McPherson, 55-58.

<sup>200</sup> Lerone Bennett Jr., *Forced into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 2000): 346-348.

<sup>201</sup> Stewart, 181.

<sup>202</sup> Stewart, 183-184.

<sup>203</sup> McKivigan, *War against Proslavery Religion*, 183-184.

<sup>204</sup> Stewart, 182; McPherson, 81-84.

expediency than in principle.<sup>205</sup> What finally convinced Northerners and their President to support emancipation was military necessity rather than moral conviction.<sup>206</sup> Although some abolitionists bemoaned the lack of genuine conversion, many more were willing to accept the war's practical outcomes as sufficient victory for their long campaign. To those who remained committed to internal moral transformation it seemed that an era of radical idealism had given way to an era of political and economic pragmatism.<sup>207</sup>

The wartime antislavery writings of Seventh-day Adventist church leaders and editors of the *Review* exhibited their own distinctive movement from principle to pragmatism. While retaining key elements of prewar theological principle, Adventist leaders, with few exceptions, molded their precept and practice to accommodate the church's precarious position in an embattled nation. Theologically, they remained committed to proclaiming the sinfulness of the institution of slavery and the sovereignty of God over the worsening course of human history. They continued to believe that their mission was not temporal reform but preaching Christ's imminent advent and God's ultimate judgment of sinful humanity. They viewed the Civil War itself as God's punishment of the nation and the device by which God would vanquish enslavement. Despite these key theological retentions, Adventist leaders began to compromise in more practical areas. Their previous hard-line stance for political nonparticipation, nonviolence, and disloyalty to government began to soften. Like evangelical

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<sup>205</sup> Merton L. Dillon, *The Abolitionists: The Growth of a Dissenting Minority* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974): 253-255; McKivigan, *War against Proslavery Religion*, 200.

<sup>206</sup> Stewart, 202-203; McPherson, 91, 133.

<sup>207</sup> Stewart, 189-193.

abolitionists, they viewed the war as drastically changing previous circumstances. However, unlike abolitionists, their moral mitigation came not to bring a swifter end to enslavement but to serve the purposes of their own emerging denomination.

In a time of tenuous peace, Adventists' counter-cultural identity remained untested. However, faced with the Civil War in 1861 editors of the *Review* and the nascent church leaders made difficult moral decisions. In a hostile wartime climate, their vocal political nonparticipation could be interpreted either as sympathy toward the South or radical nonresistance: either position smacked of national disloyalty and invited public suspicion. James White and other contributors to the *Review* both exacerbated and attempted to resolve this dilemma. To protect Seventh-day Adventist identity and mission, they began to modify their antislavery stance, maintaining core theological principles while moderating key precepts and practices. Such mitigating moral compromises dramatically altered the main tenor of Adventists' prewar positions, although the move toward pragmatism solidified a trend first apparent in Uriah Smith's "practicable philanthropy."

In the prewar years the *Review* consistently promoted the theological position that all governments, including the United States, were hopelessly corrupt and, according to biblical prophecy, could not be reformed by human deeds. The United States sat under condemnation by God for its civil and religious hypocrisy, including the sin of slavery. Ellen White reinforced this view in an article printed in the *Review* on August 27, 1861, following the first battle of Manassas. White wrote that the nation was only at the beginning of its long punishment:

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 overreaching and overbearing influence.... God will restrain his anger but a little longer. His anger burns against this nation, and especially against the religious bodies who have sanctioned, and have themselves engaged in this terrible merchandise.... The cries and sufferings of the oppressed have reached unto heaven, and angels stand amazed at the hard-hearted, untold, agonizing suffering, man in the image of his Maker, causes his fellow-man. The names of such are written in blood, crossed with stripes, and flooded with agonizing, burning tears of suffering. God's anger will not cease until he has caused the land of light to drink the dregs of the cup of his fury.<sup>208</sup>

She likened the war to the plagues inflicted on Egypt when the hardened heart of Pharaoh refused to free the children of Israel. She also described a recent vision of the battle of Manassas in which she saw an angel create confusion in the ranks and prompt a Northern retreat. While Northerners and Southerners remained perplexed at the unexpected battle outcome, White gave Adventists a clear picture of God's unfolding judgment on the nation "in his own hand."<sup>209</sup>

Some Adventist readers expressed fear that perhaps the Civil War was Armageddon, the great, final battle between Earth and Heaven. *Review* editor James White clarified that this war between nations signified that the end of the world was coming but was not the end itself.<sup>210</sup> Former editor Uriah Smith wrote that the war fulfilled the biblical prophecy found in Joel 3, that the course of human history would move downward toward increasing war, rather than upward toward increasing peace.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Ellen White, "Slavery and the War," *Review* (27 August 1861): 100-101.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>210</sup> James White, "Thoughts on the Great Battle," *Review* (21 January 1862): 77.

<sup>211</sup> Uriah Smith, "Prepare War," *Review* (5 August 1862): 76.

An article reprinted from the *Republican Standard* suggested that God was extending the war because of the perpetuation of slavery.<sup>212</sup> Smith reiterated the sinfulness of slavery by running a two-part series on its condemnation in the Bible.<sup>213</sup> Smith also criticized the nation for maintaining a commitment to enslavement. In an editorial comment prior to a selection on the antislavery sentiments of America's early leaders, Smith condemned the "blasphemous and insane ravings of pro-slavery demagogues of the present day..., the white-washed villainy of many of the pulpits of our land..., and the strenuous efforts put forth to foster and extend this diabolical system." The retention of enslavement evidenced the continuing "dragonic spirit" of the nation.<sup>214</sup>

Throughout 1862 the *Review* published numerous articles and editorials blaming the nation's lingering commitment to slavery for the inception and continuation of war. Smith decried the pro-slavery, pro-Southern sympathies of generals and politicians in power, which resulted in "half-hearted efforts" and "sickly policy." He cited two Northern generals who reacted negatively to anti-slavery songs in the ranks; one called them "incendiary" and "worthy to be suppressed," while the other said he thinks "just as much of the Rebels as of Abolitionists."<sup>215</sup> A subsequent article from the *Anti-Slavery Standard* claimed that both North and South were fighting to preserve slavery: "Two

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<sup>212</sup> "The War," (from *Republican Standard*), *Review* (10 June 1862): 11-12.

<sup>213</sup> "Is Slavery Sanctioned by the Bible?" reprint from *Premium Tract*, *Review* (1 October 1861): 137-139; "Is Slavery Sanctioned by the Bible?" (from *Premium Tract*), *Review* (8 October 1861): 145-147.

<sup>214</sup> Uriah Smith, "The Degeneracy of the United States," *Review* (17 June 1862): 22.

<sup>215</sup> Uriah Smith, "Traitors in Power," *Review* (4 February 1862): 77-78.

armies drawn up in battle array, / Both fighting for slavery—each in its way!”<sup>216</sup> Smith wrote that God could not bring success to the North because Lincoln’s administration refused to make emancipation its operating policy.<sup>217</sup> But it was not merely the current government that was to blame for retaining the system of enslavement. The United States had “from within a short time of its foundation to the present...made itself the obsequious servant of one of the most diabolical systems that has ever cursed the earth.”<sup>218</sup> Because of this, Smith argued that Christians could only identify “with a higher power than any earthly government, and look forward with longing anticipations to the setting up of that kingdom which shall be established in righteousness and endure forever.”<sup>219</sup>

The *Review* continued to print articles taking this position throughout the entire war. A reprinted article from Harriet Beecher Stowe declared that the time to free slaves was at hand; the government had a right to decree it, and the people had the obligation to petition for it.<sup>220</sup> Capitalist merchants, newspapers, and religious leaders bore responsibility for maintenance of slavery and the subsequent miseries of war according to an article reprinted from the *New York Independent*, Lewis Tappan’s influential antislavery newspaper:

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<sup>216</sup> “Anomalies,” (from *Anti-Slavery Standard*), *Review* (15 April 1862): 155.

<sup>217</sup> Uriah Smith, “Our Public Affairs,” *Review* (12 August 1862): 85.

<sup>218</sup> Uriah Smith, “The Cause and Cure of the Present Civil War,” *Review* (19 August 1862): 90.

<sup>219</sup> Smith, “Traitors in Power,” 78.

<sup>220</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, “Simon, The Cyrenian,” *Review* (19 August 1862): 91.

We charge all these millions upon millions of money, all the precious blood which has drenched the earth, in defense of liberty, and all the mourning and wailing now filling thousands of households, to you, money-loving, truth-dodging, principle-evading, liberty-hating, man-oppressing newspapers, merchants, ministers, capitalists, and others, who have been willing to sacrifice real and eternal riches for a mess of pottage.<sup>221</sup>

Smith blamed the President himself for enacting a “conservative” and “suicidal” policy, ignoring the calls for freedom in the free North and the enslaved South.<sup>222</sup> This comment prefaced a reprint of Lydia Maria Child’s famous letter petitioning the President to make emancipation a war aim.<sup>223</sup> Child’s letter was followed by another reprint that condemned the Union war policy of guarding rebel property and returning fugitive slaves to their masters.<sup>224</sup>

In the same issue a letter to the editor rehearsed the nation’s track record of bondage, including its proslavery constitution, and called for corporate repentance and withdrawal of support for enslavement.<sup>225</sup> A final letter to the editor called enslavement the greatest of Northern sins; the North would suffer for its long tolerance of enslavement, but when the punishment was over, “let southern traitors tremble.”<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> “A Word to Home Rebels,” *Review* (2 September 1862): 107.

<sup>222</sup> Uriah Smith, editorial comment before “Letter to the President,” *Review* (23 September 1862): 130.

<sup>223</sup> Lydia Maria Child, “Letter to the President,” reprint from *National Republican, Review* (23 September 1862): 130-131.

<sup>224</sup> “Policy—Leniency and Protection to Rebels,” selected reprint, *Review* (23 September 1862): 131.

<sup>225</sup> James Sawyer, “Is the Nation Guilty?” *Review* (23 September 1862): 133.

<sup>226</sup> Joseph Clarke, “The War! The War!!” *Review* (23 September 1862): 134.

Toward the end of the war, articles discussed appropriate retribution to slaveholders, ravaged conditions in the South, hope for the soon destruction of the slave power, God's punishment of the entire nation, the desperate economic condition of the entire country, the decline of world order, and the continued presence of proslavery sympathizers in the North.<sup>227</sup>

During the war the *Review* also continued to run antislavery articles rooted in biblical interpretation. James White lengthily restated the Adventist position that the United States as the "two-horned American, protestant beast" fulfilled apocalyptic prophecy from Revelation.<sup>228</sup> Even more lengthy was a twelve-part front-page series reprinted from Methodist antislavery minister Luther Lee and entitled "The Bible No Refuge for Slavery." Lee systematically covered both Old and New Testaments, arguing against proslavery interpretation of key texts and arguing for God's hatred of all human oppression.<sup>229</sup> The editorial introduction to the first installment stated its purpose as being to answer a demand from the *Review* readership for biblical exposition on enslavement. The editor commented that the staff believed the study would "meet the

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<sup>227</sup> "Justice Awakening," *Review* (26 January 1864): 68-69; Uriah Smith, "The End Approaching," *Review* (23 February 1864): 98; "A Negro Preacher's View," *Review* (10 May 1864): 191; "What is True of Our Country," *Review* (19 July 1864): 60; "Is the World Growing Better?" reprint from *Voice of the West*, *Review* (16 August 1864): 91; John Nevins Andrews, "Slavery," *Review* (18 October 1864): 172.

<sup>228</sup> James White, "Thoughts on the Revelation," *Review* (11 November 1862): 188.

<sup>229</sup> Luther Lee, "The Bible No Refuge for Slavery," reprinted from *Slavery Examined in the Light of the Bible*, *Review* (3 February 1863): 73-74; (10 February 1863): 81-83; (24 February 1863): 97-98; (3 March 1863): 105-106; (10 March 1863): 113-114; (17 March 1863): 121-123; (24 March 1863): 129-130; (7 April 1863): 145-146; (14 April 1863): 153-155; (21 April 1863): 161-163; (28 April 1863): 169-171; (5 May 1863): 177-178.

minds of the readers of the *Review* generally”; that is, it would express biblical doctrine already agreeable to Adventists.<sup>230</sup> Lee’s thesis was simple: slavery was a sin.<sup>231</sup>

Clearly, throughout the war, the antislavery principle of the *Review* remained consistent with its prewar denunciation of national government and religious institutions for maintaining the sinful system of enslavement. However, this consistency did not extend to antislavery precept and practice. In prewar years, the *Review* grounded antislavery precept and practice in its biblical expectation that the corrupt character of the nation would not improve over time. Biblical prophecy predicted that the “dragonic” character of the lamb-like beast would not change before Christ’s return. Because Adventists held this pessimistic view of earthly institutions, their definition of proper ethical behavior was not the same as that of progressive, optimistic, perfection-based reformers. Antebellum Adventist precept cautioned believers not to vote or participate in party politics or compromised reform causes. Believers were to “come out” from fallen institutions, work legitimately in their own sphere and wield spiritual, not carnal, weapons. Believers were also to break human laws that conflicted with divine laws and commit themselves to voicing objection to sin. In short, Adventist mission was not political reform but spiritual reformation, evangelism, and biblically-based social critique; God’s providence would bring an end to evil earthly systems over which Adventists had no power.

James White played the central role in shifting the locus of Adventist precept from principle to pragmatism. In the August 12, 1862, issue of the *Review*, White printed

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<sup>230</sup> Editorial comment to “The Bible No Refuge for Slavery,” *Review* (3 February 1863): 73.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-74.

an editorial that stimulated controversy among readers. "The Nation" affirmed the *Review's* ten-year record of proclaiming the sinfulness of enslavement, a record so consistent that it had led slave states to ban its circulation in their borders. Despite his affirmation of theological principle, White compromised in several key areas of accepted precept. First, he suggested that some Adventists had indeed voted at the 1860 election and that "to a man" they had voted for Abraham Lincoln. This claim implicitly softened Adventists' former position on voting and political parties. Second, White suggested that in the case of the draft, it would be "madness to resist" and risk execution for treason. White stated that the government would assume the "responsibility of violation of the law of God." White thus softened the Adventist position on killing and combat. Finally, White labeled the United States as "the best government under heaven," which was currently protecting Adventist civil and religious liberties and "struggling to put down the most hellish rebellion since that of Satan and his angels." He said that Adventists were in no way sympathetic with secessionists. This final position softened Adventist principle itself, which had always pledged allegiance only to the divine government. White's concluding statement of loyalty to "the government of heaven" was not enough to counterbalance his compromise.<sup>232</sup>

That heated correspondence followed is evident in White's sharp editorial rejoinder two weeks later. White characterized his readers' response as "feverish" and

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<sup>232</sup> James White, "The Nation," *Review* (12 August 1862): 84. For fuller treatment of Adventists' position during the Civil War, see Peter Brock, "The Problem of the Civil War: When Seventh-day Adventists First Faced War," *Adventist Heritage* 1:1 (January 1974): 23-27; Francis McLellan Wilcox, *Seventh-day Adventists in Time of War* (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1936).

flinched at their accusations of Sabbath-breaking and murder.<sup>233</sup> He reprimanded the “brethren” and counseled that they all should

go to God with this matter, and secure to yourselves a humble and teachable spirit; then if any of you are drafted, and choose to have a clinch with Uncle Sam rather than obey, you can try it. We shall not contend with you, lest some of you non-resistants get up a little war before you are called upon to fight for your country. Any well-written articles, calculated to shed light upon our duty as a people in reference to the present war, will receive prompt attention.<sup>234</sup>

Some of White’s readers were apparently unhappy with his position on the draft. His sarcastic labeling of them as “non-resistants” suggested his own suspicion of unbending pacifism. He clearly believed that under circumstances of war it was better to obey Uncle Sam than to risk adverse consequences. Here White’s moral reasoning operated not from biblical principle, but rather from the exigencies of circumstance.<sup>235</sup>

White’s readers indeed heeded his call for “well-written articles” over the next months. In the September 9 issue of the *Review*, White wrote another letter to correspondents in which he included excerpts from letters received in the office. Interestingly, the two letters White quoted extensively were both sympathetic to his position. R. F. Cottrell emphasized White’s comments on trusting God’s deliverance;

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<sup>233</sup> Seventh-day Adventists feared the draft not just because it meant combat but also because it meant military service on Saturday, which they believed to be a day of Sabbath rest.

<sup>234</sup> James White, “The Nation,” *Review* (26 August 1862): 100.

<sup>235</sup> It is ironic that the very next issue of the *Review* contained the *New York Independent*’s strongly worded criticism of morally bankrupt merchants, clergymen, and newspaper editors: “Ask them to put into practice the Golden Rule, and they will say ‘circumstances alter cases.’ Ask them to do right under *all* circumstances and cases, and leave the result with God, and they will say, Yes—well—if—but—and think you very impertinent.” “A Word to the Home Rebels,” *Review* (2 September 1862): 106.

M. E. Cornell wrote that extreme non-resistance was fanaticism. White provided one- or two-line summaries of the other varied responses, the sum of which he called a “war-chowder.” He responded to persisting negative criticism by suggesting that his original editorial had been misunderstood. He believed that Adventists should try to stay out of the war (i.e., not enlist), and he insisted that he in no way had compromised core principles on slavery, the war, and divine loyalty. He implicitly advocated moderation and explicitly scorned fanaticism:

Some, in their reckless fanaticism, will never be satisfied unless they can drive us to oppose enlisting, denounce the government, and bring upon our people the brand of secession, and unnecessarily expose life and property. We can cheerfully resign our position in the cause, but never yield to any man’s fanaticism, and bear the responsibility of disgracing the Seventh-day Adventists, and the truth they hold.<sup>236</sup>

In this passage, White shunned so-called fanaticism that recklessly endangered life and property. Beyond this, his moral reasoning exhibited an additional and somewhat surprising element. White argued that a hard-line stance against fighting would jeopardize “the cause”—denominational mission—and would tarnish the reputation of “the Seventh-day Adventists” and their distinctive doctrine.

White made a second appeal for well-written, biblically sound articles on the draft in the next issue of the *Review*. He claimed that the “Spirit of Christ and of the present truth,” that is the values of Christianity in general and Adventism in particular—were incompatible with the “spirit of the present war.” Given the amoral conditions in war camps, Adventists would certainly make poor soldiers. Seeming to back away from his earlier position, White now asked thirteen church leaders by name to research a solid

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<sup>236</sup> James White, “To Correspondents,” *Review* (9 September 1862): 118.

position from the Bible behind which all Adventists could unite.<sup>237</sup> J. H. Waggoner, *Review* correspondent, responded in the next issue, affirming White's original editorial. Although he had initially been troubled by it, Waggoner now felt that Adventists should feel gratitude toward the government instead of denouncing it. He defended the government's right of draft in times of peril. Regarding the Iowa legislature's bill allowing those conscientiously opposed to combat to pay \$100.00 instead of serving, Waggoner was scornful. He stated that he would rather endure the draft than sell his conscience or avail himself of an option that only the rich could afford.<sup>238</sup>

Some contributors to the *Review* who had opposed violence in the 1850s now shifted their stance. Joseph Clarke, whose prewar articles had emphasized the corruption of the United States, the sin of enslavement, and the unique, peaceful mission of Adventists, confessed that he had fantasized about joining the army and wiping out the foe, like Gideon, Joshua, and David. He counseled the *Review* readers to stop whining about the draft and stop pestering Brother White. They should wait faithfully while God exacted punishment on the South. If God called him to fight or to stand still, he was content with either.<sup>239</sup> In a second letter in the same issue, Clarke defended White's editorial, interpreting it to mean that it was commendable for Christians to love and protect their country if it were engaged in a moral conflict. He concluded: "Let us lay

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<sup>237</sup> James White, "Our Duty in Reference to the War," *Review* (16 September 1862): 124.

<sup>238</sup> J. H. Waggoner, "Our Duty and the Nation," *Review* (23 September 1862): 132-133.

<sup>239</sup> Clarke, "War," *Review* (23 September 1862): 134.

aside fanaticism and act like men.”<sup>240</sup> J. N. Loughborough, who had prophetically denounced the United States in prewar issues of the *Review*, also agreed with White’s original editorial. Loughborough understood John the Baptizer’s injunction to “do violence to no man” as enjoining upon his followers “humanity, and abstinence from all *unnecessary* violence and pillage.” John was not saying that it was wrong to fight “under any circumstances.”<sup>241</sup> M. E. Cornell argued that Adventists should not volunteer to fight, but in the case of the current war, accepting the draft was wisdom; Adventists should avoid extremes and recognize that in a moral cause killing was permissible.<sup>242</sup>

In the context of civil war, these church leaders and others followed the pattern of James White and articulated a revised moral position. The new basis for practice emphasized several key themes: moderation in moral behavior, circumstantial justification for otherwise problematic actions, tentative reconciliation with government, the defensibility of wars having moral aims, and the protection of Adventist identity and mission. The last item appeared most frequently in the *Review* as defense for new positions. Adventists were afraid of being labeled “secessionists” or “non-resistants”; these supposed fanaticisms would precipitate unnecessarily harsh consequences and jeopardize Seventh-day Adventist credibility, not to mention survival.

Several contextual factors may provide additional explanation for the shift in Adventist moral reasoning. James White’s editorial “The Nation” appeared in

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<sup>240</sup> Joseph Clarke, “The Sword vs. Fanaticism,” *Review* (23 September 1862): 135.

<sup>241</sup> J. N. Loughborough, “Do Violence to No Man,” *Review* (30 September 1862): 140 (*italics mine*).

<sup>242</sup> M. E. Cornell, “Extremes,” *Review* (21 October 1862): 163.

August 1862, at a time when White was leading the charge for church organization. As described earlier in this chapter, White had already been successful in launching a church publishing house, proposing a denominational name, organizing the Michigan State Conference, and developing a procedure for Seventh-day Adventist ministerial credentialing and salaries.<sup>243</sup> White's rationale for increased organization was pragmatic; he argued for the need to solve specific logistical issues faced by the fledgling denomination.<sup>244</sup> In this light, White's appeal to bring no disgrace to the name of Seventh-day Adventists through fanatical behavior takes on new meaning. Seventh-day Adventists were in the midst of acquiring an organizational identity. Less than a year after White's editorial, White and other church leaders organized the General Conference.<sup>245</sup>

Happenings in the nation may have also influenced the development of the *Review's* revised moral position, especially regarding loyalty to the United States and the permissibility of fighting in the war. During the first years of the war, President Lincoln had refused to make emancipation a war aim. However, on September 22, 1862, Lincoln announced a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. While largely conservative and ineffective, the Proclamation was a salve to festering abolitionist appeals. Finally, the war would address enslavement.<sup>246</sup> The *Review* printed Clarke's and Waggoner's revised war positions on September 23, the day after publication of the Proclamation. In

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<sup>243</sup> Loughborough, *Advent Movement*, 351-353.

<sup>244</sup> Knight, 33-66.

<sup>245</sup> Loughborough, *Advent Movement*, 354-355.

<sup>246</sup> McPherson, 117-118.

the next issue the *Review* printed the full text of the Proclamation one page before Loughborough's defense of fighting for moral causes.<sup>247</sup> The timing was unmistakable. Now that the war had become a moral cause, Adventist leaders felt that it was justifiable to accept mandatory participation.

Of course, Adventist leaders also continued to believe that killing was ultimately against the law of God and should be avoided. Thus, they maintained a rather contradictory position, not wanting to kill and not wanting to refuse the draft. The federal enforcement of the draft in 1863 put the Adventist position to the test. As recorded in the *Review*, several Seventh-day Adventist members were drafted and offered no resistance. By this time, however, the organized denomination had a federally recognized non-combatancy status. The church had sent J. N. Andrews to Washington, D. C., in 1864, to lobby for Adventists. Andrews' success at this enterprise did not mean that members would be immune from draft lists, but that in case of draft, they would have special non-combatant duties. These included working in hospitals and caring for the freedmen that followed the armies.<sup>248</sup>

In response to requests James White printed an article on the duty of non-combatants in regards to the war, suggesting that Adventists should feel grateful for their special status in this "the best government in this revolted and sin-cursed world." He suggested that, as a part of their Sabbath prayer and fasting for the war crisis, Adventists should give "thanks to God for those in authority" who had given Adventists special

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<sup>247</sup> "Proclamation by the President," *Review* (30 September 1862): 139.

<sup>248</sup> "The Freedmen," *Review* (13 September 1864): 125; "Hospital Duties," *Review* (23 August 1864): 100.

provision.<sup>249</sup> J. N. Andrews gave concrete suggestions to ensure Adventist non-combatant status would be enforced.<sup>250</sup>

In January 1865 an editorial comment stated that there was no evidence that Adventists' special status had been honored in actual practice.<sup>251</sup> The Adventist soldiers who corresponded with the editors served in the ranks like everyone else. Their letters to the editor spoke of harsh conditions in the military camps and threatening opposition from other soldiers for their non-combatant status. They petitioned the church to find them a way out.<sup>252</sup> James White attempted to do just that when he tried to raise bounty money in Battle Creek, Michigan, that would be given to men willing to enlist to meet state quotas.<sup>253</sup> This would protect Adventists from having to serve. Church leaders also assisted members in raising the \$300.00 fee that would buy them out of service altogether.<sup>254</sup> As the war intensified and Lincoln called for more men, Adventist relief assistance also increased.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> James White, "Non-Combatants: Their Duty in Reference to the Present War," *Review* (31 January 1865): 76.

<sup>250</sup> J. N. Andrews, "How to Proceed if Drafted," *Review* (7 February 1865): 84.

<sup>251</sup> Untitled, *Review* (24 January 1865): 72.

<sup>252</sup> P.H. Cady, "Experience of a Drafted Non-combatant," *Review* (24 January 1865): 70; C. F. Hall, "Something Wrong," *Review* (24 January 1865): 70.

<sup>253</sup> Untitled, *Review* (30 August 1864): 112.

<sup>254</sup> "Systematic Benevolence," *Review* (24 November 1863): 204.

<sup>255</sup> Samuel Tomlinson, "From Bro. Tomlinson," *Review* (29 November 1864): 7; Untitled, *Review* (20 December, 1864): 32; "The New Call for Men," *Review* (24 January 1865): 68.

Adventist practice, in light of wartime exigencies, had made a dramatic change from its prewar position. Not only had Adventists begun to vote, they had also lobbied the government to achieve non-combatancy status. Furthermore, they had become engaged in extensive fundraising for the purpose of paying bounties and draft bonds. James White and other leaders rationalized their increased participation in the affairs of state by appealing to institutional identity and mission. The spread of the third angel's message—the imminent advent and judgment—must not be threatened.<sup>256</sup> Adventists had always stated this as their primary objective, and so in time of war, that objective had not changed. It remained the priority by which other beliefs and practices were to be measured, according to church leaders. The church's organization, combatancy position, and political participation were all modified in the war years for the stated purpose of protecting distinctive identity and mission.

While Adventist leaders' commitment to identity and mission evidenced a clear retention of original Adventist values, their root source had shifted. No longer a product of theological principle, their new moral reasoning sprang from temporal necessity and institutional effectiveness. In making this transformation church leaders sacrificed moral standards that had emphasized obeying the laws of God regardless of the consequences. In doing so, they became less willing to accept the negative consequences of principled behavior and more willing to condone previously unacceptable practices. Even though the *Review* continued to publish against slavery, this position had lost its radical edge during an embattled time when most Northerners had become increasingly sympathetic to the antislavery cause. To say that Adventist leaders moved from principle to pragmatism

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<sup>256</sup> "Spare Thy People, Lord," *Review* (9 August 1864): 88.

is not to suggest that they had wholly discarded their theology, but that the basis of their moral decision making had transferred to the benefit of the institution and its message.

As James White and the male leaders of the denomination moved toward expediency in the name of missional necessity, the unsalaried female prophet maintained an unflinching commitment to principle as the basis of precept and practice. In a pamphlet to the church membership, Ellen White attempted to resolve the excitement created by her husband in his controversial editorial. According to Ellen, James had written according to the best light that he then had. It had been necessary to counteract false claims about Adventists, specifically claims that they were sympathetic with the rebellion. Those who spoke so quickly against the draft revealed weakness of character that, she believed, would not stand up against the test of imprisonment, torture, or death. Those “who would be best prepared to sacrifice even life” would “make no boast,” would “feel deeply and meditate much,” and would be in constant prayer. Finally, she wrote that Adventists should obey the laws of the land unless they conflicted with God’s laws.<sup>257</sup> To this point, Ellen White seemed to be reaffirming her husband’s entire position. But when she made her final application to Seventh-day Adventists’ precarious situation during the Civil War the picture was quite different:

I was shown [in a vision] 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

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<sup>257</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, Vol. 1, 356-361.

rightdoing. But God's people cannot be governed by these motives.<sup>258</sup>

In the end church father and mother were at odds: the former moving toward institutional pragmatism and the latter maintaining theological principle. While James White furthered Uriah Smith's "practicable philanthropy," Ellen White retained a radical commitment to the priority of spiritual motives over "worldly policy and public opinion." Ironically, Ellen White's description of "worldly men" described the direction her own husband would advance in the coming years of Seventh-day Adventist institutionalization.

This pivotal irony would acquire increasing significance as the institution followed the trajectory set by James White. In the postwar years the new pragmatic pattern in moral reasoning may have profoundly affected Adventist leadership's desire to enter into hostile Southern territory to engage in aid to the freedmen. After all, if the first commitment was to denominational identity and doctrine, and dangerous roadblocks to mission were to be avoided, then what would motivate Adventists to sponsor dangerous relief work? As the denomination developed in other areas—health work, educational institutions, and foreign missions—they neglected to do the same for the freedmen. There was a lag of at least twenty-five years before Seventh-day Adventists made any serious attempt to work among black people in the South. The irony of this lapse is made even more stark by a second General Conference vote at the end of the war to sponsor

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 361.

missions to freed slaves in Southern states.<sup>259</sup> Interestingly, it was Ellen White alone who led the charge for African-American missions in the 1890s.

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<sup>259</sup> "The Conference," *Review* (23 May 1865): 197. The full text of the vote reads: "*Resolved*, That a field is now opened in the South for labor among the colored people and should be entered upon according to our ability" (emphasis supplied).

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

John 17:14-16, KJV

The changes that Adventists underwent in the war years set a new course for the increasingly organized denomination. Church leaders maintained a greater willingness to participate in their societies, at least enough to protect the church's ability to carry out its distinctive mission of spreading the third angel's message. Sadly, the 1865 General Conference's vote to deliver the message to freed slaves in the South was slow to take hold. Mission to freedmen did not begin in earnest until the 1890s. Ellen White's son, Edson, prompted by his mother's outspoken sermons on the topic of race prejudice in the church, formed a new missionary society and launched the *Morning Star* steamboat to form a traveling schoolhouse, church, and press for work among Southern blacks. This work by Edson White formed the basis for what Ellen White called "the Southern work" and for which she personally raised funds and donated her own money to support. Church leaders were recalcitrant in their duty, according to Ellen White, going so far as

to divert as much as ten thousand dollars from the Southern field to cover their own publishing debts.<sup>260</sup> Still, the work that she and Edson accomplished ultimately led to the formation of a thriving, if financially challenged, missionary and educational program, the result of which can be seen in the large number of African Americans in the present denomination and the successful institution of Oakwood College, Adventism's only historically black college, located in Huntsville, Alabama.

Because issues of racism and segregation continue to confront the global denomination, there is significant interest in the early church founders' writings against slavery. The denomination's troubled racial history contrasts with their antislavery past. As the denomination found its roots out of Millerite disappointment, they retained a radical commitment to the near advent of Christ and their duty to deliver this message. While their central sense of their own work as "remnant reformers" centered on proclaiming the Advent and the Sabbath, the keeping of God's entire Law, they still were concerned enough with the problem of slavery to write or reprint hundreds of articles condemning its existence and expansion in the United States of America. Writers such as Uriah Smith, John Loughborough, J. H. Waggoner, and Joseph Clarke voiced an unrelenting critique of the nation and its prophesied course of destruction at a time when most moral voices were assuming its continued progress. However, concurrent with the pessimism of the downward course of human history and judgment of the wicked, these writers also voiced a confident hope in the immediate Advent of Christ offering a day of liberation to themselves and to the oppressed millions in slavery.

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<sup>260</sup> Ellen G. White, Letter to C. H. Jones, February 20, 1899. Huntsville, AL: Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office.

Adventists' "spiritual abolitionism" did not place them in the position to directly effect change in social institutions, but it did express their willingness to stand apart from an oppressive reality and unflinchingly call sin by its name. During the 1850s, Adventists avoided voting, participating in political parties, and forming alliances with the government that would put them in a position to kill on that government's behalf. Several Adventists, particularly Ellen White, expressed willingness to break the Fugitive Slave Law and to suffer the attending legal consequences. Even so, contemporary criticism from Anson Byington revealed fissures in such a radically otherworldly position. Byington demonstrated that Adventists, in their emphasis on Christ's activity, had neglected to recognize their own Christian moral duty. Practical social concern, according to Byington, did not contradict Adventist mission. Uriah Smith's argument for a "practicable philanthropy" in selecting objects of denominational mission left most Adventists in a comfortable position among Northern whites. Only a few writers in the *Review* of the 1850s expressed tangible interest in taking Adventist missions to the enslaved.

The compromises that took place in the period of the war did not change Adventists' views against slavery. Adventists, in fact, saw the war as God's means of ending slavery and punishing both North and South for perpetuating it so long. However, they did redraw just how far apart from society they were willing to stand and what price they were willing to pay for moral peculiarity. The shift from operating out of principle regardless of consequences to pragmatic expediency in protecting their religious institution may help to explain the lag in concern for freedmen and the racial prejudice that is part of the church's subsequent history. Adventist leaders after the war, like Uriah

Smith in 1859, may have found it more “practicable” to focus their energies on health and education reform in the North than to launch missionary work to freed slaves in the volatile “reconstructing” South. White leaders in the twentieth century who promoted racial segregation used the argument of expedience to justify separate churches, and eventually conferences, for black and white Adventists.<sup>261</sup>

A brief review of the literature reveals that, in comparison to their interest in the church’s theological and organizational development, modern Seventh-day Adventist historians have devoted little attention to understanding the early church’s antislavery position. Adventist historians of the mid-twentieth century presented a watered-down version of the Adventist antislavery position that emphasized loyalty to the government and institutional moderation. Arthur Whitefield Spalding in *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists* (1961) states that “Seventh-day Adventists were practically unanimous in their abhorrence of slavery and in their support of government.”<sup>262</sup> Ciro Sepulveda in “Reinventing Adventist History,” suggests that the historical motive for such revisionism was to ally the church with the nation and develop a mainstream, middle-class Protestant identity.<sup>263</sup> Official denominational history texts include passing references to abolitionist sentiment, but their general emphases are elsewhere.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> See Bull and Lockhart, 194-195

<sup>262</sup> Arthur Whitefield Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists*, Vol. One (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1961): 329.

<sup>263</sup> Ciro Sepulveda, “Reinventing Adventist History: How Adventist Historians Transformed Adventist Heritage So That It Would Fit Neatly into the National Mythology,” <http://www.oakwood.edu/history/Ejah/Reinventing%20SDA%20history.htm>. (27 January 2004): 1-18.

<sup>264</sup> Spalding, 329. Cf. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant*, 1979.

Chancing a fresh historical gaze, Roy Branson, in 1970, wrote two influential articles which characterize Adventist antislavery thought and action as “radical abolitionism” of the Garrison mold.<sup>265</sup> In *Seeking a Sanctuary* (1989), Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart briefly but firmly argued against Branson’s view, suggesting that Adventists were too preoccupied with millennialism to possess any social conscience, much less any genuine concern about slavery.<sup>266</sup> Subsequent historical accounts predominantly lean toward one side or the other. Some more complex descriptions tend to be a balancing act that retains the descriptive categories of each end.

Branson based his characterization of Adventists as radical abolitionists on statements made in the *Review* that opposed the institution of slavery, criticized Lincoln for his political expediency, and identified the United States as the last great persecuting power due to its commerce in human beings. He also cited the activities of early Adventist leaders who took part in the Underground Railroad and advocated breaking the Fugitive Slave Law.<sup>267</sup> An article printed in 1970 in the denominational youth magazine followed Branson’s lead and outright called Adventists “activists” in their time.<sup>268</sup> A more significant work, Roy Graham’s book *Ellen G. White, Co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (1985), also used the term “activist” to describe Adventists. Graham argued that Adventist leaders voiced a moral abhorrence of slavery and believed that relieving the condition of slaves was an appropriate task when possible. He

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<sup>265</sup> Branson, “Ellen G. White,” 2-3; “Slavery and Prophecy,” 7-9.

<sup>266</sup> Bull and Lockhart, 193-197.

<sup>267</sup> Branson, “Ellen G. White,” 2-3; “Slavery and Prophecy,” 7-9.

<sup>268</sup> Julia Neuffer, “How Activist Were Adventist Abolitionists?” *Review and Herald* (10 September 1970): 11.

acknowledged their apocalyptic framework by making it clear that they believed ultimate liberty would come through the Advent.<sup>269</sup>

Douglas Morgan offers an in-depth and complex “activist” interpretation in his book *Adventism and the American Republic* (2001). Morgan argues that Adventists underwent a shift in their relationship to politics—from “apocalyptic disassociation” (pessimism about the world) to a “moderated apocalyptic” with a reform inclination (based on the delay of the Advent). He characterizes their change in the Civil War as an awakening to activism. He argues that Adventists had a reform impulse before their apocalyptic disassociation and that it never fully dissolved and then resurfaced during and after the war in reform movements such as health, temperance, and religious liberty and in an acceptance of voting. He viewed their antislavery position in the pre-war years as a reform impulse tempered by an apocalyptic hard line.<sup>270</sup>

In an unpublished paper presented to a conference of Adventist historians in 2001, Morgan explicitly links his study to Branson’s view that Adventists bore a similarity to Garrison. He makes a point-by-point comparison: both were apocalyptic in their orientation and millennialists; both proclaimed a “come-outer” message, indicting the United States’ civil and religious institutions for supporting slavery and repressing religious liberty; both viewed slavery as a sin and were suspicious of compulsory religious practice, such as evangelical Sunday laws; both were suspicious of conventional party politics and voting; finally, both viewed their role according to “the priority of

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<sup>269</sup> Roy E. Graham, *Ellen G. White, Co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (New York: P. Lang, 1985).

<sup>270</sup> Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001).

individual conversion and the imperative of higher duty.” Adventists and Garrisonians differed on “the human role in the actual implementation of the apocalyptic transfiguration.” Garrison believed in human reform and the eventual success of “the political process” in “bringing the day of Jubilee”; Adventists, on the other hand, “foresaw no human institutional role in setting up the new order of things.” Morgan’s key point is that despite these differences, “both varieties of come-outerism led to a radical, public witness to transform energized by apocalyptic hope.” Adventists were “politically radical” in that their vision saw the United States and all human governments destroyed, replaced by God’s kingdom, slavery ended, and all the faithful saved.<sup>271</sup>

Adventism’s emphasis on the Second Coming of Christ created suspicion among historians of the opposing view. Bull and Lockhart’s central criticism of Adventists is that they were theologically obsessed, were not genuinely concerned about the welfare or liberation of slaves, and that what they did write about slavery served only the purpose of proving their unique biblical interpretation of the United States as the second beast of Revelation 12. Their expectation of the second coming stripped them of any reform impulses they may have had before becoming Adventists and rendered them morally bankrupt in terms of meaningful social involvement.<sup>272</sup>

Three Adventist scholars have produced studies that agree with Bull and Lockhart’s formulation. Turner Battle wrote an unpublished paper that soundly criticized Adventism for its racial conduct from its concept to its modern institution. Battle writes

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<sup>271</sup> Douglas Morgan, “Radical Witness: The Political Stance of the Earliest Seventh-day Adventists,” Unpublished paper presented at the Association of Seventh-day Adventist Historians (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 13 April, 2001): 1-13.

<sup>272</sup> Bull and Lockhart, 193-197.

predominantly from his experience with the racial segregation and unequal distribution of resources in the modern Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>273</sup> Roger Dudley and Edwin I. Hernandez in *Citizens of Two Worlds* (1992) reflect Bull and Lockhart's thesis: Adventists' "condemnation of slavery was not so much an effort to abolish the institution as it was to illustrate the dragon-like characteristics of the United States." Thus, Adventists had no genuine concern for the welfare of the enslaved but were exclusively concerned with strengthening their distinctive worldview and institutions.<sup>274</sup>

While most Adventist historians do not accept Bull and Lockhart in their entirety, many have been influenced by their categories. In his book on Adventist social ethics, Zdravko Plantak devotes a chapter to early Adventist history, which includes a discussion of abolitionism. He argues that early Adventists were more concerned with doctrinal development than social reform. He comments on the strong statements printed in the *Review*, writing that "such theorizing accomplished very little on the practical level of involvement in the fight for religious or any other human rights." Plantak's study is complex, for he initially presents the early church as narrowly concerned with doctrinal development, evangelism, and its own interests, but in a later section he praises the radicalism of the earliest church founders and comments that Bull and Lockhart overstated Adventists' lack of moral consciousness. His analysis postulates a period of

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<sup>273</sup> Turner C. Battle, "The Attitude of Seventh-day Adventists Toward Slaves, Free Men of Color, and Freedmen between 1863 and 1896," (Allentown, PA: Educational Development Center, 1999): 1-50.

<sup>274</sup> Roger Dudley and Edwin I. Hernandez, *Citizens of Two Worlds: Religion and Politics among American Seventh-day Adventists* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1992).

early radicalism that gave way to a concern for institutional survival and eventually began a slow return to its earliest social consciousness.<sup>275</sup>

Bull and Lockhart's analysis of Adventist race relations is bolstered by Alven Makapela (1996), an African historian who understandably expressed concern that white Adventists did not seem to show much compassion for African Americans. Certainly this is no more evident than in the church's poor race relations and history of segregation following the end of the Civil War and in their culturally-bound missions in Africa. Racial narrowness is also evident, according to Makapela, in the scarcity of significant interactions that early white Adventists had with blacks. Makapela diverges from Bull and Lockhart by stating that Adventists were adamantly against slavery on moral grounds. He goes so far as to hypothesize that several key Adventist theological concerns (such as free will, health, the Sabbath, and salvation) caused them to despise slavery. Since Adventists did not believe in political means to ending slavery, Makapela calls them "moderate abolitionists" who promoted individual spiritual and moral change.<sup>276</sup>

Most recent studies have attempted to find a middle ground between the two extremes, and like Morgan, Plantak, and Makapela, show complexity in the Adventist antislavery position. Steven Sherman, in a term paper at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary (1988), argues that Adventists struck a balance between the extreme of "non-participation" and "total participation." The first extreme was to ignore

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<sup>275</sup> Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998).

<sup>276</sup> Alven Makapela, *The Problem with Africanicity in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, African Studies*, Vol. 42 (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1996).

social problems with the expectation of Christ's coming; the second was to ignore the commission to proclaim the Advent, focusing solely on social reforms. He argues that Adventists lived in two worlds—one heavenly and the other earthly—and that this posed a tension, causing them to have to take a unique perspective on justice.<sup>277</sup> Bill Knott takes a similar position in his well-written article published in the modern *Review* (2002). Knott discusses the radical nature of the printed page as a moral voice as well as the radical nature of expecting the imminent overthrow of all earthly governments by the coming King.<sup>278</sup>

Adventists' immediate expectation of the Advent figured prominently in Jeffrey Boyd Smith's dissertation on Adventist political rhetoric (1983). Smith presents a chapter on slavery in which he proposes that Adventists bore incredible similarities to immediate abolitionists in their rhetoric. While they believed that the imminent coming of Christ (and their preparation toward that end) would be the source of reform, they were much closer to the reform-minded abolitionists than to "all gradualist or static philosophies of history." Smith shows that the primary difference between Adventists and other abolitionists was their "application of rhetoric." Adventists were not fatalistic premillennialists; neither were they social reformers. They were immediatists in their

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<sup>277</sup> Steven J. Sherman, "Slavery in America: A Moral Issue for Early Adventists," Term Paper (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1988).

<sup>278</sup> Bill Knott, "Writing Against Wrongs." *Adventist Review* online edition. <http://www.adventistreview.org/2002-1509/story1.html>. (21 February 2002): 1-10.

own right, working in their own community to prepare for an Advent that would replace the present corrupt society.<sup>279</sup>

Ron Graybill presents a similar view of the Millerites. He shows their significant connections to the abolitionist movement. Numerous abolitionists joined the Millerite movement, and although they become preoccupied with preparing themselves and others for Christ's imminent return, they did not lose their sympathy for abolitionism and other reform movements. They did not act as social reformers, but they did believe that Christ was about to enact the ultimate reform, including ending slavery. Graybill argues that Millerism realized abolitionist goals through different, more spiritual, means.<sup>280</sup>

Historians who provide complex descriptions have made a significant improvement in the understanding of Adventists' antislavery position. They have recognized the difficulty of accurate description and have endeavored to present a truer picture. Even so, many still utilize the language represented in the Branson-Bull/Lockhart bipolarity: theological concern versus social reform. Bull and Lockhart present this dichotomy *en force* by categorically dismissing the notion of Adventist social concern. Because Adventists were not reformers and did not attempt to use the political process, they, by default, had no moral behavior. Such a formulation ignores the theological assumptions of the Adventists as well as the evangelicals. Further, it does not ask how social concern would be activated out of distinctively Adventist assumptions and does not consider the theological obsessions of the reform-minded evangelicals. Both pre- and

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<sup>279</sup> Jeffrey Boyd Smith, *The Political Character of Adventist Rhetoric until the End of the Civil War*, Ph.D. Dissertation (Loma Linda, CA: Loma Linda University, 1983).

<sup>280</sup> Ron D. Graybill, "The Abolitionist-Millerite Connection," *The Disappointed*.

postmillennialists had theological assumptions. Both operationalized an ethic based on those assumptions. This has to be factored into the analysis of the Adventist response.

Historians seeking to show “activist” and “reform” tendencies in the church get caught in the same dichotomy as they try to prove that Adventists were similar to postmillennialist reformers. They try to draw points of comparison, using reform language to describe Adventist social concern. This skews the Adventist position to seem more socially active than it actually was; their theology did have social implications, but they were not reformers of the postmillennialist tradition. This begs the question of how postmillennialist evangelicals became the “objective standard” for the meaning of social concern. Their position was not the normative position in nineteenth-century America, just as evangelicalism is not the only motivation for social concern in the twenty-first century.

Historians are fond of drawing lines of heritage from the evangelical abolitionists to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Nonetheless, they must equally draw a line to the other heirs of the American reform movements: the modern evangelical Christians who attempt to legislate morality in issues such as abortion, Sunday blue laws, prayer in schools, protection of marriage, and government funding of faith-based institutions. Now, as in the nineteenth century, this viewpoint has its own problematic implications. Evangelicals of yesterday and today merge church and state in violation of a principle at the heart of the American Constitution. They also identify America as “the new Israel,” and thus legitimate American expansionism through the doctrine of manifest destiny, or enforced salvation.

This critique of evangelicalism is not meant as an attack on their distinctive theological and political perspectives. Rather, the intent here is to show that responsible analysis must be even handed. Abolitionism by nineteenth-century evangelicals was motivated by *their* particular view of the end of the world. One cannot remove this dimension of their belief in antislavery. Eschatology was at the source of their belief. They were trying to bring about the millennium on earth. Using Bull and Lockhart's formulation, one would have to assert that they were not motivated to liberate slaves but were rather motivated by their view of the end of the world—their conception of the millennium.<sup>281</sup> Given the hundreds of surviving evangelical abolitionist documents that show their concern for the plight of the enslaved, such a claim seems shaky.

On the other hand, one could argue in the opposite direction that evangelicals' theological obsession reveals one reason they did not enact broad plans for outreach and education of freed slaves, and most increasingly favored segregation as blacks moved northward into the cities. Perhaps this shows the root of the inadequate responses of many Adventists and evangelicals. In their zeal to identify the sinfulness of slavery, many neglected to identify the sin of racism. Thus, they had a burning desire to end slavery, both for their own theological reasons and through their own distinct means, but they had not matured to a point where their principle made them willing to live in equality with freed blacks.

In describing Adventists' apocalyptic theology as applied to the institution of slavery from 1849 to 1865, some historical narratives emphasize negative descriptors such as “amoral,” “world-escaping,” and “doctrinally obsessed.” Others emphasize

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<sup>281</sup> Bull and Lockhart, 197.

positive descriptors such as “activists,” “radicals,” and “reformers.” The real historical phenomenon took a much more complex and sometimes paradoxical form. Adventists were both theological and social, principled and pragmatic, institutional and anti-institutional. This thesis has attempted to circumvent perceived polarities in its description of Adventists’ antislavery position as “spiritual abolitionism,” a term that reflects Adventists’ active belief in the immediate, liberating impact of Christ’s agency as well as their own short-lived attempt to live on a pure spiritual plain while occupying a dangerous and dirty world.

Adventists can be described as a strange nineteenth-century hybrid, or, more accurately, a distinct religious species. They were not overt social activists, but neither were they amoral armchair theologians. Adventists kept a keen eye for the final abolition of all sinful things at the imminent coming of Christ; but while on earth they claimed the responsibility to call sin by its name. In their most radical period, Adventists were a group of peaceful dissidents who did not embrace the nation’s core ideology, did not consider themselves citizens of this world, and would not shut up about it. They composed a strange “army”—an army without guns, party uniforms, or patriotic loyalty. Their flimsy, rough-cut newsprint was their spiritual weapon. Through it, they held the sword of truth to the neck of a “two-horned beast.” In so doing, they proclaimed their loyalty to only one master and invited their friends and foes to do the same. Adventists removed from their feet the sandals of this world and undertook a tenuous walk on a narrow path with unexpected pitfalls. Seeing themselves fundamentally as “in the world” but not “of the world,” they endeavored to steer aright but sometimes overlooked the very people they were commissioned to reach.

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