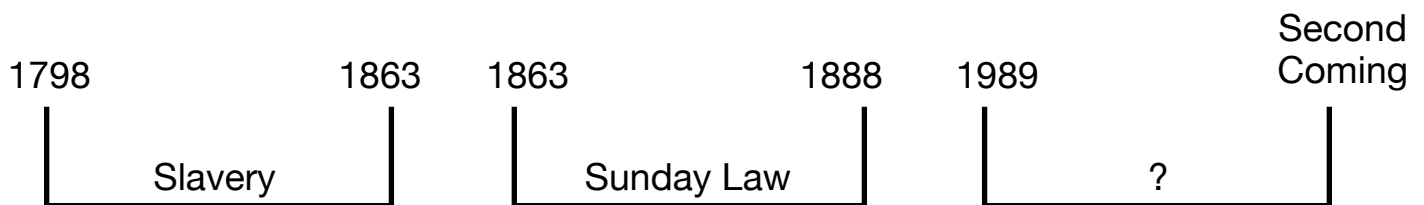


Have We Become A Political Movement?

Over the last few months the movement's detractors have been making the accusation that it has turned its back on the third angel and transformed into a political movement. Spirit of Prophecy passages are quoted and read at face value in attempts to convey the idea that those in the movement are walking contrary to God's Word when they venture to take positions on some of the most divisive political issues of the day. The specific issues in question are the subjects of race and racism, gender equality, and the myriad conspiracy theories and false narratives that are used to justify oppressive and discriminatory attitudes on these subjects. This article will seek to establish the fact that God's people are in fact required to understand these issues as the movement has been presenting them. And they are required to take their stand on the right side as far as their beliefs on these subjects are concerned. The traditional Adventist approach of being neutral or non-committal on issues that may be termed "political" is not in line with God's purpose on these subjects. And far from being a disregard of the Spirit of Prophecy, a correct, contextualized reading of Ellen White's writings upholds the movements course in this area.

1863 and 1888

1863 and 1888 present two histories within which the work of the gospel could have been finished and in which Christ could have returned. Of course Christ did not return in these histories so they are thus fundamentally different from the current dispensation in this respect. Nevertheless they serve as types which present important lessons about how events in this final generation are to be understood.



In the beginning of modern Israel (1798 - 1863) Slavery was a hot-button political issue. It has been called America's "original sin" - the legacy of which shapes law enforcement and criminal justice, race relations, settlement patterns, and wealth distribution in that country to this very day. This issue divided the country along political lines and ignited the civil war which came to its close with the defeat of the Southern confederates in 1865.

The implication of the logic employed by the movement's detractors is that God's people should not have had anything to say on this subject at the time. They should have contented themselves to preaching their prophetic message without any

reference to this political question. But was this the course the church pursued under the guidance of the prophet? It certainly was not. They not only took a decided position against slavery as far as their beliefs on the subject, but they spoke out against it. They went further than this to do another thing which is a taboo in the minds of the movements detractors - they voted for worldly politicians on the basis of the position they took on this issue.

FOR the past ten years the Review has taught that the United States of America were a subject of prophecy, and that slavery is pointed out in the prophetic word as the darkest and most damning sin upon this nation. It has taught that Heaven has wrath in store for the nation which it would drink to the very dregs, as due punishment for the sin of slavery. And the anti-slavery teachings of several of our publications based upon certain prophecies have been such that their circulation has been positively forbidden in the slave States. Those of our people who voted at all at the last Presidential election, to a man voted for Abraham Lincoln. We know of not one man among Seventh-day Adventists who has the least sympathy for secession. {August 12, 1862 JWe, ARSH 84.1}

Why did they conduct themselves thus? In a manner foreign and even sinful in the minds of most conservative minded Adventists today? The answer is that when slavery was identified by the prophet as the sin which above all others would lead to the outpouring of God's wrath it ceased to be a solely political issue. It became a prophetic issue. By saying it became prophetic it is meant that it transcended the realm of what Adventists would consider sinful partisan politics, which is below the dignity of the gospel, to become part of the gospel message itself. This is seen in Spiritual Gifts volume 1 where Ellen White identifies slavery as the principal sin of Babylon for which the judgements in Revelation 18 were to be poured out.

All heaven beholds with indignation, human beings, the workmanship of God, reduced to the lowest depths of degradation, and placed on a level with the brute creation by their fellow men. And professed followers of that dear Saviour whose compassion was ever moved as he witnessed human woe, heartily engage in this enormous and grievous sin, and deal in slaves and souls of men. Angels have recorded it all. It is written in the book. The tears of the pious bond-men and bond-women, of fathers, mothers and children, brothers and sisters, are all bottled up in heaven. Agony, human agony, is carried from place to place, and bought and sold. 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. Such injustice, such oppression, such sufferings, many professed followers of the meek and lowly Jesus can witness with heartless indifference. And many of them can inflict with hateful satisfaction, all this indescribable agony themselves, and yet dare to worship God. It is solemn mockery,

and Satan exults over it, and reproaches Jesus and his angels with such inconsistency, saying, with hellish triumph, Such are Christ's followers! 1SG 191.1

... God's anger will not cease until he has caused the land of light to drink the dregs of the cup of his fury, and until he has rewarded unto Babylon double. Reward her even as she rewarded you, double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double. 1SG 192.1

She went further and identified that holding a wrong position on this subject would lead away from the principles of the gospel as the two were incompatible.¹ Thus how one chose to understand the issue of slavery became a testing issue - a matter of life and death.

Due to the failure of God's people in that history Christ did not come.² After the civil war Christ could have come in the 1888 time period. At the very time the Lord was attempting to pour His Spirit upon His church in the messages of Righteousness by Faith, a Sunday Law was moving through Congress. Alonzo Trevier Jones would eventually stand in Congress to bear testimony against the proposed law. The Sunday Law was inherently political - it was introduced into and debated in congress by politicians. But God's people played a prominent role in speaking out against this proposed decree. Why did they do this? Because for them the Sunday Law was also prophetic. It was the testing issue of that time as identified by God's Word and the testimonies of the prophet who yet lived. If God's people are to have nothing to say in political lines as our detractors argue then Jones had no business speaking out as he did. Jones spoke in biblical terms, yes, but he spoke principally on the basis of the constitution - an areligious political document.

These two histories have passed as histories of failure for God's church. Christ did not come and His people now look to the present for the second coming. With each of the former two histories the testing issues were found within the context of those histories.

¹ ***Satan was the first great leader in rebellion, and God is punishing the North, that they have so long suffered to exist the accursed sin of slavery; for in the sight of heaven it is a sin of the darkest dye. God is not with the South, and He will punish them dreadfully in the end. Satan is at the bottom of all rebellion. You, I saw, Brother R, have permitted your political feelings to destroy your judgment and love for the truth. It is eating out true godliness from your heart. You never have looked upon slavery in the right light, and your views of this matter have thrown you on the side of the Rebellion, which Satan and his host have stirred up. Your views of slavery, and the sacred, important truths for this time, cannot harmonize. You must yield your views or the truth. Both cannot be cherished in the same heart, for they are at war with each other. 1LtMs, Lt 24, 1862, par. 3***

² *Had Adventists, after the Great Disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith, and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive his people to their reward. EW 299.4*

The spiritual tests were characterized by the broader issues that defined their time. With the first - slavery began in 1619 and came to its official end with the emancipation proclamation in 1863, and the defeat of confederate slavers in 1865. With the second - the National Reform Movement was established in 1863 and began its work of agitating for a religious amendment to the U.S. constitution; which amendment involved the enforcement of Sunday by state legislation.

February, 1863, there was begun an organized movement by a religious combination, composed of the "evangelical" churches of the country, to get the government of the United States committed by direct legislation to a recognition of "the Christian religion," and a national adoption and enforcement of Sunday as "the Christian Sabbath," or Lord's day. They proposed first to accomplish their purpose by an amendment to the national Constitution, declaring this to be a "Christian nation," and "so placing all Christian laws, institutions, and usages upon an undeniable legal basis in the fundamental law of the land." {1893 ATJ, CAR 3.1}

This movement was active in the time Ellen White penned the book Great Controversy which was first published in 1884. It was with reference to the activities of this movement that she spoke of movements then "in progress" for the enforcement of Sunday.

In the movements now in progress in the United States to secure for the institutions and usages of the church the support of the state, Protestants are following in the steps of papists. Nay, more, they are opening the door for the papacy to regain in Protestant America the supremacy which she has lost in the Old World. And that which gives greater significance to this movement is the fact that the principal object contemplated is the enforcement of Sunday observance—a custom which originated with Rome, and which she claims as the sign of her authority. It is the spirit of the Papacy—the spirit of conformity to worldly customs, the veneration of human traditions above the commandments of God—that is permeating the Protestant church and leading them on to do the same work of Sunday exaltation which the papacy has done before them GC 573.1

The National Reform Movement reached its height in 1888 and few years following but it ultimately failed.

The Final Generation

The history of the end of modern Israel (the reformatory movement of the 144,000) is further removed from 1888 than 1888 was from 1863. Slavery is a distant memory notwithstanding the visibility of its legacy in American society today. The Sunday movement has likewise descended into insignificance since the failure and decline of the National Reform Movement. In the over 100 years that have ensued the world and the church have changed as have the issues that define the present. These points give

force to the understanding that the testing issues today must be found within the context of this history. As with slavery, the testing issues today can be traced as a progressive development that begins prior to the Time of the End for the final generation (1989). And as with both the 1863 and 1888 histories - the development of the testing issues is traced within the United States primarily.

The question then is what can be seen developing in the years preceding 1989? A thorough response to this question is beyond the scope of this article as the subject is so vast as to constitute a study on its own. But the answer will be given in summary. What is seen in the years preceding 1989 is the rise of the Christian Right. The Christian right has its ideological roots in the dominionist movements that began to take shape in 1970s.³ Dominionism, or Dominionist theology, refers to a group of Christian political ideologies which posit that Christianity (or at least their version of it), and its laws, should be the governing influence within the political arena and within the organs of the state. They do not believe in the separation of church and state as framed within the United States constitution; and they hold to the false belief that America was founded as a Christian nation. Following from this, Dominionists believe it to be their duty to exert every effort to bring every spheres of life - be it education, the family, the economy, the political and legal spheres etc., into subjection to their conception of Christian morality. Dominionists do not recognize the equality of all religions in the public sphere or even other versions of Christianity. The foregoing is disturbing. However their visions of Christian totalitarianism are rendered the more troubling by the fact that they also espouse race-based segregation which they justify through literal readings of old testament texts. They hold beliefs about gender roles which are patriarchal and discriminatory towards women. These are again upheld through literalistic readings of certain scriptures. These points open the way for discrimination against ideological opponents (liberals), discrimination against racial minorities, against women, and against other religions and forms of Christianity.

Dominionist theology influenced Jerry Falwell and the founders of the Moral Majority, which organization was formed in 1979. The Moral Majority was a landmark effort to mobilize the Cristian right towards the accomplishment of the goals of Dominionism. Through the activism of the Moral Majority the Christian Right became a potent political force which effectively ushered in Ronald Reagan in 1981, and George H.W. Bush in 1989. While the Moral Majority formally dissolved in 1989, it did so having met its goal of making Christian conservatives a permanent and powerful feature of American

³ **Dominion theology** (also known as **dominionism**) is a group of **Christian political ideologies that seek to institute a nation governed by Christians based on their understandings of biblical law...** The label is applied primarily toward groups of **Christians in the United States.**

Prominent adherents of these ideologies are otherwise theologically diverse, including **Calvinist Christian reconstructionism, Roman Catholic Integralism, Charismatic/Pentecostal Kingdom Now theology, New Apostolic Reformation,** and others. **Most of the contemporary movements labeled dominion theology arose in the 1970s from religious movements asserting aspects of Christian nationalism.** - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominion_theology

politics. The Christian Right were largely responsible for elevating George W. Bush to the presidency in 2001.⁴ They now control the governing Republican Party and forms the staunchest and most vocal cohort of Donald Trump's electoral base.

So what is seen in the history preceding the Time of the End? The rise of a movement advocating for the removal of the wall of separation between church and state. This movement is right-wing and nationalistic. It does not recognize the full equality of religious, racial, or ethnic groups outside of their own. It is therefore racist. This movement presents a patriarchal world-view as the ideal for society and it is seeking to impose this ideal upon the masses through legislation. This movement is therefore sexist. In addition to their racism and sexism, a constant thread seen in the working and ideology of this movement is the use of conspiracy theories to uphold their world-view and justify attitudes that would otherwise be seen as hateful and discriminatory.⁵

The issues that characterize this movement today bear a position similar to slavery when it was championed by the confederacy before and during the civil war. They are also similar to the Sunday Law as championed by the National Reform Movement in the 1860s - 1880's. Based upon the repetition of sacred history, and the principle of historic context as a factor in defining the tests in a given history, it can be seen that race and gender are testing issues today. These arguments are most clearly presented in the prophetic lines that have been shared since last year under the sounding of the Midnight Cry. They are issues that God's people must recognize and respond to in order to come into alignment with His will.

In Conclusion

The argument that the movement is engaging in political partisanry contrary God's Word is false. Histories that the movement has used for years as types of the end of the world demonstrate that present-truth tests are often inherently political. Once these testing issues are identified in Bible prophecy, they transcend mere politics to become

⁴ **Fueled by the political writings of Rushdoony and the social activism of Schaeffer, and energized by the Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*, Jerry Falwell and Tim LaHaye launched the Moral Majority in 1979.** That same year, Beverly LaHaye started Concerned Women for America as a biblical counterpoint to the National Organization for Women. Since then the Christian Right has seldom looked back, even as it has taken on wildly apocalyptic overtones. [Roe v. Wade was only a pretext and a tool that the founders of the Moral Majority used to galvanize their base].

By the early 1980s the Christian Right had formed a voting bloc that burgeoned into a powerful movement. It effectively ushered Ronald Reagan [1981], George H. W. Bush [1989], and George W. Bush [2001] into the presidency [and Trump in 2016]. <http://libertymagazine.org/article/the-rise-of-dominionism-and-the-christian-right>

⁵ For a list of conspiracy theories promoted by Trump see the following page: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Conspiracy_theories_promoted_by_Donald_Trump>

Bible truth. And by virtue of their status as Bible truth, the position that God's people take on them becomes a matter of salvation.