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The Connection Between Slavery and Prophecy as It Relates to the American Nation in the Writings of the Adventist Pioneers During the Antebellum Period

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The period between 1850 and 1865 was a period of major social upheavals in American society; the major issue was the slavery. This period also witnessed the birth and organization of the Sabbatarian Adventism, a pre-millennial Christian movement distinguished by an emphasis on the Seventh-day Sabbath and a special understanding of Bible prophecies. Most Adventist pioneers vehemently opposed slavery, although not always on the same ground as their Christian counterparts. Aided by their peculiar understanding of Bible prophecy, the early Adventists identified America with apocalyptic end-time power, slavery being the key attribute of the “beast that looks like a lamb but speaks like a dragon” from Revelation 13:11. This article investigates the development of Adventist connection between slavery, America and Bible prophecy.

Keywords: America, Adventism, abolitionism, prophecy, reform, slavery

Introduction

The decades preceding the Civil War witnessed major social upheavals in American society; the key issue was the enslavement of Blacks in America. The controversy between the North and South centering on the problem of slavery, ultimately led to the outbreak of the Civil War. This tumultuous period also saw the rise of Sabbatarian Adventism, a radical Christian movement that would eventually grow into a world’s most widespread Protestant denomination¹.

The early Sabbatarian Adventist leaders² firmly opposed slavery, depicting it as a great evil of the United States. However, the Adventists’ view of slavery was slightly differing from the other contemporary

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¹ Formally organized in 1863, the Seventh-day Adventist Church remains the fastest growing Christian denomination, counting 17 million baptized believers throughout the world in 2010 (GC SDA 148th Annual Statistical Report. Available from <http://www.adventistarchives.org/docs/ASR/ASR2010.pdf#view=fit>>).

² While these individuals would ultimately form the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in the period between their first conferences in 1846 and formal organization in 1863, they were known simply as Sabbatarian Adventists, believing in Seventh-day Sabbath and Christ’ work of investigative judgment in the heavenly Sanctuary prior to the Second Coming (Burt, 2003).

abolitionists. From their earliest days, Adventists saw a close connection between slavery and America's role in Bible prophecy. The identification of America with the Lamb-like beast in Revelation 13 became one of the central landmarks of Adventist eschatology. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the unique Sabbatarian Adventist position regarding slavery and its connection to America in Bible prophecy.

In the first section of the paper, we will describe the context of slavery in America and mainstream Christian abolitionist reaction to this problem. The second part of the paper deals with the anti-slavery attitude of the ideological parent of Sabbatarian Adventism, the Great Second Advent Movement (1840-1844). Finally, the last section of the paper provides us with the description and analysis of abolitionist ideas within the Sabbath-keeping Adventist circles between 1850 and 1865.

Anti-slavery Movements in America Prior to the Civil War

Introduction

The mid-19th century found the American nation embroiled in a fierce conflict over the issue of slavery. Through constant agitations, meetings, writings, petitions, drives and lectures, the Abolitionist Movement waged a relentless war against this social problem. Despite these relentless civil efforts, slavery was overthrown only after a bloody Civil War that resulted in the death of over 600,000 Americans.

The steep price paid to crush slavery speaks of how deep rooted and malignant this cancer that had fastened itself onto American society. Slavery was the cornerstone of Southern society and the platform of its entire social structure. Slave owners dominated the branches of power—legislative, executive, and judicial—and they established and maintained the social order. Even poor Whites who owned no slaves were steeped into the ideology of White supremacy that under girded the entire system of slavery.

The abolitionists who called for the immediate, uncompensated cessation of slavery were true revolutionaries. To campaign for the overthrow of slavery, was to call for the overthrow of an entire economical, political and social order. The abolitionists' call for the end of slavery would signify the immediate transfer of millions of dollars in capital and investment from the ruling elite. Such a revolutionary idea met with fierce resistance from those in power.

This resistance was felt not only in the Southern States but also among those in the North who had a profitable interest in the continuation of slavery.

Merchants, manufacturers, and capitalists were against the abolitionist movement, for trade with the South was important. . . . In 1833, when the American Anti-slavery Society was founded by law-abiding people for the good morals, the nature of their meeting was regarded by Southerners and by the vast majority in the North as, "an assembly of anarchists". (Aptheker, 1989, p. 12)

The abolitionist movement, although possessing a unique revolutionary element, represented merely one aspect of a larger series of religious reforms that were sweeping the nation. These reform movements grew out of a great revival sweeping America at this time, called the Second Great Awakening.

Impact of the Second Great Awakening

The Second Great Awakening was probably the most influential revival of Christianity in American history (McLoughlin, 1978; Conkin & Ridge, 1990). It started in the last decade of the 18th century and ended in the 1830s. Some scholars have identified three major phases of the Second Great Awakening. These were separated in space, time, and character (Williams, 2002, p. 184).

The first phase of this awakening was in New England with its epicenter in the congregational churches and Yale University in Connecticut. These reformers emphasized the moral character of God's government and a move away from original sin to an emphasis on the active role and responsibility of the individual. The second phase of the Second Great Awakening occurred among Scotch-Irish pioneers of the Southwest, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Southern Ohio. Methodist and Baptist preachers spearheaded the second phase of the revival. These revivals were passionate, exciting, and highly emotional. The itinerant preacher and the camp meeting format grew out of this revival, becoming a part of frontier life (Williams, 2002, pp. 185-186; Johnson, 1955).

The third phase of this awakening fell somewhere between the first two phases. The intensity of this revival occurred in upstate New York, which became known as the "Burned-Over-District"³. The leader most identified with the upstate New York revival was Charles Finney, lawyer-turned preacher, whose preaching epitomized the shift in emphasis from the First Great Awakening where revival was the work of God to the new view that religion was the response of humans towards the drawing of God's spirit. Finney argued that a revival of religion was not a miracle, but the result of the right use of human will. The Calvinism of Jonathan Edwards in the First Great Awakening now gave way to the human choice to allow God to work within individual (Williams, 2002, p.188; Finney, 1835, p. 12).

Finney not only exalted human will in conversion and assurance of salvation but also the ability to triumph over sin in the life of a Christian. During the 1830s, he began to link his moral reform campaign against alcohol and slavery. Finney argued that when individuals become truly converted they are not engaged in either of these vices (Mullin, 1999).

How did the Second Great Awakening affect slavery? While the First Great Awakening focused on the personal conversion, the Second Great Awakening had broader aims. The goal was to bring about a "Christian America" and slavery was a major obstacle on the road of perfecting American society (McKivigan, 1984, p. 20). In order to achieve this utopian state the revival had to be hitched to a new idea: Reform. "Reform" became the watchword of early and mid-18th century America. Reform movements sprang up everywhere. There were those who advocated for the rights of women, the promotion of peace, humane treatment of the imprisoned, and the abolition of slavery. Many revivalists took on the mantle of reform, with the result that revival and reform became twin sisters (Williams, 2002, p. 191).

No other reform crusade disrupted the churches more and shook the nation to its foundation than the anti-slavery movement. Various societies were formed for the abolition of slavery. These ranged from gradual abolitionism to immediate abolitionism. Some organizations such as the Colonization Societies campaigned for the removal of Blacks from America to Africa. However wide their differences were, they succeeded in making slavery a national issue. Through the instrumentality of revivalism and reform, the people of the North began to be swayed by a moral revulsion against slavery. Although many Northerners agreed with the South that Blacks were inferior and in need of paternal protection, they disagreed that the protection was being provided through the system of slavery (Williams, 2002, p. 196).

Many Northern Christian abolitionists agreed that slavery was sinful but they did not all agree whether slavery should be abolished immediately or gradually. The convention of Christian abolitionists in New York

³ The area covered by the Northeastern states was termed "burned-over district" because of the frequency of reforms and religious reforms that insurrected in this region in the first part of the 19th century (Cross, 1965).

in 1845 resolved the following:

Those who admit the sinfulness of slavery... and yet vote for oppression, or for those who are connected with proslavery parties, are guilty of the most inconsistency; and are undeserving of the name Christian patriots, and unworthy to be recognized as true friends of the downtrodden Christianity. (McKivigan, 1984, p. 147; Barnes, 1933)

These statements were intended to encourage Christian abolitionists to vote for antislavery political parties as way of advancing the abolitionist cause.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's epic novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published in 1852, which became one of the most widely read books of the period, indicted the system of slavery and America's role in it. The novel ended in a biblical and apocalyptic tone predicting cryptically the coming War.

This is an age of the world when nations are trembling and convulsed. A mighty influence is abroad, surging and heaving the world, as with an earthquake. And is America safe? Every nation that carries in its bosom great and un-redressed injustice has in it the elements of this last convulsion.... Christians! Every time that you pray that the kingdom of Christ may come, can you forget that prophecy associates in dread fellowship, the *day of vengeance* with the year of his redeemed? A day of grace is yet held out to us. Both North and South have been guilty before God; and the *Christian Church* has a heavy account to answer. Not by combining together, to protect injustice and cruelty, and making a common capital of sin, is this Union to be saved, — but by repentance, justice and mercy; for, not surer is the eternal law by which the millstone sinks in the ocean, than that stronger law by which injustice and cruelty shall bring on nations the wrath of Almighty God!(Stowe, 1852, Vol. 2, pp. 321-322)

The slavery issue would split denominations and churches, especially the three great national evangelical denominations—Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian. This division of denominations would foreshadow the split within the nation (Corrigan & Hudson, 1992, pp. 216-218; Dumond, 1961). The reform movements that emerged from the Great Awakening had a profound impact on the issue of slavery. Adventists were deeply influenced by these developments, but the ethics and reasons that motivated their opposition to slavery were slightly different from those that motivated the other evangelical abolitionists. Most Sabbatarian Adventist leaders came out of the Second Advent Movement (also known as Millerism), and in order to understand the background to their views on slavery we must consider some of the prevailing views among certain key Millerite leaders.

Abolitionist-Adventist Connection

Introduction

One of the high points of American religious awakenings took place in the middle of the 19th century under the name of “Great Second Advent Movement”, more commonly known as Millerism⁴. This label came from its theological leader; lay Baptist preacher, William Miller (1782-1849) from Low Hampton, New York (Himes, 1853, 2005; Nichol, 1944; Numbers & Butler, 1993; Knight, 2010).

Millerite Leaders and Slavery

Great Second Advent Movement, or “Millerism” although at odds with Finney's *post-Millennialism*,

⁴ It has been estimated by recent studies that as many as 200,000 accepted the Millerite message between 1842 and 1844, with one million or more brought under the influence of the movement (Knight, 1993, p. 213). Miller more humbly placed the number of true believers at “some fifty thousand”(Miller, 1845, p. 22); Miller recalled having 700 preachers and 125 camps meetings organized in the period of 1841 to 1844.

continued to carry a distinct anti-slavery attitude⁵. Ronald Graybill asserted that many of the early Millerite leaders showed varying degrees of abolitionist tendencies. Although there is no specific record of William Miller's active participation in the anti-slavery societies, he was known to have revealed his attitudes toward abolition movements in a practical way. On one occasion, a fugitive slave was sent to Miller's farm with the hope that he would feed him and direct him to Canada. It seemed clear that Miller actively helped this runaway slave (Graybill, 1993).

Joshua Himes, Miller's closest associate, was well known to William Lloyd Garrison, the most recognized abolitionist leader of that time, who described Himes as an "avowed abolitionist and faithful supporter of the anti-slavery movement"... He was a supporter of many of the other reforms sweeping New England and that time and was a counselor and contributor of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society until the end of 1842⁶. The abolitionist leader, Frederick Douglas, noted that while attending the Convention of the Evangelical Alliance in London in 1846, Himes spoke vigorously against seating slaveholders. Douglas identified Himes as the American Adventist clergy who was virtually the only American delegate that took the anti-slavery position (Blassingame, 1979, Vol.1. pp. 421-422).

Another important Millerite leader, who was known in the abolitionist circles was Charles Fitch. In his tract, "Slaveholding Weighed in the Balance of Truth and Its Comparative Guilt Illustrated" (Graybill, 1993). Fitch argued that slavery was as bad as or worse than liquor traffic, theft, robbery, murder, and treason. He also warned of God's judgment on the oppressors. Although Fitch became one of Garrison's opponents due to his condemnation of Garrison's criticism of clergymen and the Sabbath, nevertheless Garrison still recognized Fitch as a well-known abolitionist (From, 1946-1954, Vol. 4, pp. 533-534).

Chief among the less prominent Millerite leaders who embraced the abolitionist reform movement was George Storrs. Along with Orange Scott and Leroy Suderland, Storrs led out in the anti-slavery cause in the Methodist church. Conservative bishops condemned Storrs at the 1836 General Conference session in Cincinnati for speaking at a local anti-slavery society. He eventually left the Methodist ministry and converted to the Millerite movement, becoming a powerful Millerite evangelist after 1842 and preaching extensively throughout Ohio and Indiana (Graybill, 1993, p. 137).

As we can see, the Millerite movement although differing from Finney in their eschatological expectation, retained much of the "reformist" mindset of the Second Great Awakening. This abolitionist character will continue to be displayed by various splinter groups of Millerites, especially by the Sabbatarian Adventists.

Sabbatarian Adventists And Slavery

Introduction

After the dissolution of Second Advent movement in October 1844, a fraction of Millerites, adopted the

⁵ Through systematic study of the Holy Scriptures, Miller concluded that Christ's coming must occur before the Millennium. Based on the common historicist reading of Daniel 8:13, Miller and his followers suggested that "cleansing of the sanctuary" meant the "destruction of the earth by fire" and announced that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ was supposed to occur around 1843 or 2300 years after the decree of Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem in 457 BC. See connection between Daniel 9: 25 and Daniel 8:13, 14 in Miller (1842) and Damsteegt (1977, pp. 30-36).

⁶ As the expected date of Jesus drew near, Himes became more absorbed in preaching the Gospel and his abolitionist activities diminished. According to Nichols, "Himes allowed his active interest in abolitionism to subside as he became more swallowed up in the all-absorbing task of promoting a movement which expected, shortly, to meet the Lord face to face" (Nichols, 1944, p. 176). However, after the disappointment, Himes swiftly resumed his anti-slavery activities.

view that the year 1844 signified the beginning of the investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary⁷. The same group soon accepted the Seventh-day Sabbath as one of their theological cornerstones.

The members of this rapidly growing group, already numbering around 4,000 by mid 1860s, were initially known as Sabbatarian or Sabbath-keeping Adventists⁸. Since the earliest days of the movement, the Sabbatarian Adventists were heavily involved in Bible prophecies, rekindling the hope in Jesus' Second Coming among the disappointed Millerites.

Sabbatarian Adventists' anti-slavery sentiments extended beyond the views of their Millerite forbearers and were different in motivation and ethics from the other Protestant abolitionists' views, which focused on slavery as a societal sin that needed to be abandoned so that the perfectibility of human society could be realized. The connection between United States of America and the prophecies in the book of Revelation became a unique characteristic of Sabbatarian Adventist eschatology following the 1844 disappointment⁹.

America in Prophecy

From the inception of their journals *Present Truth* (1849) and *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (1850), until the end of the Civil War, Sabbatarian Adventists wrote several articles tying America to apocalyptic end-time events¹⁰. The former Methodist and Millerite minister, Hiram Edson, was the first Sabbatarian Adventist to offer a full connection between America and the "beast that looks like a Lamb but speaks like a dragon" from Revelation 13.

Edson pointed out that the Lamb-like Beast from Revelation 13:11-18 represents American Protestantism. Edson argued that soon America would join ranks with the Papacy to form a new world superpower. The Catholic Church received a "mortal wound" (Revelation 13:1-10) and lost its authority over the secular nations, through the events of the French Revolution. However, America will, according to Edson, in near future, "heal the wounded head" of the Papal beast (Revelation 13:12) and re-unite the Church and State, persecuting the religious dissenters once more (Edson, 1850, p. 9). The major Adventist leaders of the time including James White, Joseph Bates and Otis Nichols all agreed with Edson's interpretation¹¹.

⁷ They concluded that the words from Daniel 8: 14: "2,300 night and days and the sanctuary will be cleansed" do not refer to the purging of the earth by fire but to the cleansing of the most holy place in heaven where Jesus began another phase of his ministry before his imminent coming. The Biblical confirmation for this position was found in comparison between the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8 and the scene of heavenly judgment in Daniel 7: 9-12 as well as the antitypical role of the Priesthood in the Old Testament. The daily sacrifice performed by Jewish priests in the holy place of the Hebrew sanctuary (Lev 4) symbolized the daily mediation of Jesus while the once-per-year entering of the High Priest into the most holy compartment of the sanctuary during the day of Atonement (Lev 16) symbolized the final cleansing and the judgment over the people of God just prior to Jesus' second coming. See Crosier (February, 1846); for an excellent guide of the development of Adventist doctrine of Sanctuary see Damsteegt, 1981).

⁸ The name refers to the two most important SDA doctrines; the restitution of the Seventh-day Sabbath and the Cleansing of the Sanctuary before the imminent Second Advent of Jesus.

⁹ Millerite Adventists did not in general include America in any scheme of Biblical prophecy. An article published by a Millerite periodical *Voice of Truth* (succeeded by *Day-Star*) on January 1, 1845, written by E. R. Pinney and O. R. Fassett, entitled "The Vision of the Eagle" identified America with the eagle in the Apocryphal book of two Esdras. This article was re-published by the *Western Midnight Cry* on January 14, 1845: 38-40.

¹⁰ The periodical originally entitled *The Advent Review & Sabbath Herald (ARSH)*, presently known as *Adventist Review*, has served as the major voice of the Seventh-day Adventist Church over the years and continues to function in that capacity until today. The 19th century publications of this periodical are accessible at the *Adventist Archives*. Available from <http://www.adventistarchives.org/DocArchives.asp>

¹¹ Joseph Bates, August 5, 1851, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 3-4; Nichols, September 2, 1851, Vol. 2, No. 3, p. 22. See also letter from Hiram S. Case to J. White (Case, November 1850, No. 11, p. 85). See also the 1850 Adventist Prophetic Chart which points to the two horns of the Lamb-beast as "Republicanism" and "Protestantism". The first time "Republicanism and Protestantism" were linked to the horns of the Lamb-beast in Revelation 13 was actually in the early 1850 issue of the journal *Present Truth* (Holt, March 1850, No. 8, p. 64). Holt, an early Adventist Sabbath-keeper however, did not elaborate further on the subject.

Edson was not the first expositor ever to identify the Lamb-like beast with America or Protestantism. Already in the 18th century, Baptist historian Isaac Backus' called this power a "Protestant Beast" pointing primarily to Britain, but in part to America as well¹². There was also American representative and Judge John Bacon who identified Protestant clergy as the Lamb-beast along with the papal beast (Bacon, 1805, pp. 26-27). Elias Smith's definition of this power was applied not only to the pope but also to the American established churches. Anglican clergymen, Samuel M. M'Corkle as well as Richard Sanderson, both applied this symbol to Protestantism (Froom, 1946-1954, Vol. 4, p. 1099).

Although not the originators of the idea that United States are portrayed in the prophecy of Lamb-like beast in Revelation 13, the Sabbath-keeping Adventists became the most prominent advocates of this interpretation in the last decade before the Civil War. Also what separated Sabbatarian Adventists from others was their application of slavery to the "dragon" characteristics of the Lamb-like beast.

America and Slavery in Bible Prophecy

The Sabbatarian Adventist saw two main Biblical prophecies as pointing towards the existence of slavery in the United States. The first was found in Revelation 13:11 where the Lamb-like beast is told to "speak as unto a dragon". The second one is in Revelation 18:13 where the end-time Babylon power is told to have merchandized with "slaves and souls of men" (KJV). Both of these passages were expounded and applied to America, condemning the slavery on Biblical and theological ground. This section will cover the views on American slavery of six major Adventist leaders in the period between 1850 and 1865. These leaders include the founders Joseph Bates, James White and Ellen White, and three most prominent theological minds of the movement; Uriah Smith, John N. Andrews and John Loughborough.

Slavery and the Lamb-Beast (Revelation 13)

John Nevins Andrews (1829-1883)

The first Adventist to have connected American slavery with the Lamb-like beast "speaking like a dragon" in Revelation 13 was the young Adventist scholar John Nevins Andrews. For Andrews, who would go on to become the church's first official missionary and its third General Conference president, slavery was a wicked and evil thing and it was one of the attributes of the dragon-like speaking of the two-horned beast. In the article of the *Advent Review* entitled "Thoughts on Revelation XIII and XIV", Andrews suggested:

We regard this two-horned beast, then, as the symbol of civil and religious power, differing in many respects from those, which have preceded it. It is in appearance the mildest form of power which ever existed, but it is after having deceived the world with its wonders, to exhibit all the tyranny of the first beast. Are the pretensions of this power well founded? Let us examine. If all men are born free and equal, how o 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? If the right of private judgment be allowed, why then are men expelled from these religious bodies for no greater crime than that of attempting to obey God in something where in the word of God may not be in accordance with their creed? (Andrews, May 19, 1851, Vol. 1, No. 11, p. 84)

In another article, Andrews described further reasons why America fits the description of the Lamb-like

¹² Celebrated Baptist evangelist and leading preacher of the American Revolution period, Isaac Backus, affirmed that the deadly wound of the Papal beast is being in process of healing by the very Protestant nations of England, Germany and American Colonies who executed the same religious intolerance towards the dissenters as Papists had done before them. Backus was certainly among the first protestant expositors that identified the Protestantism with the Lamb-beast healing the Papal wound in Revelation. 13 (Backus, 1793, No. 53, p. 39).

beast speaking like a dragon from Revelation 13.

And he had two horns like a *lamb* and he spoke as a *dragon*, Revelation 13:11. This animal has a dragon heart. His disposition, his motives, his intentions and desires are all like a dragon, his outward appearances, his horns... are lamb-like. In appearance he is like a harmless lamb but when he raises his voice in acts of authority his dragon-like character is revealed. This is a two-faced hypocritical beast that first appears with mildness and equity but has the fierce prompting of a dragon heart. The institution of slavery most clearly reveals the dragon spirit of this hypocritical nation (Andrews, March 19, 1857, Vol. 9, No. 20, p. 156).

Andrews pointed to the American Constitution's lofty claims of equality asserting that:

The same government that utters this sentiment in the face of this declaration will hold in abject servitude over 3, 200, 000 humans, rob them of their rights with which they acknowledge that all men are endowed by their creator... In the institution of slavery is more especially manifested thus far, the dragon spirit that dwells in the heart of this hypocritical nation. (Andrews, March 19, 1857, Vol. 9, No. 20, p. 156)

John Loughborough

Another early Adventist leader who expressed a strong concern with slavery was John Loughborough (1832-1924). Similarly to Andrews, Loughborough, made a strong and explicit connection of slavery to America's fulfillment in prophecy or Revelation 13. In his article entitled "The Two Horned Beast of Revelation XIII, Symbol of the United States", Loughborough elaborated upon the two horns of the Lamb-beast representing Protestant ecclesiastical and Republican civil power. The character of the lamb-like beast is described in these terms:

Its Character. This is all revealed to us in one sentence, short indeed, but abundant in meaning: [Rev. xiii, 11:] "And he had two horns like a *lamb*, and he spoke as a *dragon*". Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; therefore the animal has a dragon's heart. His disposition, his motives, intentions, desires, are all like a dragon; his outward appearance, his horns, which must of course be prominent objects to the beholder, his open profession, are all lamb-like. His appearance is good enough, and we might be led to look upon him as a whole, as quite an amiable creature, were it not that when he raises his voice in acts of authority, he speaks as a dragon: like the old fable of the ass in the lion's skin; if he only had not brayed, his fellow-beasts would have taken him for a lion. (Loughborough, April 8, 1858, Vol. 11, No. 21, pp. 167-168)

Loughborough argued that the Declaration of Independence is a mere "Lamb-like" make-up. If the people lived out the Declaration of Independence, then all would love their neighbors as themselves and all persons would be on an equal footing. Instead, Loughborough lamented: "all men are created free and equal except 3, 500,000" (Loughborough, March 21, 1854, Vol. 5, No. 9, p. 66). In the same article, Loughborough sharply attacked the hated Fugitive Slave Law that demanded the return of runaway slaves to bondage and punished those who aided the slave in their flight to freedom¹³. In another article, published in 1857, Loughborough lambasted those clergymen who tried to justify slavery from the Old Testament, arguing that the American form of slavery cannot be compared with patriarchal slavery. He pointed out that certain principles, which governed such form of slavery, (e.g., jubilee, slaves were freed every seven years) were not followed by American slaveholders. He challenged the masters to carry out this practice and to observe its outcome. (Loughborough, July 2, 1857, Vol. 10, No. 9, pp. 65-67).

¹³ Loughborough (March 21, 1854, Vol. 5, No. 9, p. 67) cited two examples: A Virginia woman was convicted for the crime of teaching a Negro child to read, and a slave burning in Mississippi was witnessed by 4,000 other slaves from nearby plantations because a slave raised his hand against a White man. Loughborough described numerous speeches by magistrates and ministers of religion warning slaves of the same fate if they should prove rebellious to their masters. Loughborough mockingly declared: "Here is a specimen of the scenes that are transpiring in the boasted land of liberty—'all men created free and equal'".

Loughborough also complained that the demands of slavery were imperious and unquenchable shown by its desire to seek more slave states. More territory was purchased and surrendered to its service. But again, it sought for more slave states to equalize its power in the Senate; “Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana and Mississippi are successively opened to its foul embrace”. The slaves, regarded only as chattels, had some influence in the ballot box by the compromise that rendered five slaves equal to three white men in political influence; “in other words, a slave on election day becomes *three-fifths* of a man! On all other days he is a *thing!* ... But the grasping ambition of slavery is unquenchable. Texas is wanted to consummate its purposes. The imbecile North bows assent, as ever, to the dictates of the usurper; and Texas is gained to slavery, to say nothing of Utah and New Mexico” (Loughborough, July 2, 1857, Vol. 10, No. 9, pp. 65-67). Thus, According to Loughborough, slavery was not the only sign, but was among a constellation of signs that pointed to America as this two-faced beast.

Uriah Smith

Uriah Smith (1832-1903), the longest serving editor of the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, used the strongest language when writing on the evil of slavery. He described it as a black and revolting iniquity, which any nation pretending to be civilized would repudiate. He condemned those who used the Bible to defend slavery and chided those who by their silence condoned this evil. Smith asserted that the South was not the only guilty party, but that the North was just as culpable:

The North has joined hands with the South in oppressing the colored man throughout the whole country. Exulting in their own freedom the whole inhabitants of this country have trampled upon the rights of the poor and needy, and practically given the lie to the principle of equality engraven upon the cornerstone of our political edifice. The world has been witness of this, and the enemies of a Republican government have taunted us with our hypocrisy or indifference “to the opinion of mankind.” Profession to be a Christian nation, the people - we allude to the masses - have set at naught the precepts of Christianity, in their treatment of their colored brethren, forgotten the exhortations of God, and unheeded his warnings, until the patience of the Father of all appears to have been exhausted, and he has come out against us in judgment. (Smith, August 20, 1861, Vol. 18, No. 12, p. 941)

Smith exposed the blatant hypocrisy of the American nation, which used its own freedom to enslave others, and daily trampled upon the fundamental principle of equality which was the foundation of its political structure. His words also struck a prophetic note, for like the other Adventist pioneers; he predicted coming judgment upon the American nation. God would not be silent forever. But even as Smith predicted judgment upon the American nation, he seemed to offer the nation a way out. Uriah Smith’s blistering words against slavery and its connection to America in prophecy are best revealed by excerpts from his poem that first appeared in the *Review* in June 1853.

With two horns like a lamb a beast arose
 So with two leading forms a power has risen,
 two fundamental principles, than which
 In all the earth none can be found more mild,
 More lamb-like in their outward form and name.
 A land of freedom, pillared on the broad
 And open basis of equality;

A land reposing 'neath the gentle sway
 of civil and religious liberty.
 Lamb-like in form, is there no dragon-voice
 Heard in our land? No notes that harshly grate
 Upon the ear of mercy, love and truth?
 And put humanity to open shame?
 Let the united cry of millions tell
 Millions that groan beneath oppression's rod,
 Beneath the sin-forged chains of slavery,
 Robbed of their rights, to brutes degraded down,
 And soul and body bound to other's will
 Let their united cries, and tears, and groans,
 That daily rise, and call aloud on Heaven
 For vengeance, answer; let the slave reply.
 O land of boasted freedom! Thou hast given
 The lie to all thy loud professions, first,
 of justice, liberty and equal rights;
 And thou hast set a foul and heinous blot
 upon the sacred page of liberty;
 And whilst thou trafficest in souls of men,
 Thou hurl'st defiance, proud, in face of Heave
 Soon to be answered with avenging doom.
 (Smith, June 23, 1853, p. 8)

Uriah Smith was also a major Adventist proponent in linking the practice of slavery in America to its dragon-like quality. He expressed pessimism about the future and predicted that the dragon-like voice of America would be developed further and would speak louder as the end of time drew near. Here is a gloomy paragraph:

...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, [Revelation, xiii, 11] a symbol of our country, is that he shall speak as a dragon! Not that slavery alone constitutes the dragon voice; but we must take with it its prime mover, that infernal spirit that is even now, on the plains of Kansas, burning the homes of freemen to the ground, and driving out their inmates robbed and insulted, and which but recently prompted a brutal assault upon a senator in the very halls of congress. Prophecy gives us no ground to hope for reform here: the beast speaks like a dragon...They cannot reform his mouth: he will speak like a dragon still. The prophecy does not say that at first he spoke like a dragon, but at length reformed his speech, and breathed forth a just and Christ-like spirit. His future history presents no redeeming feature. He will 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. (Smith, June 26, 1856, Vol. 8, No. 9, p. 68)

In his poem and subsequent articles, Smith predicted that even after the abolition of slavery, the spirit of slavery would live on through political necessity. Little did he know how accurate his prediction was, for although legal slavery died on the battlefield of the Civil War, its spirit lived on in the oppressive share cropping system that Blacks were subjected to for decades. He also argued that if the people of the South, along with their allies in the North, had the power, they would reinstate slavery. He described it as a disease gone underground but not cured and predicted that it might be the source of serious trouble later on (Smith, June 26, 1856, Vol. 8, No. 9, p. 68).

America and Babylon

Although the majority of early Adventists considered America to be represented by the Lamb-like beast in Revelation 13, not all expositors agreed that the words “speak like a dragon” refer necessarily to the practice of slavery in the States. However, those Adventists generally identified slavery with another Bible prophecy, the one found in Revelation 18, concerning the end-time Babylon. Two major Adventist leaders who preferred this interpretation were elder James White and his wife Ellen White.

James White

James White, one of the three major founding fathers of the Seventh-day Adventist church, also maintained very negative feelings towards slavery. In his 1862 editorial, “The Nation,” White revealed America’s place in prophecy and identified slavery as the “darkest and most damning sin upon the nation”. Although White did not fail to identify America with the Lamb-like beast from Revelation 13, he never connected slavery with “speaking like the dragon” quality of the beast. Instead, White saw slavery in other apocalyptic passages such as Revelation 18¹⁴.

As other Adventists, White argued that American Protestantism was in apostasy, and it was becoming the end-time ecclesiastical Babylon from Revelation 18. This “Babylon” or a mixture of Papal and Protestant religion is soon to receive seven last plagues because of many sins and heresies. White predicted that the nation would drink of God’s wrath as punishment for the sin of slavery and then “the merchants of slaves and souls of men” will mourn and lament because their hellish traffic with Babylon has come to an end (Revelation 18:13) (White, August 12, 1862, Vol. 20, No. 11, p. 84).

In the same article, White even encouraged Adventists to vote for Lincoln, interpreting that vote as a decision against slavery and against the secession of the South. However, he cautioned against military involvement in the war to free the slaves. Adventists were noncombatants and although they were willing to wage war against slavery with their pens, they were unwilling to kill for the sake of abolishing slavery. Like Uriah Smith, he predicted that slavery would survive to the end of time (White, August 12, 1862, Vol. 20, No. 11, p. 84), but he did not explain in what form it would occur.

Joseph Bates

Joseph Bates (1792-1872), one of the three main founders of Adventism, not only spoke against slavery

¹⁴ James White connected Protestant America with Babylon and slavery as early as November 1850 “Third Waymark, The Fall of Babylon” in *Advent Review*(November, 1850, Vol. 1, No. 5, p. 67) etc.. He was followed by Andrews (May 19, 1851, p. 81); Frisbie (November 8, 1853, Vol. 4, No. 18, p. 142); Hewett (September 11, 1856, Vol. 8, No. 19, p. 150), etc..

but was also an ardent abolitionist. In his autobiography, Bates, a former Sea captain and fervent Millerite preacher, described his life long battle in support of the oppressed. He confessed that he could not be a consistent Christian if he stood with the oppressor. He wrote of praying for and remembering “them that are in bonds, as bound with them”. He prayed also that God would save his country from the curse of slavery. Bates wrote of the tremendous opposition he received due to his anti-slavery principles. He described resolutions denouncing him and his fellow anti-slave comrades in severe terms. Bates mocked the colonization societies for their opposition to abolition and accused them of being the worst enemies of the free people of color. He also pointed out that they labored to perpetuate slavery in the slave-holding states (Bates, 1868/1970, pp. 233-237).

After joining Adventism and creating Sabbatarian Adventist movement, Bates had not forgotten his abolitionist roots. He pointed to slavery as part of prophecy against Babylon in Revelation 18. In an early pamphlet, written in 1847, Bates mentioned slavery as one of the characteristics of Protestants becoming part of Babylon. He argued that the text “come out of her [Babylon] my people” before referred to Papacy but now also referred to Protestant Churches because of their moral downfalls including the crime of slavery (Bates, 1847, pp. 69-70).

Ellen White and Slavery

Ellen Gould White (1827-1915), one of the founders of the Adventist Church, has been regarded as the most influential voice of Adventism. Considered to be a prophet,¹⁵ “Mrs. White”, as she was called, had very strong views against racism and slavery. She often described in graphic language how heaven beholds with indignation the terrible degradation of slave holding and how the Savior is moved with compassion for the slaves. She described slavery as a grievous and enormous sin, repudiating the idea of blacks in bondage being the property of their masters, an idea that formed the legal basis of American slavery: “Their Maker alone is their master.... Those who degraded slaves will experience God’s wrath” (White, 1864, vol. 1, p. 388).

She called slavery an accursed sin in the sight of heaven,

Satan was the first great leader in rebellion. God is punishing the North that they have so long suffered the accursed sin of slavery to exist; for in the sight of heaven it is a sin of the darkest dye. (White, 1864, Vol. 1, p. 359)

According to White, the Civil War was God’s punishment for the high crime of slavery (White, 1864, vol. 1, p. 264). Ellen White even went that far as counseling the church to remove from their membership those who held and promoted pro-slavery views (White, 1864, Vol. 1, p. 359).

Like the majority of Adventist expositors of her time she identified America as the fulfillment of the two-horned beast of Revelation 13. In her own words she wrote:

Here is a striking figure of the rise and growth of our nation. And the lamblike horns, emblem of innocence and gentleness, well represent the character of our government as expressed in its two fundamental principles, Republicanism and Protestantism. (White, 1872-1885, Vol. 4, p. 277)

¹⁵ Ellen Gould White, was reported to have had many visions and dreams from God. She is considered a prophet by the Seventh-day Adventist members. EGW Estate counts 188 visions in the life of Ellen White, without mentioning private dreams and revelations. (Estate, 1963, Vol. 3, pp. 2978-2984). Great number of her visions were public, before dozens, sometimes hundreds of witnesses. SDA minister George Butler, transmitted following testimony on this subject: “While she is in vision, her respiration ceases entirely and no breath whatsoever escapes her nostrils or lips. This phenomenon had been contested by number of witnesses and skilled physicians, themselves unbelievers in visions.” (Butler, June 9, 1874, pp. 201-202); For additional information’s concerning physical phenomena following Ellen White visions see: (Douglas, 1998, pp. 135-137); (Coon, 1992, pp. 25-37).

Although she identified the beast as Protestantism and the speaking as a dragon as a satanic force propelling the Sunday movement, Ellen White never made a direct connection between slavery and to the fulfillment of America in prophecy as the two-horned beast in Revelation 13. Instead, she pointed out that the defense of slavery by some of the protestant churches in the nation was a proof that they were a part of Apostate Babylon. “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 themselves engaged in this terrible merchandise”. She warned that God’s anger would not cease until America drank from the cup of God’s fury. She equated America with Babylon, who would be given her reward for all the sins that she committed (White, 1858, Vol. 1, pp. 191-193).

Ellen White and the Race Prejudice

It seems fitting here to add couple of paragraphs explaining Ellen White’s attitude towards different races, particularly American blacks. Even after the North won the war and slaves were apparently set free, Blacks did not receive immediate emancipation. Mrs. White often encouraged the church to work for those who have been for years oppressed in the bondage of slavery. According to her, it is not enough to disprove of slavery to be a Christian. A true follower of Christ must help the oppressed no matter the skin color. Long after the abolition of slavery, she continued to fight for equality of all people. Thirty years after the war, she wrote:

The American nation owes a debt of love to the colored race, and God has ordained that they should make restitution for the wrong they have done them in the past... Those who have taken no active part in enforcing slavery upon the colored people are not relieved from the responsibility of making special efforts to remove, as far as possible, the sure result of their enslavement.” (White, January 21, 1896, p. 33)

She noted:

The Lord has looked with sadness upon that most pitiful of all sights, the colored race in slavery. He desires us, in our work for them, to remember their providential deliverance from slavery, their common relationship to us by creation and by redemption, and their right to the blessings of freedom. (White, 1901, Vol. 7, p. 223)

God loves them all, and makes no difference between white and black, except that He has a special, tender pity for those who are called to bear a greater burden than others (White, 1969, Vol. 2, pp. 486-487).

The religion of the Bible recognizes no caste or color. It ignores rank, wealth, worldly honor. God estimates men as men. With him, character decides their worth. And we are to recognize the Spirit of Christ in whomsoever it is revealed. No one need be ashamed to speak with an honest black man in any place or to shake him by the hand. He who is living in the atmosphere in which Christ lives will be taught of God and will learn to put His estimate on men. (White, 1909, Vol. 9, p. 223)

Thus, through these couple of paragraphs, we can see that the main spokesmen of Adventism, Ellen White, worked tirelessly to erase all racism among the Adventists (Graybill, 1970).

Summary and Conclusions

The success of the revivals in the wake of the Second Great Awakening led many clergy men to predict that America would be the site of the kingdom of God on earth, prophesied in Revelation in connection with the Christ’s Second Coming. Adventists, unlike other Protestants of that era, rejected the notion that America was a God-ordained enterprise or that it could ever become one; they argued that while the nation was to be admired

for its lofty Constitution and Republican principles, the practice of slavery was a manifestation of its ungodly nature or its dragon-like qualities.

For Adventists, the world was not improving but was becoming progressively worse. The “signs of the times” everywhere proclaimed the end of the world. Slavery was identified as a central sign of the corrupt human structure. The special understanding of America’s place in prophecy fired their passion for opposing slavery and motivated their opposition to slavery.

Most of leading voices of the Adventist pioneers identified America either as the two-horned beast of Revelation 13, which spoke as a dragon, or the eschatological Babylon, an end-time conglomeration of Apostate churches, pointing to slavery as one of the strongest evidences of America’s Babylonian and dragon-like quality. This was a view that was held by many leaders including Ellen White and James White, Uriah Smith, J. N. Andrews, John Loughborough and others. While their views on the immorality and evil of slavery were similar to those held by anti-slavery evangelical leaders of their time, they differed significantly in how slavery was related to the American nation.

The Adventist pioneers, being students of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, saw America as another one of the great earthly powers that would rise and fall as Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece and Rome did. They had no illusions about the ultimate destiny of America, for this nation was governed by sinful men as other nations were therefore doomed to ultimate failure. By pointing out slavery as a fulfillment of America in prophecy they were simply repudiating any notion of America being some type of the kingdom of God. These men were not unpatriotic or disloyal to America because of this damning critique of America. On the contrary, it revealed their courage and bravery to speak frankly on America’s “original sin”.

What was the central point of these Adventist pioneers? The end of the age is at hand; things would not get better. America was not the answer to the problems of humanity. Even though they believed America was guided by providence, America was a man-made experiment and therefore a sinful enterprise. The distinct feature of the nation was its deceitful and hypocritical nature. It gave the impression of a gentle, harmless lamb, but beneath that lamb-like pretension was a fierce dragon heart. At its core it was a dragon beast; it did not evolve into one. This pessimistic view of the future did not cause the pioneers to remain silent on the great social ills of the day. They spoke out against them and encouraged the nation to change.

The pioneers also believed that this dragon-like quality would become more evident as we approach the end of time. America was already becoming and it will fully become a part of end-time Babylon which will receive the punishment of the wrath of God for their many sins, including slavery. In other words its lamb-like quality would recede, as its dragon-like quality would predominate. Is it possible that the pioneers may be predicting a time in America’s future when the nation will repudiate its lamb-like qualities of democracy, freedom, and justice and evolve into a totalitarian, police state? In the present climate of fear and uncertainty, it is not inconceivable that in the name of security and safety many of the freedoms that we now enjoy will be suspended. The government may be forced to choose between freedom and security and will almost certainly choose security with the view of preserving the nation. That time may be upon us sooner than we imagine and will make the words of these Adventist pioneers startlingly relevant yet again.

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