

Adventist Eschatology in Relation to the Religious Left and the Religious Right

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1. Introduction

It is commonly understood that Seventh-day Adventist eschatology predicts that a Sunday Law in homage to Papal authority will be enacted in the United States and other nations in the final period of earth's history preceding the Second Coming of Christ.¹ Furthermore, despite its ultimate inevitability according to the sure word of prophecy, prior to such an enactment we are obligated to do all we reasonably can to delay this law by uplifting the importance of religious liberty.² I affirm these beliefs. The

¹ For a collection of Seventh-day Adventist thought leader Ellen White's comments on this, see Donald Ernest Mansell, *The Shape of the Coming Crisis* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998), 58-82. As White herself put it, "The Sabbath question is to be the issue in the great final conflict in which all the world will act a part," Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church Volume Six*, 352.

² "A time is coming when the law of God is, in a special sense, to be made void in our land. The rulers of our nation will, by legislative enactments, enforce the Sunday law, and thus God's people [will] be brought into great peril. When our nation, in its legislative councils, shall enact laws to bind the consciences of men in regard to their religious privileges, enforcing Sunday observance, and bringing oppressive power to bear against those who keep the seventh-day Sabbath, the law of God will, to all intents and purposes, be made void in our land; and national apostasy will be followed by national ruin. We see that those who are now keeping the commandments of God need to bestir themselves, that they may obtain the special help which God alone can give them. They should work more earnestly to delay as long as possible the threatened calamity. If, in our land of boasted freedom, a Protestant government should sacrifice every principle which enters into its

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question this article will explore is what politically oriented religious groups and ideologies have 21st century Adventists identified as encouraging a union of church and state that could be expected to prepare the groundwork for a Sunday Law? The thesis of this study is that some Seventh-day Adventists have (unintentionally) fallen into a trap, for a variety of reasons, of replacing epistemology with eschatology. This has possibly caused some of us to be near-sighted as we analyze present events and developments in the religious and secular world in our desire to predict the future and delay a Sunday Law. In other words, to replace one's epistemology with an eschatology is to see the present with an anticipated future as an overlay; we know the dots or major events, thus we are tempted to fill in the lines in our "overlay" between the dots with a detailed version of events of how our predicted eschatology will come about. In doing so, one is no longer analyzing the present objectively or honestly, but with "eschaton-tinted glasses." On the one hand, this would seem a good thing to many Adventists, as will be demonstrated below. However, I hope to demonstrate why this approach has some potentially serious pitfalls and consequences that should be avoided. Nevertheless, the need for remaining apocalyptic in our focus as Adventists is important,³ which is the reason why I feel this subject needs to be addressed.

Some additional important motives for this study revolve around the central evangelistic problem Adventism faces in regard to the Old/New

Constitution, and propagate papal falsehood and delusion, well may we plead, 'It is time for thee, Lord, to work, for they have made void thy law.' Some may think that because it has been revealed in prophecy that our nation shall restrict the consciences of men, it must surely come; and that if we make an effort to preserve our liberty, we shall be acting the part of unfaithful servants, and thus come under the condemnation of God.

"This peril now threatens the people of God; and what are we going to do? Can we not assist in lifting the standard, and in calling to the front those who have a regard for their religious rights and privileges? God calls upon us to awake. We know the end is near. We know that the prophecies are fast fulfilling which show that we are living in the close of this world's history," Ellen White, "David's Prayer," in *The Review and Herald*, Dec. 18 (1888).

³ I concur with George R. Knight's central theme that Adventism is in danger of being "neutered" when we forget about the centrality of our apocalyptic message. George R. Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism: Are We Erasing Our Relevancy?* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2009).

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Covenant question, which has at its heart the Sabbath.⁴ Central to Adventism's concerns about the Sabbath is its realization as an eschatological matter of importance, where it ultimately becomes a matter of religious liberty. Thus, the reasons for understanding how Adventist eschatology will manifest itself in the world of political theories and ideologies actually might shed some light on our understanding of our fellow Sunday Christian believers. They often struggle to understand why they should worship on Sabbath instead of Sunday, so exploring anew how the Sabbath relates to eschatology may in turn grant us insights into forming better evangelistic methods to reach them intellectually. For many Sunday Christians, it seems as if we are calling them *back* to a Jewish/Old Covenant understanding of salvation by legalistic works, whereas they currently live under a New Covenant of grace with Sunday as part of their symbol of liberation from Judaism and sin.⁵ There is a direct irony the Adventist must confront in this understanding by Sunday keepers and our view of eschatology, and that is, why would one of the symbols of the New Covenant of grace⁶ ultimately manifest itself in a *coercive, forced* Sunday observance? Would not such a forced Sunday worship *look* like a new version of the Old Covenant they rejected, which was a covenant of legalism and works, a perspective which they often accuse Adventists of having? We can appear to be *doing* what we accuse of them of *going* to do, and that is to encourage the idea that we are saved by observing a certain day with legalistic rigidity, and urging it upon others.

⁴ Appreciated in this respect is the work of Skip MacCarty, who has connected beautifully the Sabbath's relationship to the Gospel and the Law. Skip MacCarty, *In Granite or Ingrained? What the Old and New Covenants Reveal About the Gospel, the Law, and the Sabbath* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2007), 219-233.

⁵ Representing a common perspective, see Kevin L. Cunningham, *The Sabbath, the Law, and the New Covenant* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2013), 144. Cunningham comments that "It seems that each covenant has a day that is set aside for God's people to remember deliverance from bondage, the bondage of slavery in the old covenant and the bondage of sin in the new covenant," Ibid. He continues, "when John says "the Lord's day," he is undoubtedly referring to the day that we have been delivered from our sins, the day that Jesus Christ was resurrected, which is the first day of the week," Ibid.

⁶ For example, see Kurt Litwiller, *New Covenant Living: Released to Live by the Spirit* (Apopka, FL: Reliance Media, 2010). After studying the Sabbath with Adventists (for whom he says nice things about), he still found greater joy in the New Covenant that excluded the Sabbath.

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As such, there are two reasons for studying contemporary Adventist perspectives and attitudes concerning the identification of groups that might encourage Sunday Laws. In line with the above observations, the first is that I perceive an error in Adventists crying “wolf” too frequently when and where there is no wolf, while the wolf may emerge from within groups that we did not foresee, making us look ignorant of current events. This is undesirable for a movement that sees prophecy as a central component of our reason to exist presently. Secondly, our overzealous efforts to identify the wolf have caused us to damage our corporate witness and splinter our evangelistic message by alienating various groups we accuse of being “wolf-like” who are sincere Christians despite their observance of Sunday. Stated plainly, continuously criticizing various Christian groups who worship on Sunday, and who feel it is important to *encourage* Christian values through sound public policy, is hampering our witness to moderate Sunday worshipers who are sympathetic to the more political groups, but are personally lenient in how they go about advancing Christian values. Insisting or implying that every Sunday worshiper has a goal of uniting Church and State to create a Sunday law with a desire to persecute Sabbath keepers is patently false.⁷ Many Sunday worshipers are simply ignorant of

⁷ I do not fault Ellen White, who had a very balanced perspective overall, but nevertheless, she can be cited by those who wish to do so for agitating people toward extreme views and to expect it “around the corner” in an unhealthy paranoiac manner. Some 100 years since her death, that “around the corner” attitude has encouraged us to make many false predictions and accusations against Sunday keepers, which, when they fail, cause many Adventist believers to become skeptical of our teachings. For example, Ellen White wrote, “The days in which we live are solemn and important. The Spirit of God is gradually but surely being withdrawn from the earth. Plagues and judgments are already falling upon the despisers of the grace of God. The calamities by land and sea, the unsettled state of society, the alarms of war, are portentous. They forecast approaching events of the greatest magnitude. The agencies of evil are combining their forces, and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones.” Ellen White, *Testimonies Vol. 9*, 11. She also noted, with reference to the historical context, “We see that efforts are being made to restrict our religious liberties. The Sunday question is now assuming large proportions. An amendment to our Constitution is being urged in Congress, and when it is obtained, oppression must follow. I want to ask, Are you awake to this matter? and do you realize that the night cometh, when no man can work? Have you had that intensity of zeal, and that piety and devotion, which will enable you to stand when oppression is brought upon you?” Ellen White, “David’s Prayer,” in *The Review and Herald*, Dec. 18, 1888. C.f., “The testing time has not yet come. There are true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman

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the truth as we see it, but sincerely desire the preservation of religious liberty with a passion that matches any Adventist. Many Sunday worshippers regard the individual's conscience as sacred, the same as we do.

With the above in mind, the study will proceed in section 2 by examining some relatively recent published works by influential conservative Adventist pastors, authors, and scholars to see how they understand our contemporary situation and identify who they see advancing any union of Church and State where Sunday observance might be enforced. Following this, in section 3 I will then turn toward describing how other non-Adventists who are also concerned about a Roman Catholic Church-State and religious liberty see contemporary events, noting the distinct differences they see in comparison with the expressed Adventist perspectives. Section 4 will conclude by providing a few tentative suggestions for Adventists as we move forward and remain engaged in contemporary events around the world in anticipation of a Sunday Law.

Catholic communion. None are condemned until they have had the light and have seen the obligation of the fourth commandment. But when the decree shall go forth enforcing the counterfeit sabbath, and the loud cry of the third angel shall warn men against the worship of the beast and his image, the line will be clearly drawn between the false and the true. Then those who still continue in transgression will receive the mark of the beast.

“With rapid steps we are approaching this period. When Protestant churches shall unite with the secular power to sustain a false religion, for opposing which their ancestors endured the fiercest persecution, then will the papal sabbath be enforced by the combined authority of church and state. There will be a national apostasy, which will end only in national ruin,” Ellen White, *Evangelism*, 234-235. Additionally, and of note, “But Christians of past generations observed the Sunday, supposing that in so doing they were keeping the Bible Sabbath; and there are now true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion, who honestly believe that Sunday is the Sabbath of divine appointment. God accepts their sincerity of purpose and their integrity before Him. But when Sunday observance shall be enforced by law, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome, will thereby honor popery above God. He is paying homage to Rome and to the power which enforces the institution ordained by Rome. He is worshipping the beast and his image. As men then reject the institution which God has declared to be the sign of His authority, and honor in its stead that which Rome has chosen as the token of her supremacy, they will thereby accept the sign of allegiance to Rome—‘the mark of the beast.’ And it is not until the issue is thus plainly set before the people, and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, that those who continue in transgression will receive ‘the mark of the beast,’” Ellen White, *The Great Controversy* (1911), 449.

2. Contemporary Adventist Perspectives On Religious Liberty and Sunday Laws

Numerous Adventists, and others, have commented upon Sunday Laws and the groups that have pushed for them over the past centuries in both the United States and elsewhere.⁸ I will not review their details here, aside from noting that they vary from more polemical arguments⁹ to detailed and well-reasoned historical treatises tracing the history of Sunday Laws back to pagan Rome.¹⁰ Responses by outsiders have been decidedly mixed to the Adventist perspective overall. The issues have become far more complicated in the years following Ellen White's death in 1915 than they were during the early period of American and Adventist history. While Sunday Laws in earlier periods of history were typically both motivated and sustained exclusively on religious grounds,¹¹ this is no longer necessarily the case. A variety of complex socio-economic factors are now at play, affecting both the positive and negative sides of the debate

⁸ David N. Laband and Deborah Hendry Heinbuch, *Blue Laws: The History, Economics, and Politics of Sunday-Closing Laws* (Lexington Books, 1987); Warren LeRoi Johns, *Dateline Sunday, U.S.A.: The Story of Three and a Half Centuries of Sunday-Law Battles in America* (Pacific Press Publishing, 1967); Alonzo T. Jones, *The National Sunday Law: Argument of Alonzo T. Jones Before the United States Senate Committee on Education and Labor, Dec. 13, 1888* (TEACH Services Facsimile Edition, 1996); Jan Marcussen, *National Sunday Law* (AT Publications, 2010); Vance Ferrell, *Enforced Sunday Law Coming Soon to America* (Harvestime Books, 2008); Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events* (Pacific Press Publishing, 1992); <http://www.sundaylaw.net/books/other/standish/liberty/litb19.htm>; <http://www.libertymagazine.org/index.php?id=1281>.

Note: All websites cited were accessed between January 2012 and December 2012.

⁹ Russell R. Standish and Colin D. Standish, *The Pope's Letter and Sunday Law* (Hartland Publications, 1998), <http://www.remnantofgod.org/sabatak.htm>; <http://glenburnie.net/advent.org/sabbath/sundayhistory.html>; and <http://dedication.www3.50megs.com/sundaylaw.html>.

¹⁰ Abram Herbert Lewis, *Sunday Legislation: Its History to the Present Time and its Results* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1902); Ann Warner Odom, *Sunday Laws: A History and Survey* (University of Mississippi, 1962); Miriam Cho, *Sunday Laws: A State-by-State Review* (2002); Craig Harline, *Sunday: A History of the First Day from Babylonia to the Super Bowl* (New York, NY: Random House, 2007); David Sehat, *The Myth of American Religious Freedom* (Oxford University Press, 2011); Robert L. Odom, *Sunday in Roman Paganism* (TEACH Services, 2003); and Alexis McCrossen, *Holy Day, Holiday: The American Sunday* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2000).

¹¹ Lewis, *Sunday Legislation*, xii.

concerning the usefulness and validity of any Sunday legislation.¹² Additionally, during the past, there were several times when actual Sunday legislation was being actively discussed at various national or local governments in the United States. Since World War II, however, such discussions have been absent altogether or gathering insignificant attention by government officials in the United States. This makes the traditional Adventist presentation of the future more challenging for outsiders to accept in the 21st century.

The present focus of this study, however, are the attitudes of prominent conservative Adventist perspectives from the past 15-20 years in relation to their non-Adventist peers. To fulfill this objective, I will first focus on individuals who have been employed by official or influential Adventist institutions of ministry or education. To clarify, by no means am I implying that their views, or anyone's views, are to be understood as "official" positions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Rather, I merely want to sample the perspectives of prominent and respected contributors to contemporary mainstream Adventist thinking that are or have been connected with various official branches of the church at one level or another, and who have contributed noteworthy scholarly contributions to the issues of religious liberty and Sunday Law legislation in light of 21st century events. As such, minority voices within Adventism which are challenging the future reality of the Sunday Law are exempted from the present study.

2.1 Adventist Perspectives from the 21st Century

Several Adventists have written articles or books that address the possibilities of Sunday legislation in a 21st century context. Abiding by my intent to focus on particularly influential individuals with official connections to Adventist institutions, Norman Gulley,¹³ Marvin Moore,¹⁴

¹² Laband and Heinbuch, *Blue Laws*, 157-164.

¹³ Norman Gulley, longtime Professor at Southern Adventist University and past President of the *Adventist Theological Society*, well represents a centrist Adventist perspective. He has written numerous articles and books that have been well-received during his academic career on a wide variety of theological and historical issues.

¹⁴ Marvin Moore, for many years the editor of the *Signs of the Times* periodical, a mainstream magazine originally founded by James White, a cofounder of the Seventh-day Adventist church, is well acquainted with the contemporary issues Adventism is facing. He

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and John V. Stevens,¹⁵ adequately represent both professional scholars, pastors, and popular authors who have dedicated significant portions of their time to studying religious liberty in America and in particular Sunday legislation. Collectively and individually, their credentials are solid. Each of them has written a book-length treatment on eschatology, noting both the biblical and historical evidence, which includes an examination of the identification of groups that would encourage Sunday legislation. These three will constitute the focus of this chapter of the study. I examine them in the chronological order of the appearance their major works.

2.2 Norman Gulley on the End Game in the End Time

Gulley's views on eschatology are extensive, covering both the relevant biblical passages and writings from Ellen White. His views in these areas are in overall harmony with traditional understandings from Adventist leaders, including White's. Gulley as such sees the Sunday/Sabbath crisis as the final religious question confronting the world at the end of time.¹⁶ Concerning the origin of Sunday veneration in the Christian church, he views it as a Catholic invention, evidencing the Catholic view concerning the authority of the early Church apart from Scriptural teachings.¹⁷ Gulley describes the purpose for Sunday veneration as simply Satan's hatred for Christ and God's Law. Satan "hates the law, because he hates Christ."¹⁸ These positions match the historic positions of Adventist teachings which

has also written numerous articles and books on a wide variety of religious and biblical topics, and has also served in pastoral ministry.

¹⁵ John V. Stevens has more than 40 years of experience working directly as an advisor with government officials from several countries on matters of religious liberty. Stevens served for 20 years in the church with the Pacific Union Conference as the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Director. He has also authored several articles, including a number for *Liberty* magazine which promotes religious freedom, and written a book focusing on prophecy and religious liberty in the United States.

¹⁶ Norman Gulley, "The Battle Against the Sabbath and its End-time Importance," in the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* Vol. 5 #2 (Autumn 1994), 79-115.

¹⁷ Norman Gulley, *Christ is Coming! A Christ-centered Approach to Last-Day Events* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1998), 347-349. He summarizes the data by sharing, "We see no attempts to prove Sunday from the New Testament here. Rather the change to Sunday demonstrates the authority of the Catholic Church above Scripture. That should tell us something about the church and Sunday. The day does not have divine credentials," *Ibid.*, 348.

¹⁸ Gulley, "The Battle Against the Sabbath and its End-time Importance," 81.

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have been held since near the beginning of the Sabbatarian movement that developed into Seventh-day Adventism.¹⁹ Gulley's studies on eschatology include an extensive overview of the issues that are confronting our postmodern age. These issues include the state of the dead,²⁰ New Age spiritualism,²¹ relativism,²² evolution,²³ and many others, including different understandings of millennialism.²⁴ I saw nothing to critically examine or dispute here, as I essentially agree with all of his points on these various issues as they mislead and deceive people, leading them away from the truth as it is in Scripture and Jesus. Where Gulley discusses contemporary movements, however, is where the present interest is focused.

Constituting both a chapter in one of his books²⁵ as well as a reprint in the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*,²⁶ Gulley's contemporary perspective on Sunday movements is clearly articulated and emphasized through his choice to publish it twice. Gulley holds back no punches, as he begins his article by stating, "In America, bastion of religious liberty, forces are at work to tear down the wall of separation between church and state." He continues, "There is a relentless attack against the first amendment of the Constitution, and leading the fight is the Christian Coalition."²⁷ That

¹⁹ That the Seventh-day Sabbath was changed by the Catholic church has been the position of Adventists since the founding of our denomination, and backed up by numerous historical studies. E.g., see P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1977, 1995), 137-138; and Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: An Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977), 309.

²⁰ Gulley, *Christ is Coming!*, 253-282.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 179-210.

²² *Ibid.*, 29-39.

²³ *Ibid.*, 375-409.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 438-457.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 211-225. The chapter is entitled, "The Christian Coalition and the Endgame."

²⁶ Norman Gulley, "The Christian Coalition and the End Game," in the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* Vol. 8, #1-2 (1997), 120-136.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 120. Gulley adds that "According to the historicist reading favored by Adventist interpreters, prophecy tells us that America will exercise 'all the authority of the first beast' (Papacy) and will make 'the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast' (Rev 13:12, NIV). In fact, America will set up an image of the Papacy. The Papacy is a union of church and state, so the image in America will be a union of church and state (Rev 13:13-14.) When church and state unite in America, then the church will use the government to enforce its agenda, for the issue in Revelation 13 is worship (vss. 4, 8, 12, 15). Whoever

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leads to a question: What is the Christian Coalition? Founded in 1989 following religious broadcaster and political commentator Pat Robertson's failed Presidential bid in 1988 in the Republican Party, they sought to "Christianize America" through political activism.²⁸ This much is certain. Robertson has provided some of the sharpest statements in recent decades advocating a closer relationship between religion and government. Gulley notes several articles and books that Robertson and his allies penned, expressing their desire to tear down the wall of separation between church and state that Gulley sees in the first amendment of the Constitution.²⁹ The evidence is clear enough to the watchful Adventist that the Christian Coalition is not an ally in our efforts to preserve religious liberty. "The New Christian Right is out to Christianize America," shares Gulley.³⁰

Gulley is direct in addressing the political alliances that the Christian Coalition sought to create. He notes that the Christian Coalition had "considerable influence in the Republican party and hope(ed) to get the Republican President of their choice elected in the year 2000."³¹ Gulley also sides with the liberal or progressive Supreme Court justices, against conservatives like the late William Rehnquist and still active Antonin Scalia.³² Gulley continues by sharing that the Christian Coalition is misguided in its perception of persecution against Christians in America, leading them to greatly exaggerate the difficulties Christians face in America.³³ In other words, they are deceptively playing a "victim" card to attract attention and strengthen their base supporters, according to Gulley.

The goal of the Christian Coalition is clear to Gulley. They want to "legislate morality" which sounds "like Revelation 13," doesn't it, he asks rhetorically.³⁴ Gulley notes that Robertson helped organize a meeting

refuses to engage in the mandated false worship will be threatened by boycott and death (vss. 15-17)."

²⁸ Andrew E. Moore, "Christian Coalition," in *Encyclopedia of American Religion and Politics*, ed. Paul A. Djupe and Laura R. Olson (New York, NY: Facts On File, 2003), 90-91.

²⁹ Gulley, "The Christian Coalition and the End Game," 121-122.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

³² *Ibid.*, 124. Gulley refers critically to Rehnquist's comment that the "wall of separation" between church and state was a "metaphor."

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.

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where he tried to rally his coalition behind a single individual in the Republican party to run for president in 2000, all the while trying to keep his organization tax exempt, a violation of law.³⁵ Gulley notes with irony the enigma that the Christian Coalition's "take-over of the Republican party" defies the party's traditional stance "against big government" and its concern "with individual freedom."³⁶ Nevertheless, Gulley observes Robertson's call for "his Coalition to get behind one Republican candidate for president," revealing "the partisan nature of their scheme,"³⁷ which they no doubt recognized was necessary to obtain power; they knew they needed to control a prominent secular party first.

Gulley does note that there were Christian dissenters against Robertson's Christian Coalition, like the Presbyterian minister Robert H. Meneilly, who dubbed the New Right as "a present danger greater than 'the old threat of Communism'"³⁸ and Edward G. Dobson, who wrote an article in *Christianity Today* entitled "Taking Politics Out of the Sanctuary."³⁹ But overall, Gulley leaves his readers awestruck with his personal account of his time attending the 1995 "Road to Victory" Convention organized by the Christian Coalition. He observed that in 1990, the convention had 250 delegates, but in 1995 that number had swollen to 4,260, with 143 speakers, and 7 of 9 Republican Presidential candidates speaking.⁴⁰ At the conference, Gulley reports personally hearing cries of "Let's get rid of Kennedy of Massachusetts!"⁴¹ Even more importantly, to "thunderous applause," there were shouts of "Take the nation back for God!" and "Out with the liberals" resounding throughout.⁴² Gulley, pauses to recall earlier refrains from Christian history of "Crucify them!," and directly compares the two. It was clear to Gulley that the Christian Coalition wanted to join the state and religion. Gulley also notes that of the 1.7 million Coalition

³⁵ Ibid. "For the Coalition to seek religious tax exempt status when engaged in partisan politics shows how blind it is to the moral issue involved. No organization with any partisan agenda can legally claim religious tax exempt status. But it comes as no surprise to find the Coalition seeking this status when it rejects the separation of church and state," Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 128.

³⁹ Ibid., 132.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 129.

⁴¹ Ibid. The Kennedy's are well-known liberal Democratic politicians in America.

⁴² Ibid.

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members in 1995, 250,000 of them were Catholics. Indeed, Catholics were now able to “sit cozily snug in a common cause [with Protestants]. They sense victory in the air, and it’s not Calvary’s but Caesar’s.”⁴³

Gulley acknowledges the fact, and rightly so, as he concurs with them, that the moral condition of America is wanting. However, although “the Christian Coalition is appalled at the moral disarray in the country,” they wink at the “doctrinal disarray in the church.” Thus “they shout out against moral degradation, but don’t even whimper about doctrines on the trash heap. This uniting for a moral cause is a moral disaster,” Gulley asserts.⁴⁴ Gulley recognizes correctly that the real issue is “the danger of moralists attempting to legislate their moral values on minorities. This is the danger of the Christian Coalition agenda, and that of Dominion theology.”⁴⁵

Gulley concludes his analysis of the Christian Coalition by citing how their efforts are compatible with Ellen White’s picture of the end times presented in *The Great Controversy* and elsewhere. “As we watch the Christian Coalition out to force through its social revolution, we remember that ‘Protestant churches shall seek the aid of the civil power for the enforcement of their dogmas.’”⁴⁶ Indeed, Gulley notes that “during the 1990s there have been unprecedented natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes.”⁴⁷ He continues, “the Christian Coalition and the New Right consider these natural disasters as judgment acts of God for moral degradation. And this fires them up in their push to place secular leaders in power to push their religious agenda.”⁴⁸ Gulley nicely frames several quotes from Ellen White that would seemingly fit the Christian Coalition perfectly. He cites her by sharing, “‘This very class put forth the claim that the fast-spreading corruption is largely attributable to the desecration of the so-called ‘Christian sabbath,’ and that the enforcement of Sunday observance would greatly improve the *morals*

⁴³ Ibid., 130.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 132.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 133.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 134. Gulley cites Ellen White, *Last Day Events* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1992), 228.

⁴⁷ Gulley, “The Christian Coalition and the End Game,” 134.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

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of society.”⁴⁹ It is this breaking down of the separation of church and state that Gulley describes as the “end-game.”⁵⁰ To summarize his analysis of contemporary Sunday movements, it is clear that Gulley anticipated them as most likely to come from the people like those behind the Christian Coalition, which is similarly part of the New Christian Right, the Religious Right, and perhaps recognized more publically as the Republican worldview.

The central lynchpin of Gulley’s broader critique is not leveled against the Christian Coalition per se, however. His perspective centers on the idea that there is a definable wall of separation between church and state in the Constitution, which philosophically presumes such a separation is in fact possible. This is a decidedly complex subject, as many differing opinions abound on the nature and intent of the Founding Fathers in their creation of our Constitution and the philosophical possibility of truly separating religion from the state. I would suggest that solving this puzzle would be an equivalent to having a clean cut between subjectivity and objectivity in quantum physics and neuropsychology; it currently cannot be done.⁵¹ Gulley, however, concludes that the Founders intended, through the first amendment, to preserve a wall of separation. This means “the government must stay out of the sphere of religion, which also means that religion should not force government to legislate in matters of faith and conscience.”⁵² This decidedly enters Gulley into the debate over the intent of the Founders and the philosophical issues related to any true separation of church and state. Gulley sides with the liberals who view our nation as a secular nation. Gulley insists that the Founders never wanted an openly Christian nation. The Constitution is a “secular” document.⁵³

⁴⁹ Ibid. Gulley quotes Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, 587. He also cites White, “Those who honor the Bible Sabbath will be denounced as enemies of law and order, as breaking down the *moral* restraints of society, causing anarchy and corruption, and calling down the judgments of God upon the earth.” Ibid., 592 (emphasis added).

⁵⁰ Gulley, “The Christian Coalition and the End Game,” 135.

⁵¹ Louis S. Berger, *Psychotherapy as Praxis: Abandoning Misapplied Science* (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2002), 19-20; and Louis S. Berger, *The Unboundaried Self: Putting the Person Back Into the View from Nowhere* (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2005), 250-257.

⁵² Gulley, “The Christian Coalition and the End Game,” 121.

⁵³ Ibid.

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At this point, I will not critique Gulley's perspectives, save one general comment. Rather, I will share my comments at the end, and analyze all three Adventist perspectives together while interacting with non-Adventist views of the Roman Church-State's goals. My one comment is that, while I am in complete harmony with Gulley's theology and eschatology concerning the ultimate end game as described by Ellen White, I am obligated to point out that the Christian Coalition is, for all practical intents and purposes, utterly destroyed. Yes, just a decade and a half after Gulley penned his article and book in 1997-98, from the vantage point of 2013 (and, in truth, from around 2002,⁵⁴ making his article outdated within 4 years), the Christian Coalition has nose-dived severely. It jumped off a cliff. From a highpoint of \$26.5 million revenue in 1996, their financial wherewithal had dropped to a scant \$1.3 million by 2004, by which point they had also lost their battle with the IRS over their tax exempt status, setting a precedent for other similar religious organizations who thought to engage in politics.

Furthermore, the now elderly Pat Robertson, the man behind the Christian Coalition, is a name garnering nearly universal ridicule and disdain today, especially by the under-35 crowd, to which I belong, for his racist and judgmental attitudes. When after 9/11 he blamed the terrorist attacks on the immorality of America, his comments were not received well at all. He was the object of nearly universal disdain for his remarks. Indeed, since then, I only read about him in the news when he says something stupid enough that the media pokes a little more fun at that "aging Christian fool," who is also seen as a hypocrite. In August 2005 he called for the assassination of the Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, then denied it, though the evidence didn't support him, forcing him to finally apologize.⁵⁵ In September of 2011, he made a remark that divorce was

⁵⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Coalition_of_America. It's worth noting that the Christian Coalition's presidential candidate did not "win." However controversial George W. Bush was as a President, and acknowledging his professed Christianity, and although the Iraq war is a highly controversial issue, the fact is little was done in the U.S. concerning the Religious Right's wishes during his 8 years in office. Furthermore, Bush's campaign manager, Karl Rove, is often said to have "exploited" the religious right during the 2000 and 2004 elections. Rather than religious conservatives taking control and exploiting politics, quite the reverse occurred, with clever secular politicians exploiting religious zealots to win an election, and then abandoning them.

⁵⁵ <http://uspolitics.about.com/b/2005/08/24/robertson-back-pedals.htm>.

justified if one's spouse had Alzheimer's disease.⁵⁶ Christians everywhere, his former supporters, were shocked and stunned; they were infuriated. Robertson's fall was complete. And his movement with him. The champion of the New Christian Right destroyed his own machine so rapidly that if you weren't following the news you'd have blinked and wondered where the Christian Coalition went. It seems most Republicans decided they were, as Gulley had pointed out from a *New York Times* editorial suggesting the same, terrified that such radical conservative Christians wished to take over the Republican party to enact their agenda at the sacrifice of individual liberty.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, to my knowledge, Gulley has not penned a followup article to evolve with the times.

2.3 Marvin Moore: Could It Really Happen?

Moore takes a similar approach to Gulley. Outlining our traditional perspectives on the historical significance of the Papacy and the United States in prophecy, particularly our understanding of Revelation 13, Moore admirably guides his readers through the historical context that sets up the contemporary picture.⁵⁸ Again, as with Gulley, I see nothing in particular worth detailing here. I agree with virtually everything he wrote on these topics. Moore sets up his book by asking the question, "Could it really happen?" in reference to a union of church and state in the United States, followed by a Sunday law, thus making an image to the beast of Papal Rome. My answer is, yes, it could happen. I agree with Moore. The question at present is, who does Moore identify as most likely to make such a union of church and state? And in what manner does he see it developing historically?

Moore notes that the land-beast of Revelation 13:11-18 is *lamb-like*. As the symbol of the lamb usually represents Christ, this means the United States will become a "professedly *Christian* nation."⁵⁹ This means for Moore that however strong secularism, atheism, or other religions may

⁵⁶ <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/AlzheimersCommunity/pat-robertson-alzheimers-makes-divorce/story?id=14526660#.TzYnupWsPmg>.

⁵⁷ Gulley, "The Christian Coalition and the End Game," 129.

⁵⁸ Marvin Moore, *Could It Really Happen?: Revelation 13 in the Light of History and Current Events* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2007). Note especially chapters 1-9, which detail the history of the Catholic church in biblical prophecy.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 98.

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become in America, they will never obtain a dominance. America, while founded on the separation of church and state, is nevertheless and will remain predominantly a protestant Christian nation.⁶⁰ This protestant nation will, however, eventually pay homage to the Papacy through the enactment of Sunday legislation.⁶¹ So far, again, these interpretations and predictions in and of themselves are in harmony with longstanding Adventist interpretations, and I support them.

When Moore traces the rise of religious influences and powers in America, however, things get more interesting. Moore, like Gulley, rests his case largely on the assumed true separation of church and state established in the Constitution,⁶² all the while acknowledging that the Founders of our nation recognized the importance of religion.⁶³ From this point onward, Moore clearly reveals only one path that he foresees as bringing a union of church and state, and it is the rise of the conservative movement in America and its associated religious arm, the Religious Right, which includes the Christian Coalition and the Moral Majority.⁶⁴ Liberal theology and “mainline” Protestantism are given little attention; indeed, they are relegated to merely a few pages with scant references.⁶⁵ Conversely, the “Religious Right” as a phrase occurs 58 times in Moore’s

⁶⁰ Ibid., 99-101.

⁶¹ Ibid., 202-203. Moore states, “As a Seventh-day Adventist, I don’t hesitate to say that a national Sunday law—which we have predicted for 150 years and which has seemed so foolish to so many people during most of that time—is now a distinct possibility. Adventists are confident that it *will* become a reality at some point in the future,” Ibid., 203.

⁶² Ibid., 112-115.

⁶³ Ibid., 108. Moore explains his view, “This is not to say that the Framers were devout, Bible-thumping Christians who attended church every week. They were a unique brand of secularists who appreciated the positive contribution that religion could make to the life of the nation. . . . The Framers of the American Constitution recognized the *importance* of religion, but they also were convinced that their new government couldn’t *sponsor* religion,” Ibid., 108-109.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 7. His table of contents reveals the course of his discussion, with titles like “The Rise of the Conservative Movement in America,” 117, “The Rise of the Religious Right in America,” 121, and “The Success of the Religious Right in America,” 131. Moore describes the Moral Majority as the creation of Jerry Falwell in 1979, a well known conservative Christian. See Ibid., 124.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 122-123. Moore describes “liberal theology” which he acknowledges made “deep inroads into mainstream American Protestantism during the second half of the nineteenth century and continuing on into the twentieth century,” but overall it failed the test of time. Ibid.

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book. The dichotomy of emphasis is noteworthy. Moore's work clearly reveals his thoughts here; in that, although the intellectual elites, including those more involved with politics, were more likely to be liberal theologically, their influence and numbers amongst the population declined during the mid and late 20th century.⁶⁶

Moore proceeds to detail the work of Jerry Falwell, Ronald Reagan, and Pat Robertson, as key players in the rise of conservatism.⁶⁷ Falwell and Robertson undeniably desired to create a Christian political powerhouse to run society. Moore also traces with special interest the rise of the Christian Coalition in the early 1990's following the relative demise of the Moral Majority.⁶⁸ And, although the conservative presidencies of Ronald Reagan and the first George Bush represented successes for the Religious Right, Moore acknowledges that they weren't as conservative as many Religious Right leaders hoped. Moore then makes a particularly revealing statement and analysis following the presidency of Bill Clinton, a noted Democrat liberal. Moore observes that religious conservatives were able to see a silver lining, in that now they had a "face" to war against in Bill Clinton.⁶⁹ This paid off to some degree in Moore's thinking as following Clinton, Republican President George W. Bush was elected, whom Moore considers a genuine religious conservative who catered to the Religious Right. This commitment to conservatism was seen through his "appointment of . . . two Catholics," John Roberts and Samuel Alito, to the Supreme Court, granting decided victories in Moore's mind for the Religious Right.⁷⁰

At this point, a summary can be made. Moore essentially sees the avenue toward the Sunday law to be along the lines of the conservative, Republican, religious push of the 1980's and 1990's. Moore also cited R. J. Rushdoony, a very influential character in Christian Reconstructionism and Dominionism, which emphasize creating a kingdom of heaven here on

⁶⁶ Ibid., 123. During the 20th century, "mainstream Protestantism shrank about as significantly as conservative Protestantism expanded. But here is an important point to note: In spite of their declining numbers, the pastors, priests and members of the mainline Protestant denominations were the educated elite in the nation, and they dominated its politics during the first three-fourths of the twentieth century," Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 126-130.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 132-134.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 134. Moore quotes a Religious Right operative, "'What better way to galvanize your troops than to have Bill Clinton to fight against?'" Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 136.

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earth.⁷¹ Without question, Adventists are opposed to these views, which are antithetical to religious liberty. With that in mind, Moore sees these ideas as the influential drive for the Religious Right and the path that the Sunday Law will likely follow.⁷² In other words, it is a conservative version of Christianity that has its roots in the Religious Right and its political connections that will create the Sunday Law.

Following my pattern with Gulley, I will not offer an extended critique of Moore here, save a brief comment. Although all the citations and sources Moore cites are technically accurate to my knowledge, and do reveal an attitude amongst some “ultra” conservatives that is indeed opposed to genuine religious liberty, there is a flaw in his analysis of the present situation. First of all, as I noted above, individuals like Pat Robertson and the now deceased Jerry Falwell are *not* popular figures in America. The younger culturally and ethnically diverse generation which is taking over America does not view these men favorably. Additionally, I note with irony that while it is true that President George W. Bush had two influential and historically significant terms of office, he also left the presidency with the highest *disapproval* rating in U.S. history, at 71%!⁷³ The chances of seeing another Bush-like figure win the presidency are low for the foreseeable future. In other words, America isn’t interested in following the ultra-conservative path as the 21st century gets well underway. This is seen clearly in the election of Barack Obama in 2008, and again in 2012, to the presidency, one of the most liberal politicians in history with a very progressive agenda. A ping-pong ball effect appears to be the reality America embraces more than anything else.

⁷¹ Ibid., 213. “In Rushdoony’s optimistic view, as more and more people convert to Christ, the whole world will gradually become Christian, including its civil governments. These governments will be based upon all the biblical laws of the Old and New Testaments, and that will be the signal for Jesus to return.

“This notion of a perfect end time flies in the face of the biblical teaching.” Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 214. Moore acknowledges that most on the Religious Right do not accept Rushdoony’s more radical views, but he asserts that “while Religious Right Christians by and large reject Rushdoony’s most extreme views, *they are very attracted to his notion that governments should be Christian and that America’s laws should be based on the Bible, thus making America a ‘Christian nation,’*” Ibid.

⁷³ http://articles.cnn.com/2008-05-01/politics/bush.poll_1_disapproval-rating-new-poll-polling-director?_s=PM:POLITICS; see also http://voices.washingtonpost.com/fact-checker/2008/05/how_unpopular_is_george_bush.html.

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However, even more important than either of the above observations is the fact that Moore completely fails to mention one of the most amazing trends in American Christianity during the late 1990's and 2000's. That is the rise of the Religious Left, a term not even appearing in Moore's work, which mentions the Religious Right 58 times. This oversight is surprising. Moore seems to operate on the assumption that "most" (say around 80%) of Christians in America are Republicans and supporters of the Religious Right, in light of the mainstream liberal (left, though Moore doesn't use the term) denominations shrinking rapidly during the 1920's-1970's. While the small size of liberal Protestants was true during the late 1980's, times have changed yet again. According to a recent poll in 2009, American Christians are now split almost 54/46, Right versus Left, and the trend is moving toward a 50/50 split.⁷⁴ There is little difference between the Catholic and Protestant numbers; both are split in their overall socio-political identification.⁷⁵ Pollsters noted that their report "puts to rest the question of whether there is a 'God gap' between Republicans and Democrats: 'Clearly, from this data, it's not only closing. It's closed.'"⁷⁶ The importance of this "God gap" being closed will be examined later, as it directly impacts upon the relationship of Christianity to the government. Moore also fails to mention the significance of the culture/geographical gap, or the "Red/Blue" divide in America, separating the liberal coastal cities from the conservative heartland, and the impact this could have on the implementation of Sunday laws.⁷⁷ This cultural divide has only become prominent since after 1992.⁷⁸ The population centers in America, where much power exists, are overwhelmingly liberal, not conservative.

⁷⁴ <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-religion/2343313/posts>.

⁷⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church_and_politics_in_the_United_States.

⁷⁶ <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-religion/2343313/posts>.

⁷⁷ Ellen White notes that the persecution against Sabbath keepers will be greatest in the cities. But, currently, cities are decidedly *not* conservative or Christian. Therefore, it seems odd, at present, to imagine Moore's scenario. "As the decree issued by the various rulers of Christendom against commandment keepers shall withdraw the protection of government, and abandon them to those who desire their destruction, the people of God will flee from the cities and villages and associate together in companies, dwelling in the most desolate and solitary places. Many will find refuge in the strongholds of the mountains," Ellen White, *Last Day Events*, 259-260.

⁷⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_states_and_blue_states;
http://www.outsidethebeltway.com/2000_election_county_by_county/.

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Interestingly, Ellen White seems to indicate that persecution of Sabbath-keepers will be most severe in cities. If this is so, it would be ironic, as cities are not conservative or Republican. Having conservative, country, farmer Christians invade the cities to enforce a Sunday law on secular people and liberal Christians seems odd. Unfortunately, Moore seems unaware of these current events and trends. This is not to say things couldn't happen Moore's way. But the trends are currently pointing toward a different direction as I will explain later, and certain elements of this new direction seem "here to stay."

2.4 John V. Stevens: Abortion and the Sunday Law

Stevens, a longtime specialist and activist on matters of religious liberty, follows a similar line of thinking alongside that of Gulley and Moore, and outlines clearly the Adventist position on Revelation 13, that places the United States squarely into the center of prophecy. Again, there is much here with which I can agree with Stevens, and will not comment upon on these items further at present. Just to be clear, I agree with his overall eschatology.

Stevens sees the United States as a nation founded upon secular principles respecting the freedom of religion.⁷⁹ In this he echoes the views of Gulley and Moore. It was the separation of church and state that granted the U.S. its lamb-like characteristics.⁸⁰ Stevens specifies how precisely the U.S. was able to achieve this, and how such a system must look. It requires a specific separation of the two tables of the Ten Commandments into vertical and horizontal planes, wherein a secular government can only legislate the horizontal plane.⁸¹ This leads him, however, to articulate yet

⁷⁹ John V. Stevens, *The Abortion Controversy: Will A Free America Survive? Will You?* (Sun City, AZ: Founders Freedom Press, 2008), 404-405.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, "The United States began as a secular nation with no form of established religion." "It was that very gift that qualified this new nation to be described as lamb-like—even Christ-like."

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 405-406. "The United States was established on the premise that all men were equal, and its principles and laws were based on the concept that each one was to love and respect everyone else as one's own self. That principle is taken from the second table of the Ten Commandment law, which deals with the horizontal social relations of man to man and does not breach the separation of church and state, which forbids laws enforcing a religious law. Such laws interfere with the citizen's vertical man-to-God relationship and responsibility, these being Sunday observance laws, or other laws stemming from religious

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another reason for criticizing the Religious Right, and that is the issue of abortion.⁸² Stevens believes fervently that conservative religious powers are trying to restrict or oppose abortion in violation of the separation of church and state principle upon which our nation is founded. I will not here pursue Stevens' precise views on why he believes abortion is acceptable, other than to state that he believes human life begins only at birth, not conception.⁸³ This view is naturally contestable in its own right. But that debate must take place elsewhere. For the present purposes, however, how abortion relates to Sunday legislation is what matters. And for Stevens, interpreting the commandment on murder to include abortion is not biblical. Therefore, legislating the issue in favor of a pro-life commitment violates the separation of church and state.

For Stevens, "the most powerful religio-political coalition in the nation is seeking control of the presidency, the Congress, and the judiciary, and for all practical purposes has achieved it, and the same is true on the state level." He continues, "The Fundamentalist New Right, including Protestants, Roman Catholics, Mormons, and others, is effectively using the abortion issue in recent years in order to become our moral and legal guardians."⁸⁴ The powers he refers to reside, in his mind, in the conservative political party of the Republicans, the party well known for its support of anti-abortion, or pro-life, positions. Stevens is highly critical of both President George W. Bush and James Dobson, of *Focus on the Family*, a conservative organization dedicated, in part, to opposing abortion and gay marriage.⁸⁵ I must immediately note that Stevens' book, written in

dogma. Another example is the current prevalent use of religious theology as a legal basis to determine the beginning of personhood and life at conception in the issue of abortion," *ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 402. "The biggest religious issue we face in society today is that of abortion. This author predicts that it will be resolved favorably to those who oppose it," *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 197. Stevens claims that "God's Word defines the time of the beginning of life for a person as birth and the end of life as death."

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 505.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 455. Stevens claims that "Perhaps the most recognized Evangelical leader today is Focus on the Family's James Dobson. He seems to have more political clout than any other Evangelical. His complaint about Harriet Miers nixed her nomination to the United States Supreme Court and caused her to withdraw her name from consideration. She appeared to have a more moderate position on the Constitution than her successor nominee, Samuel Alito. . . . One might add that since Dobson is the head of Evangelical Christianity's

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2008, went to press prior to President Obama's election, which casts a very different light on current events. Nevertheless, Stevens believes that it is through the issue of abortion as the catalyst, that "the Catholic-Evangelical alliance wants to unite religion with government" and that "it is *this* change on the part of some American Protestants that is changing them into the likeness of the beast, like the papacy."⁸⁶ This will eventually lead to "Sunday observance" coming "again . . . to the forefront."⁸⁷ Abortion and Sunday legislation are thus joined at the hip for Stevens, with their common origin in the conservative Religious Right which dominates the Republican party in America. In some respects, again, his views are clearly supportable by all Adventists, such as when he criticizes Timothy La Haye, a noted evangelical author, for claiming that "the only way to have a genuine spiritual revival is to have legislative reform."⁸⁸ The key issue is the application of the issues he advocates and their relationship to the separation of church and state.

To critique Stevens briefly in line with what I've done above, there are two major issues that affect the accuracy of his assessment. First, abortion must be interpreted in harmony with his view that life begins only at birth, leaving the value of the fetus significantly lessened. Many Adventists are not comfortable with that interpretation. In fact, were one to take the opposite view from Stevens, that voluntary abortion *is* murder, one could argue that it is precisely society's willingness to violate one of the horizontal commandments that will prepare them to violate a vertical commandment. Secondly, in line with the above criticisms, some of Stevens facts just don't line up with the present reality. Influential figures he cites, such as Dobson, the "pope of evangelicals" are fading off the scene without obvious replacements. There has been a strong rise of liberal Christians in recent times. Even when Obama provoked American Catholic leaders over the issue of contraceptives in February 2012, drawing pointed criticism, the average Catholic seemed unconcerned, with Obama's approval ratings dropping only three percentage points from 49% to 46%

Vatican, he is close to being to the Evangelicals what the pope is to the Roman Catholic Church—the Protestant pope," Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 456.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 455.

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among Catholics,⁸⁹ right in line with the rest of the country at the time, including many other Christians. Overall, Obama maintained a near 50% approval rating during the public dialogue on this issue, consistent with the very split nature of the country overall, a split that has deepened of late as part of a broad “culture war.”

2.5 Summary

Upon the above survey of three prominent mainstream Adventists, a theologian, well-published pastor, and religious liberty expert, concerning the issue of potential Sunday legislation, a clear pattern has emerged.⁹⁰ Every branch of interested groups, namely theologians, informed pastors, and legal experts, have advanced the idea that Sunday legislation is most likely to come from *conservative* religious Protestant groups uniting with fellow conservative Catholic groups to “moralize” society. In the everyday world, this amounts to a criticism of the Republican party in American politics during the 1980’s-2000’s. This is not to say there aren’t differing perspectives. This study cannot explore that presently, partially in light of the fact that little literature exists with alternate viewpoints from Adventists. Nevertheless, amongst the general Adventist population, there is sympathy for the work of people like James Dobson, who has labored for family values. Of course, no Adventist denies the problematic nature of some of Pat Robertson’s and Jerry Falwell’s statements and beliefs. But, as noted, they are not necessarily as influential as the above authors believe. Indeed, the facts point otherwise. Moore’s mention of Rushdoony, for example, highlights the situation. Texas Governor Rick Perry, during his brief primary run in the Republican Party for President in 2012, was supported by the New Apostolic Reformation, an offshoot of Rushdoonian Reconstructionist ideas, and he was able to garner only 7% in some polls of the *Republican* vote before he bowed out of the 2012 presidential primaries.⁹¹ It seems the American people don’t like ultra-

⁸⁹ http://content.usatoday.com/communities/theoval/post/2012/02/obamas-ratings-with-catholics-are-little-changed/1#.Tzv_3ZWsPmg.

⁹⁰ I could add others who share essentially the same views, such as G. Edward Reid, *Sunday’s Coming!: Revelation 13 Is Coming Into Focus* (Omega Productions, 2005).

⁹¹ This became clear especially after Rick Perry’s views were compared, under the national spotlight, with those of his liberal fellow Republican nominee challengers. Even in his home state of Texas, Perry lost support. <http://www.npr.org/2011/08/24/>

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conservatives, notwithstanding any other reasons Perry was rejected by his party.

Rather, our nation is very evenly divided when it comes to conservative and liberal Christians, and the fragmentation appears to be growing.⁹² The future is uncertain concerning who will win—conservatives or liberals? And, as I hope to demonstrate below, Adventist prophecy is compatible with *either* side winning in a general sense, as they both have strong motives compatible with Catholic teachings that could combine the church and the state, and the various understandings of the Old and New Covenants advanced by Protestant believers.

Additionally, I hope to prepare a *reason* why we as Adventists should cease our overly partisan critiques of American Protestant Christianity as it is hindering our witness to many sympathetic Christians who may favor either the conservative *or* liberal versions of Christianity in a broad sense. The fundamental problem illustrated by the above situation is that it very often appears that Adventists are generally or wholesale in opposition to *any* conservative idea or movement through their critiques of the Religious Right, including those in the arenas of economics and foreign policy. This can hardly be avoided when one feels encouraged to always vote for one particular political party because of their purported religious supporters. Our corporate witness is in danger in such instances of being swallowed up in our Sunday-phobia. But should this necessarily be the case? Must not all issues be argued for individually, irrelevant of party platforms?

As noted in the introduction, Ellen White encouraged us to work to delay Sunday legislation. Given the above, and the party identification that the Religious Right has obtained, it would make it appear that every good Adventist should always vote for the Democrat or liberal politician. The unfortunate result is that Adventist young people are implicitly encouraged to believe or support *every* liberal cause, idea, or practice. This greatly

139781021/the-evangelicals-engaged-in-spiritual-warfare. See also, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/17/rick-perry-texas-republicans_n_1211144.html. Also, <http://www.pollwatchdaily.com/tag/rick-perry/>.

⁹² The fact is, religion is more complicated in America these days. “Gone are the days when one could simply gauge the religious right’s position on a given issue by procuring a sound bite from a spokesman with an established organization like the American Family Association, the Christian Coalition, or Focus on the Family,” writes Becky Garrison, <http://www.thereligiousleft.org/>.

damages our reputation with many non-militant conservatives, both religious and secular, who are not seeking any particular union of church and state. I will examine a sample of such individuals below. Again, my purpose is not to embrace either side, but merely to demonstrate the unwise character of the monotoned critiques of the above individuals, whose work I generally support, with the exception of Stevens' views on abortion, which I do view differently.

3. The Existence of the Religious Left: Fact

The section title above is very intentional. Based on the evidence provided above, prominent Adventists seem to doubt the existence of a politically active Religious Left, and especially doubt that the Left could be key players in any Adventist eschatological picture. Rather, it is clearly conservative religious powers allying with conservative political powers that will enact Sunday legislation. I believe this simplified prediction to be a grave error, if not in content, then in presentation. Below I will outline some of the reasons why we need a modified approach to our understanding of the nature of religious political identities, and especially how we relate to them.

3.1 Are “Most” Christians “Conservative?”

As the liberal Democrat leaning Catholic Steven H. Shiffrin observed in 2009, “although the mass media tend to ignore it, there is a strong religious Left in the United States.”⁹³ His observation is merely the echo of one made by Michael Cromartie in 2000, when he shared that a visiting liberal theologian, Harvey Cox, was surprised to find that the students at Pat Robertson's Regent University were “not monolithic in their political views.”⁹⁴ Indeed, Cromartie notes that evangelicalism “includes not only a diversity of denominations but also Christians from the political right,

⁹³ Steven H. Shiffrin, *The Religious Left and Church-State Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1. See also, David P. Gushee, *The Future of Faith in American Politics: The Public Witness of the Evangelical Center* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 216.

⁹⁴ Michael Cromartie, “The Evangelical Kaleidoscope: A Survey of Recent Evangelical Political Engagement,” in Timothy J. Demy and Gary P. Steward, eds., *Politics and Public Policy: A Christian Response* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2000), 123.

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left, and center.”⁹⁵ Even more importantly, from his vista in 2000, he already had noted that “although they have largely maintained an alliance with political conservatism, they do have a moderate, liberal, and left-wing contingent that has had an important influence.”⁹⁶ When this fact is combined with the knowledge that even decades ago “many evangelical college students were turned off by the confrontational tactics of Jerry Falwell’s followers”⁹⁷ and were not fans of Robertson either during the heyday of the Moral Majority and Christian Coalition, the evangelical world was and remains ripe for unpredictable changes.⁹⁸

The question is, what kind of changes? And have they already begun to happen? The answer, as already implied above, is a resounding “yes.” “The Religious Right and the Religious Left are almost exactly the same size. The former has had a much greater impact for the past 25 years largely because of superior organization and drive.”⁹⁹ Yet that dominance might change, as the latest data from 2013 indicates.¹⁰⁰ It seems that “if current trends persist, religious progressives will soon outnumber religious conservatives, a group that is shrinking with each successive generation.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Carl F. H. Henry, “Linking the Bible to Public Policy,” in Demy and Steward, eds., *Politics and Public Policy: A Christian Response*, 58. Henry pointedly observed that “the religious right did not, to be sure, speak for all evangelicals any more than Pat Robertson’s presidential candidacy was a ‘panevangelical’ effort,” Ibid.

⁹⁸ This consequence is in part due to the epic failure of Pat Robertson’s presidential campaign, which resulted in Robertson being one of the most negatively viewed politicians ever. As Doug Bandow shares, “popular acceptance of the role of religion, at least of [conservative] evangelical Christianity, in the political process may have peaked [in 1987]. . . . A year later Pat Robertson’s presidential candidacy crashed and burned. After his dramatic second-place showing in Iowa polls showed that half of all Republicans, let alone Democrats, would not vote for him under any circumstances, a negative rating virtually unprecedented for any politician [followed],” Doug Bandow, *Beyond Good Intentions: A Biblical View of Politics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 226-227.

⁹⁹ <http://www.beliefnet.com/News/Politics/2004/10/The-Twelve-Tribes-Of-American-Politics.aspx>. See also, Shiffrin, *The Religious Left and Church-State Relations*, 1.

¹⁰⁰ <http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2013/07/19/2324411/the-rise-of-the-religious-left-religious-progressives-will-soon-outnumber-conservatives/>; and http://www.salon.com/2013/07/19/the_rise_of_the_religious_left/.

¹⁰¹ <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/07/the-rise-of-the-christian-left-in-america/278086/>.

As such, the “forgotten” Evangelical Left¹⁰² may yet rise again, in unforeseeable forms. And the socio-political groundwork for such a major movement has already been laid for some years in what is called liberation theology, which depends on a union of church and state.

3.2 The Origin and Development of the Religious Left

A history of the origin of the contemporary Religious Left in America necessarily begins with a very brief primer on liberation theology, a movement popular in South American Catholicism in the 1960's and 70's, though its social and political visions come from even earlier times.¹⁰³ In its essence, “liberation theology grew out of the faith, struggles, sufferings and hopes of the poor.” As such, “it is . . . a theology that starts out in a particular political context and set of social conditions.”¹⁰⁴ This political dimension is crucial to recognize. Indeed, as Ian Linden comments, “because liberation theology originated—and remains—at the intersection of contested political and religious goals,” no matter how one wishes to define the “theological” dimension of it, at heart it remains interested in “socio-economic systems”¹⁰⁵ that have a decidedly Marxist, redistributive flavor, that takes, forcibly if necessary, from the rich and gives to the poor to advance equality.¹⁰⁶ “Liberation theology” has “its focus on the poor, the construction of God’s reign and liberation.”¹⁰⁷ It seeks the “radical political

¹⁰² David R. Swartz, *Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in an Age of Conservatism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012). While appreciative of Swartz’s historical research, I believe the Evangelical Left is not something that has been abandoned to the dustbin of history, as the numerous books below demonstrate.

¹⁰³ For works describing this moment, both pro and con, see Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology: The Essential Facts About the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1987); Daniel Bell, *Liberation Theology after the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering* (Routledge, 2013); Christopher Rowland, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Ivan Petrella, *The Future of Liberation Theology: An Argument and Manifesto* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2004).

¹⁰⁴ Ian Linden, *Liberation Theology: Coming of Age?* (London, UK: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1997), 5.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. Liberation theology is when a “knowledge of God is sought through a critical reflection on praxis, the action and practice of the poor in seeking their liberation from every kind of oppression,” Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.gotquestions.org/liberation-theology.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Petrella, *The Future of Liberation Theology*, 4.

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transformation of the present order” as “a central component of the living out of Christian faith.”¹⁰⁸ It is noteworthy, for Adventist audiences, that Ellen White took a decidedly neutral position on socio-economic activism.¹⁰⁹

There is a direct connection between the above and the popular concept of “cheap grace,” a problem infecting the Religious Right, whose vision became obsessed with political goals at the cost of personal piety, and which must be explained before proceeding further. To define it, as Eldin Villafañe puts it, “‘cheap grace’ is a phrase, and a concept, that has great theological meaning. In its practical sense, which I want to underline, it speaks to us of an ‘easy’ Christianity.” He continues, “An easy Christianity is a Christianity that doesn’t cost much, that pays no price. It thinks and says, in fact, ‘Please don’t ask too much of me’; ‘Don’t place any demands on me.’ ‘Cheap grace’ portrays those persons who want to live in a secured comfort zone, those who think and say, ‘Do not disturb!’ Ultimately, ‘cheap grace’ characterizes that mode of thinking or mind-set that rejects obedience, commitment, and discipleship, and the cross!”¹¹⁰ Although the criticism of cheap grace can be fully given and accepted as a *personal* critique and call to discipleship, and thus an internal criticism of conservatives to themselves, it can also become a corporate and external one, as it is used by liberal theologians against conservatives. For example, the prominent liberal leaning Christian, Ronald Sider, connects the Religious Right’s apparent “cheap grace” message to a lack of emphasis by Christians on social justice.¹¹¹ He aims his critique of “cheap grace” at traditional evangelical conservatives, the Religious Right. He credits liberal “Mainline Protestants [and] Roman Catholics” for an understanding of “distributive justice,” which includes universal access to “health-care”¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Humberto Belli, “Nicaragua: Field Test for Liberation Theology,” *Pastoral Renewal*, September (1984), 18.

¹⁰⁹ Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases Vol. 14* (1990), 160-161; and White, *Mind, Character, and Personality Vol. 2* (1977), 625-627.

¹¹⁰ Eldin Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace: A Call to Radical Discipleship, Incarnation, and Justice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 2.

¹¹¹ Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience: Why are Christians Living Just like the Rest of the World?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 77-78, 81.

¹¹² Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of Evangelical Politics: Why Are Christians Missing the Chance to Really Change the World?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 104-105, 136. An irony is that Sider is against abortion, while many secular advocates of universal

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and a rejection of cheap grace. For Sider, the “issues of poverty, inequality, and economic justice . . . [are] central to biblical morality.”¹¹³

The liberation movement, a call to abandon “cheap grace,” took on an American face in the 1970’s through the work of Jim Wallis (particularly when he re-branded an earlier magazine of his into *Sojourners* in 1976), the aforementioned Ron Sider, and Tony Campolo. Ronald Nash’s work may represent one of the first serious critiques describing the rise of these individuals and their thinking in his 1996 book, *Why the Left Is Not Right: The Religious Left: Who They Are and What They Believe*.¹¹⁴ Importantly, the connection is explicit between the South American liberation thought and the American version of the evangelical Left, often softened to simply the Social Gospel. In the words of Wallis himself, who was not even here advocating Marxism, though his pragmatic ideas would lean more and more that way:

As more Christians become influenced by liberation theology, finding themselves increasingly rejecting the values and institutions of capitalism, they will also be drawn to the Marxist analysis and praxis that is so central to the movement. That more Christians will come to view the world through Marxist eyes is therefore predictable. It will even be predictable among the so-called ‘young evangelicals’ who, for the most part, have a zeal for social change that is not yet matched by a developed socio-economic analysis that will cause them to see the impossibility of making capitalism work for justice and peace.¹¹⁵

Wallis’ words were prophetic. Note his reference to the “young evangelicals,” also sometimes called the “new evangelicals.”¹¹⁶ Such

health care are not, and Sider connects the right to health care upon the right to life.

¹¹³ Laurence R. Iannaccone, “*The Economics of American Fundamentalists*,” in *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Politics, Economics, and Militance*, ed. Martin E. Marty, and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 350.

¹¹⁴ Ronald H. Nash, *Why the Left Is Not Right: The Religious Left: Who They Are and What They Believe* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996).

¹¹⁵ Jim Wallis, “Liberating and Conformity,” *Sojourners*, September 1976, 3-4.

¹¹⁶ Marcia Pally, *The New Evangelicals: Expanding the Vision of the Common Good* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011). See also, David P. Gushee, *A New Evangelical Manifesto: A Kingdom Vision for the Common Good* (Chalice Press, 2012). C.F., Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003).

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individuals would later contribute to the rise of the hottest and hippest Christian movement, the Emergent and/or Emerging Church, which is essentially a postmodernized Christianity, an amorphous liberal Christianity that “speaks hip” fluently and constitutes a group of millions throughout the western and south American world.¹¹⁷ Although their exact numbers are difficult to ascertain in part because they eschew the traditional churches and buildings most still identify with Christianity, what is clear is that they have split American evangelicalism in two.¹¹⁸ They are an “ideology” that runs house-to-house, college campus-to-campus. While often relegated by some as merely a youth movement, many aspects of the Emerging ideology have made their way mainstream.¹¹⁹ The Occupy Wall

¹¹⁷ <http://www.alanhartung.com/2007/02/the-size-and-scope-of-the-emerging-church/>.

¹¹⁸ “The evangelical church is deeply divided. . . . Two groups, the traditional [Right] and emerging [Left] camps, are at the heart of the impending split,” Jim Belcher, *Deep Church: A Third Way Beyond Emerging and Traditional* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 9.

¹¹⁹ The “Emerging/Emergent Church” is a difficult label to define precisely. For brevity’s sake, I’ll borrow a less than brief sentence from Kevin Deyoung: “After reading nearly five thousand pages of emerging-church literature, I have no doubt that the emerging church, while loosely defined and far from uniform, can be described and critiqued as a diverse, but recognizable, movement. You might be an emergent Christian: if you listen to U2, Moby, and Johnny Cash’s *Hurt* (sometimes in church), use sermon illustrations from *The Sopranos*, drink lattes in the afternoon and Guinness in the evenings, and always use a Mac; if your reading list consists primarily of Stanley Hauerwas, Henri Nouwen, N. T. Wright, Stan Grenz, Dallas Willard, Brennan Manning, Jim Wallis, Frederick Beuchner,; David Bosch, John Howard Yoder, Wendell Berry, Nancy Murphy, John Franke, Walter Winks and Lesslie Newbigin (not to mention [Brian] McLaren, [Doug] Pagitt, [Rob] Bell, etc.) and your sparring partners include D. A. Carson, John Calvin, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and Wayne Grudem; if your idea of quintessential Christian discipleship is Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, or Desmond Tutu; if you don’t like George W. Bush or institutions or big business or capitalism or *Left Behind* Christianity; if your political concerns are poverty, AIDS, imperialism, war-mongering, CEO salaries, consumerism, global warming, racism, and oppression and not so much abortion and gay marriage; if you are into bohemian, goth, rave, or indie; if you talk about the myth of redemptive violence and the myth of certainty; if you lie awake at night having nightmares about all the ways modernism has ruined your life; if you love the Bible as a beautiful, inspiring collection of works that lead us into the mystery of God but is not inerrant; if you search for truth but aren’t sure it can be found; if you’ve ever been to a church with prayer labyrinths, candles, Play-Doh, chalk-drawings, couches, or beanbags (your youth group doesn’t count); if you loathe words like *linear*, *propositional*, *rational*, *machine*, and *hierarchy* and use words like *ancient-future*, *jazz*, *mosaic*, *matrix*, *missional*, *vintage*, and *dance*; if you grew up in a

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Street movement in America represents this “liberation” of the poor from the rich in a secular context, and has been specifically embraced by the Religious Left’s Wallis.¹²⁰ It’s no accident that Wallis is a special advisor on religious matters to President Obama. It is similarly no surprise that Obama’s longtime pastor, Jeremiah Wright, has connections with liberation theology.¹²¹

My point in the above is very simple: all of these movements and individuals are religious, political, and lean to the far left politically. Furthermore, Wallis is also a close ally with Brian McLaren, a prominent leader of the Emerging church movement. And those with sympathies to these movements represent a significant number of the American populace. And they don’t like the Religious Right or Republicans. Emergent or Emerging Christians are overwhelmingly Democrats.¹²² And Emerging Christians often espouse a “kingdom on earth” mentality, oft considered a tell-tale sign of the Religious Right. For example, Scot McKnight, an Emerging Church leader, once said “I tell my friends that I have voted Democrat for years for all the wrong reasons. I don’t think the Democratic Party is worth a hoot, but its historic commitment to the poor and to centralizing government for social justice is what I think government

conservative Christian home that in retrospect seems legalistic, naive, and rigid; if you support women in all levels of ministry, prioritize urban over suburban, and like your theology narrative instead of systematic; if you disbelieve in any sacred-secular divide; if you want to be the church and not just go to church; if you long for a community that is relational, tribal, and primal like a river or a garden; if you believe doctrine gets in the way of an interactive relationship with Jesus; if you believe who goes to hell is no one’s business and no one may be there anyway; if you believe salvation has a little to do with atoning for guilt and a lot to do with bringing the whole creation back into shalom with its Maker; if you believe following Jesus is not believing the right things but living the right way; if it really bugs you when people talk about going to heaven instead of heaven coming to us; if you disdain monological, didactic preaching; if you use the word ‘story’ in all your propositions about postmodernism—if all or most of this tortuously long sentence describes you, then you might be an emergent Christian,” Kevin DeYoung and Ted Kluck, *Why We’re Not Emergent: (By Two Guys Who Should Be)* Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008), 21-22.

¹²⁰ <http://vitalwholeness.wordpress.com/2011/11/13/occupy-wall-street-according-to-jim-wallis/>.

¹²¹ <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88512189>.

¹²² http://articles.cnn.com/2008-07-01/politics/obama.evangelicals_1_evangelical-voters-young-evangelicals-evangelical-community?_s=PM:POLITICS. See also, <http://www.brianmclaren.net/archives/blog/why-im-voting-for-barack-obama-a.html>.

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should do.”¹²³ When combined with what Brian McLaren believes, namely that “Jesus came ‘to proclaim the Kingdom of God, which is God’s will being done on Earth,’”¹²⁴ whether one likes this or not, this kind of thinking leads to the explicit ideological union of Church and State that McKnight alluded to, and which the liberal Social Gospel seeks to temporally fulfill here on earth. The saying of Jesus, “‘Seek first the kingdom of God’” includes “social salvation and the salvation of the earth.”¹²⁵ It is not an accident that President Obama, a Democrat, echoed their sentiments that he wanted to create “a kingdom right here on earth”¹²⁶ in his desire to reach out to what he perceived to be his liberal Christian base.

Presently, very little has been said about the Emerging church by Seventh-day Adventists in print.¹²⁷ There is virtually no sounding board with which one may interact. Some Adventist scholars are even ignorant of the existence of the swelling number of people in the Religious Left; not one mention of them appears by any of the Adventists explored above—Gulley, Moore, and Stevens—as they look at possible eschatological scenarios. This is a remarkable fact, given how large the movement is!¹²⁸

¹²³ <http://www.estnews.com/bm/issues-facing-christians-today-common-sense-for-today/falling-standards-and-seeker-sensitive-churches/top-agenda-of-the-emergent-church-social-gospel.shtml>.

¹²⁴ <http://christianresearchnetwork.com/?p=2106>.

¹²⁵ This is a popular line of thought for liberal-leaning theologians, notes Jürgen Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness, ARISE!: God’s Future for Humanity and the Earth* (Minneapolis, MN: First Fortress Press, 2010), 80.

¹²⁶ <http://www.libertymagazine.org/index.php?id=1810>; http://articles.cnn.com/2007-10-08/politics/obama.faith_1_obama-s-south-carolina-rick-warren-faith?_s=PM:POLITICS; <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,300257,00.html>.

¹²⁷ This is slowly changing. The work of Fernando Canale, here in *JATS*, is addressing the Emergent Church in an ongoing article series looking at its philosophical and theological roots. See also, John Markovic, “The Emerging Church: A Call to Action and Authenticity,” *Ministry*, (March, 2010).

¹²⁸ It is very difficult to measure the exact size of the “Emerging Church” movement, as it is not a denomination. It represents the widespread “liberal/progressive” impulse amongst Christians from *every* denomination, that has now split evangelicalism amongst the two major secular political parties. Estimates run in the millions. A “Google books” search nets 27,000+ books with the phrase “Emerging Church” appearing. However, there is another dimension to explore here as well. Societal socio-demographic changes are in store for the United States that will completely shake up the traditional powers and groups, and favor the Religious Left, which is open to more diversity and is very ecumenical. Furthermore, it is none other than Pat Buchanan who discusses this in a recent book. Patrick

This exhibits a strange and unexpected unawareness of what is happening religiously in America. And, although it may seem inconceivable that such liberal Christians would want to create a Sunday law, I will provide below a sample of reasons why this is not so far-fetched as one might think, because of the close relationship that liberal Catholics have with the Religious Left, and the relationship that the Religious Left's interests have in the government to advance their causes. Although Catholicism's "best kept secret"¹²⁹ may have been its Leftist progressive social agenda, this day may be coming to an end as it emerges into the American public consciousness.

3.3 The Ground Motive of the Secular and Religious Left

Although the arguments rage on over the Republican and Democratic visions of society and the amount of power or control the federal government should have over its citizens, it does appear to be a basic reality that, at least in theory, the Republicans favor big business "trickle down" economics and the Democrats more of helping the poor directly as the best way to improve society and the economy. Although it is a highly divisive topic, the basic fact is that the liberal/socialist/progressivist/Marxist philosophies admittedly require larger, more comprehensive governmental oversight, whereas a conservative capitalism emphasizes less government and more localized control.

With the above in mind, it is important to emphasize that societal change oriented toward emphasizing equality and fairness is the ground motive of the Religious Left, and is something it shares with the secular Left. They want things to be fair, even if it means "forcefully" (in South America, sometimes violence was used, in the U.S., usually just higher taxation of the rich). Both are willing to use the government to achieve

J. Buchanan, *Suicide of a Superpower: Will America Survive to 2025* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2011). See especially his chapter, "The End of White America," 123-161, for an extended discussion of the changes in store for American culture. However the cards may fall, indeed one needn't agree with Buchanan's assessment of the good or bad sides of the changes, there are certain inevitabilities that will come, and they will bring changes with them that will break up the current political groups.

¹²⁹ In reference to the work by Edward P. DeBerri, James E. Hug, Peter J. Henriot, and Michael J. Schultheis, *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992). All of the documents referenced in this work would support "Leftist" policies related to world poverty, etc.

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their socio-economic-religious aims. What truly separates the Left from the Religious Right, which seeks to reform society *morally* (e.g., taking a stance against abortion and same-sex marriage), is simply a shift in focus. The Left is willing to work through the government just as much as the extreme Right leaders were. In the Left, however, the idea that everyone should have an equal or “fair” amount of wealth and prosperity is the primary concern, and even becomes the moral justification for their actions. The issue is, does reforming society through the government, even without purportedly traditional moral concerns, truly leave the state out of the church or individual’s life in an excessive way? The answer appears to be no.

Any law, such as the universal health-care plan that the Obama administration passed, that requires an “individual mandate,” represents this reality, and is almost unanimously supported by Leftist religious leaders, though not by most on the Right.¹³⁰ Even more *apropos* would be the debate concerning the Obama administration on the issue of government mandated contraception availability in church controlled hospitals. Although most Catholic *leaders* denounced Obama’s plan to provide contraception through religious organizations, including Catholic hospitals which oppose the practice, the fact is 95% of Catholics do in fact practice contraception in spite of their Catholic faith.¹³¹ The point is, were Adventists to focus solely on the vigorous voice of the conservative Catholic leadership’s opposition, they would be preaching from a denial of reality of what most religious people actually believe. Religious people are as likely to be “progressive” as “conservative” on different issues. In this instance, the progressive liberals are rather stoking the fire by provoking conservatives over an irrelevant issue through a desire for greater “forced” secularism, as free or very low cost contraceptives were already available

¹³⁰ <http://brianmclaren.net/archives/blog/jim-wallis-gets-it-right-on-theo.html>. Also noteworthy is that the critical votes to pass the Health-care plan were a supposed “conservative” Catholic, Chief Justice John Roberts, and Obama’s appointee, the liberal progressive Catholic Justice, Sonia Sotomayer.

¹³¹ http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/charles-krauthammer-overreach--obamacare-vs-the-constitution/2012/02/16/gIQAmupcIR_story.html. See also, <http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/pelosi-i-am-going-to-stick-with-fellow-catholics-in-supporting-obama-birth>.

at many health clinics for people from lower economic brackets.¹³² Liberals were here inserting themselves into socio-religious issues unnecessarily, even when it interfered with the operation of churches.¹³³ Interestingly, the disagreement between conservative Catholics and the secular Left over contraception ignores the fact that the Catholics strongly favored the universal health-care plan in the first place, setting up the future disagreement. These issues are complicated, and I cannot give them a full treatment here. Instead, I will turn toward some non-Adventist reactions to the Religious Left and the Left's relationship with Catholicism's historic desire for complete socio-political-economic control, which Adventists believe will be renewed during the end times. In any case, one can't deny the Religious Left's desire to gain a public and political influence that rivals that of the Religious Right,¹³⁴ and it's hard to argue they aren't beginning to achieve some success.

3.4 The Religious Left's Catholic Roots and Desire for Political Control

It is no accident that a number of individuals in the Emerging church and Religious Left see the tight relationship between the Religious Left and

¹³² <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/2762671/posts>.

¹³³ http://www.bostonherald.com/news/opinion/op_ed/view/20220217health_mandate_vs_religion/. See also, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/charles-krauthammer-overreach--obamacare-vs-the-constitution/2012/02/16/gIQAmupcIR_story.html. George Weigel explains it well as he shares, "But what about the intellectuals? What about the insistence of self-identified "liberal Catholic" commentators, op-ed columnists, and journals that the HHS mandate had nothing to do with religious freedom, or, later, that the "accommodation" met any legitimate religious-freedom concerns? What is going on when these Catholics provide intellectual and political cover for the Sebeliuses, DeLauros, Murrays, and Pelosis in their insistence that this is all about "preventive services" necessary for "women's health"? Many of these liberal Catholics had, of course, provided similar cover for Obama during the 2008 campaign, so in that sense it was less than startling that their partisanship trumped their religious loyalty once again. Still, there was something different, something tragic, about this particular *trahison des clercs*. In throwing a robust concept of religious freedom over the side, liberal Catholics were betraying their own noblest heritage," <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/291455/catholic-betrayal-religious-freedom-george-weigel>.

¹³⁴ For example, see Frederick Clarkson, ed., *Dispatches from the Religious Left: The Future of Faith and Politics in America* (Brooklyn, NY: Ig Publishing, 2009).

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liberal Catholicism.¹³⁵ Noteworthy is that those in the new Evangelical “Center” (which is really more Left than Right, given which issues they emphasize, like Global Warming) are far more open to Catholic teachings.¹³⁶ Roger Oakland, in *Faith Undone: The Emerging Church . . . A New Reformation or an End-Time Deception*,¹³⁷ treats in book-length detail the friendliness and ecumenical attitude that Religious Left leaders have toward their “mother church,” the Catholic Church, especially concerning mystical spirituality. As the evangelical Left’s ethicist David Gushee remarks, “We believe that while the Catholic tradition’s emphasis on learning from tradition and other sources of insight can be embraced, the equating of the authority of Scripture and of tradition must be rejected on the basis of Jesus’ example.”¹³⁸ Gushee favors more nuanced positions, like the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, where Scripture is combined with tradition,

¹³⁵ E.g., see Paul E. Begala, “The Religious Left, Too Often Left Out,” 57-62, in E.J. Dione Jr., Jean Bethke Elshtain, and Kayla M. Drogosz, eds., *One Electorate Under God? A Dialogue on Religion & American Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 58. Growing up in the “Bible Belt,” Begala shares that while “Christian views led many of the people I grew up with to express their politics through conservatism, Christianity—especially Catholicism—drew me to liberalism,” 58. He also shared, for example that, “I am disappointed when prominent Catholic politicians and bishops try to reduce the call to faithful citizenship to the issue of abortion alone,” *Ibid.*, 61. Recalling that 54% of Catholic voters supported Obama in 2008, a very strong pro-choice President, one can see this reality is undoubtedly repeated in the minds of many Catholics. See also, Shiffrin, *The Religious Left and Church-State Relations*, ix, 1.

¹³⁶ For example, note David P. Gushee and Glen Harold Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 423-424, “Catholic social teachings have been willing to name these problems [in capitalism] quite forthrightly and have consistently called for appropriate government regulation of free-market economies so as to reduce distributive injustice. The encyclicals also have pleaded with individuals and institutions to remember the universal destination of goods, the biblical mandate for economic generosity and the simple humanity of those who suffer economic deprivation. . . . [we need] more aggressive government involvement in constructive economic empowerment efforts.” See also, David P. Gushee, *Christians and Politics Beyond the Culture Wars: An Agenda for Engagement* (Baker Books, 2000). Gushee also observes that many more liberal evangelicals “often draw on the profound resources of the magisterial Roman Catholic social-teaching tradition,” David P. Gushee, *The Future of Faith in American Politics: The Public Witness of the Evangelical Center* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 219.

¹³⁷ Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone: The Emerging Church . . . A New Reformation or an End-time Deception* (Silverton, OR: Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2007).

¹³⁸ Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, 88.

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reason, and experience. “All have a role to play in the formation of Christian faith and ethics, though Scripture occupies the central place,”¹³⁹ so he claims. His discussion needs to be taken seriously by Adventist thought leaders to detect the slide into Catholicism that Religious Left leaders are encouraging. Either Oakland and Gushee are completely misinformed, or there is a reason that Emergent, liberal, Leftist ideas are so friendly to Catholic understandings of spirituality and social concern, even when the political scene is brought into the picture.¹⁴⁰

In the secular arena, journalist and historian Jonah Goldberg has written a provocative book entitled *Liberal Fascism*,¹⁴¹ detailing the intellectual history of many of the ideas that today’s liberals, Democrats, or progressives, advocate. In brief, many of today’s liberal or progressive ideas, Religious or otherwise, have intellectual roots or parallels in

¹³⁹ Ibid., 87. Gushee is quite honest about his thinking. He states that “the Catholic moral tradition . . . has always been quite interested in gaining insight from other sources, such as the moral philosophy of ancient Greece or, in modern times, the best and most relevant scientific research available on any given question. This interest is rooted in a deeply held theological belief that God speaks to humanity not solely through the Bible (or church tradition) but also through the witness of the created order as discovered by the human mind,” Ibid. Gushee goes on to acknowledge that “the Protestant Reformers broke with Roman Catholicism precisely on the issue of sources of authority. The rallying cry of *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) meant the rejection of the authority of the Catholic tradition in favor of a return to the Scriptures, and only the Scriptures, for theological and moral direction,” Ibid. Gushee rejects this radical Protestant ideal as unrealistic and untenable, preferring the Catholic moral tradition that seeks the best and most relevant scientific research available.

¹⁴⁰ Interestingly, during the 2012 Presidential campaign, the Republican conservative Catholic presidential candidate Rick Santorum lost to his fellow moderate Mormon Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, in Republican primary voting amongst Catholic voters, again demonstrating that Catholic voters favor more liberal policies. <http://www.religionnews.com/politics/election/mitt-romney-trouncing-rick-santorum-among-catholics>. See also, <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/03/07/loudly-catholic-santorum-loses-ohio-catholics/>. It is very telling that *Republican Catholic* (let alone the Democratic Catholics, which are a sizeable number) voters were not offering strong support to a genuine conservative Catholic, which runs directly against the ideas that Gullely, Moore, and Stevens have suggested.

¹⁴¹ Jonah Goldberg, *Liberal Fascism: The Secret History of the American Left from Mussolini to the Politics of Meaning* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2008).

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totalitarian fascism. The evidence is overwhelming.¹⁴² Those on the Left are often as totalitarian in their thinking as those on the right.¹⁴³ It seems, then, that many prominent Adventist thinkers have clearly neglected studies of recent history as they paint possible eschatological pictures, which are always filtered through classical or contemporary conservatism and the Religious Right of the 1980's-90's. However, such critiques are not absent from the rest of the Christian world.

In his *tour de force* book, *Freedom and Capitalism: Essays on Christian Politics and Economics*,¹⁴⁴ alongside his earlier work, *Ecclesiastical Megalomania: The Economic and Political Thought of the Roman Catholic Church*,¹⁴⁵ the libertarian conservative John W. Robbins sharply rebukes the liberal-progressive tendencies of Catholic social

¹⁴² Ibid. From the front inside cover, “the original fascists were really on the left, and . . . liberals from Woodrow Wilson to FDR to Hillary Clinton have advocated policies and principles remarkably similar to those of Hitler’s National Socialism and Mussolini’s Fascism.”

“Contrary to what most people think, the Nazis were ardent socialists (hence the term ‘National Socialism’). They believed in free health care and guaranteed jobs. They confiscated inherited wealth and spent vast sums on public education. They purged the church from public policy, promoted a new form of pagan spirituality, and inserted the authority of the state into every nook and cranny of daily life. The Nazis declared war on smoking, supported abortion, euthanasia, and gun control. They loathed the free market, provided generous pensions for the elderly, and maintained a strict racial quota system in their universities—where campus speech codes were all the rage. The Nazis led the world in organic farming and alternative medicine. Hitler was a strict vegetarian, and Himmler was an animals rights activist,” Ibid. This doesn’t mean today’s liberals or progressives are identical by any means. But the similarities and the intellectual roots of many of the ideas are undeniable. Even more importantly, Goldberg is not only very critical of Barack Obama, but also highly critical of “compassionate conservatives,” including George W. Bush. See also, http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_PAUL?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2012-02-18-22-33-48, where U.S. Congressman Ron Paul, a Libertarian with Republican ties, attacks both the political Right and Left with equal vigor.

¹⁴³ “Absolutism and fanaticism . . . apply not only to the Religious Right but to the Religious Left as well,” James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America: Making Sense of the Battles over the Family, Art, Education, Law, and Politics* (BasicBooks, 1991), 155.

¹⁴⁴ John W. Robbins, *Freedom and Capitalism: Essays on Christian Politics and Economics* (Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation, 2006).

¹⁴⁵ John W. Robbins, *Ecclesiastical Megalomania: The Economic and Political Thought of the Roman Catholic Church* (Unicoi, TN: The Trinity Foundation, 1999; 2006).

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teachings as an integral part of the Catholic church's plan to regain complete authority over society. Robbins states plainly that "the Roman Church-State devised much of the theory on which secular twentieth-century totalitarian regimes have been based, as well as acting as a model for them."¹⁴⁶ Robbins argues that "for centuries the Roman Church-State had resisted the advance of the Reformation and its economic system, capitalism." As capitalism began to win the day, "a new ally had to be found" to combat capitalism.¹⁴⁷ That new ally was socialism and all its variants.

Robbins demonstrates what to him seems clear. "In the United States, the influence of Roman Catholic economic thought has resulted in the creation of a redistributive state, in which the government intervenes in the economy and society in order to protect the 'common good' and establish 'social justice.'"¹⁴⁸ Robbins believes that "Mainline Protestant churches, which like the Roman Catholic Church . . . were promoting what came to be called the Social Gospel, whose political expressions were the Progressive movement and later the New Deal," represent the heart of the Catholic Church-State's vision.¹⁴⁹ Presently, in 2013, this can be seen in the progressive vision of a variety of programs and ideas, including universal health-care, where "every person has a right to adequate health care."¹⁵⁰ As Robbins explains, "what the papacy has realized is that by constantly enlarging the Rights of Man, to use the Vatican's own phrase, it can offer ever new moral arguments for enlarging the size, scope, and power of government."¹⁵¹ With health care, the principle at stake is the universal destination of goods. "The rights advocated by the Roman Church-State require the enslavement of some people for the benefit of

¹⁴⁶ Robbins, *Freedom and Capitalism*, 217-218.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 459. See also, <http://www.ourdailthread.org/content/vatican-issue-radical-document-economy-thomas-j-reese-sj>, where Tom Reese shares that the Vatican's, and Pope Benedict XVI's, position on economics is "to the left of every politician in the United States. It will be closer to views of the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement than anyone in the U.S. Congress. It will call for the redistribution of wealth and the regulation of the world economy by international agencies. Not only will it be to the left of Barack Obama, it will be to the left of Nancy Polosi."

¹⁴⁸ Robbins, *Freedom and Capitalism*, 480.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 497.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 486.

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others.” It appears “the Church-State seems to realize that this is the case, and advocates these rights for that reason.”¹⁵² Just imagine the day a “day of rest” might become a “right” before a “requirement” like our forced participation in universal health-care. A time when I am no longer *requested* to aid my brother willingly, but my well-being is bound up with his, in every way, *forcibly*. The parallels are closer than one might wish; the precedent has been set, and supported by Catholic Supreme Court Justices from both ideological perspectives.

The most important point to draw from Robbins is the fact that the re-empowerment of the Roman Church-State is most likely to come from their socio-economic teachings, which authorize greater governmental oversight over all of society for the “greater good.” Robbins notes that “the Vatican itself traces the origin of liberation theology to the Roman Church-State, specifically to Vatican II (1962-1965) and the 1968 conference of Roman Bishops in Medellín, Colombia.”¹⁵³ Indeed, “the only disagreements the Vatican has had with some aspects of liberation theology are its secular elements, the insufficient obsequiousness of some liberation theologians to the pope, and their sometime advocacy of a systematic use of violence to achieve goals that the Roman Church-State has always approved: social justice, the common good, and the universal destination of goods.”¹⁵⁴ Robbins again plainly states that the Roman “Church-State has never criticized the economic views of the liberation theologians.”¹⁵⁵

At this point, I must ask: If it were true that the Roman Church-State were using Leftist liberal social concerns to prepare the groundwork for a total takeover of American society, then where are the critiques of the relationship of Leftist economic thought and church-state relations by Adventists focusing on eschatology? Just like health care, could a day of rest on Sunday also become, first a right, before a requirement?¹⁵⁶ Why

¹⁵² Ibid., 497-498.

¹⁵³ John W. Robbins, *Ecclesiastical Megalomania*, 78.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ This is not nearly so radical an idea as traditional Adventists who incessantly attach such ideas to the Religious Right might think. See http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/jurisprudence/2008/04/the_new_blue_laws.html, where both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, and their supporters, have referenced the need for a day of “rest.” <https://my.barackobama.com/page/community/post/Tritium/gG5ngR> (unfortunately no longer available).

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aren't we engaging conservative but moderate theologians like Ronald Nash, who has written extensive criticisms of liberation theology and its attendant economic theory in relation to church-state issues?¹⁵⁷ Why aren't we paying closer attention to Max Weber's thesis in 1905 that capitalism, however imperfect in a sinful world, leads to greater freedom and better economic outcomes than alternative systems?¹⁵⁸ Considering that Robbins agrees wholeheartedly with our Adventist representatives Moore, Stevens, and Gulley, that Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell are false Christians, and shares with Adventists an opposition to Christian Reconstructionism,¹⁵⁹ I find it unfortunate that we aren't entering genuine dialogue with his and similar thinkers works, which are very concerned about the growing power of both the secular and Religious Left alongside their strong disagreements with aspects of the Religious Right. Robbins expresses a healthy independence from any history of eschatological predictions and guesswork, letting his epistemology speak for itself as it analyzes the present, and he sees the church and state uniting on both the Left and the Right with equal force.

¹⁵⁷ For example, see Ronald H. Nash, *Freedom, Justice and the State* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1980); *Social Justice and the Christian Church* (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1983); *Poverty and Wealth: The Christian Debate Over Capitalism* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986); Ronald Nash and Humberto Belli, *Beyond Liberation Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992).

¹⁵⁸ For an analysis of Weber's thesis, see Stanislaw Andreski, "Method and Substantive Theory in Max Weber," in Eisenstadt, *The Protestant Ethic and Modernization: A Comparative View* (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

¹⁵⁹ Robbins, *Freedom and Capitalism*, 164, n 1. "For 50 years Christians in America have been bamboozled by Romanists like Patrick Buchanan, William Bennett, and William F. Buckley, Jr., into supporting their Antichristian programs, candidates, and theologies. The rise of the Religious Right—Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, D. James Kennedy's Center for Reclaiming America, and Rousas Rushdoony's-Gary North's-Greg Bahnsen's Reconstructionist movement—has exacerbated, not corrected, the situation. Now Romanists are invited to address D. James Kennedy's political conferences, and putative Protestants endorse books by devout Romanists, and become Romanists and Orthodoxists themselves. The Reconstructionist movement and its allies and offshoots, by substituting political and cultural action for the proclamation of the Gospel, by substituting eschatology and ecclesiology for soteriology, and by mangling the Gospel itself, have become tools of Romanist political action," *Ibid*.

3.5 Summary

In this study, I have not argued, as Gulley, Moore, and Stevens did, for a bold new and precise prediction for how the “end game” will play out to fulfill traditional Seventh-day Adventist predictions for Sunday legislation. I have simply wished to highlight the work of non-Adventist Christians who also have a passionate concern for religious liberty, and share our concern over the historical Roman Church-State’s desire for totalitarian authority. When a non-Adventist like Robbins can state the following, we should at least listen and dialogue:

The Roman Church-State is a hybrid – a monster of ecclesiastical and political power. Its political thought is totalitarian, and whenever it has had the opportunity to apply its principles, the result has been bloody repression The Roman Church-State in the twentieth century, however, is an institution recovering from a mortal wound. If and when it regains its full power and authority, it will impose a regime more sinister than any the planet has yet seen.¹⁶⁰

The point is that Robbins sees Catholicism’s end-time power coming as much from the liberal, progressive, Religious Left, as from the Right, in contrast to the one-sided views some Adventists have predicted. Indeed, it’s important to again note that Robbins is interestingly no fan of Pat Robertson or George W. Bush; Robbins is *not* part of the Religious Right! Are his arguments and evidence then not even worthy of dialogue? Is it possible Adventists have had narrow myopic vision in our eagerness to foresee the rise of Sunday legislation? My purpose is not to engage Robbin’s arguments in any detail, but he claims a lot of evidence to support his position, and his scenario isn’t incompatible with our traditional Adventist teachings. It merely includes a component that Robbins didn’t see, the role of Sunday. But my question remains an open, hypothetical one: Could it be that the Roman Church-State has been using the Religious Right as a dialogue partner, all the while seizing greater influence and power in both the secular and Religious Left, as well as the Right, to gain complete control? Something like a boxer watching out for the “right cross” and then having a “left hook” strike you? Given the Roman Church-

¹⁶⁰ Robbins, *Ecclesiastical Megalomania*, 195.

State's long and well-established history of social teachings which require governmental control, many of which are operative today in the thinking of Leftist progressives, I feel the need to voice the myriad possibilities that may fulfill the traditional Adventist teachings on the end-times, possibilities that are completely absent from many of today's Adventist intellectuals. Adventism is in desperate need of a more complete and independent worldview, one that can see more clearly the wholistic nature of the final conflict, and one that will have greater evangelistic and apologetic power than the one-sided presentations that some of our best thinkers have offered thus far in the representative works I have presented.

4. Conclusion

I begin this conclusion with a brief exposition of Ellen White's views on the Sabbath/Sunday crisis, with the popular Old/New Covenant Law/Grace distinction in mind. In the *Desire of Ages*, White further reiterates the importance of understanding the historical origin of the Sabbath and how this establishes its true meaning. "Because He had rested upon the Sabbath, 'God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it,'—set it apart to a holy use. He gave it to Adam as a day of rest. It was a memorial of the work of creation, and thus a sign of God's power and His love."¹⁶¹ Again, White describes in detail the true purpose of the Sabbath. "The Sabbath calls our thoughts to nature, and brings us into communion with the Creator. In the song of the bird, the sighing of the trees, and the music of the sea, we still may hear His voice who talked with Adam in Eden in the cool of the day."¹⁶² The Sabbath, as a time set apart, is a sign of the nature of the God who created us, one who is personal and relational. It was made *for us*, but can, as originating with Him, only be chosen *by Him*. Some other day won't do. Although it was made for us, it is not of our choosing, but God's; in this respect, it is no different than any relationship, it has two parties. And in this instance, one is the creator, the other the created. We can't choose a Sabbath for God, but rest in our acknowledgment of God's choice of a Sabbath with and for us. God wants to rest with us. God wants to spend his quality time, so to speak, with us.

¹⁶¹ Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, 281.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 281-282.

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An important point to note is also that Sabbath observance is not merely an external form that we can meet through some series of actions, as a mere ritual. “In order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. Through faith they must become partakers of the righteousness of Christ.”¹⁶³ Our hearts must be in conformity to God’s work and designs for us for us to actually rest in Him, fulfilling a true rest. Furthermore, and highlighting the universal scope of the Sabbath, White states that “The Sabbath was embodied in the law given from Sinai; but it was not then first made known as a day of rest. The people of Israel had a knowledge of it before they came to Sinai. On the way thither the Sabbath was kept.”¹⁶⁴ And, “The Sabbath was not for Israel merely, but for the world. It had been made known to man in Eden, and, like the other precepts of the Decalogue, it is of imperishable obligation.”¹⁶⁵

In many ways, and in complete contrast to many other religions, God’s “idol” is His time, the Sabbath. Other religions worship shapes and forms, but the biblical God commanded us to do no such thing. Rather, instead of a wooden or metal idol, He hallowed the Sabbath time. We are not merely commanded, but invited, to join Him during this time.¹⁶⁶

White also beautifully describes that the Sabbath is not intended to be a yoke upon us, but that it is designed to be a joy.¹⁶⁷ The Jews had turned the Sabbath into a rule book, rather than allowing it to be a positive focus of our week. It is perfectly within the purpose and intent of the Sabbath to bring joy and help to our friends and neighbors.¹⁶⁸ The Sabbath itself serves as a sign of God’s redemptive power for us. We are invited to rest in His work for us, both in creation and in salvation.¹⁶⁹ As White explains, “The Sabbath is a sign of Christ’s power to make us holy. And it is given to all whom Christ makes holy. As a sign of His sanctifying power, the Sabbath is given to all who through Christ become a part of the Israel of God.”¹⁷⁰ As such, we are to ““Serve the Lord with gladness: come before

¹⁶³ Ibid., 283.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 282.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 285.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 286.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 287.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 288.

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His presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise,' Psalm 100:2-4."¹⁷¹ It is not a burden imposed for the sake of forcing our salvation.

Two of the most important chapters of White's writings are surely found in "God's Law Immutable" and "A Work of Reform" in *The Great Controversy*. These chapters present the difficulties that Sabbath keepers have had and will have in explaining the Sabbath and its original purpose. Not because of any intrinsic fault with the Sabbath, but because of the insidious nature of the arch-deceiver's work. As White shared, "In the absence of Bible testimony in their favor, many with unwearied persistence urged—forgetting how the same reasoning had been employed against Christ and His apostles: 'Why do not our great men understand this Sabbath question? But few believe as you do. It cannot be that you are right and that all the men of learning in the world are wrong.'"¹⁷²

Although there is much that could be said on these issues, I think it worthwhile try to boil it down to a much more simple question. It is not so much that it will come down, in the final period of earth's history, to two groups of people "properly" living the Christian life, with one group worshipping on Sunday, while the other worships on Sabbath. No, the final crisis will come when one group attempts to *force* and *coerce* the other group to do as they want. In this critical sense, the Sunday keepers will be rejecting the entire plan of salvation Christ has offered, attempting to save themselves, and others, by their own works. An Old Covenant experience of Law, not grace! This is why grasping this truth, in its wholistic socio-political context, is important, as events unfold. One cannot properly keep the Sunday as the Sabbath at the appointed time. This is the "sign" that true Sabbath keepers may rest in as we attempt to share the ultimate price and cost of our choice to rest in God's salvation, rather than presenting to God our own means of salvation.

As such, despite the fact that "The great obstacle both to the acceptance and to the promulgation of truth is the fact that it involves inconvenience

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, 455.

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and reproach,”¹⁷³ we may share that it is not merely an inconvenience, but a choice, to truly accept salvation by *faith* that empowers rather than empty works! No true Sabbath keeper would wish to go out and persecute his Sunday worshiping friend. But that our message is sometimes (and by and large will be) rejected is a sign of its truth. God’s Law cannot be changed to save man, and this is a *good thing!* That the Sabbath also functions as the ultimate sign at the end separating those who *choose* God rather than man’s authority makes it ironic that we are accused of salvation by works, when the very opposite is true. All of the “requirements” that Adventists submit themselves to, the health message, the Sabbath, etc., are really preparatory, like with Daniel in Babylon, to prepare us (and our *minds*) to make a *choice* to accept God’s salvation for us and to rest our repentant hearts in Him, as the completion of our character development here on earth (White elsewhere compares the final Sabbath test to Eden’s Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; a simple test).¹⁷⁴ This is a beautiful reality, not a legalistic one. In our obedience to God we acknowledge we are not saved by works, but accept His work on our behalf. And the hatred of Satan will cement that this seeming paradox (obedience to accept grace and redemptive growth in God) is the true reality, as Sunday keepers will ultimately persecute us for our *rest* in God’s work. We, the ones accused of legalism over the Sabbath, will finally be the only ones who are proven *not* to be legalists, the only ones living a New Covenant experience of grace and faith that works.

4.1 Review and Implications for Further Study

This study has surveyed Seventh-day Adventist perspectives on the possibilities in foreseeing a union of church and state such that a Sunday Law might be enacted. To undertake this task, I examined the perspectives of selected prominent conservative or mainstream Adventists, Norman Gulley, Marvin Moore, and John Stevens, to identify how they see the “end game” that leads to Sunday legislation. What emerged was that they unanimously pictured the conservative Christians in America as being the

¹⁷³ Ibid., 460.

¹⁷⁴ See Ellen White, “The Test of Loyalty,” in *The Signs of the Times*, Feb. 13 (1896); and Ellen White, “The Sabbath Test,” in *The Review and Herald*, Aug. 30 (1898).

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primary instigators of the destruction of religious liberty and the creation of Sunday legislation in harmony with Papal wishes.

For the purposes of fostering greater dialogue and a more complete and thorough examination of this ever important topic, I also examined the works of select non-Adventist scholars, to see if their understandings of church-state relations and religious freedom match those of our own thinkers. I found that there were almost diametrically opposed viewpoints, relative to understandings of how the Roman Church-State would attain its power. In their views the Roman Church-State union would come more from the political and Religious Left. This is a fascinating situation.

What the above demonstrates is that several mainstream Adventist authors have neglected important contemporary trends, and have failed to engage in dialoguing with other prominent contemporary thought leaders who are also seeking to preserve religious liberty.¹⁷⁵

The results of this study are important for several reasons. First, this study demonstrates an evangelistic barrier exists at present. Many sincere Christians in the “conservative heartland” of America are, for a variety of reasons, more sympathetic to the Religious Right. Not necessarily because they wish to see Christians take over and enact religious laws, but rather precisely because they see a biblical view of economics and individual liberty aligning with more conservative or libertarian positions. Evangelizing to these people by sharing the ideas found in Gulley, Moore, and Stevens’ works can be counterproductive, because they simply don’t see reality that way. And these evangelicals have sufficient facts and evidence to sustain their differing worldview, whether it is ultimately closer to the truth or not.¹⁷⁶ Many of these Christians have no desire to create

¹⁷⁵ Interestingly, studies emphasizing only one side of these contemporary movements continue to be written by Adventist scholars, even in this current *JATS* issue. Note the articles by the Adventist scholars Trevor O’reggio and Fernando Canale. I wish to make clear that I agree with basically everything each of them wrote. I merely point out that the New Apostolic Reformation and the Emergent Church are, for all general purposes, ideologically opposite Christian movements. They favor opposite secular political parties to advance their agendas. What does *this* mean for Adventist eschatology, and where is the conversation about this paradox?

¹⁷⁶ In support of Robbin’s position, I note that studies have shown that “after 1991, increasing numbers of Americans of all ages expressed deep concern that religious leaders should not try to influence either people’s votes or government decisions,” which shifted the emphasis on issues into more *humanistic* moral concerns, like social justice, rather than

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Sunday legislation that would harm dissenters. They are baffled by our insistence that they will. Conversely, however, when reaching out to people who share Ronald Nash's and John Robbin's views, it makes perfect sense to them that Catholics are trying to assert political power through *leftist* liberal social ideas which will ultimately impinge upon their understanding of the separation of church and state. Allowing the possibility of this perspective in Adventist circles might open more doors to such people concerning the nature of the final eschatological conflict, including the role of the Sabbath as a social, as well as a moral, commandment. To be clear, in my opinion both views, Robbin's and the Adventist authors I surveyed, remain possible. Thus, what should remain speculative is what views we Adventists should advocate and share publically with any air of certitude.

Secondly, this study demonstrates an *internal* ideological barrier for Adventists, especially our young people. It is confusing to them to wonder why it is that we spend most of our efforts engaging, in a positive way, liberal, mainline churches and secular intellectuals who are often theistic evolutionists or atheists, simply because they purportedly "agree" with us on religious liberty issues. How privileged is one set of issues over another? As various socio-political issues percolate through the media, whose voices should we be listening to as we try to understand what is happening in the world? Should we believe secular Leftists who constantly ridicule every idea from Religious Right? Or should we be more wary of the humanistic morality that the secular *and* Religious Left are now pushing, and their potential consequences? My personal experience tells me Adventist young people are baffled by the mixed messages their leaders are sharing with them, and this is a key contributor to the fragmentation Adventism is now experiencing. Why do Adventists not also engage more positively with the "Religious Right," on issues we have in common, like recent Creationism? Do doctrines not matter? Should we be so selective in who we engage with in scholarly dialogue in more positive ways? Spending some time positively dialoging with people like Robbins and

traditional moral issues, like marriage and abortion. Thus, the creation of a "secular" morality has become the issue of our times. Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 121.

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Nash, and in a friendly way critiquing any weaknesses we perceive they may have, while also enlisting their sympathies in areas which we may share, seems the more productive route. Simply dismissing their eschatological views on the particulars of the Roman Church-State because they differ from our traditional emphasis on the Religious Right, while they are more wary of the Religious Left, appears inadequate, if an accurate understanding of the world around us is desired.

Third, in their efforts to fully secularize the country with a supposed complete separation of church and state, it must be recognized that some believe the secular and religious Left *literally create* (the contemporary Religious Right's political influence did not exist until the religious and secular Left agitated them) the Religious Right.¹⁷⁷ Although delving into this topic would require another study, more often than not, it is the interference of secular liberals, whom Adventists like those noted above are implicitly supporting in church-state issues, that creates the uproar from people like Pat Robertson. Do we even know, as Adventists, what a *truly secularized* nation (where church and state were totally separated) and its laws would look like? Could it not be a totalitarian state just as easily? The point for now seems to be that if secular liberals wouldn't interfere in conservative Christianity, then things would remain more *status-quo*; there would be no flag around which to rally the Religious Right. Thus, it would be wiser to support moderate political positions to delay any awakening of the "beast" of Revelation. "Let sleeping dogs lie," goes the old saying. So if Adventists wish to delay a Sunday Law, they should not appear to so

¹⁷⁷ The history is complex. What is interesting is that although some issues like the ethnic segregation of some conservative private religious colleges was lamentable and caused the political Left to respond to the religious Right in the 1970's, the direct seeds of the Religious Right initially sprouted in reaction to the advance of secular leftist science and its promotion in public schools which encouraged evolution in the 1950's. There is an irony here in that the secular evolution promoted by liberal progressives encourages "racism," yet the religious Right rejected evolution, creating an unfortunate contradiction in the thinking of some conservatives that has now been mostly corrected. George Rising, "Religious Right," in *Culture Wars: An Encyclopedia of Issues, Viewpoints, and Voices*, ed. Roger Chapman (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2010), 466. See also, Cleran Hollacid, *Evolution Declassified: Just When You Thought it was All Settled* (Detroit, MI: Gold Leaf Press, 2012), 21-44; and Jonah Goldberg, *The Tyranny of Clichés: How Liberals Cheat in the War of Ideas* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2012), 100-114, 204-219.

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openly support the political philosophy of progressivist secular liberals¹⁷⁸ in their opposition to the Religious Right, as this only irritates and awakens the true conservatives. There is more than one philosophical way to support libertarian principles.¹⁷⁹ Perhaps in this light we also need to reevaluate the precise nature or possibility of any truly “secular” Constitution, which secular Leftists promote.

Supporting humanistic morality is a growing trend among the general populace, and surprisingly compatible with the Left and Catholic social teachings. It is no accident that Pope Francis recently shared that atheists and agnostics can be saved, when he wrote that “the issue for those who do not believe in God is to obey their conscience.”¹⁸⁰ The point is not whether or not Scripture supports the salvation of the unevangelized or those who have received an incorrect view of God and thus doubted His existence, but that the *Pope*, of all people, would contextualize this so openly and point toward the *conscience* as our guide. God does not offer a “pass” for those who merely follow their own conscience.¹⁸¹ When applied

¹⁷⁸ Ellen White expressed an astonishingly balanced and uncommonly insightful perception of how complicated church and state issues can be when she rebuked A. T. Jones for objecting to a law that would make Bible reading in public schools required, on the purported principle of an absolute separation of church and state. White did not support required Bible reading, but could not object to it either, and warned that if we were thought to be objecting to required Bible reading as Adventists, it would hurt us later. Ellen White, *Spalding and Magan Collection* (1985), 8-9.

¹⁷⁹ A fascinating comparison on political philosophy would be between a postmodern philosopher like Gary Brent Madison with the works of John Robbins and Ronald Nash cited above. They appear to arrive at similar conclusions on many issues, showing “conservatism” and “libertarianism” to not be mutually exclusive. See G. B. Madison, *The Logic of Liberty* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1986); G. B. Madison, *The Political Economy of Civil Society and Human Rights* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998); and G. B. Madison, *The Politics of Postmodernity: Essays in Applied Hermeneutics* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001).

¹⁸⁰ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/pope-francis-assures-sceptics-you-don-t-have-to-believe-in-god-to-go-to-heaven-8810062.html>; <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/the-pope/10302850/Pope-Francis-reaches-out-to-atheists-and-agnostics.html>.

¹⁸¹ It is a conscience that *listens* to the Spirit of God which will guide those ignorant of Scriptural truth into salvation. Ellen White notes that “we shall meet those who have so perverted the conscience that they are unable to discern the precious truth of God’s word,” White, “The Pearl of Great Price,” in *The Review and Herald*, Aug. 1 (1899); Furthermore, “there are professed Christians who will warp the conscience and becloud the mind, under

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to the socio-political sphere, our consciences will often conflict on matters of life and death; when we should go to war, who should receive health-care, and at the cost of whom. The atheist who follows his conscience when voting on these issues and many other issues does not receive a “go to heaven card” automatically. Yet, this example by Pope Francis shows, among other issues, like the Catholic church’s possible reconsideration of Priests and marriage¹⁸² and de-emphasis on abortion and homosexuality,¹⁸³ that the Catholic church is now perfectly willing to connect with liberal progressive humanists and their views of morality, including a heavy emphasis on economic systems, wealth distribution, and poverty.¹⁸⁴ If the Left continues to redefine morality’s relationship to socio-political realities alongside an Emergent vision,¹⁸⁵ it is impossible to predict how things may play out. What is clear is that a government that is proactive in social agendas is needed in such a worldview, which plays as much into Robbin’s predictions for the Roman Church-State as a creation of Leftist ideas, as one that is created by the Religious Right. Thus, a more neutral approach on our part would culturally ally ourselves more closely with those who truly do share our general Christian beliefs, allowing us to better reach out to them with more authentic and genuine sympathies, to share with them

the pretense of godliness; and those who do not see nor sense the danger are already the dupes or victims of Satan,” White, *Counsels to Physicians and Medical Students* (1885); and “The conscience is the regulative faculty, and if a man allows his conscience to become perverted, he cannot serve God aright,” White, *Manuscript Releases Vol. 13* (1990), 155.

¹⁸² <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/faith/article3866516.ece>.

¹⁸³ http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/20/world/europe/pope-bluntly-faults-churchs-focus-on-gays-and-abortion.html?_r=0; <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-09-19/pope-says-church-should-stop-obsessing-over-gays-abortion.html>; and http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/09/19/20580271-pope-francis-says-church-cannot-focus-only-on-abortion-and-gay-marriage?lite.

¹⁸⁴ <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/pope-francis-speaks-again-world-poverty>; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/22/us-pope-economy-idUSBRE98L04H20130922>; <http://www.dnaindia.com/world/1866398/report-pope-francis-tells-clergy-to-go-out-on-the-streets-and-help-the-poorest>.

¹⁸⁵ Steven H. Shiffrin, “The Religious Left and Church-State Relations: A Response to Kent Greenawalt and Bernie Meyler,” *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy*, Vol. 19 (2010), 761. Shiffrin suggests that “the religious Left or religious liberals are better equipped to combat or engage religious conservatives or the religious Right than are secular liberals. . . in the context of church-state relations,” Ibid. Yet, if the religious Left continues to rely on the secular academic Leftists for its intellectual foundation, one can foresee a variety of problems in many areas.

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the message of “justification by faith,” a message that Martin Luther accepted and for which Ellen White specifically endorsed Luther.¹⁸⁶ We would then be better positioned to be received as true heirs of the Reformation. Then we will be in more influential positions to introduce the Sabbath and the Sanctuary doctrine as the true “New” Covenant experience, outside the restrictive stereotypes of any political-ideological identification.

Lastly, in conclusion, it would serve Adventism well, I believe, if we articulated a less partisan and narrow vision of how end-time events will play out, and focus more on the philosophical aspects of the debate as they interrelate with theological issues. It serves our evangelistic purposes more effectively to explore different possibilities with a more open mind, keeping our distinctive issues at the forefront, but not letting our eschatology replace a solid epistemology that analyzes the present honestly and without bias. This will allow us to form our worldview off what is really happening in an ever evolving world, not what “could” or “will” happen, outside of what prophecy specifically makes clear. In this way, Adventists will not be caught off guard when things don’t turn out “precisely” the way we predict as time passes, and our message will be more open to acceptance by individuals of varying religious and political backgrounds and perspectives, which may open scholarly and evangelistic doors of opportunity we had never anticipated.

¹⁸⁶ “Luther searched the Scriptures with untiring interest and zeal, and at last found therein the way of life clearly revealed. He learned that it is not to the pope, but to Christ, that men are to look for pardon and justification. ‘There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.’ Christ is the only propitiation for sin; he is the complete and all-sufficient sacrifice, for the sins of the whole world, securing the pardon of all who will believe on him as God hath appointed. Jesus himself declares, ‘I am the door. By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.’ Luther sees that Christ Jesus came into the world, not to save people in their sins, but to save them from their sins; that the one only way whereby the sinner can be saved is by repentance toward God, because of the transgression of his law, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, both for the pardon of sin and for grace to lead a life of obedience,” Ellen White, “Martin Luther—His Character and Early Life,” in *The Signs of the Times*, May 31 (1883); c.f., White, *The Great Controversy* (1911), 140, 253.

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