



Lesson 108

The Vote for Our Time

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Voting is a subject that this Movement has recently dealt with. When Ellen G. White quotes spoke against voting, we used to just take them as they read. In this lesson, we are going to reassess our position on voting and see if it is really correct, and if not, what evidence is there in support of voting.

Review

Creating Prophecy (lesson 105)

Lesson 105 was titled *Creating Prophecy*. In that lesson, we focused on the parable of Matthew 13:24-30. In the parable, the householder planted wheat in the field, only for the enemy to come later and sow tares. We looked at the symbols in the parable. First, were the workers, or the observers. Their job was to watch the field, which is how they discovered that there were tares in it. They also harvest the plants during the harvest time. They go between Heaven, the house, and Earth, the field, which is why they are considered students of prophecy. Then there are the plants, or experiencers. They do not observe the field, they are in the field. They experience the world, which is the field. But then we understand that both the workers and the plants represent God's people, which means that we both experience and observe the world. Being observers was what was taught under Elder Jeff. That was why we focused on the first four commandments, because they are about our relationship to God (the workers were loyal to the householder). Being experiencers is what is taught under Elder Tess. That is why we are focused on the last six commandments, because it is about our relationship to each other (the plants are concerned about the other plants). The term "the personal is political" can also be connected. The plants, the personal, are affected by the world, the political. But they also can affect the field, or the world. And this is how we know that we, the plants, create prophecy. The choices that we personally make as plants could affect the entire field. An example of plants effecting the field or the world (creating prophecy) was the French election this year. The French created prophecy by voting.

A Traditional Ellen G. White Quote

Ellen G. White against voting

When Seventh-day Adventists talk about voting they often go to a few specific quotes from Ellen G. White. A typical passage on her perspective of voting is Letter 95, 1899. Ellen White wrote this letter to people who worked and taught in the schools. She says that they should not talk about politics because that will encourage other people to voice their opinions and thus hinder unity in the church. She also says that Adventists shouldn't vote: "We cannot with safety vote for political parties, for we do not know who we are voting for. We cannot with safety take part in any political schemes. We cannot labor to please men who will use their influence to repress religious liberty, and to set in operation oppressive measures to lead or compel their fellow men to keep Sunday as the Sabbath" (Lt 95, 1899 paragraph 2). Adventists cannot participate with people, politicians, who break the Sabbath. "The people of God are not to vote to place such men in office," Ellen White says, "for when they do this, they are partakers with them of the sins which they commit while in office" (Lt 95, 1899 paragraph 3). She is saying that Seventh-day Adventists do not know the politicians so, if they vote for them and they pass the Sunday Law then they are guilty for that law as well. Ellen White is focused on the Sunday Law when she talks about voting in this passage. She also says that we cannot compromise; we can't support the cause of Christ and politics at the same time: politics are worldly, so they are like light and darkness (paragraphs 4-6) - which cannot work together. The solution to this, according to Ellen White, is to not vote and to "let political questions alone" (Lt 95, 1899 paragraph 5). But we just reviewed the study of the plants and the workers (lesson 105), and in that lesson we learned that, as plants, we create prophecy. One way to create prophecy is to vote, so we can see that these traditional quotes from Ellen White do not agree with that model.

The Pioneers and EGW for Voting

Voting for temperance

In 1882, voting against temperance was allowed in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Also in 1882, the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* volume 59 was written. In the pamphlet, there is an article which began by speaking against voting. The article spoke of how Seventh-day Adventists don't engage in politics, and that an influence to prevent participating in them was a good influence. As an example, the article spoke of how people who participated more and more in politics participated less and less in the truth, and eventually they were "lost to the cause." But then the article took a turn, saying that it did not wish to be misunderstood; the article plainly stated that if a Seventh-day Adventist thought there was a moral principle at stake, voting to express their preference wasn't wrong. Next, the article spoke on the subject of temperance. During the 1860s, people tended to drink alcohol a lot, which caused a temperance movement to form. The article took a clear position in favor of the temperance movement. It supported preaching sermons on the subject of temperance, and supported laws that enforced temperance. This is when voting was connected; the article mentioned that Kansas recently banned alcohol, and that Iowa was planning on doing the same. In support of Iowa's law that would soon be voted on (by the people in Iowa) the article said, "We greatly hope it will pass. We have no question but that it is the duty of every Seventh-day Adventist voter in the state to cast a ballot in its favor..... have your voice written upon a piece of paper, and deposited in a box; and if the majority of the people desire it, they shall have their choice. There can be nothing wrong in doing this. But every principle of righteousness demands that we should express our minds in, favor of right when it comes before us in so plain and simple a form as this. We hope every Seventh-day Adventist voter in the state will vote for this law, and induce all others to do so whom he can influence by honorable means." So, here we see that even though Ellen White speaks against voting in some of her writings, the position of the church wasn't completely against it. When a very important issue came up, not only did they say you should vote, but that you should encourage others to do the same. This was the position on voting the church had in 1882.

Praying and voting

In Ellen G. White's quote from the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, she says "were we living under an absolute monarchy, all we could do would be to pray; but in this Republic we have an instrument given us with which we can second our prayers, and that is, our ballot." (The *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* February 17, 1891.) She says that, because we live in a republic, we can second, or reinforce, our prayers through the ballot. "Prayer is the life of the soul, the foundation of spiritual growth. In your home, before your family, and before your workmen, you should testify to this truth. And when you are privileged to meet with your brethren in the church, tell them of the necessity of keeping open the channel of communication between God and the soul. Tell them that if they will find heart and voice to pray, God will find answers to their prayers. Tell them not to neglect their religious duties," (*Prayer* 20.3). Ellen White says that prayer is a religious duty. Therefore, if voting is reinforcing prayer, which is a religious duty, then voting is also a religious duty.

Ellen G. White for voting

Ellen G. White doesn't just speak against voting, in some contexts, she speaks in favor of voting. Prohibition (banning alcohol) was a big topic in Ellen White's time and the Adventist church fully supported it. In the book *Temperance*, section 12, chapter 6 ("The Power of the Vote") many of Ellen White's statements on this topic can be found. She says we have to "take our stand decidedly on all questions relating to temperance reform" (*Temperance* 253.1). In 1914 she said: "We talk of the results, tremble at the results, and wonder what we can do with the terrible results, while too often we tolerate and even sanction the cause," but, "the advocates of temperance fail to do their whole duty unless they exert their influence by precept and example—by voice and pen and vote—in favor of prohibition and total abstinence. We need not expect that God will work a miracle to bring about this reform, and thus remove the necessity for our exertion" (*Temperance* 253.5). Ellen White also said in 1880 that, "intemperate men should not by vote of the people be placed in positions of trust" (*Temperance* 254.1). Specifically talking about legislators and judges, Ellen White said that intemperance takes away their vigor, clouds their minds, and destroys their integrity thus putting everyone at risk. She also says that people who vote to sanction intemperance are accountable for what intemperate people do. In 1859, some intemperate men said that they were glad that Seventh-day Adventists didn't vote, like the Quakers, but Ellen White disagreed and wrote that she prays Satan will be disappointed - because Adventists should vote. She said that, "in our favored land, every voter has some voice in determining what laws shall control the nation. Should not that influence and that vote be cast on the side of temperance and virtue?" (*Temperance* 253.3). So we can see that Ellen White supported voting for laws and people that were on the right side of the cause of prohibition.

The 1865 General Conference

The pioneers spoke favorably about voting. In 1865, the newly formed Seventh-day Adventist church held their 3rd Annual General Conference meeting. In this meeting they resolved the subject of voting which was being discussed in the church at the time. "Resolved, that in our judgment, the act of voting when exercised in behalf of justice, humanity and right, is in itself blameless, and may be at sometimes highly proper; but that the casting of any vote that shall strengthen the cause of such crimes as intemperance, insurrection, and slavery, we regard as highly criminal in the sight of Heaven. But we would deprecate any participation in the spirit of party strife." (*Advent Review Sabbath Herald* May 23, 1865 p. 197.4) So this was the decision made by the church in 1865- and we know the people that decided this were the pioneers, and Ellen G. White, herself, was most likely there. Voting, they said, when on the behalf of justice was not only right, but sometimes highly proper- which is a sharp contrast to some Ellen G. White quotes on voting. They mentioned that Seventh-day Adventist shouldn't vote to strengthen things such as intemperance, insurrection, and slavery. All three of those subjects were major issues at the time. The Seventh-day Adventist church opposed slavery and insurrection (the Civil War), and it supported temperance, and that is one of the reasons why in 1865 they chose to resolve the subject of voting- in its favor.

How the Test Affects Voting

The tests for Modern Israel

In the three histories, Millerites, 1888, and 144,000, there are three different issues being dealt with. For our history, the 144,000 history, the issue that we are dealing with is feminism. We are understanding that we have to be trans-inclusionary radical feminists. In the 1888 history, the issue that was being dealt with was Sunday vs. Sabbath. It was during that time that A. T. Jones spoke to the United States Congress on why a Sunday Law, and a Sabbath Law, should not be passed because church and state should not be combined. In the Millerite history, the issue being dealt with was slavery and temperance. It was during the Millerite history that slavery was abolished. But the minor issue spoken about was temperance. Ellen White and the pioneers often spoke about temperance as we have previously spoken about in connection to voting. We showed that some issues were necessary to vote on; in the Millerite history that issue was temperance. The test for the Millerites was slavery, the test for 1888 history was the Sabbath, and the test for our history is sexism.

Voting and noise

We in this Movement know what it means to not pay attention to noise. That same concept applies when it comes to the subject of voting. If you voted for an intemperate person or a Sunday worshiper during separate specific parts of Millerite history you were accountable for that person's actions, because, as we just saw, those were the tests for those time periods. If it is not the test, it is not the main focus. That is why at the 1865 General Conference the Seventh-day Adventist leaders didn't mention Sunday worship. This concept applies to us today. We know, and we were just reminded, that the test for our time is gender equality - not slavery, intemperance, or Sunday worship. That means that gender equality is the criteria you should judge people on when it comes to politics. Whether or not someone goes to church on Sunday is noise. Sunday is not our test, so you won't be accountable for any Sunday Laws that they pass: because they won't pass any. People use the Ellen White quotes about being held responsible for the Sunday Law as a reason to not vote, but as we can see that is an invalid argument. Who you vote for is determined by the time you live in. Everything must be examined in its context, this does not mean you need to ignore any other characteristics of a person, it just means that those do not take priority. According to Ellen G. White and the Adventist pioneers it is okay and often extremely important to vote for laws and politicians that agree with the test of the time.

In summary:

REVIEW



OBSERVE



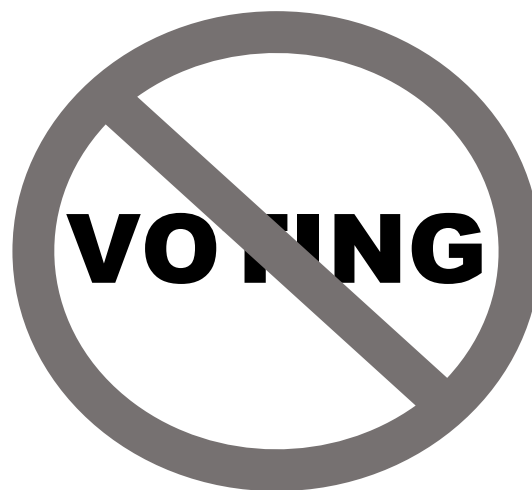
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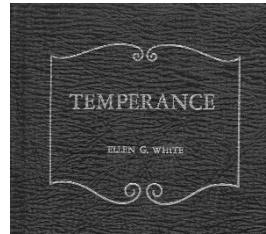
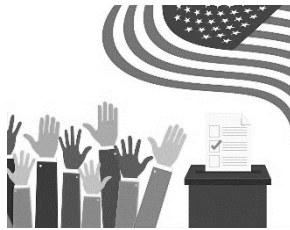
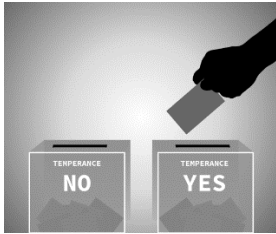
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Traditional EGW Quote

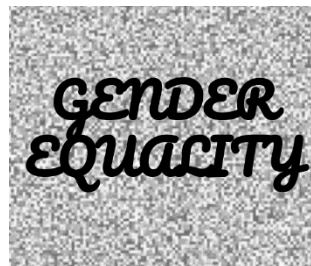


The Pioneers & EGW for Voting



How the Test Affects Voting

MILLERITE
Slavery and temperance
1888
Sabbath
144,000
Sexism



Official Youth Prophecy Group website:
youthprophecygroup.org

If you have any questions or comments on any of the material contact us at:
youthprophecygroup@gmail.com

Find all the YPG lesson videos at:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeltzVajTXgSQRL-o2XOq_g

Link to YPG Zoom meetings which are at 10:00am Pacific Time on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87170293849>