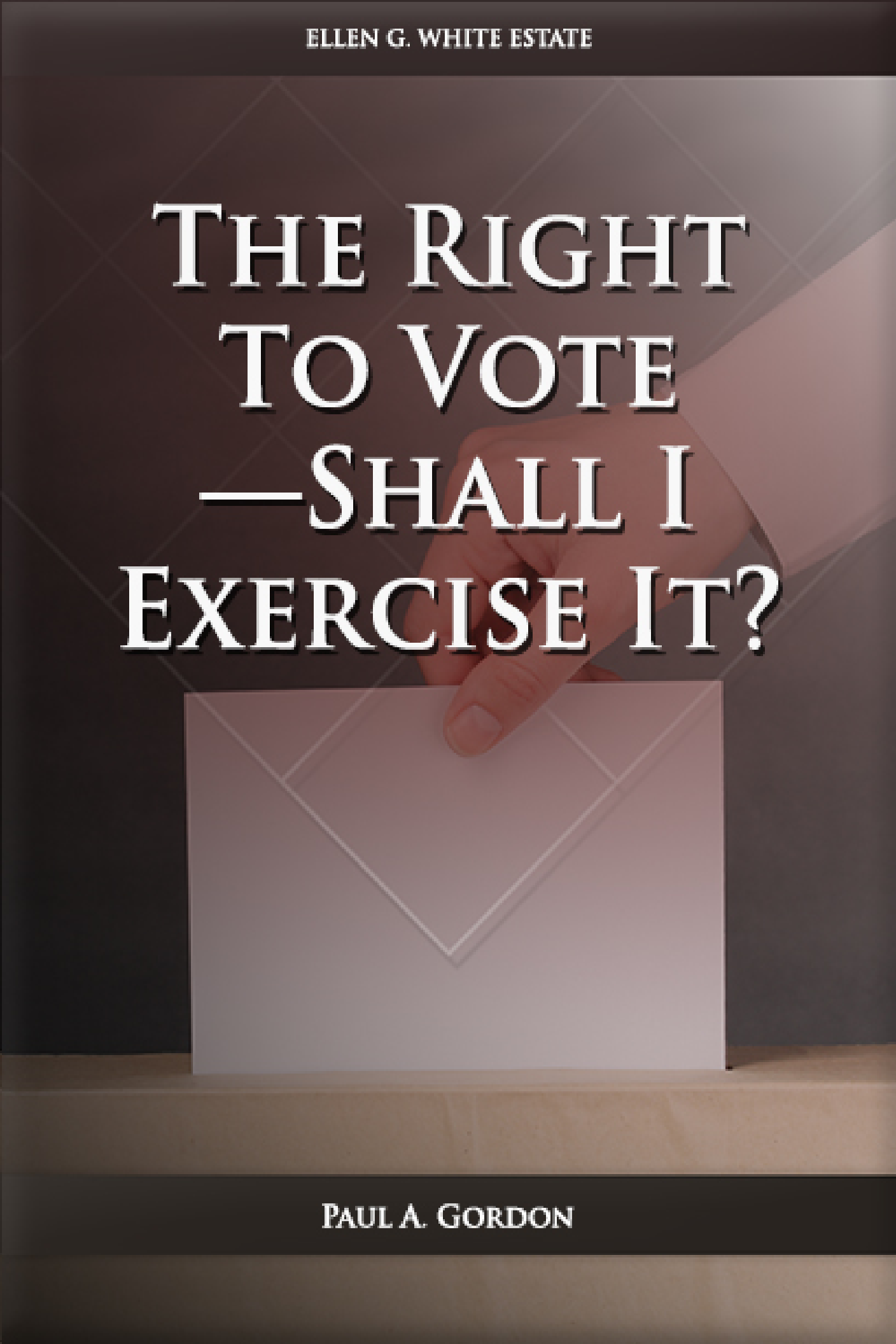


ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE

A close-up photograph of a hand in a light-colored sleeve placing a white ballot into a white ballot box. The background is dark and out of focus. The text is overlaid on the image.

THE RIGHT
TO VOTE
—SHALL I
EXERCISE IT?

PAUL A. GORDON

**The Right To
Vote—Shall I Exercise
It?**

Ellen G. White

**Copyright © 2018
Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.**

Information about this Book

Overview

This eBook is provided by the [Ellen G. White Estate](#). It is included in the larger free [Online Books](#) collection on the Ellen G. White Estate Web site.

About the Author

Ellen G. White (1827-1915) is considered the most widely translated American author, her works having been published in more than 160 languages. She wrote more than 100,000 pages on a wide variety of spiritual and practical topics. Guided by the Holy Spirit, she exalted Jesus and pointed to the Scriptures as the basis of one's faith.

Further Links

[A Brief Biography of Ellen G. White](#)
[About the Ellen G. White Estate](#)

End User License Agreement

The viewing, printing or downloading of this book grants you only a limited, nonexclusive and nontransferable license for use solely by you for your own personal use. This license does not permit republication, distribution, assignment, sublicense, sale, preparation of derivative works, or other use. Any unauthorized use of this book terminates the license granted hereby.

Further Information

For more information about the author, publishers, or how you can support this service, please contact the Ellen G. White Estate at mail@whiteestate.org. We are thankful for your interest and feedback and wish you God's blessing as you read.

Contents

Information about this Book	i
Part 1	v
Introduction	vi
Chapter 1—Historic session	xi
Chapter 2—Statement of principle	xiii
Chapter 3—Three conclusions	xvi
Part 2	xix
Introduction	xx
Chapter 4—Will not wear political badges	xxii
Chapter 5—Does not rule out holding office	xxiv
Chapter 6—Responsible until Christ returns	xxvii

by Paul A Gordon

1. Part 1	1
Introduction	1
Chapter 1— <i>Historic session</i>	2
Chapter 2— <i>Statement of principle</i>	3
Chapter 3— <i>Three conclusions</i>	3
2. Part 2	5
Introduction	5
Chapter 4— <i>Will not wear political badges</i>	5
Chapter 5— <i>Does not rule out holding office</i>	6
Chapter 6— <i>Responsible until Christ returns</i>	7

Part 1

The decision to vote for candidates is a personal decision. If you vote, “keep your voting to yourself. Do not feel it your duty to urge everyone to do as you do.” [Selected Messages 2:337](#).

Introduction

Should Seventh-day Adventists become involved with political questions? Is it our duty to campaign for party or person? Should we take a position on the social issues of the day? Should we vote at all?

In order to find some answers to these and related questions, let us take a historical look at our position on politics and voting.

It was 19 years after the 1844 disappointment before the Seventh-day Adventist Church was formally organized. These were years of strong resistance to organization on the part of many Adventists because of the opposition to the Advent message by the established churches prior to 1844.

For the first few years of these nearly two decades, our founders were regrouping and settling on a new course. Those Adventists who were the beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist Church usually were independent people.

They had to be. In the face of ridicule at their disappointed hopes of the return of Christ, they were men and women with the courage of their convictions—for better or worse. It was a time of isolation from the rest of the world. And barriers were erected on both sides.

Related to their isolation from other churches was the isolation of Adventists from involvement with civil government. Just as other churches were considered “Babylon,” so the civil government was regarded with suspicion and distrust. And often with good reason. It was a period of political corruption perhaps unmatched by any preceding period in United States history. Adventists expressed strong opposition to politics and the spirit that usually accompanies an election campaign. These convictions are reflected in early articles and editorials that appeared in the *Review and Herald*. One writer, David Hewett, a thoughtful and solid lay member in the Battle Creek congregation, asked a question in 1856, seven years before our church was officially organized:

“My brethren, shall we spend our time in political campaigns, ... when we so soon expect Christ in all the glory of His Father, and all the holy angels with Him, when He shall sit upon the throne of His glory?”—[The Review and Herald, September 11, 1856](#).

Uriah Smith, editor of the *Review*, as if in answer to the question—declared in the same issue that the Adventist position was one of “neutrality in politics,” with our people refusing “to take part in a contest so exciting as the one which is now agitating this nation.” He concluded his editorial by stating:

“To the question, why we do not with our votes and influence labor against the evil tendency of the times, we reply, that our views of prophecy lead us to the conclusion that things will not be bettered.... And we feel it our duty to confine our efforts to preparing ourselves, and others as far as in us lies, for the great and final issue already pressing upon us—the revelation of the Son [of] man from heaven, the destruction of all earthly governments, the establishment of the glorious, universal and eternal kingdom of the King of kings, and the redemption and deliverance of all His subjects.”—*Ibid.*

Arguments continued to be heard for refusing to vote. In the same year Roswell F. Cottrell, a minister in western New York, [2] stated that the United States was “upon the eve of a political contest” that, he believed, would “finally result in the formation of the image” prophesied in [Revelation 13:11](#).

“Under these circumstances, if I cast my vote at all,” he said, “it will ... tell for, or against the making of the image. If I vote in favor of the formation of the image, I shall aid in creating an abomination which will persecute the saints of God.... On the other hand, if I vote against this work, I shall vote against the fulfillment of the prophecy.... Therefore, I cannot vote at all.”—[The Review and Herald, October 30, 1856](#).

In the light of the tragically low state of American politics, his concluding remarks are interesting:

“I cannot vote for a bad man, for that is against my principles; and, under the present corrupt and corrupting state of politics, I could not wish to elevate a good man to office, for it would ruin him.”—*Ibid.*

The next year further objections to voting were voiced:

“If I enter the lists as a voter, I do in fact endorse this government as worthy of fellowship. If my name is entered upon the poll-book I then become a part of the body-politic, and must suffer with the body-politic in all its penalties.”—[The Review and Herald, April 23, 1857](#).

But it was largely national issues that were at stake in the situations described in the foregoing articles. A local election in Battle Creek in 1859 challenged Adventists to reconsider their responsibilities as citizens in a community. They were pressed to make a more definite commitment on the subject of voting. What were they to do?

Ellen White, who was present as Adventist leaders discussed this question, made this entry in her diary:

““Attended meeting in the eve. Had quite a free, interesting meeting. After it was time to close, the subject of voting was considered and dwelt upon. James first talked, then Brother Andrews talked, and it was thought by them best to give their influence in favor of right and against wrong. They think it right to vote in favor of *temperance men* being in office in our city instead of by their silence running the risk of having *intemperance men* put in office. Brother Hewett tells his experience of a few days [since] and is settled that [it] is right to cast his vote. Brother Hart talks well. Brother Lyon opposes. No others object to voting, but Brother Kellogg begins to feel that it is right. Pleasant feelings

exist among all the brethren. O that they may all act in the fear of God.

“Men of intemperance have been in the office today in a flattering manner expressing their approbation of the course of the Sabbathkeepers not voting and expressed hopes that they will stick to their course and like the Quakers, not cast their vote. Satan and his evil angels are busy at this time, and he has workers upon the earth. May Satan be disappointed, is my prayer.”—[Temperance, 255, 256](#). (Italics supplied.)

Note that Ellen White was not just talking about voting on issues; she was talking about voting for men. It is very evident that she favored voting for “temperance men” as contrasted with “intemperance men.”

But there continued to be a cautious attitude toward voting in general. About a year after this experience in Battle Creek, James White, as a *Review* editor, wrote: “The political excitement of 1860 will probably run as high as it has for many years, and we would warn our brethren not to be drawn into it. We are not prepared to prove from the Bible that it would be wrong for a believer in the third [angel’s] message to go in a manner becoming his profession, and cast his vote. We do not recommend this, neither do we oppose. If a brother chooses to vote, we cannot condemn him, and we want the same liberty if we do not.”

He then went on to express certain strong reservations:

“But we do believe that he who enters into the spirit of the coming contest, loses the spirit of the present truth and endangers his own soul.”—[The Review and Herald, August 21, 1860](#).

It is evident that some Adventists did vote in this election, for two years later James White wrote:

“Those of our people who voted at all at the last Presidential election, to a man voted for Abraham Lincoln. We know of not one man among Seventh-day

Adventists who has the least sympathy for secession.”—
[The Review and Herald, August 12, 1862.](#)

When Abraham Lincoln was elected President, 11 Southern States seceded from the Union, and America was plunged into civil war. A short time later, on May 21, 1863, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was formally organized. This country was then halfway through the war.

Chapter 1—Historic session

The third annual session of the General Conference, which convened at Battle Creek on May 17, 1865, was destined to be historic in regard to the question of voting. Delegates included prominent Adventist leaders such as J. N. Andrews, Uriah Smith, M. E. Cornell, J. N. Loughborough, J. H. Waggoner, Joseph Bates, and I. D. Van Horn. James and Ellen White were there also, and both of them spoke to the assembled delegates. The report of this session states that J. N. Andrews spoke at one meeting to a crowd of more than 600 people, and that “this is probably the largest body of Sabbathkeepers that has assembled for fifteen hundred years.”

An important item of business at the session was the choice of officers. James White was elected president of the General Conference; Uriah Smith, secretary; and I. D. Van Horn, treasurer.

Some significant resolutions were adopted. One expressed sorrow for the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Another reaffirmed noncombatancy in war, with an acknowledgment of responsibility to Government in “tribute, custom, honor, and reverence to the civil power, as enjoined in the New Testament.” A third involved the subject of voting. Remembering that James and Ellen White were present and actively participated in the work of the conference, we note this resolution:

“*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 some times 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.”—[The Review and Herald, May 23, 1865](#).

[3]

This basic resolution, along with supporting counsels from the pen of Ellen White, has continued to be a guide for the church for more than 100 years. Note the clear distinction that is made between the exercise of the voting right and “participation in the spirit of party strife.” Note also that several social issues are mentioned that should be a point of concern. This resolution was reaffirmed as the position of our church the next year. It has not been changed to this day.

Chapter 2—Statement of principle

The fact that this position was established at such an early date in our church history is remarkable. Those who have written since to clarify our belief on this issue have used this resolution as a statement of principle that continues to apply.

Writing a few years later, Joseph Clarke, a layman residing in Ohio, and a frequent contributor to the *Review*, said:

“Shall we meddle with politics? No, if we must mingle in the noisy crowd, and shout the praises of the poor, puny man who is to be raised to the pinnacle of power. No, if we must give currency to the many-voiced, slanderous reports, which fill the political atmosphere with clouds and mists. But we may deposit a ballot quietly in the box in behalf of freedom, and as quietly give a reason therefore.”—[The Review and Herald, December 14, 1876.](#)

Discussing the coming political campaign of 1880 in one of his last editorials, James White said:

“We as a people, as Adventists, have before us an all-absorbing subject, and a work of the greatest importance, from which our minds should not be diverted....

“It should be our duty to adapt ourselves, as far as possible without compromising truth, to all who come within the reach of our influence, and at the same time stand free from the strife and corruptions of the parties that are striving for the mastery.”—[The Review and Herald, March 11, 1880.](#)

Writing from Australia in 1898, Ellen White emphasized the same points:

“We are not as a people to become mixed up with political questions.... Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers in political strife, nor bind with them in their attachments.... Keep your voting to yourself. Do not feel it your duty to urge everyone to do as you do.”—[Selected Messages 2:336, 337](#).

Just one month before the death of James White, Seventh-day Adventists were gathered for camp meeting in Des Moines, Iowa. A proposed action was placed before the delegates which read:

“*Resolved*, That we express our deep interest in the temperance movement now going forward in this state; and that we instruct all our ministers to use their influence among our churches and with the people at large to induce them to put forth every consistent effort, by personal labor, and at the ballot box, in favor of the prohibitory amendment of the Constitution, which the friends of temperance are seeking to secure.”—[The Review and Herald, July 5, 1881](#).

Some disagreed with the clause that called for action at “the ballot box,” and urged that it be taken out. Ellen White, who was attending this camp meeting, had retired for the night, but she was called to give her counsel. Writing of it at the time, she said:

“I dressed and found I was to speak to the point of whether our people should vote for prohibition. I told them “Yes,” and spoke twenty minutes.”—[Temperance, 255](#).

Ellen White never changed that position. In an article written for the *Review* just a year before her death she reemphasized the responsibility of every citizen to exercise every influence within his power, including his vote, to work for temperance and virtue:

“While we are in no wise to become involved in political questions, yet it is our privilege to take our stand decidedly on all questions relating to temperance

reform....There is a cause for the moral paralysis upon society. Our laws sustain an evil which is sapping their very foundations. Many deplore the wrongs which they know exist, but consider themselves free from all responsibility in the matter. This cannot be. Every individual exerts an influence in society. *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?*”—*The Review and Herald, October 15, 1914.* (Italics supplied.)

Chapter 3—Three conclusions

Three conclusions seem clear from this historical study:

1. We are always to vote “on the side of temperance and virtue.”
2. The decision to vote for candidates is a personal decision. If you vote, “keep your voting to yourself. Do not feel it your duty to urge everyone to do as you do.”
3. We are to stand free from political strife and corruption.

Perhaps a surprising postscript on voting is that the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, giving women the right to vote, was not passed until 1920, five years after Ellen White’s death. It stated simply: “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”

Some States granted women partial suffrage earlier. Colorado did this in 1894 and California in 1911. But long before this, Ellen White evidently anticipated such a development when she wrote in 1875:

[4] “There are speculations as to woman’s rights and duties in regard to voting. Many are in no way disciplined to understand the bearing of important questions. They have lived lives of present gratification because it was the fashion. Women who might develop good intellects and have true moral worth are now mere slaves to fashion.... Such women are not prepared to intelligently take a prominent position in political matters.... Let this order of things be changed.”—[Testimonies for the Church 3:565](#).

From this statement we might properly conclude that (1) it is inappropriate for women (and men) to perform their “duties in regard to voting” unless they have been “disciplined to understand the bearing of important questions”: (2) such understanding should be acquired.

Next week we will consider politics and government, and the Christian's relationship to it.

Part 2

Individual members have the right to vote if they choose to do so, but the church should hold itself aloof from politics.

Introduction

Last week I drew three conclusions from inspired counsel on the subject of voting. These were: (1) we are to cast our vote “on the side of temperance and virtue”: (2) if we vote, “keep your voting to yourself. Do not feel it your duty to urge everyone to do as you do”: and (3) we are to stand free from political strife and corruption.

Having considered these points, some questions still persist. Can Seventh-day Adventists participate in certain aspects of politics with good conscience? Are we ever to help in the making of laws, and if so, how? Is it ever proper to hold public office, either elective or appointive?

Let us consider politics first. Uriah Smith, looking at the political situation in our country in 1884, wrote with insight and pessimism:

“Fraud, dishonesty, usurpation, lying, cheating, and stealing, will largely determine the count; and the party which can do most of this work will probably win.”—
[The Review and Herald, July 15, 1884.](#)

Some years later, George C. Tenney, coeditor of the *Review* with Uriah Smith, defined “pure politics” much as the dictionary does, as something that “embraces the sciences and principles of good government. Political economy, political science, philanthropy, civil government—in fact, every branch of statecraft and statesmanship—are included in pure politics.”

If politics as generally practiced were this “pure,” we would have no argument with it. But we will have to agree with Elder Tenney that politics, as generally known, has “become a name for demagogism, a system of personal wire-pulling, a cover for chicanery [and] trickery,” with politicians generally having a “burning desire for office and its spoils” and legislators moved “by one consideration only—the prospect of re-election.” [The Review and Herald, August 11, 1896.](#)

L. A. Smith, another coeditor, compared political organization to an army, saying:

“Everybody can understand why it is that an army can easily overcome a mob, and the same reason will explain why the political machine so readily overcomes the people’s reform movements. The machine is an organized and thoroughly disciplined army; the people are an unorganized body.”—[The Review and Herald, April 6, 1905](#).

He continued:

“The only way for the reform element to cope successfully with the machine would be to organize and put in the field its own machine, and follow machine methods of work; but it is in machine politics that the whole evil lies.”—*Ibid.*

Have the passing decades outdated the foregoing statements? Not if we are to believe today’s concerned commentators on the political scene. In the setting of these facts of political life Ellen White’s terse comments come through clearly:

“The Lord would have His people bury political questions.” “We cannot with safety vote for political parties.” “Let political questions alone.” “It is a mistake for you to link your interests with any political party, to cast your vote with them or for them.”—[Gospel Workers, 391-393](#).

Note that the preceding statements do not exclude voting. If we vote, it should be on the basis of the personal qualifications of a candidate, not because he bears a certain party label. What we might call a vote for a “straight party ticket” is clearly warned against. If we vote, we should vote intelligently. But it is clear that political questions are not to be brought into our churches, nor must the political infatuation, strife, and excitement of politics absorb our time and attention.

[5]

Chapter 4—Will not wear political badges

In a statement first published as a tract in 1899, Ellen White said that we are not to vote for men that “use their influence to repress religious liberty,” for if we do, we “are partakers with them of the sins which they commit while in office.” “We cannot with safety take part in any political schemes,” she said. Christians “will not wear political badges.”

She counseled that teachers “who distinguish themselves by their zeal in politics, should be relieved of their work,” and ministers “who desire to stand as politicians shall have their credentials taken from them.” (See [Fundamentals of Christian Education, 475-484.](#))

But what about personal participation in lawmaking? Can we hold office and not violate our Christian responsibilities? Two statements by Ellen White bear careful study. In [Education, 262](#), we read:

“Many a lad of today, growing up as did Daniel in his Judean home, studying God’s Word and His works, and learning the lessons of faithful service, will yet stand in legislative assemblies, in halls of justice, or in royal courts, as a witness for the King of kings.”

That this witness is not limited to occasional appearances on behalf of specific issues, and in fact includes participation in legislative decisions, is evident from another statement Ellen White made in an address to the teachers and students of Battle Creek College, November 15, 1883. She said:

[6]

“Have you thoughts that you dare not express, that you may one day ... sit in deliberative and legislative councils, and help to enact laws for the nation? There is nothing wrong in these aspirations.”[Fundamentals of Christian Education, 82.](#)

Ellen White went on to explain the circumstances under which it is proper to accept such responsibilities. She said that we are not to be content with low goals, but we are to remember that “the fear of the Lord lies at the foundation of all true greatness.” We are to hold “all temporal claims and interests in subjection to the higher claims of the gospel of Christ.”

She also indicated that “as disciples of Christ, you are not debarred from engaging in temporal pursuits; but you should carry your religion with you.” And, “balanced by religious principle, you may climb to any height you please.” Notice that the climbing is to be “balanced by religious principle.”

Further, our God-given powers and talents are not to be perverted “to do evil and destroy others” or to be used to “spread moral ruin and corruption.” Rather, our responsibilities are to be “faithfully and conscientiously discharged.” (See [Fundamentals of Christian Education](#), 82, 83; [Messages to Young People](#), 36, 37.)

Chapter 5—Does not rule out holding office

It appears quite clear, then, that the counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy writings does not rule out the holding of public office and, in fact, states that some Adventists will hold office. Selfish motives are to be ruled out, and the officeholder is to remember always that “temporal claims and interests” are to be held “in subjection to the higher claims of the gospel of Christ.” How practical and plain these guiding principles are! They need not be misunderstood by anyone.

Election of Seventh-day Adventists to public office carries back at least 88 years. A rather unusual editorial by Uriah Smith stated: “Elder William C. Gage has been elected mayor of the city of Battle Creek.” The editorial went on to explain that the advocates of temperance in the city had felt betrayed by current officeholders, and when no other man could be persuaded to run against them, Elder Gage had been approached. The editorial continued:

“When it appeared that to decline absolutely would be to jeopardize the interests of the temperance cause, he accepted, and the people ratified the nomination, giving him a plurality.”—[The Review and Herald, April 11, 1882](#).

Both Uriah Smith and G. I. Butler, president of the General Conference, appeared apologetic for the election of Gage. In the same issue of the *Review*, Elder Butler urged support of the temperance issues of the day, but cautioned:

“We have not time or ability to waste in the arena of politics while the cause of God is languishing.” Both men stated their conviction that Adventists normally should not become involved in politics. Elder Butler stated further that even though we favor temperance, we are to be cautious “about being absorbed and carried

away in excitements over it or any other question”—
Ibid.

Surely, this advice is appropriate in the light of pressing social and political issues of our day.

It may be of interest to note that halfway through his one-year term as mayor, Gage was strongly rebuked by Ellen White. She said:

“He has ever been a curse to the church in Battle Creek.” She added: “I warn the people of God not to take this man as their pattern.”—[Special Testimony to the Battle Creek Church](#), 6, Nov. 30, 1882.

The Bible has some valuable counsel on the question of serving a civil government. There were fair and just rulers in Bible times, and there were those who were cruel and unjust. The true statesman is a long way from the corrupt politician, and there are many noble men filling positions in the government of the world. Yet both might serve in similar and even identical positions. What makes the difference? Obviously, the man makes the office, not the office the man.

Joseph considered his position in Egypt’s government to be a direct result of God’s leading. As he tried to calm his brothers’ fears after their father’s death, he said to them, “God hath made me lord of all Egypt” ([Genesis 45:9](#)). He “[sent] me before you to preserve life” ([verse 5](#)).

Daniel and his three Hebrew companions were selected from among captives in Babylon for training in civil leadership. They did not refuse this training. After Daniel was promoted to “ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon,” he asked that his three friends might be “set ... over the affairs of the province of Babylon,” and the request was granted ([Daniel 2:48, 49](#)). The three companions were promoted again after going through the fiery furnace ([chap. 3:30](#)). They did not refuse to serve.

The next ruler of Babylon, Belshazzar, made Daniel third ruler after he interpreted the handwriting on the banquet wall, and just

[7]

hours before Belshazzar was defeated by Darius ([chap. 5:29](#)). Darius, the Mede, recognized leadership in Daniel and made him first of three presidents of the whole kingdom ([chap. 6:2](#)).

Later, Daniel became the object of jealousy of the other presidents and princes when Darius was considering putting him over the whole realm. This is what led to his ordeal in the lions' den. When he met this test successfully, he "prospered in the reign of Darius" ([verse 28](#)). It is obvious that Daniel did not refuse civil responsibility when he was called upon to serve.

And, of course, there is Mordecai the Jew, who "sat in the king's gate" and was one of King Ahasuerus' "servants" ([Esther 2:19; 3:3](#)). The king's gate was a place where business of the realm was carried on, and offices were there. When he was given a chance to replace Haman, who had been hanged, he did not refuse. Eventually he was placed next to the king in power ([chap. 10:3](#)). Esther, of course, was queen of the realm during this time. A few generations later, Ezra and Nehemiah served as civil servants in their respective governments.

In the New Testament appears what might be called the charter of Christian civic responsibility ([Romans 13](#)). It notes that "the powers that be are ordained of God" and in light of this, "whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God" (verses 1, 2).

It goes on to say: "Rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be subject, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience" (verses 3-5, R.S.V.).

Tribute and taxes are definitely approved as being properly required by the civil government (verses 6, 7).

Chapter 6—Responsible until Christ returns

Some day soon the prophecy of [Daniel 2](#) will meet its fulfillment in the return of Jesus, and “the God of heaven” will “set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed,” a kingdom that “shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms.” It will be a kingdom that “shall stand for ever” ([verse 44](#)). But until that time, Christ’s followers continue to have a responsibility to “Caesar.”

In summary we quote a portion of an editorial appearing in the [The Review and Herald, September 13, 1928](#). Elder F. M. Wilcox, longtime church leader and editor, wrote:

“The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not seek to dictate to its members as to how they shall vote or whether or not they should vote at all. It is left for each one to act on his own judgment in the fear of God. We have been told by the servant of the Lord that we should not link up with political parties, that we should not agitate political questions in our schools or institutions. On the other hand, we have been instructed by the same authority that when certain moral issues, such as prohibition, are involved, 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 ... total abstinence.’ This instruction is not mandatory, it is still left for each one to determine for himself what he shall do.

“While an individual member of the church has a right, if he so likes, to cast his vote, the church as such should hold itself entirely aloof from politics. It is one thing for the individual members of the church to vote, and another thing for these same individuals in their church capacities to endeavor to influence political measures.”

Reprinted from *Adventist Review*, September 18, 25, 1980

Paul A. Gordon served as undersecretary of the Ellen G. White Estate.