# **Tempered Enthusiasm:** Adventists and the Temperance Movement | By RICHARD RICE

he Temperance movement was by many accounts the largest and most successful of the Protestant reform movements in America during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Seventh-day Adventists enthusiastically participated in it—sharing its objectives, even adopting its standards as "tests of fellowship"—but only up to a point.

Ellen White (*right*), for example, endorsed the goals of the movement, spoke widely on the subject of temperance, encouraged cooperation with the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and urged church members to vote for Prohibition. On the other hand, she viewed the



prospect of legally enforced Sunday observance, which many Temperance advocates supported, as a sign of impending doom. Does the Adventist relation to the Temperance movement a century and a half ago provide a precedent or a caveat for Adventist involvement in social and political movements today—or perhaps both?

## **Prohibition's Backstory: America's Drinking Problem**

Prohibition is sometimes characterized, or caricatured, as a misguided and ultimately unsuccessful attempt by an overzealous cadre of kill-joys to stifle the innocent pleasure of the decent American public. But the facts are that alcohol consumption had been acknowledged as a serious problem in the United States for years and by many standards Prohibition was notably successful in meeting it.

Drink was everywhere in early America, and Americans drank in enormous quantities. Indeed, statistics suggest that drinking was not merely a national pastime, it was a national occupation.<sup>1</sup> At the time of the Revolution Americans drank the equivalent each year of three-and-a-half gallons of pure, two-hundred proof alcohol per person.<sup>2</sup> By 1830 the annual amount increased to 7 gallons of pure alcohol per person, or three times as much as Americans now consume.<sup>3</sup>

Between 1850 and 1890, the US population tripled, but its capacity for beer increased twenty-four-fold, from 36 million gallons to 855 million. The leading imbibers were immigrants—from Ireland and Germany to begin with, followed by other Europeans—and the saloon became a pervasive presence in American cities.<sup>4</sup>

As liquor permeated the national fabric, women were frequently victims of its abuse. A drunken husband or father was pain enough, but many women had to endure the associated ravages—lost money, lost job, even a scourge later referred to as "syphilis of the innocent," venereal disease contracted from husbands who found something more than alcohol to entertain them in the saloons.<sup>5</sup>

During the nineteenth century the perception grew that the abuse of alcohol, or intemperance, was not just a moral problem for those who overindulged, but a significant social problem, indeed, a threat to the very wellbeing of the country. In series of sermons published in 1827, influential clergyman, Lyman Beecher, described beverage alcohol as harmful to just about everything a nation needs to flourish. With godly living compromised by the evils of drink, he insisted, the virtue of the citizenry was in doubt and the nation was imperiled.<sup>6</sup>

### The Temperance Movement in Three Acts

Although the route from temperance to Prohibition followed a "steep and twisting path,"<sup>7</sup> it is generally described as occurring in three different waves.<sup>8</sup>

The first occurred in the early nineteenth century with the efforts by individual clergymen like Lyman Beecher to curb drinking. Their work contributed to the founding of the American Temperance Society in 1826. Prohibition

gained support during the 1840s and 50s, with a number of states prohibiting the selling and manufacturing of liquor.<sup>9</sup> but all these laws were repealed by the end of the decade.<sup>10</sup>

The second wave was marked by the establishment in 1869 of the National Prohibition Party, which had an impact on two presidential elections.<sup>11</sup> The most memorable participants in this phase were women, particularly members of the WCTU, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

The very name of the WCTU identifies the factors that ultimately accounted for the organization's success. National Prohibition could never have been realized



without the dual support of religion and of women. Organized by a small group in Cleveland, Ohio on November 17, 1874, the WCTU is still active, and

according to its website, represents "the oldest voluntary, non-sectarian woman's organization in continuous existence in the world."12 By the mid-1890s the WCTU had become the largest and most active of the non-secret temperance organizations in the United States, with branches in every U.S. state and territory.<sup>13</sup> During the same decade it made its way to other countries, such as New Zealand, where it contributed to the 1893 passage of

both the women's suffrage bill and the liquor bill.<sup>14</sup> Under the direction of the formidable Frances Willard (right), who sometimes called her followers "Protestant nuns,"15 the organization grew to an army of 250,000 and became "the nation's most effective political action group in the last decades of the nineteenth century."16



While temperance was the specific concern of the WCTU, Willard expanded its interests dramatically. Its members envisioned individual reformation-it was not enough just to get the flask out of a drinking man's pocket, "the New Testament must be placed there in its stead."<sup>17</sup> But that was just a beginning. Under the principle, "Do Everything," and declaring herself a "Christian socialist," Willard placed on the WCTU agenda the eight-hour day;

workers' rights; government ownership of utilities, railroads, factories, and theaters; vegetarianism; cremation; and less restrictive women's clothing; along with "alcohol free, tobacco free, lust free marriage";18 as well as legislated Sunday observance.<sup>19</sup> In her expansive vision, the purpose of the WCTU was nothing less than "to help forward the second coming of Christ in all departments of life."20

The WCTU also held that the power of the state should be used to enforce Prohibition,<sup>21</sup> and to achieve

this goal, female suffrage was essential. The liquor problem would never be solved, its members were convinced, until those "who suffer most from the drink traffic," have power to declare at the ballot-box for its destruction.<sup>22</sup> Because the victims of intemperance were chiefly women, whose homes and lives were damaged when men abused alcohol, temperance was primarily a woman's issue. But to crush the liquor demon it would not be enough merely to encourage temperance; Prohibition was essential, and unless women had the vote, this would never happen. The problems alcohol caused could not be resolved if authority were left solely in the hands of men.<sup>23</sup> So, the most urgent reasons women wanted to vote in the mid-nineteenth century were alcohol related; they wanted the saloons closed, or at least regulated.24 Prohibition not only required the suffrage movement, however, it galvanized it.25 In fact, without the "liquor evil," says one scholar, the suffrage movement would not have drawn the talents and energies of gifted women such as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, and Amelia Bloomer (right, top to bottom).<sup>26</sup> Anthony gave her first speech to the Daughters of









Temperance, and she and Bloomer became crusaders for women's rights when men's temperance organizations refused to let them speak.<sup>27</sup>

Few organizations have been eulogized as has the WCTU. For Willard herself, it was "the exponent of what is best in this latter-day civilization. Its scope is the broadest, its aims the kindest, its history the most heroic."<sup>28</sup> It was "an organization without a pattern save that seen in the heavenly vision upon the mount of faith, and without a peer among the sisterhoods that have grouped themselves

around the cross of Christ."<sup>29</sup> According to another admirer, U.S. Senator Henry William Blair (*right*), it represented "the greatest exclusively women's association that exists, or ever has existed in the world."<sup>30</sup> In his

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view, the Woman's Crusade that gave rise to the WCTU was nothing less than a miracle. "There is no precedent for it in history," he exclaimed, "and as I read the account of its birth and growth, I am impressed with the feeling that this thing was supernatural."<sup>31</sup>

The most radical means the members of the WCTU employed to achieve their objectives in a given community entailed what we might call "sit-ins" or "pray-ins." A band of these dauntless crusaders would descend upon a place where liquor was sold, such as a saloon or drugstore, and stage a prayer and hymn service, accompanied by appeals to the proprietor to desist from his business and to the patrons to sign the temperance pledge. This could continue hour upon hour, often until an entire night had passed. As a result of this procedure marvelous results were realized and many liquor establishments were closed down. The WCTU traced its origin to the first such visit to a saloon in Hillsboro, Ohio, December 23, 1873.32

The WCTU was not without its fanatical elements, too. After the death of Frances

Willard, its most striking figure was Carry A. Nation (*below*), the hatchet wielding bar-smasher of Medicine Lodge, Kansas. In her youth, Carry married a physician who drank and smoked and, as a result, died within six months of their wedding, leaving Carry pregnant. This experience evoked a hatred for liquor that remained unabated throughout her life. She later married David Nation and, with a Baptist minister's wife, formed a branch of the WCTU in Medicine Lodge.<sup>33</sup> Instead of kneeling in prayer outside a liquor establishment, Carry's practice was to enter a bar armed with rocks, bricks and bottles wrapped in newspaper, and solemnly announce, "Men! I have come to save you from a drunkard's grave." When she left some minutes later, its mirror and windows would be demolished, and the bar and the shelves behind it denuded of everything but shards of broken glass. In all fairness it must be added that the WCTU disavowed her actions



as extreme,<sup>34</sup> and that she had an extensive family background of severe mental illness.<sup>35</sup>

The third wave of temperance activity leading up to Prohibition was highlighted by the formation of the Anti-Saloon League

(ASL) in 1893, an organization which epitomized the cooperation of religion and the temperance movement. Throughout its career the League depended on the evangelical churches;<sup>36</sup> The Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches were its most active supporters, aided by the smaller Disciples of Christ, Christian Science, and Mormon religious groups.<sup>37</sup> It resulted in "the last great corporate work in America of legalistic evangelicalism," as some have referred to it, i.e., the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919.<sup>38</sup>

For temperance reformers, the saloon epitomized all that was odious about the entire

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liquor traffic. In 1908 there were some 3,000 breweries and distilleries in the United States and more than 100,000 legal saloons. There was one for every 300 people in the cities of Boston and Chicago and over half the population paid a daily visit to the saloon.<sup>39</sup>

The saloon was more than simply a place where alcoholic beverages were sold, however. Saloons were the rendezvous of the working class, a much appreciated sanctuary from the drudgery of factory labor and the dullness of slum living. So it is not surprising to find the staunchest supporters of prohibition in rural America, in the agricultural areas of the West and South, while the temperance movement made little gains in the industrial states of the East and North.<sup>40</sup>

	From time to time, the close alliance
Drink was	between religious groups and the temperance
	movement led some to believe that they had
everywhere in	violated the separation of church and state and
everywhere m	argue that their property should be taxed. In
	1876 President Grant had recommended a con-
early America,	stitutional amendment to this effect which had
<b>,</b> ,	passed the House and failed in the Senate by
	only two votes. <sup>41</sup>
and Americans	There were also questions about the extent to
	which the ASL represented the real sentiments
drank in	of church members in general. Although the
ui aila ili	ASL claimed to be the representative voice of
	the churches and of the majority of Americans,
enormous	the seven major religious bodies which support-
	ed prohibition contained only one-fifth of Amer-
	ica's population, and for every dry church
quantities.	member there was a wet one. <sup>42</sup> So, it is not
	entirely unreasonable to regard the temperance
	movement, as many do, as the attempt of a dedi-
	cated and militant minority to impose its convic-
	tions about a moral issue on the totality of
	America's population.43

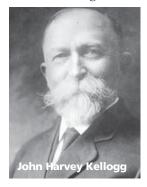
The temperance movement was thus a multifaceted phenomenon within a context of widespread social upheaval. It comprised religious, social, political, feminist, and fanatical elements and on one level or another involved nearly every strain of American life. To place the temperance activities of the Adventist Church in proper perspective, we must view it against this complex background.

#### Adventist Temperance Activities

Adventists wholeheartedly supported the objectives of the temperance movement. Articles on "Seventh-day Adventists" appear in the major encyclopedias of the movement and describe the church as completely in harmony with its principles. Says one, "This church has from the first been committed to the principles of total abstinence."<sup>44</sup>

Adventists developed an organization of their own, the American Health and Temperance Association (AHTA), because they wanted to show their support for the goals of the temperance movement—i.e., individual abstinence and legal prohibition—and also because they felt that other temperance societies did not go far

enough in calling for reform. True, these organizations engaged in fighting the "great and damning evil," but they failed, as Dr. John Harvey Kellogg (*right*) put it, to "strike at the root of the evil of



intemperance."<sup>45</sup> For Adventists, "the first principle of temperance is to discard *all* stimulants."<sup>46</sup>

So, in December, 1878, a meeting was held in Battle Creek, Michigan to consider the organization of a national health and temperance society, and the American Health and Temperance Association was officially organized the following month. Its founders believed that it could accomplish a work which no other organization had previously been able to, because no other organization had made its platform so broad and comprehensive. In a single pledge it included alcohol, tobacco, tea, coffee, opium, and all other narcotics and stimulants.

Membership in the AHTA was open to any person of good moral character who paid the initiation fee of 25 cents and signed one of three pledges: (1) the Teetotal pledge (abstinence from the voluntary use of alcohol, tobacco, tea, coffee, opium, and all other narcotics and stimulants in any form); (2) the Anti-Rum and Tobacco Pledge (abstinence from alcohol in any form and all uses of tobacco); (3) the Anti-Whisky Pledge (abstinence from alcohol).47

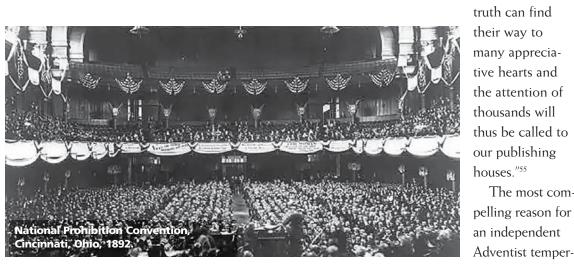
All these features-pledges, certificates, and ribbons-were in use by other temperance organizations.48 When members of the WCTU entered saloons and read their Bibles, they encouraged individuals to take the total abstinence pledge, their "declaration of independence."49 The blue ribbon was used more extensively in temperance work than any other; a number of drinking men joined Red Ribbon Reform Clubs, and the white ribbon was the identifying mark of all members of the WCTU,<sup>50</sup> whom Frances Willard enjoyed describing as a "white-ribboned host."51

There were a number who questioned the need for the AHTA. If church membership required adherence to the principles of temperance, why did Adventists need an auxiliary organization to promote temperance? Several Review and Herald articles explained its necessity.<sup>52</sup> For one thing, Adventist Church members themselves were not as advanced in temperance and health reform as they should be (and if they were, they could hardly object to signing the pledge). Then, too, certain practices on the part of other temperance organizations made it impossible for Adventists to join. For example, a number of the organizations were secret in character, and according to one writer in the Review and Herald there was no reason for such secrecy, no good in it, no end to be gained by it. Indeed, such secrecy half paralyzed the good these organizations might accomplish.53 It was also necessary to take an oath in order to enter some of them, and in many of their meetings there was a great deal of smoking, spitting, and general uproar, making them a nuisance to the neighborhood. Naturally, self-respecting Adventists would find themselves quite out of place in such company. On the other hand, not belonging to any temperance organization could create the impression that Adventists were opposed to temperance. With their own organization, Adventists could demonstrate their support for the movement, especially if the pledge they signed was stronger than others.

Another reason for the AHTA was its potential as a means of evangelism. The temperance movement represented a channel through which Adventists could reach thousands who otherwise would see no attractions in the Adventist message. It provided opportunities to place the peculiar points of the Adventist faith before those who, except for their interest in temperance, might never listen.<sup>54</sup> Through attempts to encourage others to sign the temperance pledge, channels could be opened "whereby our publications on various points of

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The most com-

ance organization was the fact that few others took a stand solely on temperance issues. The WCTU, as we noted, supported a number of other causes, such as female suffrage. But the most crucial amalgamation of issues under the banner of temperance, as far as Adventists were concerned, was the widespread support among temperance reformers for Sunday legislation.

The platform of the National Prohibition Party (*button, above right*) called for the "national observance of the Christian Sabbath, established by laws, prohibiting ordinary labors and business in all departments of public service and private employment."<sup>56</sup> In 1888, U.S. Senator Blair—the same man who wrote in glowing terms of the temperance movement and the WCTU in particular—tried to get a Sunday bill through Congress.<sup>57</sup>

In the same year the National Reform Party introduced a Constitutional Amendment and Sunday bill, openly boasting that 6.5 million signatures on petitions had already been secured. The Party included among its supporters, clergymen; the women of the land and "their great and benevolent organization, the WCTU"; the workingmen, with their guilds, unions, and brotherhoods; and the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>58</sup>

Since Adventists were adamantly opposed to Sunday legislation, there was the danger that they would appear to be against the principles of temperance as well, as long as the two movements were closely allied. With their own temperance organization, however, they could demonstrate their complete sympathy with the principles of temperance while taking a firm stand against the Sunday law.

If the AHTA began with bright prospects of a great work to be done, its hopes were never realized. At the fifth annual session of the AHTA, the president, John H. Kellogg, "expressed his gratitude in being able to say that the Association was still alive," suggesting that it was less than a thriving success.<sup>59</sup> And there seem to have been no improvement thereafter. The sixth annual session opened with the remark, "The record for the year for the Health and Temperance Association is not one of active work and progress."<sup>60</sup> An undated pamphlet from Mrs. E. E. Kellogg, the correspondence secretary of the AHTA, to the various presidents of the Health and Temperance Clubs contained this dismal observation:

The past two years have witnessed so little progress in the work of our Health and Temperance Association that I feel impelled to write you and most earnestly ask if you will not put forth zealous efforts to revive this branch of the cause in your midst.

Whatever its relative lack of success, the AHTA received a vote of confidence from the General Conference, when it passed the following resolution in its 1888 session:

Resolved, That we heartily endorse the principles of the American Health and Temperance Association, in protesting against the manufacture and sale of all spirituous and malt liquors, and in discarding the use of tea, coffee, opium and tobacco, and that we urge upon all people the importance of these principles.<sup>61</sup>

Once the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, Adventists could support temperance by simply upholding the laws of the land. And a resolution containing the following passage was adopted at the General Conference in 1926:

Whereas, the past seven years of prohibition under the Eighteenth Amendment of the American Constitution have brought unprecedented prosperity to the American people, a remarkable increase in bank deposits by the labouring man, a great decrease in drunkenness, a reduction in crime caused by drink, an increase in the longevity of the race, and a reduction of the death list and added joy and peace to homes that had been previously cursed and impoverished by drink; therefore,

Resolved, that it is the sentiment of the World Conference of the Seventh day Adventists [sic] to encourage sobriety, and the enforcement of the proper regulations to prohibit the traffic in intoxicating beverages and habit-forming drugs.<sup>62</sup>

In 1932, the year before the Eighteenth amendment was repealed, Pacific Press, perhaps sensing that support for Prohibition was waning, published a book defending Prohibition. In *Wet or Dry? A Brief, Candid Examination of a* 

Moot Question in American Life, F. D. Nichol (below), then associate editor of the Review and Herald, addressed a string of popular objections to Prohibition—asserting that Prohibition was not the cause of increase in crime; that bootlegging and illicit distilling were not peculiar to the Prohibi-



tion era; that Prohibition did not infringe on personal liberty; and that Prohibition did not deprive people of something wholesome and beneficial. To the contrary he argued, not only does Prohibition "prohibit to a very definite extent," "[a]t one stroke it quite largely freed the country from a most amazing domination by the liquor industry," and "contributed in a very substantial way to a decade of prosperity for the workingman." Indeed, Nichol asserted, "Prohibition has probably done more than any other one law to establish better social and economic conditions in the country." <sup>63</sup>

#### Ellen G. White: Temperance Reformer

No one in the Adventist church was more supportive of, or involved in, the temperance movement than Ellen G. White. She advocated Prohibition, wrote extensively on temperance, and spoke widely on the topic. "For many years," she said in 1905, "I was known as a speaker on temperance."64 While attending a temperance meeting in 1874 at the Methodist Church in Battle Creek, Michigan, she was called upon to report the progress of the temperance cause in California.65 Three years later she and her husband James took part in a large meeting sponsored by the Battle Creek Reform Club and the local chapter of the WCTU. On that occasion she spoke for ninety minutes on Christian Temperance to a crowd of 5,000 who "listened in almost breathless silence."66

During her visit to Europe in the 1880s, the local temperance society in Christiana, Norway, invited her to speak. She addressed an audience of 1,600 in the largest hall in the city. Although she touched on the evils of tobacco and liquor and the tremendous waste involved in the use of stimulants, most of her remarks dealt with the subject of temperance from a religious standpoint—a striking contrast to most temperance speeches of the day. Her audience was "at first astonished, then interested, and finally deeply moved." Indeed, at the close of the meeting the society's president attributed the success of the temperance movement in America to its being supported "by religious zeal and Bible truth."<sup>67</sup>

In the 1890s Ellen White traveled to Australia and New Zealand. During her visit to New Zealand the attention of the country was riveted on two closely



connected issues, temperance and women's suffrage, due in part to the influence of the WCTU, which entered the country in 1885. Ellen White spoke on temperance at evangelis-For tic campaigns in both Wellington and Gisborne. While in New Zealand Ellen White became friends with Margaret Caro (*above*), an temperance Adventist dentist who supported both causes, and participated in a number of progressive women's reform organizations. Late in 1893 the reformers, country's Parliament passed both the liquor and the women's suffrage bills.68 the saloon Besides speaking widely on temperance, Ellen White repeatedly urged her fellow Adventists to cooperate with other churches in epitomized all promoting it. "In the work of temperance," she wrote, "all church members are supposed to stand upon the platform of union,"69 with that was Adventists in the front ranks of all who claim to be friends of temperance.<sup>70</sup> odious about She promoted the central objectives of the temperance movement-abstinence for the individual and legal prohibition by the state-and the entire vocally joined in calling for the closing of saloons. The advocates of temperance fail to do their whole liauor duty unless they exert their influence...in favor of prohibition and total abstinence.<sup>71</sup> traffic.

O that a public sentiment might be created that would put an end to the drink traffic, close the saloons, and give these maddened men a chance to think on eternal realities.<sup>72</sup>

Let everything possible be done to circulate strong, stirring appeals for the closing of the saloon.<sup>73</sup>

Her comments on the work of the WCTU were positively glowing. "None who claim to Prohibition

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have a part in the work of God," she exclaimed in 1881, "should lose interest in the grand object of this organization in temperance lines." Its members can be "a great help to us in our efforts to advance the temperance movement."<sup>74</sup> In 1908 she reiterated, "The WCTU is an organization with whose efforts for the spread of temperance principles we can heartily unite. The light has been given me that we are not to stand

aloof from them...."75

She also felt that joining forces with the WCTU would give Adventists an opportunity to share their faith. "They, by uniting with us, will hear new truths which the Holy Spirit is waiting to impress upon hearts."<sup>76</sup> "The education our people have had in Bible truth and in a knowledge of the requirements of the law of Jehovah will enable our sisters to impart to these noble temperance advocates that which will be for their spiritual welfare."<sup>77</sup>

Although Ellen White had high praise for the WCTU, she was adamantly opposed to one of the organization's objectives, namely, legally enforced Sunday observance. "We cannot unite with them in a work of exalting a false Sabbath," she wrote. "We cannot work in lines that would mean the transgression of the law of God, but we say to them, Come on to the right platform."<sup>78</sup>

It was evidently the Christian character of WCTU members that earned Ellen White's approval, because she emphatically opposed any alliance with temperance clubs composed of all classes of men. "We must as a people make a distinction between those who are loyal to the law of God and those who are disloyal."<sup>79</sup> In her view, those who indulged in tobacco and drank tea and coffee were not temperance people after all, in spite of their agitation for prohibition.<sup>80</sup> When it came to choosing allies in the temperance movement, Ellen White believed that liv-



ing a conservative Christian life, holding to high standards of personal conduct, was more important than their views on Sunday legislation.

Ellen White's adamant opposition to any licensing of the liquor traffic continued throughout her career. Such a law, she said, "gives its sanction to this downfall of the soul and refuses to stop the trade that fills the world with evil."81 To license the liquor traffic was tantamount to giving it legal protection, and that fostered the very evil it purported to restrict.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, all the efforts of the temperance movement were futile, she insisted, so long as the sale of liquor was sustained by the law.83 She urged that "laws be enacted and rigidly enforced prohibiting the sale and the use of ardent spirits as a beverage."84 "Let the voice of the nation demand of its lawmakers that a stop be put to this infamous traffic."85 Like other temperance reformers, she found the saloon particularly offensive. "No real reform will be effected," she wrote in 1886, "until the law shall close up liquor saloons."86

As well as speaking and writing in favor of Prohibition, Ellen White actively urged Adventists to vote for it, and to encourage others to do the same. "In our favored land," she wrote, "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?"<sup>87</sup> In 1881 the following resolution was submitted to the delegates at the Iowa camp meeting:

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.<sup>88</sup>

When some questioned the wisdom of including the words "the ballot box" in the resolution, they sought Ellen White's counsel, since she was on the camp grounds. According to her diary, "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 for twenty minutes."<sup>89</sup>

Something similar happened twenty years earlier when certain "wet" politicians tried to persuade Adventists to refrain from voting on the liquor issue, as was the Quaker practice. She said of their visit, "Satan and his evil angels are busy at this time, and he has workers upon the earth. May Satan be disappointed, is my prayer."<sup>90</sup> And according to one source, she even encouraged Adventists to vote on the Sabbath if they had to, in order to support Prohibition.<sup>91</sup>

#### Conclusions

The active involvement of Adventists in the temperance movement raises a number of interesting questions, both theological and ethical. Adventism originated in the Millerite movement of the 1840s, whose followers anticipated the imminent return of Christ. And ever since, from the Millerites who eventually organized the Adventist church to their successors around the world today, Adventists have looked for Christ to return in the very near future. In spite of their conviction that this present world is soon to pass away, however, Adventists, from early on have been actively involved in elevating the lot of humankind in this world, by developing an extensive network of educational and medical institutions and by participating in a broad spectrum of activities designed to meet human needs. In other words, Premillennial Adventists have consistently embraced a good deal of Postmillennial activity.

A number of scholars have commented on the paradox that a people expecting the world to come to a catastrophic end in the near future should work so hard to improve the conditions of life in the world. According to Jonathan Butler there was a remarkable shift in Adventist attitudes in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In contrast to the apolitical apocalyptic of the 1840s that shunned any relation to government, the Adventists of the 1880s and thereafter embraced "a political prophetic which brought them into the political process, if only marginally, and engaged them as prophets to sustain America, at least for a time, rather than merely to forecast its ruin...."92 With "Adventists both apocalypticism and more traditional eschatology could sustain itself in tandem ... with a concomitant effect on how they related to society."93

From time to time, this willingness to employ political means to achieve moral ends has made Adventists a bit uncomfortable. Note the following attempt to separate the two in the 1966 edition of the *Adventist Encyclopedia*.

Adventists believe in the separation of church and state, and therefore oppose church participation in politics; but they have always considered legislation against alcohol and other such issues to be not a political but a moral issue.<sup>94</sup>

Whatever their similarities, it seems, there were fundamental differences between Adventists and other temperance advocates. Adventists may have supported measures that would promote social improvement, but social transformation was not their primary concern. In spite of Ellen White's extensive support for causes such as temperance, Douglas Morgan argues, she never made political transformation of American society a central target of her work.<sup>95</sup> And even

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though they were willing to vote for Prohibition, says Butler, this accommodation "left them only at the periphery of the political process and not entirely absorbed by it."<sup>96</sup>

What many reform minded religious leaders in the nineteenth century regarded as a unified package, Ellen White viewed as a decidedly mixed bag. As we have seen, she strongly supported Prohibition, but she seemed indifferent toward female suffrage,<sup>97</sup> and when it came to legally enforced Sunday observance, she objected in terms that were, quite literally, apocalyptic. In *Testimony* 

33, published in 1889, she asserts that biblical prophecy foretells the enactment of a national Sunday law in the United States. She solemnly warns that such legislation would have horrific consequences for Seventh-day Adventists—it would bring them before councils to justify their beliefs,



and ultimately lead to "imprisonment, exile, and death."<sup>98</sup> Moreover, she describes this crisis as "impending," "right upon us,"<sup>99</sup> and "on the point of realization."<sup>100</sup>

In view of these dire warnings, it is hard to understand why Ellen White would encourage Adventists to ally themselves with a temperance whose leaders were actively promoting Sunday legislation. While predicting that the power of the state would soon lead to persecution, Ellen White urged Adventists to vote for Prohibition and thereby use that very power to impose a moral objective on the country—a measure that a number of Americans at that time resented as a violation of their personal freedom.<sup>101</sup>

When we note that many members of a movement whose leaders were actively supporting temperance not only wanted to achieve Prohibition, but supported the legal enforcement of Sunday observance, the irony of nineteenth century Adventism becomes a striking paradox. The very means that some saw as an important step toward an ideal society, Adventists viewed as a descent into cosmic catastrophe.

The record of Adventist involvement in the temperance movement presents us with the puzzling spectacle of people who believe that human history is fast moving toward a cataclysmic end, yet devote themselves diligently to improving human life in the short time remaining, and doing so in a variety of ways—through education, medical ministry, worldwide mission work, and, yes, social reform. We are also confronted with the striking paradox of Adventists actively supporting Prohibition, which involved using the power of the state—the very source of potential persecution—in order to enforce changes in personal behavior. In light of the alarm with which Ellen White viewed the prospect of Sunday legislation—she described it as a sign that probation was about to close—it is remarkable that she wanted Adventists to have anything to do with organizations that supported it.

What does our historic involvement in the temperance movement, including our support for legal Prohibition, have to tell us about Adventist involvement in social issues generally? For one thing, it suggests that Adventists should engage in social reforms when human well-being is at stake, even when their motives do not precisely coincide with others who are committed to the same objectives. We do not have to agree on everything to make common cause with other reformers. By allying themselves with proponents of temperance, Adventists ran the risk of indirectly supporting Sunday legislation, one of the auxiliary objectives of the National Reform Party and of the WCTU, as Ellen White was aware. However, to abstain from any involvement with the temperance movement would have placed Adventists in a most unfavorable light in the eyes of their fellow Protestants. To do this was apparently less desirable than to risk indirectly lending support to Sunday legislation, or at least assisting those who advocated Sunday legislation.

Even though Adventists shared certain goals with temperance organizations, they wanted to make the distinctive position of the Church on other issues perfectly clear. The organization of the AHTA provided Adventists a way to express approval of the principles of temperance principles while objecting to certain features in other temperance organizations. Adventists were politically involved in temperance, to be sure, but they were always involved as Adventists, and they never forgot it.

At the same time, the willingness of the Adventist Church to participate in the temperance movement and cooperate with other institutions of reform, such as the WCTU, shows that Adventists were not exclusivists; they did not feel that they alone were God's people, or that their denomination was the only means by which God was working in the world.

Do the temperance activities of the Adventist Church around the turn of the twentieth century provide a precedent for social and political action of the part of the Church in the twenty-first? I believe they do. If contemporary Adventists are true to their nineteenth century heritage, we will commit ourselves to improving society, and we will not be reluctant to use political means to do so.

Suppose we took our forbears' commitment to temperance as a specific precedent for social action today. What would we do? Trying to reestablish national Prohibition in the United States now would be unrealistic. That battle was won, and then lost. But there may be alcoholand drug-related issues that deserve the church's attention today. One is the lenient treatment accorded those who drive under the influence.

Vehicle registration renewal notices in California are accompanied by an insert with the heading, "Get a DUI—Lose Your License." It includes the warning, "It is illegal to drive with a Blood Alcohol Content of .08% or more." Then, ironically, it also says, "REMEMBER: Even one drink is likely to affect your ability to drive safely!" The chart that follows shows that a BAC of .00 is the "Only Safe Driving Limit" and that as little as .02 BAC—well within the legal limit—falls within the range of "Driving Skills Impaired."

As this chart makes clear, it is perfectly legal to drive in California when your skills are affected by alcohol. In the United States we pay a heavy price for our leniency. Many of us know someone who died in an alcohol related traffic accident. The girl who grew up across the street from my high school home was killed by a drunk driver, for example, and a college friend of mine lost her nine-month old baby when a drunk driver crashed into her car.

It is startling to note the contrast between California laws related to alcohol and driving and those of Sweden, for example, which has some of the most rigorous DUI penalties in the world. Sweden lowered its legal BAC limit from .05 to .02% twenty years ago, and the fines for drunk driving can depend on how much money you have in the bank. In one case, a woman had to pay more than \$21,000. And if you break the law more than once, your name, your face and your car go into a database so police can stop you at any time.<sup>102</sup> The Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) website lists the following statistics, citing sources such as the FBI and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Each day, people drive drunk almost 300,000 times, but fewer than 4,000 are arrested. No one in Every day in America, another 28 people die as a result of drunk driving crashes. the Adventist Drunk driving costs the United States \$199 billion a year. church was Almost half of all drivers who were killed in crashes and tested positive for drugs also had alcohol in their more supportive system. of, or involved About one-third of all drivers arrested or convicted of drunk driving are repeat offenders. in, the Over 1.2 million drivers were arrested in 2011 for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics. temperance The rate of drunk driving is highest among 21 to 25 year olds (23.4 percent). movement In fatal crashes in 2011, the highest percentage of drunk drivers was for drivers ages 21 to 24 (32 than Ellen G. percent), followed by ages 25 to 34 (30 percent), and 35 to 44 (24 percent). White.

Since DUI is a serious social problem and a persistent threat to public health and safety, Adventists could express their historic commitment to temperance reform today by agitating for more rigorous standards, more severe penalties, and more systematic enforcement. According to various authorities, the key to reducing alcohol-impaired driving is deterrence. People are less likely to drink and drive if they believe they'll get caught. And sustained and well-publicized enforcement is the best way to let potential violators know they won't get away with it. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), effective measures against impaired driving include:103

Administrative license suspension. This procedure, allowed in most states, lets police immediately take away the license of someone who either fails or refuses to be tested for alcohol even before they are convicted.

Sobriety checkpoints. Checkpoints, which have been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, don't always result in a lot of arrests, but they are a good deterrent if they are visible and publicized. Not all states have them.

Minimum drinking age of 21. Young drivers have a much higher crash risk after drinking Suppose alcohol than adults. Setting 21 as the minimum legal age for purchasing alcohol has helped we took our reduce alcohol-impaired driving among teenagers. However, better enforcement of these laws is needed in many places. forbears' Alcohol interlocks. Many states require these devices for people with impaired driving con-

victions. People are less likely to reoffend when commitment to they're required to have an interlock. Something else that deserves attention may be the discrimination against citizens who don't drink when it comes to jury selection in DUI offenses. A municipal judge in Riverside County, California, once informed me that the only people who serve as jurors in DUI cases are people who themselves drink alcohol. All who are non-drinkers, he said, for whatever reasonreligious conviction, membership in organizations like MADD, even just a personal distaste

for alcohol-are eventually dismissed.

Alcohol is just one of the substances abused in American society. People in the U.S. are now dying at a greater rate from accidental drug overdoses than from traffic accidents. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), each day, forty-four people in the United States die from an overdose of prescription painkillers.<sup>104</sup> By some estimates the use of heroin has reached epidemic proportions,<sup>105</sup> and the evidence indicates that the two often go together.

In a recent Sports Illustrated article, "Smack Epi-

demic: How Painkillers Are Turning Young Athletes into Heroin Addicts,"106 L. Jon Wertheim and Ken Rodriguez describe the heartbreaking consequences from coast to coast of overusing opioid painkillers. The "general path to the drug" begins with the abuse of opioid painkillers such as OxyContin, Percocet and Vicodin. One in fifteen people who take nonmedical prescription painkillers will try heroin within the next ten years. While opioid painkillers can cost up to thirty dollars per pill on the black market, a bag of heroin can be purchased for five dollars and provides a more potent high. Prescriptions for pain medications more than quadrupled between 1999 and 2010. By the time high school athletes become seniors, approximately eleven percent will have used a narcotic pain reliever such as OxyContin or Vicodin-for nonmedical purposes. Athletes were four times more likely of medically misusing painkillers than non-athletes. A seven-month Sports Illustrated investigation found heroin overdose victims in no fewer than thirteen sports-including baseball, basketball, football, golf, gymnastics, hockey, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, volleyball and wrestling. Heroin has been described as "a weapon of mass destruction" among young athletes.<sup>107</sup> I wonder if this is something Adventists should address, giving our interest in, and the pride we take in, promoting longevity.

What is the ultimate take-away for Adventists today from the church's involvement in the Temperance movement a century and a half ago? One conclusion is that we should actively participate in reform movements and activities, cooperate with organizations committed to social improvement, righting wrongs, and both preventing and relieving suffering in the world around us. And we should not be reluctant to appeal to civil authority and use the power of government to support our efforts in doing so. We may need to be selective in our alignments, but that should not keep us from pursuing morally inspired social goals. At the same time, we should not, as Adventists, allow a preoccupation with this world and its concerns, no

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matter how laudable they may be, to cloud our awareness of the ultimate end of things.

This leaves us facing what may be the persistent perplexity of the Adventist experience. Is the world here and now something God wants us to care for and improve? Or is it something God hopes to end as soon as possible? Adventist involvement in the temperance movement suggests that this is an artificial dichotomy. Whatever our chronology of last day eventshowever near or far the end may be-God's people have important work to do. In his apocalyptic discourse, Jesus brings the cosmic and the common together. The sermon begins with a dramatic account of wars and persecution, but concludes by commending those who have served the Master faithfully, meeting the urgent everyday needs of those around them.

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versity Theological Seminary (MDiv) and the University of Chicago Divinity School (MA; PhD). He was a pastor in the Southeastern California Conference, then a member of the religion faculty at La Sierra, and is now pro-

fessor of religion at Loma Linda University. In 2014 Intervarsity Academic published his book, *Suffering and the Search for Meaning. A version of this paper was presented at the 2015 meeting of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies.* 

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1. The taste for alcohol dated back to the Puritans. The ship that brought John Winthrop to Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630 had more than 10,000 gallons of wine and three times as much beer as water. Daniel Okrent, *The Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (New York, 2010), 7–8.

2. Jack Larkin, Chief Historian, Old Sturbridge Village (http://www.teachushistory.org/second-great-awakening-agereform/articles/historical-note-temperance-reform-early-19thcentury) [accessed February 1, 2016].

3. Okrent, The Last Call, 8.

4. Fully 80% of licensed saloons were owned by first generation Americans, according to US census figures (lbid., 25–26).

5. Ibid., 16.

6. Beecher's list included "the health and physical energies of a nation," the "national intellect," "the military powers of a nation," the "patriotism of a nation," the "national conscience or moral principle," the "national industry," and "civil liberty" "Six Sermons on the Nature, Occasions, Signs, Evil, and Remedy of Intemperance" in Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford, 2002), 296–97.

7. Okrent, 24.

8. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, 1972), 871.

9. By 1855 fully forty percent of the states were legally dry Floyd O. Rittenhouse, "An Historical Study of the Temperance Movement in America, and Enactment and Repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment," Lecture at Institutes of Scientific Studies, Tenth Session, Loma Linda, CA (1959); Fourth Session, Washington, DC (1953), 2.

10. Okrent, 11-12. In the 1830s and 1840s national and state societies generated an enormous output of antiliquor tracts, and hundreds of local temperance societies were founded to press the cause, first of moderation in drink but increasingly of total abstinence from liquor. The temperance campaign proved extremely successful, particularly in New England and New York. Most New England communities became sharply divided between drinkers and non-drinkers. By the 1840s, liquor consumption had fallen to less than half its previous level, and hundreds of thousands of men had signed pledges of total abstinence. Much of this change proved more or less permanent-since the mid-nineteenth century, per capita alcohol consumption in the United States has never gone back to pre-1820 levels. Jack Larkin, Chief Historian at Old Sturbridge Village (http://www.teachushistory.org/second-great-awakening-agereform/articles/historical-note-temperance-reform-early-19th-century). [Accessed February 1, 2016]

11. The second wave swelled in the 1870s and 1880s. Founded in 1869, the Prohibition Party ran its candidates in the presidential election in 1872 on a platform of universal suffrage, business regulation, public education, and constitutional prohibition. Ibid. The party's power reached its zenith in the national election of 1884, when it took enough votes from the Republican candidate, James G. Blaine, to allow the Democratic candidate, Grover Cleveland, to win. In the election of 1888 it again took votes from the Republican candidate, Benjamin Harrison, who narrowly defeated Cleveland but won only a minority of the popular vote. Andrew Sinclair, *Prohibition: The Era of Excess* (Boston, 1962), 85.

12. wctu.org.

13. The names it gave its various departments in 1889 indicate the wide scope of the organization's activities: *Organization, Preventative, Educational, Evangelistic, Social, and Legal. The Cyclopaedia of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals,* eds. Deets and Pickett (New York, 1917), 650–51.

14. Gilbert M. Valentine, "When President Wilson Changed His Mind about Policy for Women" *Spectrum*, vol. 43, issue 2 (Spring 2015): 75. New Zealand was the first country to allow women to vote.

Okrent, *The Last Call*, 18.
 Ibid., 16.

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17. Francis E. Willard, Woman and Temperance (Hartford, CT, 1883), 176–7.

18. Okrent, The Last Call, 19.

19. There were many who saw connections among the various reform movements that characterized the 19th century. Frederic Douglass, for example, found a link between abolition and temperance. When he took the abstinence pledge in 1845 Douglass said, "If we could but make the world sober, we would have no slavery," partly because "all great reforms go together" (Ibid., 19). In his memoir, Douglass describes the way slave owners used liquor, particularly on holidays, to keep their slaves "happy" and obedient, thus "keeping down the spirit of insurrection." *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (New York, 2004), 100; quoted in Susan Cheever, *Drinking in American: Our Secret History* (New York, 2015), 105.

20. Willard, Women and Temperance, 43.

21. In its second national convention (1875) the WCTU voted the following: "Resolved, That whereas, the object of just government is to conserve the best interests of the governed; and whereas, the liquor traffic is not only a crime against God but subversive of every interest of society; therefore, in behalf of humanity, we call for such legislation as shall secure this end: and while we will continue to employ all moral agencies as indispensable, we hold Prohibition to be essential to the full triumph of this reform." *Cyclopaedia of Temperance*, 651.

22. lbid., 651-2.

23. Okrent, The Last Call, 17.

24. Ibid., 14-15.

25. While female suffragists regarded the ballot as their major goal, with the ability to vote down Demon Rum as one of several resultant blessings, the WCTU viewed votes-for-women as simply the best means for achieving their primary goal, i.e., prohibition. J. C. Furnas, *The Life and Times of the Late Demon Rum* (New York, 1965), 290.

26. "The rise of the suffrage movement was a direct consequence of the widespread Prohibition sentiment" (Okrent, *The Last Call*, 14).

27. Cheever, Drinking in America, 139.

28. Willard, Women and Temperance, 39.

29. Ibid., 40.

30. Henry William Blair, *The Temperance Movement: or The Conflict Between Man and Alcohol* (Boston, 1888), 502.

31. lbid., 504.

32. Willard, *Women and Temperance*, 50. Eliza Thompson, a devout Methodist, led 75 women from the Presbyterian Church to the town's saloons, hotels, and drugstores, where they worked in six-hour shifts, praying, singing, and reading from the Bible. If allowed inside, they would kneel; if not, they would remain outside, hunched for hours against the December cold. In 11 days they persuaded nine of the towns' 13 drinking establishments to close their doors (Okrent *The Last Call*, 13–14).

33. Furnas, Demon Rum, 292.

34. Robert L. Taylor, *Vessel of Wrath: The Life and Times of Carry Nation* (New York, 1966), 115.

35. Furnas, Demon Rum, 291.

36. In 1888 Senator Blair had written, "The position of all the leading Protestant denominations of our country ... is almost unanimous for total abstinence of the individual and total prohibition by the law of the land."

Blair, The Temperance Movement, 471.

37. Sinclair, Prohibition, 64.

38. Chiefly Methodists, joined by Baptists and Presbyterians (Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*, 871). The 18th Amendment was repealed by the 21st Amendment, which was ratified on December 5, 1933.

39. Sinclair, Prohibition, 76-7.

40. Rittenhouse, "Historical Study," 5.

41. Sinclair, Prohibition, 71.

42. Ibid., 68–9.

43. In this vein, Okrent suggests that Prohibition deprived a "freedom loving people" of "a private right that had been freely exercised by millions upon millions since the first European colonists arrived in the New World." He also observes that the temperance movement "created a template for political activism that was still being followed a century later" (Okrent, *The Last Call*, 3).

44. Ernest H. Cherrington, ed., *Standard Enclopedia of the Alcohol Problem* (Westerville, OH, 1929), V, 2423.

45. In addition, Kellogg felt that such an independent organization devoted to the interests of health and temperance reforms would remove the "odium of denominationalism" which apparently accompanied certain Adventist activities in the area of health reform. J. H. Kellogg, *Advent Review Supplement* (Jan 9, 1879).

46. J. H. Kellogg, "Behold, I Come Quickly," *Signs of the Times* (Oct 12, 1876): 329–30.

47. They also felt that each signer should receive a certificate, along with an appropriate ribbon—"elegant," "nice" or "good," depending on which pledge was involved. J. H. Kellogg and W. B. Sprague, "Organization of The American Health and Temperance Association," *Advent Review Supplement* (Jan 9, 1879): 1.

48. For many years the pledge had been one of the main agencies of temperance reformers. *Cyclopaedia of Temperance*, 484.

49. Willard, Women and Temperance, 176-7.

50. *Cyclopaedia of Temperance*, 57. The white ribbon endures as the logo for the WCTU (see the organization's current website).

51. Willard, Women and Temperance, 41.

52. See S. N. Haskell, "The Temperance Association and Missionary Work," *Review and Herald* (Feb 27, 1879): 5, and R. F. Cottrell, "American Health and Temperance Association," *Review and Herald* (May 15, 1879).

53. Review and Herald (Feb 20, 1879): 60.

54. W. C. White, "Missionary Societies: Temperance Societies," *Signs of the Times* (Oct 12, 1876): 334–35.

55. Haskell, "The Temperance Association and Missionary Work," *Review and Herald* (Feb 27, 1879): 69.

56. W. C White, "The Prohibition Platform," *Signs of the Times* (July 27, 1876): 256.

57. L. A. S., "Senator Blair's Testimony on the character of his Sunday Bill," *Review and Herald* (Nov 20, 1888): 728–29.

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Herald (Oct 30, 1888): 680-82.

62. "Proceedings of the General Conference," *Review and Herald* (June 14, 1926): 1–2.

63. F. D. Nichol, Wet or Dry? A Brief, Candid Examination of a Moot Question in American Life (Mountain View, CA, 1932), 90, 93. Okrent offers a strikingly different assessment of Prohibition. "In almost every respect imaginable, Prohibition was a failure. It encouraged criminality and institutionalized hypocrisy. It deprived the government of revenue, stripped the gears of the political system, and imposed profound limitations on individual rights. It fostered a culture of bribery, blackmail, and official corruption. It also maimed and murdered ...." Nevertheless, he concedes, as a direct result of its 14-year reign, Americans drank less and continued to drink less for decades afterward (Okrent, The Last Call, 373). Susan Cheever shares Okrent's dismal evaluation. "Prohibition was supposed to make the country healthy," she writes, "but instead it made them sick. Prohibition was supposed to cut down on crime, eradicate poverty, and reunite the American family. Instead it increased crime immeasurably and created organized crime syndicates...." By 1928, it had become "a national embarrassment, a synonym for corruption and foolishness, and the only amendment to the Constitution ever to be repealed.... Prohibition was only mildly effective when it came to lowering the amount of alcohol people drank" (Cheever, Drinking in America, 156).

64. E. G. White, Temperance (Mountain View, CA, 1949), 259.

65. On this occasion she stated that she "had seen the great evil everywhere in her travels from Maine to the Golden Horn, and she felt that we must use every power and influence possible to stop the tide of sin and misery." E. G. White, "Temperance Meeting," *Signs of the Times* (July 23, 1874): 35.

66. E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA, 1948), IV, 274–5.

67. E. G. White, *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions* of the Seventh-day Adventists (Basle, 1886), 207, 211.

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69. E. G. White, Gospel Workers (Washington, DC, 1915), 66.

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