

# SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PIONEERS AND THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON: AN ABOLITIONIST PERSPECTIVE

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## Resumen

La Epístola a Filemón fue un texto clave para los partidarios de la esclavitud a lo largo de la historia cristiana, incluyendo el siglo diecinueve que vio los comienzos del adventismo sabático. Los pioneros adventistas heredaron una opinión contraria a la esclavitud de forma natural de los milleritas, quienes fueron reformadores sociales. El mismo Miller fue un abolicionista activo así como lo fueron muchos de sus colegas adventistas, entre ellos Josué V. Himes, Carlos Fitch y José Bates.

## Palabras clave

Filemón – Pioneros adventistas – Esclavitud

## Abstract

The Epistle to Philemon was a key text for supporters of slavery throughout Christian history including the nineteenth century which saw the beginnings of Sabbatarian Adventism. Adventist pioneers naturally inherited anti-slavery views from the Millerites, who were social reformers. Miller himself was an active abolitionist as were many of his Adventist associates including Joshua V. Himes, Charles Fitch, and Joseph Bates.

## Key words

Philemon – Adventist pioneers - Slavery

## Introduction

Slavery is one of the main theological issues in the Epistle to Philemon.<sup>1</sup> This epistle was used to support slavery throughout Christian history.<sup>2</sup> Richard A. Horsley argues: “The traditional scholarly interpretation of Philemon could not have been more helpful for pro-slavery arguments, even for legitimization

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<sup>1</sup> Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 89-163. Slavery was very common in Paul's days. See Zvi Yavetz, *Slaves and Slavery in Ancient Rome* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988). However, slavery has Old Testament precedents: Gregory C. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (JOTSup 141; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); Paul Virgil McCracken Flesher, *Oxen, Women, or Citizens? Slaves in the System of the Mishnah* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> Willard M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women: Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1983), 31-66.

of the fugitive slave law”.<sup>3</sup> Martin affirms that “a second argument invoking Pauline authority in support of slavery noted that slaveholders (like Philemon) were members of churches founded by Paul and other apostles, hence, neither Paul *nor* the early church considered slavery sinful *per se*”.<sup>4</sup> Woods sustains that Paul’s Epistle to Philemon, together with “selected passages from some of the other Epistles, constituted the most important—and extensively quoted—Biblical weapon in the arsenal of the Christian American slaveholder”.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, it is therefore not surprising that Americans from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries quoted the Epistle to Philemon to justify the American slave system.<sup>6</sup>

Adventist pioneers strongly opposed the antebellum “great sin” of slavery. Since they disagreed with the practice of slavery, the question arises: How did Adventist pioneers interpret the slavery-related texts of the Epistle to Philemon? This article analyzes early Sabbatarian Adventist interpretation of these passages.

In order to contextualize Sabbatarian Adventist interpretation of Philemon, this study will explore: (1) the position of Millerism on slavery, (2) the general viewpoint among Sabbatarian Adventist pioneers regarding this practice, and last, (3) it will present the Sabbatarian Adventist interpretation of the slavery-related texts in the Epistle to Philemon.

## The Abolitionist-Millerite Connection

Millerism and abolitionism arose from the same milieu and shared many of the criticisms about the condition of society.<sup>7</sup> Millerism grew up in the context of a moral and social reform movement. A significant catalyst was the Second

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<sup>3</sup> Richard A. Horsley, “Paul and Slavery: A Critical Alternative to Recent Readings”, in *Slavery in Text and Interpretation* (ed. Richard A. Horsley, Allen Dwight Callahan, and Abraham Smith; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1998), 155-160.

<sup>4</sup> Clarice J. Martin, “‘Somebody Done Hoodoo’d the Hoodo Man’: Language, Power, Resistance, and the Effective History of Pauline Texts in American Slavery,” in *Slavery in Text and Interpretation* (ed. Richard A. Horsley, Allen Dwight Callahan, and Abraham Smith; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1998), 214.

<sup>5</sup> Forrest G. Wood, *The Arrrogance of Faith: Christianity and Race in America from the Colonial Era to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Knopf Press, 1990), 67.

<sup>6</sup> See also Orlando Patterson, “Paul, Slavery and Freedom: Personal and Socio-Historical Reflections”, in *Slavery in Text and Interpretation* (ed. Richard A. Horsley, Allen Dwight Callahan, and Abraham Smith; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1998), 263-282.

<sup>7</sup> American slaves’ condition is well pictured in Sheldon M. Stern, *The Black Response to Enslavement: Reinterpretations of the Behavior and Personality of American Slaves* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1976), 3-40.

Great Awakening, a series of revivals and reforms jointly described as “twin sisters”.<sup>8</sup>

William Miller took a decided stand against slavery.<sup>9</sup> William Lloyd Garrison—the most visible leader of the American abolitionist movement—recognized Miller as one in whom “the cause of temperance, of anti-slavery, of moral reform, of non-resistance,” found an “outspoken friend.”<sup>10</sup> In this sense, it can be said that “the affinity between abolitionism and Millerism should elicit little surprise”.<sup>11</sup>

Millerites were careful not to forget their responsibilities in this world. Facing imminent judgment they had an additional reason to carry out God’s commands. For Millerite abolitionists these directives included the requirement to “do all in our power to ameliorate the condition of our fellow men,” slave and free.<sup>12</sup> For example, Joshua V. Himes, the communications genius behind Millerism, was a counselor and contributor to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in 1842.<sup>13</sup>

Charles Fitch, another prominent Millerite, was a renowned abolitionist with his tract *Slaveholding Weigh in the Balance of Truth, and Its Comparative Guilt Illustrated*. He considered slavery as something worse than liquor traffic, theft, robbery, and murder and urged to “do your duty to deliver the spoils out of the hands of the oppressor”.<sup>14</sup> Joseph Bates, a minor Millerite figure who later became a Sabbatarian Adventist, shared his passion for the anti-slavery movement with many of the Millerites. After a career as a sailor and ship

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<sup>8</sup> Peter W. Williams, *America’s Religions: From Their Origins to the Twenty-First Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2002), 191.

<sup>9</sup> See Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry: A Defense of the Character and Conduct of William Miller and the Millerites, Who Mistakenly Believed That the Second Coming of Christ Would Take Place in the Year 1844* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1945), chaps. 12-13.

<sup>10</sup> Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 25.

<sup>11</sup> Ruth A. Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 182.

<sup>12</sup> *Liberator*, May 5, 1843, 70. See *Liberator*, June 16, 1843, 94; *Advent Herald*, June 3, 1846, 133. However, in spite of these statements, many non-Millerite abolitionists rejected the “passivity” that they associated with Adventism. See *Liberator*, February 10, 1843, 23; April 5, 1844, 53.

<sup>13</sup> David T. Arthur, “Joshua V. Himes and the Cause of Adventism, 1839-1845” (M. A. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1961), 11, 15, 17.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Leroy E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (4 vols.; Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1954), 4:533-534.

captain, he returned to his home in Massachusetts, converted to abolitionism, and helped establish the Fairhaven Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>15</sup>

Millerites were strong abolitionists. This assumption was shared by the majority of them,<sup>16</sup> and contributed to the strong stance of post-Millerite groups including the Sabbatarian Adventist movement, which ultimately became the Seventh-day Adventist Church after 1863.

## Sabbatarian Adventist Abolitionism

Sabbatarian Adventism inherited the basic theological assumptions from the Millerite movement. It is a natural consequence then that early Sabbatarian Adventists also adopt a vocation for social reform. Public activism appears to have been dismissed among these Adventist pioneers,<sup>17</sup> yet their viewpoint on slavery did not change. Moreover, “during the immediate pre-Civil War and War years Adventists couched their apocalypticism in Radical Republican rhetoric and looked upon slavery as the cancer that would soon destroy the American Republic”.<sup>18</sup>

The Sabbatarian Adventist interpretation of prophecy was closely linked with their opposition to slavery. For them the evil of slavery “revealed America’s dragon-like behavior, in spite of its lamb-like behavior—which was shown by its proclamation of freedom, justice, liberty, and a constitution that asserted the self-evident truth that all men are created equal”.<sup>19</sup> In this sense, the Adventist pioneers motivation was different from the Protestant abolitionist views that were looking for the perfectibility of human society.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See George R. Knight, *Joseph Bates: The Real Founder of Seventh-Day Adventism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004), 52-55.

<sup>16</sup> See Glenn C. Altschuler and Jan M. Saltzgeber, *Revivalism, Social Conscience, and Community in the Burned-over District: The Trial of Rhoda Bement* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983); Lewis Perry, *Radical Abolitionism: Anarchy and the Government of God in American Antislavery Thought* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973).

<sup>17</sup> See Jonathan M. Butler, “Adventism and the American Experience”, in *The Rise of Adventism* (ed. Edwin S. Gaustad; New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 173-206.

<sup>18</sup> Ronald D. Graybill, “The Abolitionist-Millerite Connection”, in *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century* (ed. Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler; Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 150.

<sup>19</sup> Trevor O’Reggio, “Slavery, Prophecy, and the American Nation as Seen by the Adventist Pioneers, 1854-1865”, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17.2 (2006): 136.

<sup>20</sup> John R. McKivigan, *The War against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches 1830-1865* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 20.

John N. Andrews, the first Sabbatarian Adventist pioneer to identify America as the second beast of Revelation 13, also established a close link between the American dragon-like behavior and slavery. He stated that “the institution of slavery most clearly reveals the dragon spirit of this hypocritical nation”.<sup>21</sup> Another visible Sabbatarian Adventist leader and the editor of the main publication, *The Review and Herald*, Uriah Smith, also identified America as the lamb-like beast in a series of articles he wrote in which he compared and contrasted the American lamb-like profession with its dragon-like works, and identified slavery as an example of the dragon voice of America.<sup>22</sup> He pointed to the “whitewashed villainy of many of the pulpits of our land,” pulpits supporting slavery; evidence that “the dragonic [*sic*] spirit of this nation has of late years developed itself in accordance with the prophecy in Revelation 13,11”.<sup>23</sup>

James and Ellen G. White similarly denounced slavery. James S. White, for example, identified slavery as the “darkest and most damning sin upon the nation”.<sup>24</sup> His wife, Ellen G. White, “advocated racial equality for African Americans”.<sup>25</sup> As Sabbatarian Adventism’s leading prophetic voice “she consistently spoke in favor of liberty and freedom for black people during and following slavery”.<sup>26</sup> She called this practice “the high crime of slavery”: “God is punishing this nation for the high crime of slavery. He has the destiny of the

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<sup>21</sup> John N. Andrews, “The Two-Horned Beast – Rev. XIII. Are the United States a Subject of Prophecy?”, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 19, 1857, 156.

<sup>22</sup> Uriah Smith, “The Warning Voice of Time and Prophecy”, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 26, 1853, 17.

<sup>23</sup> Uriah Smith, “The Degeneracy of the United States”, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 17, 1862, 22.

<sup>24</sup> James S. White, “The Nation”, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 12, 1862, 84.

<sup>25</sup> Samuel G. London, *Seventh-Day Adventists and the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 151.

<sup>26</sup> Delbert Baker and Susan Baker, ed., *People of Providence: Selected Quotations on Black People from the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Hagerstown, MD: Oakwood University Publishing Office, 2010), xxvi. Regarding the accusations of racism uttered against Ellen G. White, Samuel London states that E. G White’s strategy to address the issue of segregation is very similar to that of Katharine Drexel, a well-known Catholic advocate of black rights —both supported separate schools and churches for the improvement of African Americans. London says that “the comparison of Drexel and White shows that the latter held progressive views on race relations for her time.” London, *Seventh-Day Adventists and the Civil Rights Movement*, 151. Ronald D. Graybill has shown that to affirm that Ellen G. White wrote racist statements “involves misunderstandings of the writings of Ellen G. White.” Ronald D. Graybill, *E. G. White and Church Race Relations* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1970), 116. See Roy Branson, “Ellen G. White—Racist or Champion of Equality?”, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 9, 1970, 2-3; Roy Branson, “Slavery and Prophecy”, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* April 16, 1970, 7-9.

nation in His hands. He will punish the South for the sin of slavery”.<sup>27</sup> She condemned those who supported slavery: “Some have been so indiscreet as to talk out their pro-slavery principles —principles which are not heaven-born, but proceed from the dominion of Satan”.<sup>28</sup>

Altogether Sabbatarian Adventist pioneers inherited a strong anti-slavery position from the Millerite movement. It was their apocalyptic understanding that served as a hermeneutical key to reinterpret slavery as one of the strongest evidences of America’s dragon-like quality. Within this milieu Sabbatarian Adventists interpreted the slavery-related passages of the Epistle to Philemon.

### Interpreting Philemon

The common interpretation among pro-slavery theologians during the early years of Sabbatarian Adventism was that the apostle Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon as a slave. This fact, from their perspective, validated the practice of slavery.<sup>29</sup> Historian Caroline L. Shanks states that this understanding is widespread among nineteenth century theologians:

As a concrete illustration of this conception of New Testament teaching take the pro-slavery explanation of the Epistle of Philemon. Onesimus, they averred, was a runaway slave who had been converted by Paul and sent back to his master, Philemon, with this letter of commendation. Paul expected that Onesimus would remain with Philemon forever, as his slave, and the solicitude for kind treatment displayed by the apostle was accounted for on the theory that an easy pardon of Onesimus might have had a bad effect on Philemon's other slaves.<sup>30</sup>

Sabbatarian Adventist pioneers, however, were not unfamiliar with the theological and historical interpretation of the Epistle to Philemon. They decided to give it a fresh look. Although they did not write lengthy articles regarding the Epistle to Philemon, there is enough material to identify how they interpreted these slavery-related texts in the Epistle to Philemon and also to grasp their broader understanding of slavery in the Bible.

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<sup>27</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (9 vols.; Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 1: 264.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 2: 487.

<sup>29</sup> Timothy L. Smith, “Slavery and Theology: The Emergence of Black Christian Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century”, *Church History* 41.4 (1972): 504-507.

<sup>30</sup> Caroline L. Shanks, “The Biblical Anti-Slavery Argument of the Decade 1830-1840”, *The Journal of Negro History* 16.2 (1931): 148.

The most extensive study of all was written by James S. White in a series of articles titled “The Bible No Refuge for Slavery”. White argued that, since the subject of slavery was one of the most debated issues throughout the nation, and since “believers in present truth are often met by opponents with the assertion that slavery is upheld by the Bible; and requests have been sent in that something be given on the subject through the Review,” this issue will be addressed.<sup>31</sup> He began to publish a series of excerpts from the work of Luther Lee on this subject named *Slavery Examined in the Light of the Bible*.<sup>32</sup> These articles were issued as front-page articles over a period of three months. Although the opinions presented in them were from another author, White clearly made them his own. As he did so he summarized and expanded them, thus making them a reflection of his own viewpoint.

James S. White wrote two additional articles to the issue of slavery in the Epistle to Philemon under the title “Paul to Philemon does not Justify Slavery.” The main argument, according to Lee and endorsed by White, was that Onesimus “may have been a free man in the employ of Philemon, or he may have been bound to him, as a minor by his parents, or he may have bound himself to serve for a time, and have taken up his wages in advance, and then run away”.<sup>33</sup> He was not a slave because “he is called a servant, *doulos*”.<sup>34</sup> In this sense he states that “the supposition that Onesimus returned to a state of chattel bondage, as a moral duty required by the gospel, is the last and hopeless resort of the advocates of slavery”.<sup>35</sup>

James White sustains that, if we “suppose that he was a slave” and he now “should be received not a slave, but above a slave,” then this is “a fatal consequence to slavery,” because Onesimus is urged to receive Onesimus as “a partner,” like Paul himself.<sup>36</sup> Finally, the fact that the subscription [sic] to the Epistle to the Colossians read, “Written from Rome to the Colossians, by Tychicus and Onesimus” meant that Onesimus was one of the bearers of that important letter. This is confirmed in 4,7-9 where it states: “With Onesimus a faithful and beloved brother who is one of you.” White established that “the

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<sup>31</sup> James S. White, “The Bible No Refuge for Slavery” , *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, February 3, 1863, 73.

<sup>32</sup> Luther Lee, *Slavery Examined in the Light of the Bible* (Syracuse, NY: Scholarly Press, 1855).

<sup>33</sup> James S. White, “The Bible No Refuge for Slavery—Continued” , *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 28, 1863, 169.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>36</sup> James White, “The Bible No Refuge for Slavery—Concluded” , *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 5, 1863, 177.

most obvious sense is that Onesimus was a member of the Church at Colosse,” and “he must then, after his reconciliation to Philemon through Paul’s intervention, soon have returned to Rome, and been sent as a messenger to the Colossian Church”.<sup>37</sup> Thus, in conclusion, “this proves clear enough that he was not a chattel slave”.<sup>38</sup> James White revisits this argument in another article, quoting a tract<sup>39</sup> according to which Paul, “instead of sanctioning chattelism, positively denied it by affirming voluntary service, the equality of men as brethren, to be loved as Christ himself”.<sup>40</sup>

Ellen G. White, in her own analysis of slavery in Philemon starts from the viewpoint that Onesimus was indeed a slave, and finishes as her husband declaring that Paul does not endorse slavery in his Epistle to Philemon. She devotes part of a chapter in her book *The Acts of the Apostles* (1911) to analyze the case of Onesimus. She affirmed that Onesimus was “a pagan slave who had wronged his master”,<sup>41</sup> and that the apostle, after the conversion of the slave and having seen his missionary potential “promised to hold himself responsible for the sum of which Philemon had been robbed”.<sup>42</sup>

According to Ellen G. White, Paul offered to take responsibility for the debt of Onesimus. He reminded Philemon how he too was indebted to the apostle, and pleaded Philemon to receive Onesimus not as a slave, but “above a servant, a brother beloved . . . as myself”. In this sense Paul recognized that “slave-holding was an established institution throughout the Roman Empire.” Paul’s letter to Philemon demonstrates that the gospel can revert “the relation between master and servant”.<sup>43</sup> Thus Ellen G. White concluded that “it was not the apostle’s work to overturn arbitrarily or suddenly the established order of society” —because this would endanger the success of the gospel— “he taught principles which struck at the very foundation of slavery and which, if carried into effect, would surely undermine the whole system”.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Isaac Allen, *Is Slavery Sanctioned by the Bible? A Premium Tract* (Boston: American Tract Society, 1860).

<sup>40</sup> James S. White, “Is Slavery Sanctioned by the Bible—Concluded” , *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 8, 1861, 147.

<sup>41</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 456.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 459.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

Finally, Ellen G. White quoted another passage from Paul proposing it as a hermeneutical key to understand his position on slavery: “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor 3,17). Thus, when a slave was converted, he became a member of the body of Christ, and as such “was to be beloved and treated as a brother, a fellow heir with his master to the blessings of God and the privileges of the gospel”.<sup>45</sup> Now, slave and master, having been washed in the same blood, “are made one in Christ Jesus”.<sup>46</sup>

James and Ellen G. White’s stance on slavery and their interpretation of the case of Onesimus in particular, based in slavery-related texts of the Epistle to Philemon laid the foundation to the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s understanding of both issues. In the *Handbook for the Bible Students* the authors summarized the content of the Epistle to Philemon:

Onesimus was a slave who had stolen, and then run away, from Philemon. Converted, baptized, cherished by Paul, he was by him sent back to his master, whom the apostle besought to receive him no longer as a slave, but as a brother, and to put to Paul’s account any wrong he had done him as master.<sup>47</sup>

In the first Sabbath School Quarterly that studied the Epistle to Philemon, the author made the following summary about the book:

Paul’s letter to Philemon is a personal Epistle, not one of instruction to the church. He had brought to Christ an escaped slave who belonged to Philemon, Onesimus, and returns him with this letter to his master. Yet with a delicacy and tactfulness that was both a plea for the Christian kindness of Philemon toward Onesimus and a claim on Paul’s part of the debt Philemon owed to the apostle for bringing to him the knowledge of Christ Jesus, Paul sought the recognition by Philemon that one who had become a brother in Christ was more than a slave.<sup>48</sup>

Last but not least, the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (1954-1957) follows the interpretation by Ellen G. White: “Some believe that Paul here suggests the manumission, or setting free, of Onesimus. Paul doubtless hoped that this would be the case (see AA 457). He is confident that Philemon will

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 460.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Review and Herald Publishing Association, *Handbook for Bible Students: Containing Valuable Quotations Relating to the History, Doctrines, and Prophecies of the Scriptures* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1922), 44.

<sup>48</sup> “Epistles to the Thessalonians and Philemon”, *Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly*, October to December, 1945, 28.

extend an unreserved welcome to Onesimus”.<sup>49</sup> Even more, it paraphrases her writings, by saying: “The NT does not directly attack the institution of slavery, but it does outline principles that would eventually prove fatal to this institution”.<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

Although public activism seems to have diminished among Sabbatarian Adventist pioneers after 1844, their position on slavery did not change. They saw it as the cancer that was bound to destroy the American Republic, and considered its defense and practice as evidence of the American dragon-like behavior. Sabbatarian Adventism’s motivation against slavery was thus motivated by their eschatological worldview, while for nineteenth-century North American revivalists it was part of their effort to achieve the perfect human society that would herald the beginning of an earthly Millennium.

The Sabbatarian Adventist pioneer position against slavery provided the backdrop for their interpretation of slavery-related texts in the Epistle of Philemon. On the other hand, the general consensus for pro-slavery supporters was that this letter promoted the practice of slavery. James and Ellen G. White considered the principles outlined in this epistle clearly set against the institution, and if applied by North American Christians to their society, they would undermine the whole system of slavery altogether. The White’s reading of slavery-related texts in Philemon laid the arguments for a broader Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the institution of slavery in the Scriptures and the opinions published in Seventh-day Adventist literature up to the present.

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<sup>49</sup> Francis D. Nichol, ed. *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Revised ed.; 12 vols.; Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1980), 7: 384.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*