

# National Reform Association

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The National Reform Association (NRA) is a conservative organization of Christians that seeks to amend the United States Constitution to reflect their understanding of the lordship of Jesus Christ as sovereign over the nation. For this reason, it also has been referred to as the Christian Amendment movement. It began with two goals: the abolition of slavery and an amendment to the Constitution making the United States a Christian state.

<sup>1</sup> Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the eventual ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment achieved the NRA's first goal. Regarding the second goal, the organization has been lobbying the United States Congress for over 150 years without success. During its existence, the NRA has supported conservative Christian moral reforms, including the teaching of religion in public schools, advocating pro-life legislation, and lobbying for a national Christian Sabbath (Sunday) law. However, revisions to the Preamble of the Constitution and the First Amendment remain its primary focus.<sup>2</sup>

## Official Publications

Founded by G. H. Evans, *The Workingman's Advocate* magazine was an organ of the National Reform Association, and was one of the more important of the magazines devoted to the interests of the working man. In 1844, it merged with *Subterranean* to form: *Subterranean united with the working man's advocate*.<sup>3</sup> The official publication of the NRA and its most prominent magazine, *The Christian Statesman*, was founded by T. P. Stevenson and David McAllister. The first issue appeared on September 1, 1867, and it continued monthly until 2009, placing it among the longest running Christian publications in American history.<sup>4</sup>

## Historical Development

At the beginning of the Civil War, many Americans believed the war was the result of God's displeasure due to the nation's lack of recognizing Him in the Constitution and for the national sin of slavery.<sup>5</sup> Approximately 620,000 men from both Northern and Southern armies died in the war.<sup>6</sup> Christian denominations argued pro and contra slavery, usually depending upon their geographical location (i.e., Northern or Southern), their theology (Reformed theology or covenant theology, as discussed below), and their denominational leadership.

Throughout the Civil War, this sentiment began to wane, except for among a group of Reformed Presbyterians. The organization began unofficially in Xenia, Ohio, during a gathering of members from eleven different Protestant denominations in 1863. The name originally adopted on January 27, 1864, in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, was the National Association for the Amendment of the Constitution; however, the name was changed in 1875 to the National Reform Association.<sup>7</sup> In 1861, the Lakes Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) adopted a resolution calling for the U. S. Constitution to be amended “to acknowledge God, submit to the authority of his Son, embrace Christianity, and secure universal liberty.”<sup>8</sup> Likeminded parties held similar meetings in Illinois and Pennsylvania. Their stated purpose was

to secure such an amendment to the Constitution of the United States as will declare the nation’s allegiance to Jesus Christ and its acceptance of the moral laws of the Christian religion, and so indicate that this is a Christian nation, and place all the Christian laws, institutions, and usages of our government on an undeniably legal basis in the fundamental law of the land.<sup>9</sup>

In 1864, the same year it was organized, the NRA proposed amending the preamble of the Constitution as follows (added words are in brackets and italicized):

We, the People of the United States, [*humbly acknowledging Almighty God as the source of all authority and power in the civil government, the Lord Jesus Christ as the Ruler among the nations, His revealed will as the supreme law of the land, in order to constitute a Christian government, and*] in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the [*inalienable rights and the*] blessings of [*life,*] liberty, [*and the pursuit of happiness*] to ourselves, and our posterity, [*and all the people,*] do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.<sup>10</sup>

When leaders of the Association brought their proposal for a Christian amendment to the White House, Lincoln responded diplomatically, but with caution:

Gentlemen: The general aspect of your movement I cordially approve. In regard to particulars, I must ask time to deliberate, as the work of amending the Constitution should not be done hastily. I will carefully examine your paper in order more fully to comprehend its contents than is possible from merely hearing it read, and will take such action upon it as my responsibility to my Maker and our country demands.<sup>11</sup>

“In the remaining fourteen months of his life, Lincoln took no action endorsing or supporting the National Reform Association.”<sup>12</sup>

During the following years, little progress was made in getting the proposed emendation before Congress for a vote. By the late 1860s, congressmen had become familiar with constitutional principles. In 1869, Congress debated the limits of the Fifteenth Amendment, indicating by their remarks that they favored maintaining a separation of church and state at the national level.<sup>13</sup> Being aware of this, congressmen were concerned about possible free exercise of religion implications, especially in light of the NRA’s clear intentions to grant Christianity

a favored legal status.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, in 1868 Octavius Frothingham (1822-1895) founded the National Free Religious Association (NRA) to oppose Christian Amendment efforts. He was a pastor of the North Unitarian Church of Salem, Massachusetts.<sup>15</sup>

By the early 1870s, the NRA was holding national gatherings attended by several thousand people, mostly clergy. After the first such gathering, leaders published a small pamphlet, entitled *Proceedings from the National Convention to Secure a Religious Amendment of the United States Constitution, Cincinnati, Jan. 31 & Feb. 1, 1872*, with the intent of informing more citizens of the organization and to attract more members. Additional national conventions, held in New York (February 26-27, 1873) and Pittsburgh (February 4-5, 1874), included similar concerns and rationale for amending the U. S. Constitution. These conventions grew in size and influence over the course of several years, eventually gaining national attention and marking the movement's peak influence.<sup>16</sup>

By 1876, John Alexander, a Presbyterian layman who initially had proposed a Christian amendment in 1863, and who had been subsequently chosen as president of the NRA, gathered over 35,000 signatures for a petition, which he presented to the House of Representatives that year.<sup>17</sup> The work and influence of the NRA continued to the point where an actual floor vote in the House happened in 1876 to amend the Preamble. That measure was defeated, but was re-introduced in the 1890s and 1910s, when it was defeated by a narrow margin.<sup>18</sup>

The NRA renewed its platform again in 1910 and continued to meet throughout the twentieth century. By 1919, the NRA had grown to 50,000 members nationally, received the foreign minister of France, who addressed the organization, and continued to work not only on the amendment, but also on other measures to promote Christian government.<sup>19</sup> In 1947 and again in 1954, the National Association of Evangelicals promoted an effort to add the following words to the Constitution: "This nation divinely recognizes the authority and law of Jesus Christ, Savior and Ruler of Nations through whom are bestowed the blessings of God Almighty."<sup>20</sup>

In the 1950s, Dr. G. M. Robb and Dr. Sam Boyle, a former missionary to China, worked closely with Senator Ralph Flanders of Vermont, who introduced a proposal in 1954 to amend the Constitution. When the proposal did not garner enough votes, Robb and Boyle spent nine years lobbying in the nation's capital for this amendment.

The National Reform Association argued the merits of the Christian Amendment before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments. The NRA argued principles of national greatness from the Bible, quoted a spiritual message from George Washington, referred to colonial constitutions that were pro-Christian, and explained their view of church and state separation, which favored Christianity, but also allowed for non-Christians to be considered as citizens.<sup>21</sup>

In response, the Synagogue Council of American Jews, Rabbi Isidore Breslau, with contributions from Leo Pfeffer, argued the following four points as rationale for not adopting a Christian Amendment: 1) It is against the spirit of the American way, which is to diminish distinguishing characteristics of individual citizens so as to promote a united citizenry; 2) it leaves religious decisions to Congress, which is composed of men who can be

subject to political pressure; 3) it would unnecessarily burden the conscience of those citizens who were not Christian because they would recognize that they were not “equal before the law” and thus could not pledge allegiance to the American Constitution, or to the country; 4) it introduces the precedent of government acknowledging a particular religion, which could be used as justification for other religious acknowledgements, some perhaps involving Christian doctrinal practices.<sup>22</sup>

More importantly, the attention of Congress from the 1950s until the 1980s was focused on numerous issues, both domestic and foreign: various wars (Korean, Vietnam, the Cold War), the Civil Rights movement, and the scandals such as Watergate. Needless to say, Congress did not dedicate noteworthy time or effort to the aims of the NRA during this period.

By the 1980s, various conservative Christian groups had been organizing and planning to gain national attention and influence in American politics. Those groups, while not adopting the goal of a Christian Amendment, nonetheless advocated for several causes in common with the NRA. In 1994, the Christian Coalition, spearheaded by Ralph Reed, shocked the nation by gaining a formidable number of congressional seats, in both the House and the Senate. Reed’s strategy, combined with moderate Republicans (GOP) who held office, enabled the GOP to control both branches of Congress for the first time in forty years, thus wielding significant influence in American politics.<sup>23</sup>

During the next fifteen years, the NRA experienced financial setbacks, changes in leadership, diminished support, and an overwhelming, liberal influence in society from irreligious proponents of secularism. In 1996, William Gould, treasurer for the National Reform Association, appealed to Dr. James Dobson to unite their efforts to reform the nation.<sup>24</sup> Dr. Dobson did not respond to the NRA’s suggestion, perhaps because he recognized the more successful strategy of the Religious Right to gradually influence policy makers, rather than to rely upon a frontal assault as proposed by the NRA. Ultimately, internal issues among NRA leaders resulted in major setbacks.

In a forum discussion on December 9, 2009, board members mentioned the “inactive” status of the NRA.<sup>25</sup> In 2008, then-President Patrick Marx sent a letter to supporters indicating a “re-organization,” but by the following year the association appeared to be inactive due to financial challenges.

Amid the tumultuous political climate leading up to the 2016 presidential election, and in its wake, a group of students at Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, Indiana, proposed “an informational meeting to explore the feasibility of renewing the ministry of the National Reform Association.”<sup>26</sup> Recognizing the inactive status of the NRA since 2009, and due to the increasing polarization of the political climate, they argued that the NRA should be revived. They cited a poll by the Huffington Post and YouGov, used by John Fea in an article posted on April 9, 2013, which showed that thirty-two percent of the people favored or strongly favored a constitutional amendment to recognize Christianity as the official religion of the United States.<sup>27</sup> Through such influence, and especially that of the NRA itself, societal views about a constitutional amendment changed during the next two

years.

In February 2015, a Public Policy Polling national survey of Republican voters found that fifty-seven percent wanted to “dismantle the Constitution and establish Christianity as the official national religion, whereas only thirty percent opposed this idea.”<sup>28</sup> In contrast, while a majority of Americans self-identify as Christian, the majority of those outside of the GOP would feel uncomfortable with any form of imposed Christianity.

The 2017 mission statement of the NRA declares:

In order to honor the commandment of Scripture to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord over the nations of the earth (Psalm 2:7-12; Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-22; Col. 2:10; Rev. 1:5; Rev. 11:15) and to progress with fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20), the mission of the National Reform Association since 1863 has been to work with political leaders, pastors, and lay leaders to promote reformation in government and society, and to secure an amendment to the United States Constitution modifying it as needed, particularly in its Preamble and First Amendment, to recognize Jesus Christ as King and Supreme Governor of the United States.

The wording of the new Preamble would be proposed as such:

WE, THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES, [*recognizing the being and attributes of Almighty God, the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, the law of God as the paramount rule, and Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Savior and Lord of all,*] in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessing of liberty to ourselves and to our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, the NRA, organized with both Reformed Presbyterian leadership and ecumenical support, continues to testify on biblical grounds that the United States has an obligation to acknowledge the kingship of Christ and to submit to Christ’s mediatorial reign over the nations.

## Theology

The Reformed Presbyterians who founded the NRA adhere to the teachings of John Calvin, some principles of which undergird their view of relations between God’s kingdom of grace and civil authority. The foundational tenets of Reformed theology are typically summarized through the “TULIP” acronym: Total depravity of mankind; Unconditional salvation; Limited atonement; Irrevocable grace; and, Predestination. Through such theology, those who are predestined to salvation by God’s sovereign election cannot choose to be lost because God’s grace revealed through Christ’s limited atonement cannot be revoked, resulting in salvation without conditions upon the individual, except to receive Christ as Lord and Savior (per contra these views, see Arminianism). Determinism, that God’s will is sovereign and cannot be rejected, is the foundation of such theological views. Themes of divine sovereignty in the civil sphere lead to justification of imposing God’s moral authority through societal institutions established to bring order to the Christian commonwealth. Based on Romans 13, Reformed

theologians view civil authority and its institutions as ordained by God and therefore not to be resisted because “the powers that be are ordained of God,” and “whoso resisteth the power, resisteth God.”

Such an interpretation, however, overlooks the historical setting and the context of the passage. When Paul wrote Romans, the ruling civil authority was the pagan Roman Empire. Paul’s counsel was for the Christian converts in Rome to submit to such authority and to avoid any type of involvement with rebellious or schismatic movements that would draw the wrath of Rome upon the fledgling Christian group. To adopt a Reformed interpretation almost leads to the conclusion of a justification of Rome’s institutions and actions, some of which included not only vile, sacrilegious acts such as gladiatorial matches and temple orgies, but also included the persecution of Christians as martyrs for the faith. Additionally, the context of Romans 13:1-10 implies that Christians are obligated to subject themselves to the civil authority provided that authority recognizes the sovereign authority of God and acts in accordance with principles of God’s law pertaining to human relations (viz., the last six commandments).

Thus, a more accurate and nuanced interpretation of Paul’s inspired counsel is that Christians recognize the need for civil authority to maintain societal stability, and such civil authority has the obligation before God to reveal His character in its treatment of its citizens. In similar fashion, the obligation of Christian citizens is to submit to all lawful authority that does not attempt to obligate them against their conscientious adherence to the teachings of God’s Word. From such an interpretation, one may conclude that civil authority is conditional—not unconditional; that the limit of its power lies at the line where conscientious convictions begin for the individual; that civil authority has validity only insofar as it fulfills its lawful civic function of maintaining societal peace and stability; and the moment civil authority crosses the line delineating civic functions from a religious role, it has usurped the sphere that belongs to God alone.

Reformed theologians refer to passages that speak of Christ’s mediatorial reign over all things (viz., Ephesians 1:21-22; Matthew 28:18; Acts 10:36), as justification that all things must be subject to Christ, which includes the state, composed of believing and non-believing citizens.<sup>30</sup> Citing John 5:22, 23 and 1 Corinthians 5:27, Reformed theologians believe “the Scriptures teach that Christ is Ruler of Nations and that Jesus Christ, as Mediator, has all power and universal dominion committed to him, which must include authority over nations.”<sup>31</sup> While Seventh-day Adventists believe in the mediatorial role of Christ, they also understand that role to refer to Christ’s mediatorial ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary to administer His merits and grace in favor of believers during the Pre-Advent Judgment, rather than in reference to Christ exercising a mediatorial role as Judge over the nations.<sup>32</sup>

Covenant theology is another strand in Reformed theology that impacts relations between the civic and religious spheres. Covenant theology interprets the pacts, or covenants, between Yahweh and Israel as a paradigm for relations between God and His Church in the New Testament era. While God’s covenant of grace is foundational to both Old and New Testaments, and the plan of salvation described therein, certain terms of that covenant

vary greatly—viz., the Israelites received a specific geographical territory where they established a civil government in harmony with Yahweh’s moral laws, but the New Testament Church (people of God) is never assigned a specific geographical territory,<sup>33</sup> and is thereby not capable of instituting a civil government. Whereas Israel became an established kingdom with rulers chosen by God,<sup>34</sup> the Church scatters across the globe, and fulfills His commission within the borders of numerous and politically varied systems of civil government.<sup>35</sup> Whereas Israel relied upon God’s voice through prophets to guide its civil leaders,<sup>36</sup> the Church relies upon God’s voice through appointed leaders to administer and adjudicate in spiritual matters within the Church.<sup>37</sup> Whereas Israel adjudicated civil crimes and meted out punishment,<sup>38</sup> the Church adjudicates matters of membership on a spiritual basis and relegates to the civil authority the punishment of members who have violated civil laws.<sup>39</sup> Such distinctions between Old and New Testament covenants are vital to understanding the role of the Church designated by God for His people living in the end times. Erroneous views of biblical civil authority lead, by extension, to erroneous understandings of the civil obligations resting upon Christians and the usurpation of authority in religious matters that belongs only to God.

## Political Theory

Based on Reformed theology and analysis of proceedings from the national conventions of 1872-1874, the NRA adheres to a confessional state model. Although they recognize the plurality of religions in America and the Founders’ intent to guarantee religious freedom through the First Amendment, their proposed idea of statecraft grants Christianity a pre-eminent status in relation to civil authority. Due to the prohibition of Congress favoring any religion as outlined in the religion clauses of the First Amendment, the NRA has struggled to persuasively make a case for national recognition of Christ’s lordship in the Preamble while also guaranteeing free exercise rights to all other religions, including Christian groups who do not adhere to their theological views.<sup>40</sup> The following paragraphs illustrate their rationale in support of a confessional state, albeit each author does not use that term, but instead uses terminology related to moral authority.

“The Moral Accountability of the Nation” was an address given by Professor J. R. W. Sloane, DD, in which he reasoned that a nation is comprised of moral beings in moral relation to one another. Government is merely a system of laws, but law must be founded upon justice. A true sense and practice of justice provides and maintains harmony among men.

But, although law comes from God, it gets its practical expression and exerts its real power only through the will of the political organism of the State. . . Every government, by equitable laws, is a government of God; a republic thus governed is of Him, through the people, and is as truly and really a theocracy as the Commonwealth of Israel. . . A strong government is one in which the moral power among the citizens is strong; that is, where there is a conviction of the majesty and moral obligations of just and wholesome laws. . . I believe it is one of the fundamental principles laid down by Blackstone, that no law which controverts the law of God is binding.<sup>41</sup>

By comparison, Seventh-day Adventists also support moral norms for society, although they adopt a slightly different hermeneutic than that of Sloane. They distinguish between man's obligation to his Creator and man's civic obligation to the State. Of the Ten Commandments, only the first four pertain to man's relations to God, recognized as religious convictions;<sup>42</sup> the last six commandments pertain to man's relation to his fellow man, and therefore the latter group should be considered the moral foundation of any system of laws designed to govern a nation in morality.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, one may argue that a concept of "separation of church and state" most aptly provides a just system of moral governance in America, for on the one hand it allows the individual to follow his personal religious convictions according to his understanding of the first four commandments, and it also allows for a common standard of morality for all citizens in their moral relations to one another.

A summary of some of Sloane's additional arguments can be categorized into civic duties of citizens and moral obligations of a state as an entity. Sloane reasoned that if citizens shall hold one another accountable through the jury system, there must be an acknowledgement of morality as opposed to immorality. He argued that Bible teaching in the public schools provided the moral foundation for youth who later become adults and citizens, competent to judge their fellow men as part of a jury, or to weigh and reason the justness, or lack thereof, of laws enacted by government.<sup>44</sup> Laws of the state include laws affecting aspects of society, such as marriage, education of minors, and inheritance.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, states have legally binding financial obligations and are subject to the laws of war.<sup>46</sup>

After reference to such obligations devolving upon any state, Sloane includes an argument about the "soul" of a state by alluding to how it prescribes worship: "Shall we have a quiet Sabbath (Sunday) in which to worship God, free from the rush, tumult, and confusion of business? This has been decided in the negative. Sabbath business and Sabbath processions have carried the day thus far over the Christian sentiment of the community—over the rights of worship. . ." Sloane concluded by stating, "The nation is of God, is a creature of moral law and a subject of the divine government."<sup>47</sup>

Professor Tayler Lewis, who also was commissioned by the NRA to write a treatise of the moral obligation of the state, argued in favor of a Christian Amendment based on his view that the state cannot be neutral toward religion. He contended that the state must either be amicable, or hostile; religious or irreligious; moral or immoral—there could be no "neutral" position of the state with regard to religion.<sup>48</sup> (This is still an argument used today by Catholic and conservative Protestant groups who favor government support, or establishment, of religion). However, by 1870, Congress had adopted the Thirteenth Amendment (1865, outlawing slavery), the Fourteenth Amendment (1868, granted citizenship to slaves and equal protection under the laws), and the Fifteenth Amendment (1870, right to vote for all citizens), known as the "Civil War amendments," which were pivotal for the nation because they legally unified the states of the Union and insured that one of the major causes of the Civil War, slavery, would not repeat itself. As a corollary effect, however, these amendments asserted the power of Congress over the states, thus establishing the foundation for later decades of the U. S. Supreme Court adjudicating cases of religious freedom under the First Amendment clauses.

By 1870, Congress was favoring a growing national sentiment of separation of church and state through a disestablishment of any religion.<sup>49</sup> The concept of a “wall of separation” between church and state traces back to colonial Baptist Roger Williams, was promoted by Thomas Jefferson in his letter to the Danbury Baptist Association in 1802,<sup>50</sup> and legally was conceptualized as “benevolent neutrality” by Chief Justice Warren E. Burger in *Waltz v. Tax Commission* (1970). “Benevolent neutrality” is based on the idea of two spheres—one for the church (religion) and one for the state (government). Government can be neutral toward religion, neither helping nor harming any religion, but allowing each to flourish or flounder through each one’s own resources, efforts, and so on. Government adopts a “benevolent”—“bene” (Latin, “good”) and “volonte” (Latin, “will”)—or attitude of “good will” toward religion, such as recognizing it as an element for the good of society and thus, not interfering in its sphere (“free exercise”) or directly supporting it in any way (“establishment” clause). It does allow for minor accommodations of religion, but only within constitutional guidelines of the First Amendment.<sup>51</sup>

In his concluding argument, Lewis used the example of the Christian Sabbath to argue that the state cannot be neutral toward religion—it must either embrace religion fully in accord with its moral obligation, or it should fully set aside any religious pretense. He stated,

There might be some poor attempt to keep the appearance of a Sabbath divested of every religious feature. . . . What a hell upon earth would our great cities become, and in time our land become, with one day in seven given up to idleness, to the theatres, to dissipating shows, to unchecked intemperance, or to the driving on of that flood of worldliness. . . . We may well suspect the self-knowledge, at least of any man who claims to be an advocate of temperance, a friend of moral reform, an enemy of gambling and prostitution. . . . who is, at the same time, for divesting the Sabbath of its religious idea, and turning it into a day of ‘harmless recreation,’ as it is styled.<sup>52</sup>

Because of such a subtle manner of blending civic obligations of a state with spiritual elements of how it may prescribe worship, Ellen White raised an alarm to Seventh-day Adventists, “Church and state are now making preparations for the future conflict. Protestants are working in disguise to bring Sunday to the front.”<sup>53</sup> She further stated,

The Sunday movement is now making its way in darkness. The leaders are concealing the true issue, and many who unite in the movement do not themselves see whither the undercurrent is tending. Its professions are mild and apparently Christian, but when it shall speak it will reveal the spirit of the dragon. . . . We should bring before them the real question at issue, thus interposing the most effectual protest against measures to restrict liberty of conscience.<sup>54</sup>

## The Christian Sabbath (Sunday)

In an article appearing in *The Christian Statesman* entitled, "Seven Years of Sabbath Reform in the United States,"<sup>55</sup> the author describes essay contests that began in 1885 upon the topic of the Sabbath. Contestants were offered \$500 and \$1,000 for the best essay describing and defending the Christian Sabbath (Sunday) and why there should be civil legislation to enforce it. In 1886-1887, there were two movements to obtain signatures for a petition to Congress, requesting that Sunday be observed in the nation's military and mail service, in interstate commerce, in the District of Columbia, and in the United States territories. Forty thousand letters were sent out, primarily to ministers of whom less than one-fortieth indicated support of the petition. The editor of the *Hebrew Standard*, I. P. Solomon, spoke on behalf of the Jews and in defense of the biblical Sabbath (Saturday). Mayor Hewitt of New York City replied,

As you very well know, I do not make the laws, but I am sworn to see them executed. The Sunday law has been the subject of judicial construction, and it has been decided that it is based not upon the religious principle, but upon public policy, and that it is to be observed by all citizens without regard to condition or religious belief. It does not deny any portion of our citizens the right to observe the Sabbath day and it does not compel any of them to do so. It merely provides that one day in seven shall be a day of rest; inasmuch as that day cannot be made to suit everybody, a day is selected which suits the majority. Doubtless, this inflicts a hardship on the minority; but under our theory of government, it is a hardship which cannot be avoided. . . I notice that you protest against the arrest of "inoffending citizens" who conscientiously observe the seventh day and the placing of them in cells filled with the vilest of vile. It seems to me that you beg the whole question, when you use the words "inoffending citizens." The simple fact is that they violate the law, and the police have no discretion whatever as between transgressors, but must take them all to the same tribunal and punish them in the same way. The remedy is for those citizens who you regard as inoffending to obey the law, which will give them immunity from arrest.<sup>56</sup>

The year 1888 was described as "one of national awakening in this reform"<sup>57</sup> and marked a tremendous increase of agitation and interest in a national Sunday law. Sunday law advocates organized themselves in a variety of ways to have the most impact upon Congress and society. First, early in the year, they organized the various Sabbath (Sunday) associations and Christian denominations for the defense of Sunday. They visited and enlisted the support of major business associations, such as the Central Labor Union and Letter Carriers' Association of New York City, the International Conventions of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, and the International Assembly of the Knights of Labor, among others. Additionally, they presented two million petitions to Congress on April 6 and ten million petitions on December 11. Also, they gave public and published hearings in each case before the Committee of Education and Labor. Finally, they organized and appointed members to a "National Sabbath Committee" to counteract the union of "personal liberty leagues" that sprang into existence to oppose any effort for a Sunday law.

The efforts of Sunday law advocates were so widespread that they obtained the support of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1895<sup>58</sup> and organized the American Sabbath Union on December 11, 1888. Additionally, the issue drew the attention of the nation to such an extent that Congress held a hearing on the resulting bill, known as the Blair Sunday Rest Bill. Advocates as well as opponents were given time, a lengthy six hours, to express their views and arguments. On this occasion, Stephen M. Haskell and A. T. Jones presented the concerns of Seventh-day Adventists, resulting in the defeat of the Blair Bill. The Associated Press produced a two-column report outlining the principal arguments of both sides, of which Congress published 42,000 copies due to popular demand.

## Church and State Views

To some degree, the NRA attempted to maintain a commitment to the separation of church and state. They rejected the idea of an established church. In this sense, they distinguished the "separation of church and state" from the "separation of religion and state." Its members were very careful to affirm that they were not opposing religious liberty and were not interested in creating a theocracy. But they did want to give Christianity a privileged place in America. This meant the promotion of Bible reading in schools, the preservation of the Christian Sabbath (Sunday), and the public recognition of the teaching of Christianity as the nation's moral guide.

The NRA initially did not seek to amend the First Amendment as one of its goals. However, through the course of time and after several unsuccessful attempts to amend the Preamble to the Constitution, they recognized that the establishment clause of the First Amendment posed the greatest challenge to achieving their goal. Thus, they now seek to amend not only the Preamble, but also the First Amendment, which remains as a bulwark to protect the freedom of conscience of all Americans and to prevent any religious movement from subverting that liberty.

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33. The New Testament people of God (church) has no specific geographical territory given to it, as God had given to Israel. Rather, the Gospel Commission for the church encompasses the world (Matthew 28:19; 24:14).
34. Originally, God chose Israel's rulers. God chose Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3) and, shortly before he died, Moses designated Joshua as the leader whom God had chosen to bring His people into the promised land of Israel (Joshua 1). God was the true leader of Israel, but when they clamored for a king like the heathen nations around them, God consented by giving instructions through Samuel and by choosing Saul (1 Samuel 8 – 9). After Saul failed various tests from God and was eventually rejected as king over Israel, the Lord chose David as the next king and indicated this through Samuel. Once the nation departed from the ways of God and the kingdom was divided into Israel (northern tribes) and Judah (southern tribes), the Lord did not specifically choose the great majority of the kings.
35. The Lord does not designate a particular political system for the New Testament church. Some may argue 1 Peter 2:13, 17, "Fear God, honor the king" refers to a monarchical system as the preferred political system. However, the historical context of Romans 13 refers to the Roman Empire, which had a political system based on a ruling Caesar and a Senate composed of statesman. Some portions of this political system are similar to that adopted by the United States during the Founding Era. Thus, due to the global mission of the Church, the Lord in His infinite wisdom foresaw the need to avoid designating any specific political system for His church. Such prudence enables the Church to fulfill its divine mandate without becoming entangled in the political affairs and contentions among nations.
36. God guided civil leaders through His prophets. For example, God spoke through the prophet Nathan to rebuke David for his sin of adultery with Bathsheba (1 Kings 17); God spoke through the prophet Elijah to rebuke king Ahab for his idolatry and for marrying a pagan wife, Jezebel (2 Kings 18), et al.
37. God guided His appointed leaders to adjudicate matters of the Church. In Acts 5, the Holy Spirit revealed to Peter the sin of Ananias and Saphira for withholding what they had vowed to give to God's work. It is important to note here that Peter did not punish them; rather, he was merely the mouthpiece who pronounced the sentence that God had declared and it was the Lord who meted out judgment. In Acts 6, it was the Holy Spirit who guided the leaders of the church to find a solution to the dispute among the Hebrew and Greek wives of believers regarding the daily food rations. It was the Holy Spirit who guided the church leaders during the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 to accept the Gentiles as members of the body of Christ; et al.
38. Israel adjudicated civil matters and punished. For example, those who took God's name in vain, were to be stoned to death (Leviticus 24:11-16); those who broke the Sabbath, were to be put to death (Exodus 31:14; Numbers 15:32-36); those who stole, suffered various punishments (Leviticus 6:1-5, must restore and add a fifth of the value; Exodus 22:1, stealing and selling a man, the thief and buyer must be put to death); those taken in adultery were to be put to death (Leviticus 20:10); those who maimed someone else, were to suffer the same punishment

(Leviticus 24:19-20). Thus, there were no distinctions regarding punishment for sins involving Commandments 1 -4 (between the individual and God, or on a spiritual basis), or Commandments 5-10 (between two individuals, or what we today refer to as civil crimes).

39. Jesus makes a distinction between the spiritual and civil spheres—"Render, therefore, unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's," (Matt. 22:21)—as does Peter: "Fear God. Honor the king," 1 Peter 2:17. In 1 Corinthians 6:1-3, Paul appeals to church members to bring their disputes before church leaders for a decision, rather than taking such matters before unbelievers in civil courts. In Matthew 18:15-17, Jesus describes the process for resolving spiritual wrongs committed against us. Regarding offenses (crimes) in relation to civil authority, Paul refers to the power invested by God for the punishment for civil crimes, "But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil," Romans 13:4. Peter expresses a similar thought, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well," 1 Peter 2:13-14.
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42. In Matthew 22:36-38, Jesus was asked "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" He responded by summarizing the first four Commandments as supreme love for God, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."
43. In Matthew 22:39-40, Jesus summarized the last six Commandments as love for one's neighbor, "And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Thus, Commandments 5-10 serve as an adequate moral foundation for civil society and define the sphere of civil authorities legitimate jurisdiction, which does not include any element of religious worship.
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