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Religion and Politics in Brazil: a case study from the point of view and influence of American religions

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Abstract
The Brazilian Census of 2010, besides showing the decline of Catholicism in the country, revealed a large increase of an "original" Protestantism of the United States, primarily the Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses. The two groups, founded in the nineteenth century - the Jehovah's Witnesses are a dissidence of the Seventh-day Adventism - boast more than 3 million active members - the majority of the middle class - and have particular political characteristics. It highlights, among them, exemption from military conscription and especially little or no political activity. In many of her thousands of handwritten pages, Ellen Gould Harmon White, co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, advised the members of the Church about the danger of political involvement in the spiritual life. In addition, she advocated the total separation of church and state, highlighting the misdeeds of their union from the Middle Ages to the present day. However, although Brazil is a secular state, the church's influence on society is enormous - both Catholics and Protestants. The intention of this paper is, from texts on conceptual policy of its founders, to analyze the performance of these political groups in Brazil, sensing approaches and breakthroughs in relation to American theology.

Keywords
Politics. Religion. American Theology.

Mormons, The Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses - conception and birth

The Seventh Day Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Mormons, comprise three distinct denominations that are known today as "American Originals" or churches genuinely Americans and therefore, different from those of the pilgrims puritans that from 1620 began the colonization of British territory on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. In common, all were born in the nineteenth century (the Mormons in the 30ths from the alleged dialog between Joseph Smith and the angel Moroni; the Seventh Day Adventist in 40ths with nothing apotheosis apocalyptic end of movement of the baptist William Miller in the expectation of the Parousia and the Jehovah's Witnesses - even with another name, in the 70ths, dissidents of Seventh Day Adventist) and had striking and charismatic leaders.

Besides this, they are all Churches for mission - with the clear intention of making new proselytes from practices "aggressive" of evangelization, as the sending of missionaries around the world[1], as well as the distribution of books and pamphlets[2], in addition to the offering of biblical studies from door to door.

However, perhaps the most indelible characteristics of the three denominations referred above is the character markedly remnant, apocalyptic and urgent contained in their prolific messages. While "the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Kingdom of the Lord restored in Earth, in preparation for the second coming of the Messiah[3]", and the book of Mormom "is intended to show the remnants of the house of Israel the great things that the Lord has done for their ancestors[4], the Jehovah's Witnesses crave preach the gospel, the source maximum authority, during the entire time that they have available, since they "believe that the generation that was alive at the beginning of the fulfillment of the signal 1914 is now well advanced in age. Thus, for them, the remaining time should be very short and world conditions provide all the indication that this is the case5". Therefore, all the time should be employed in evangelization - and this time is counted, according to the abovementioned Yearbook. For the Seventh day Adventist, who, as well as the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses are waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus in the clouds of heaven, the key of the mission can be found in the book of Revelation, chapter 14. The prophetic Messages contained, "present truth" of the denomination for the world, is what impels the Church, whose members "are known by observe the Sabbath, emphasize the conservation of health as part of religious obligation and by carrying out missionary activities around the world[6] ".

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1 In the case of Mormons, the young men from 19 years and the young ladies from 21 are invited to take the doctrine wherever is possible to go in the world. This mission of 2 years, involves total fidelity to the cause, being barred from the missionary any type of affective relationship or other activity that would undermine its performance. A lack considered more serious can mean the premature closure of their journey and in some cases the momentary loss of the privileges of a member, as well as probable future difficulties to find husband/wife and progress in the denomination.

2 In 2013 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses, there is an impressive figure that indicates that in 2012, were carried out 30,989 baptisms in the country; were performed on average 803,959 biblical studies; and 149,554,562 hours were dedicated to evangelization. JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES. *2013 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses Portuguese* (Brazilian Edition). Cesário Lange: Associação Torre de Vigia de Bíblias e Tratados, 2013, p. 181. Available in download jw.org/files/media_books/47/yb13_T.pdf. Access in 6 of May 2013.

3 BOOK OF MORMON. SMITH JR., Joseph. CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS. *The book of Mormon*: other testament of Jesus Christ. Salt Lake City, Utah: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997, p. vi.

4 BOOK OF MORMON, 1997, p. v.

5 BORNHOLDT, Suzana Ramos Coutinho. *Proclaimers of God's Kingdom:* Mission and the Jehovah's Witnesses Florianópolis, 2010. 140 f. Masters thesis. Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Graduate Program in Social Anthropology, p. 60. (In 1876, Charles T. Russell wrote the first of many articles in which he pointed to 1914 as the year of the end of time. For more information, see GRUSS, Edmond C. Jehovah's Witnesses: Their Claims, Doctrinal Changes and Prophetic Speculation. What Dos the Record Show. Xulon Press, 2001, p. 68)

6 VYHMEISTER, Nancy J. Who are the seventh day adventist? In: DEDEREN, Raoul (Ed.) *Treaty of theology of the Seventh Day Adventist*. Tatuí: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2011, p. 1.

Because of the introductory nature of this work and because of the fact that the Mormons totaled only 227 thousand[7] members in Brazil - in the face of more than a million members that have the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Adventist each one, we will consider here the relation of the last two communities with the politics, with the focus on seventh day Adventist, since it is the Jehovah's Witnesses dissent among them, although with answers similar issues relating to political involvement. As a key to the reading, it will be mainly examined the contribution of eschatological denominations mentioned, since both are up today, strongly cohesive from these assumptions, without which we cannot even describe them honestly. Therefore, the seventh day Adventist and the Jehovah's Witnesses are today considered conservative denominations, while the Mormons seem to live more fully the dialectics contemporary, since at the last Americans elections the defeated candidate was a Mormon whose entrepreneurship became him a very rich man in "country of opportunities"

Relationship between Church and State for the seventh day Adventist and the Jehovah's Witnesses: the strong eschatological intake as a precondition for the total separation between the two institutions

The seventh day Adventist historically always had troubled relations with the State. Looking carefully at the development of their doctrines, it is noticed that the denominations was against to the "marriage" of the two institutions, although Ellen White, its cofounder, generally affirms that "opinions accepted by much time should not be considered infallible[8] However, in this particular topic, an endless series of articles and texts of hers and from other pioneers indicate the reasons for the separation mainly from the highlight of this union in the Middle Ages, to cite just one example. In addition, mainly, the eschatology of the seventh day Adventist once again expects the union between Church and State to fulfill the same spurious purposes established by European Inquisition, which means, the persecution of all keepers of Saturday and those who "have the testimony of Jesus Christ[9]. According to White "we need to see in history the

[7] There is in Brazil, 1.393.208 according to Brazilian census in 2010, available in ftp://ftp.ibge.gov.br/Censos/Censo_Demografico_2010/Caracteristicas_Gerais_Religiao_Deficiencia/tab1_4.pdf. Access in 29 april 2013. Nowadays in Brazil, according to the 148ª. Annual statistic of the church, there is 1.267.738 members, a number of 293.333 members less than demonstrates IBGE census. According to the office of archives and statistics, the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist. Available in http://www.adventist.org/world-church/facts-and-figures/index.html.

[8] WHITE, Ellen. *The other power:* advice for writers and publishers. Tatuí: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2010, p. 25.

[9] As a consequence of this relationship nowadays, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is opposed to the so-called ecumenism. According to London: Ecumenism became a potent force in the Christian world, particularly in the civil rights era, but the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as a corporate entity, refused to participate. The denomination's reluctance to involve itself in the ecumenical movement of the 1960s came from the latter's emphasis on sociopolitical reform. In adherence to sectarian ecclesiology, Adventists viewed the political objectives of ecumenism as a violation of church-state separation.

fulfillment of the prophecy, study the performances of Providence in the great movements reformatories and understand the progression of events[10], that, in accordance with the Adventist, happen exactly as planned - what does not unbecoming both of Jehovah's Witnesses, although these are facing controversies regarding the coming of Christ, controversies these already faced by seventh day Adventist still in the first half of the century XIX. According to her vision, there will be a decree of political and global reach, although this document of death starts in the United States, causing the early times of persecution have again its place. This is the eschatological literature of Ellen White the primary source for the background of fear the seventh day Adventist in relation to the union between the Church and the State. For her:

> When the decree promulgated by various governors of Christendom against the observers of the commandments to take away the protection of the government, by abandoning them to those who want their destruction, the people of God will run away from cities and towns and will meet in groups, dwelling in places more deserts and lonely. Many will find refuge in the fortress of the mountains. Similar to the Christians of the valleys of Piedmont, the high places of the Earth will make shrines, thanking God for the "rocks". Isa. 33:16. Many, however, of all the nations, and in all classes, high and humble, rich and poor, black and white, will be bold in slavery more cruel and unjust than ever. The beloved of God will pass through painful days, prisoners in chains, retained by the bars of the prison, sentenced to death, left some apparently to starve in dark and foul calaboose. No human ear will hear to their groaning; no human hand will be ready to provide them with aid[11].

However, for such decree be authorized, need to be a strong and cohesive union between the most different Protestant churches, Catholic and the State - from the already commented ecumenical movement, which the Seventh-day Adventist Church fulgurantly opposes to - so that the power of them emanated is irresistible and pursuer, as a way to rebuild the frail morale of countries, defrauded, among other reasons, by the flagrant lack of control of government through its public educational policies. As a result, also driven by issues of economic and social order, will be the popular outcry for justice, that soon will get the world. It is noticed from time to time elements reactionaries of this denomination seeing in each mere event an act to fully comply with the writings of Ellen White, always based in the Scripture. According to White:

(LONDON, JR. Samuel G. *Seventh-Day Adventists and the Civil Rights Movement*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009, p. 74. Also to the Seventh Day Adventist Church does not participate actively in the World Council of Churches. According to Bull e Lockhart: "Distrust of the World Council of Churches was fuelled by the expectations that Sabbath keepers would be persecuted by the Protestant denominations. Most of all, the fear of the state and the effort to limit its scope developed from the conviction that America would enact a Sunday law. For American Adventists, religious liberty was at root the freedom to worship on Saturday". BULL, Malcolm; LOCKHART, Keith. *Seeking a Sanctuary:* Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007, p. 195.

10 WHITE, Ellen. *Final Events*. Tatuí: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2006, 17a. Ed. p. 14.

11 WHITE, Ellen. *The Great Controversy.* Tatuí: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2004, 42a. edição, p. 626.

> The dignitaries of church and state will unite to bribe, persuade, or compel all classes to honor the Sunday. The lack of divine authority will be supplied by oppressive enactments. Political corruption is destroying love of justice and regard for truth; and even in free America, rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance. Liberty of conscience, which has cost so great a sacrifice, will no longer be respected. In the soon-coming conflict we shall see exemplified the prophet's words: "The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 12:17[12]

Hereof it is concluded quickly that, for the seventh day Adventist, the result of the union between Church and State cannot be beneficial to Christians who abides by only the Bible as the rule of faith. This union would force these believers must make a painful choice that openly contradict the dictates of the American Magna Letter[13] and, certainly the issues of conscience as to guard the Sabbath, question always in active discussion since the institutional principles of the church. In this obtuse way, national leaders will no longer very soon to meet the maximum law of the country. Thus, for the seventh day Adventist, the union between Church and State, by minimally low that is, leads the Church to a greater closeness with the spurious principles of the world, undermining the purposes of God for his chosen people.

From the description of Ellen White, it is possible to easily understand that the eschatology of the seventh day Adventist is colored by strong terms, it is in addition detailed, real and personal. This identity the seventh day Adventist has theological roots that date back to the first and turbulent years of Lutheran Reformation and they are well-founded and largely in agreement with the so-called Radical reform or Anabaptism - whose own Luther was a masterful critical. As a prerequisite, leaving aside the potential problems caused by exaggerations practical originated from the written above formulated, the Anabaptism "at its best, it was a departure from the tradition church and the formulation of creeds, and an approximation of the ideas of the church of the New Testament[14]". For this reason the Seventh-day Adventist Church until today does not have a doctrine closed, but "fundamental beliefs", being of restorationism hallmark (although well installed in the twenty-first century) and non-ecumenical by principles.

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12 WHITE, Ellen. *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan (Edition 1888).* Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1907, p. 592

13 According to Ellen White: The founders of the nation sought wisely prevent the employment of secular power on the part of the Church, with its inevitable result - intolerance and persecution. The Magna Charter stipulates that "the Congress shall make no law regarding the officiate any religion, or prohibit the free exercise", and that "no evidence of a religious nature will never required as a prerequisite for any office of public trust in the United States". WHITE, Ellen. 1907, p. 442.

14 KNIGHT, George R. In Search of identity: the development of the doctrines of the seventh day Adventist. Tatuí: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2005, p. 29.

This denominational "rebel" profile contrary to almost all relationship[15] between Church and State can be certified when analyzed the very history of the Church throughout its 160 years of existence. Born in 1863, at the height of the American Civil War, the seventh day Adventist already in its beginnings were relieved to fight for issues of conscience. In fact, the Church has always been carried out to take into smaller issues that are ageless, since according to the belief majority of its members this world will not improve[16] and the politics being pursued by intemperate people and little linked to religious issues, should not be the object of talks and bargains by its members. This dynamic, on the contrary, it leads to nothing else but the discordance.

If the church is lost and would be divided by these "exciting" issues, the entire cohesive and sometimes complex doctrinal body would be irretrievably lost, since the focus would end up being another, that not the irruption of the Kingdom of God. The problem for them is so serious that even the issue of voting is placed on the agenda, since the same, especially when done on Saturday, tends to change the minds of the people of God. According to Arthur White:

> Nor Ellen G. White in the spirit of prophecy advises against, nor has the general Association, by their votes, denied the seventh day Adventist the privilege to vote. However consistently through the years, the leaders of the church and Ellen G. White has from time after time pointed out the danger of our people engage in politics itself or into political controversy. Guided and admonished by the spirit of prophecy, we, seventh day Adventist, we found our way when we crossed the tense days of the issues of slavery, the uncertainties related to the local option to license the sale of liquor, the problems regarding the professed Christian amendment the Federal Constitution and the monetary issue. This gives us the historic background to have a clear picture of our attitude denominational on vote.

However, even in the face of historical evidence presented above, it appears that the seventh day Adventist in Brazil maintains the political issues raging, or better, the political party in a secondary sphere. While in the United States, in spite of repeated appeals of Ellen White and the first seventh day Adventist, the members of the church are usually voting in masse, being that there are even different political profiles between

[15] It is ironic that, despite this clash, the seventh day Adventist Church requires state support for continuing bold missionary program based on TV and radio channels. Therefore, despite the fact that historically this relationship is avoided, nowadays it ends up being raised by "conservatives", although the denominations itself is considered conservative by itself.

[16] The historicist system of the Seventh Day Adventist Church follows pre-millenarian assumptions. Thus, no member of the Church must believe that the world will change positively, being that the politics would not be transformation tool, but of persecution. The corruption and the current politic bargains show the Adventist, ever more effective, that its forecasts are still correct and the fact that some candidates of this church appear in Brazilian elections only attests the distancing of popular denominational beliefs.

blacks and whites as well as members of the church in Congress[17], besides chaplains in army - showing the different practical facets, in Brazil the official stance and simply "apolitical". This means that the whole fabric of many events of denominational history, what arrived in the south of the Equator is the social engagement away from the politics. Thus, the religion should be of particular concern and this is to be the motto of its activities, which aim to make the common good should not seek personal gains. According to TIMM:

> Another fundamental principle is that the level of social justice in a country is directly proportional to the level of individual justice to each and every one of its citizens, and that this individually justice, in turn, derives from the inside of the person. Recognizing the social dimensions of sin, the Church supports and even participates in social and educational projects that benefit the community life without conflict with Bible principles. Many of these projects are carried out on behalf of the ADRA - Development Agency and care resources. However, the Church does not participate in any strikes and marches of political and party character that would compromise its apolitical posture18.

Perhaps this posture explains the fact that the seventh day Adventist worry too much about temperance, maintaining a lifestyle the more healthy as possible and thereby making this great theme its primary means of internal dissemination and even of mission. For these, the preparation for the Parousia should be taking care of the body, "temple of spirit", with the same emphasis and care of spiritual issues, because there is no degree of importance between the two in institutional Soteriology. In this way, the church escapes from the majority of the criticisms of the so-called "middle class clarified" that supplied by the academic scientificity attacks the Adventist foundations, especially those that concern the origins of life, as well as the divulged literal coming of Christ in a near future - immediate reason that gave origin to the church from an apocalyptic movement where the metaphysics was materialized via mathematical logic from a eschatological method of historicist hallmark. Therefore, really in Brazil, despite some exceptions, where certain members with political pretensions worth of their communities to ask for votes, the common is that the members just get little involved in politics, except when this seems to confirm their own Bible prophecies. With this, we have that the thought of Timm is approaching and much of that again submitted by White, almost closing the issue by saying that:

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17 Roscoe Bartlett is a U.S. Congressman from the state of Maryland and belongs to the Republican Party, by exercising his function since 1993. Tanya Bindernagel is chaplain of the army and the church itself maintains its support to the army with chaplains in widely different locations. See: DAVIES, Rachel. Life as an Army Chaplain. Spectrum Magazine, 2 May 2011. Available in: http://spectrummagazine.org/node/3137. Access in 15 of May 2013.

18 TIMM, Alberto. *The Adventists and the Politics.* Available in http://www.advir.com.br/sermoes/especial/politica/osadventistaseapolitica.htm. Access in 15 of May 2013.

> The Lord wants his people bury the political issues. On these matters, the silence is eloquence. Christ invites his followers to reach unity in pure Gospel principles that are positively revealed in the Word of God. We cannot, with security, voting by political parties; because we do not know to whom we vote. We cannot, with safety, take part in any political plan. We cannot work to please the men who will employ its influence to suppress the freedom of religion, and to implement measures to bring oppressive or compel their fellow to observe the Sunday as Saturday. The first day of the week is not a day to be revered. It is a false Saturday, and the members of the family of the Lord cannot take part with the men that the exalt, and violate the law of God, stepping on His Saturday. The people of God should not vote to put such men in official positions; because in so doing, are participants in the sins that they commit while invested those posts. We must not compromise with the principles, to cede the opinions and prejudices that perhaps we animate before we unite with the people observer of the commandments of God. We have enrolled in the army of the Lord, and we should not fight the hand of the enemy, but from the side of Christ, where we can be a whole kingdom, in feeling, action, spirit and communion. Those who are truly Christians are branches of the true vine, and will give the same result that it. Act in harmony, in Christian communion. Do not use political distinctive, but that of Christ. What do we have to do, then? - Let the political issues in peace[19] .

By seen this and going on a fast contextualization the assumptions seventh day Adventist, it can be observed in an anomalous manner some isolated manifestations of the Church, as it already happened in Brasilia, precisely in front of the Cathedral, where approximately 3 thousand members of more than 200 different seventh-day Adventist churches were - with their pastors - pray for politicians "reaffirming the hope", as literally said one of the pastors[20], in free opposition in relation to the thought of Arthur White, to quote from the aforementioned author

On the contrary, the Jehovah's Witnesses, at least in Brazil, live enclosed in their own communities and, when they leave, they do so with the declared aim of evangelization from the distribution of pamphlets scatologic wide open with "all the questions and answers" about the fate of the own be case denies the dictates of Jehovah. This iconic posture makes them even more closed in relation to their fellow Adventists. In fact, its justifications are still isolationist and attack even the Protestants historical that did the reform. In the view of the Jehovah's Witnesses, the great moral issue of Luther happened precisely when the Reformer just succumbing to political appeals, leaving aside the pure religion. With Calvin, the situation was even worse, since himself used his great and wide power to prosecute and punish his enemies. As such, it is up to the true

[19] WHITE, Ellen. Gospel Workers. Washington: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1948, p. 391-396.

[20] OLIVEIRA, Isabela. Three thousand evangelicals were in Congress to pray for politicians. Correio Braziliense, 10 of March 2013. Available in http://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/cidades/2013/03/10/interna_cidadesdf,353914/tres-mil-evangelicos-estiveram-no-congresso-para-orar-pelos-politicos.shtml. Access in 15 of May 2013.

Christian studying prophecies, live between brothers and share your faith with others, without the slightest possibility of receiving these other interpretations dissonant. In accordance with political supporters, therefore, they end up being even more sectarian and isolated. Even more: for them, Christ is not involved with politics - made immediately so the Liberation Theology heretical! - And no Christian should do something different from what Christ did[21]. It is noticed that, in comparison to Adventists, that in spite of the theory be very similar, the practice is quite different. According to them:

> To promote the Kingdom of God, Jehovah's Witnesses do not get involved in politics or incite a rebellion against secular governments, even in countries where the Witnesses are proscribed or are persecuted. (Titus 3:1). Instead, they seek to make a positive contribution, spiritual and non-political, just as Jesus and his disciples did in the first century. The Witnesses strive to help the ones with fair provision in their various communities to adopt biblical values, beneficial, such as the familiar love, the honesty, moral purity and a good work ethic. Strive primarily to teach them how to apply Bible principles and to face to the Kingdom of God as the true hope of humanity[22].

At a manner of conclusion

Analyzing the development and theological positioning of the seventh day Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses, it is clear many points in common, such as location and time of birth, as well as Christian theologies and similar practices. It is noticed also, morals distinct positioning, such as the focal theme of the evangelization and political positioning.

Transplanting the two religious confessions to Brazil, it is noticed that at that point in the Latin America to assimilate historical and doctrinal was slacker, since the country is highly mestizo, as well as recipient and originator of the richest religious traditions. Knowing the structures of power in which both the confessions were born in the United States and the Brazilian paradigms, it seems evident that below the Equator the mentioned denominations had experiences different from those perceived in their places of origin.

However, in Brazil there is a culture of low political participation, as a result of recent history of dictatorship and the widespread corruption, which makes the people, in a general way being skeptical of the actions of their representatives. In the case of the

[21] "The oldest records available show that the first followers of Jesus did not participate in politics. Because they are completely dedicated to him that Christ loved, they refused to swear loyalty to Rome and its emperor, military service and to accept public office. Therefore, they have suffered all kinds of hostility. Sometimes, their enemies accused him of hating humanity. Was this accusation founded?" Why Jesus did not get involved in politics? Online Library of the Tower of the vigil. Available in: http://wol.jw.org/pt/wol/d/r5/lp-t/2010489?q=pol%C3%ADtica&p=par. Access in 15 of May 2013.

[22] The key to a happy world. On-line library of Tower of the vigil. Available in: http://wol.jw.org/pt/wol/d/r5/lp-t/2001761#h=21:0-21:737. Access in 15 of May 2013.

churches mentioned, the posture "apolitical" of both only reinforces this "culture", causing its members to look other ways of seeing the world and act on it. Perhaps the best way to understand them is by its own logical individualist in vogue in North America of the nineteenth century and still today, causing the private action, emerges a spark which influences the collective[23]. In the meantime, as demonstrated by the last Brazilian census, they grow up numerically; making the eyes of politicians themselves lie in those institutions. It remains to be seen whether even when they resisted the power.

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[23] "The Christians remained outside and separate from the state, such as race and priestly spiritual, and Christianity seemed capable of influencing the civil life only in this way, it is this, and I have to say, the most pure, by practically strive to inspire more and more the feeling sacred in citizen of state". NEANDER, Augustus. The History of the Christian Religion and Church during the three first centuries. Philadelphia/New York: James M. Campbell/ Saxton & Miles, 1844, p. 168