

# **Adventism: Its History And Doctrine**

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## **ADVENTISM: ITS HISTORY AND DOCTRINE**

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## **PREFACE**

In the writing of this paper I have tried to allow the Adventists to speak for themselves. Hence you'll notice the free use of quotations from various sources. To insure that I was properly reading my source material (Without injecting my own bias and so misreading what I read) I interviewed a Seventh Day Adventist clergyman. By these efforts I hoped to avoid the oversimplification and mis-statement of the tenets of Adventism -- journalistic errors which could easily creep into a paper of this nature.

At the same time, however, I realize that this paper is not truly nor entirely objective. My personal beliefs are certainly shadowed throughout. I found some editorializing unavoidable. Nevertheless, I do believe this paper does correctly portray the religious logic and philosophy of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Aphorisms have been added throughout the paper to break it up into smaller sections and to make what easily could have been unduly "heavy", lighter and brighter. Please note, however, that these headings are in no way intended to unlovingly ridicule the beliefs of the Seventh Day Adventists.

You'll notice that an outline of the paper has been included. It is felt that if this paper is to be a truly usable tool, such an outline is necessary.

## **THE HISTORY OF THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS**

### **IN THE BEGINNING . . .**

Adventists like to trace their history back to the very beginning of the Christian Church Pentecost. "Their advent hope is the same as that which glowed in the hearts of Peter, James, and John. Their teaching in regard to baptism by immersion is identical with the belief and practice of the first disciples. So also is their solemn but simple celebration of the Lord's Supper."<sup>1</sup> Thus declares a current public relations pamphlet on the Seventh Day Adventists.

But more to the point, Seventh Day Adventism grew out of the "adventist" movement which sprung up in Europe and in the United States very early in the nineteenth century. Previous to 1800 spiritual values were at a low ebb. But then, as the pendulum swung back, the "adventism" emphasis gained strength.

"Spontaneously, as if rekindled by heaven itself, the advent hope flared up anew in all parts of the world. From 1800 to 1844 not only North America, but many parts of Europe, Asia, Africa and South America were stirred to the depths by the study of the prophetic scriptures and the growing conviction that the return of Jesus was near, even at the door."<sup>2</sup> This was the age of Edward Irving, whose preaching about the advent took London by storm, Horatius Bonar, the preacher and hymn writer, Charles Finney, the upstate New York revivalist, and German's Hengstenberg.

### **A RELIGION OF THE PEOPLE**

The "adventist" movement caught on well in the United States. The change in the religious atmosphere coincided with and was fueled by a great social change which was sweeping the young nation. Into the early 1800's America was locked into the same type of class

structure many of the colonists had left behind in England. It was only the aristocrats, the upper class, who had any real say in the affairs of state. but the industrial revolution was to change that.

No longer were the old class structures to remain constant. Industrialization put money into pockets which hadn't had money before. People were moving up socially. The factory owners soon found themselves with the same buying power as the aristocrats. And power came to the people. Class structure began to change. Who's who was no longer to be determined by birth, but by one's wealth and achievement.

Case in point was the election of Andrew Jackson to the presidency. He was really our first "people president." His election tells the story of "eager expectation of change that welled up among those who felt aggrieved throughout the land. The old order was passing. A multiplying population, the admission of new states, the extension of voting to the propertyless, and the abolition of religious tests in several of the states had shifted the balance of power in the nation."<sup>3</sup>

With a nation of people beginning to feel their political muscle power, religious thought as well as social structure began to change. The coming years were to be

a time when Methodism triumphed in America. The term "Methodism" was used not as the name of a denomination, but as a shorthand for a type of popular enthusiasm which burst through lines of denominational division and penetrated Protestant church life in general in upstate New York and back-country New England as well as in Kentucky and Tennessee, in Virginia and the Carolinas as well as in Indiana and Illinois. Presbyterian, Baptist, and Congregationalist churches succumbed to theological emphases, religious fervor, and revivalist techniques which in the public mind were most commonly associated with the Methodists. Not even German Reformed and German Lutheran churches in Pennsylvania . . . were immune to the contagious influence of enthusiastic religion.<sup>4</sup>

The characteristics which best described this new wave of adventism were enthusiasm, primacy of individual religious experience and revivals. Centered mostly in upstate New York (the southern California of the 1800's) the movement fostered many social reforms. The temperance movement got its start here as did drives toward anti-slavery and women's lib (ala Susan B. Anthony). this area was also to give a new rise to the internal religion groups such as the Quakers, Shakers, and New Light Baptists. Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormons, got his start here during the 1820's. Spiritualism saw a revival during these years and the Unitarians gained in number and influence. These are also the days that saw the popularity of poet Ralph Waldo Emerson and his transcendentalisma philosophy which was anti-clerical, anti-ecclesiastical, and anti-traditional.

### **A MILLER BECOMES A SOWER**

It was upon this type of land-- a nation ripe for and in the process of change, both politically and religiously that the seed which would grow into SDA was sown.

William Miller, a Baptist and former military officer in the War of 1812, quite unintentionally became the man around whom the interdenominational adventist movement was to rally. Miller, theologically trained but never licensed to preach, became convinced that

Christ's return to earth was imminent after a thorough study of the Scriptures in which he especially focused on the books of Daniel and Revelation.

Believing the time before Christ's return to earth to be extremely short, Miller had no visions of beginning his own sect. Rather, working in unity with existing church bodies would be essential. Because of this "Miller and his colleagues . . . did not join those who tried to break down the existing denominations or carry on a campaign against them."<sup>5</sup>

However, in 1840 Miller teamed up with Joshua Himes. Starting some nine years before, Miller went from church to church preaching his doctrines. He was viewed as a pleasant and effective revivalist who had dedicated his life to saving sinners and building up churches. Himes turned him into an aggressive (and fairly successful) proselyter. Himes was the minister of a Christian Church in Boston. He gained some note as the leader of an abolition movement. Later in 1839 Himes became the campaign manager for Miller, and Miller, who had been gaining little recognition, was catapulted into the limelight.

### **THE ADVENTISTS ARE COMING**

Recognizing the advantages of mass media communication and with Hime's backing, two newspapers were begun. "Signs of the Times" was printed in Boston, "Midnight Cry" was printed in New York. These publications were to prove valuable tools in furthering Millerism. They were used to provide a forum for discussion of Miller's and other adventist scholars' conclusions, a means of communication between like-minded Christians, and a means of welding adventists together.

In October of 1840 a conference of adventists was held. The chief topic was Christ's second coming. This conference was to start the wheels rolling so that "by the last quarter of 1840 the adventist cause had attained a simple, rudimentary organization and had developed a few important institutions. They had published a statement of their essential beliefs. they had established their own press and inaugurated a conference and committee system. . . . (They) were becoming in fact, if not in intent, an identifiable group."<sup>6</sup>

But still the individual adventists clung to their membership in their original churches. By 1843 it was common practice for the adventists to meet on Sunday afternoons so as to avoid any conflict with their regular churches. But the more the interdenominational adventist met together, the more denominational they became. Active preaching and evangelizing for their doctrines became increasingly aggressive. Definite church organizational structures evolved in order to minister to the spiritual needs of their adherents. A system of recognizing qualified clergy was developed.

### **WHAT TIME WAS THAT AGAIN?**

As the 1840s began, however, dissension started to show within the ranks of adventism. The emphasis on preaching the "fact" of Christ's coming was superseded by preaching the "when" of Christ's coming. On the "when" not every adventist could agree.

In May of 1842 an adventist conference voted to declare 1843 as the last year the world would stand. Obviously this alienated those who did not agree Christ would return then or those who would avoid setting such a date. Interestingly, one of those who had taken a stand on the middle ground and hadn't committed himself to a date was William Miller. Now he was prodded into coming up with what he believed would be the date of the Savior's return. He announced

after intensive study of the Scriptures that Jesus would return between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. (See Addendum A)

Feeling they had at best two years left on earth, the adventists' attitude toward other churches changed sharply. Up to this time they felt they were just one of a number of Christian groups who possessed the Truth or at least enough of it to be saved. But now, with 1843 staring them in the face, adventists began to preach that they had exclusive possession of the Truth. By mid-1842 "the time for discussion had ended, and the time for unquestioning propagation had begun. On so vital a matter as Christ's second coming there could be no disagreement. they were themselves so convinced of their truth that those who continued to disagree with them were increasingly seen as blind, unintelligent, and dishonest. They became more strident, more self-righteous, and the felling of exclusive possession of truth was widespread. The opposition, too, was growing."<sup>7</sup>

### **THE DISAPPOINTMENTS**

March 21, 1844, of course, came and went without so much as the sound of one heavenly trumpet. "But the movement seems not to have been greatly shaken by what came to be called the First Disappointment."<sup>8</sup> that summer Miller reviewed his calculations and at the urgings of his colleagues set the date of the second coming at October 22, 1844. Both Miller and Himes hesitated almost until the last to set up such a specific date.

Ushered in on the heels of October 23, 1844 was the Great (and final) Disappointment. When Christ failed to come, the adventists were left with a very uncomfortable bed in which to sleep. They had alienated themselves from their original church-homes, they were caricatured by the press as a wildly fanatical group, and they were without means of support having given up their assets as they awaited the Savior's return.

After this second disappointment, the majority renounced the adventist faith and returned to their respective churches. Those who stayed, banded together to insulate themselves from the hostile world around them. Together they groped for new explanations.

### **CHECKING THE ADDITION**

The explanation which satisfied most of the remaining adventists was presented to an adventist conference in Albany, April 29, 1845. "Hiram Edson and O. R. L. Cozier stated that according to Hebrews 8:1,2 the sanctuary spoken of in Daniel 8:13,14 is in heaven and not on the earth, as Miller had assumed. (Thus, although) the computation of the '2,300 days' had been correct, the description of the nature of the event had been false."<sup>9</sup> This interpretation was able to temporarily rally the adventists and reunite them. However, there was not to be real peace in their ranks.

"The adventist squabble remained internecine for about a decade. Fundamental disagreement of over the state of the dead, the existence of hell, the Sabbath, the ordinance of foot washing, the atonement, the nature of the millennium and the judgment, embroiled adventists in a crucible of conflict..."<sup>10</sup>

### **GREENER PASTURES FOR THE WHITES**

In the 1850s the Sabbath-keeping adventists left New York and headed for the better homesteads available to them in southern Michigan. This separation allowed them to begin anew without the intra-adventist disputes of the East. Coming to the fore at this time among the Sabbath-keeping adventists are Joseph Bates, James White, and his renounced wife, Ellen.

Ellen White was to play a very important role in this new movement. In fact, Seventh Day Adventism was shaped and led for the most part by Mrs. Ellen G. White for its first 70 years. Mrs. White is regarded as a prophetess by the Adventists. She authored 53 books and more than 4,500 articles. Much of her writing was based on visions which she received.

Mrs. White was born Ellen Harmon in 1827. She was raised Methodist but became an ardent supporter of Miller after hearing him speak. She married James White in 1846 and bore him four sons. She died in 1915.

The first of her many visions came to her in 1844. "Throughout the rest of her long life she confirmed or established almost every distinctively SDA position through her dreams and visions. Her most famous vision was that of the ark (of the covenant) and the Ten Commandments with a halo of light surrounding the Sabbath Commandment."<sup>11</sup> (Note: SDA number this commandment as the Fourth Commandment and not the Third, as we do.) She never actually held an official position in the Seventh Day Adventist Church, but through her visions and writings she had done more to influence the church than any other individual.

### **A NEW BALL GAME**

Under the leadership of Bates and the Whites, Sabbath-keeping adventism was able to take definite shape. In the conferences of the late 1850s, Sabbath-keeping and the nature of Christ's second coming became hot items of debate. As under Miller, use of the printed word helped to spread the Seventh Day Adventist views on their issues.

Finally it was apparent that the Michigan brand of adventism had established itself as a separate organization. Originally, "the growth of the group around these leaders was slow . . . owing to the general derision in which Adventists were held and to their economic limitations and social handicaps. By 1855, however, they were sufficiently prosperous and numerically strong enough to set up headquarters at Battle Creek, Michigan, with a publishing house called the Review and Herald Publishing Association."<sup>12</sup> But it wasn't until 1860 that they adopted the name Seventh Day Adventists. In May of 1863 they became recognized as a formal denominational organization.

During the last half of the nineteenth century Adventists spent some time championing causes like temperance and anti-slavery. They dedicated themselves early to establishing hospitals. they also tried to popularize their health codes, especially their eating practices. It's out of their shunning of "meat and potato breakfasts that we today have breakfast cereals. " (See Addendum B)

When the Civil War began, they were faced with a problem. Adventists did not believe God would permit them to fight and kill. So at first, they refused to serve. later, however, they modified their stand to its present form. SDA will serve in their nation's armed forces (their favorite role is in the medical corps), but they will not fight in any war.

### **AND THE BEAT GOES ON**

Today Seventh Day Adventism is worldwide. "In 1966 no less than 365 missionaries were dispatched to various parts of the world field. At the close of 1966, Adventists had 58,427 full time workers. Of these, 21,000 were in direct evangelistic service and 41,000 in publishing, medical, and education institutions. These, scattered all around the globe, employed no less than 1,068 languages and modes of speech. Publications are issued in 262 languages."<sup>12</sup>

To give you some idea of the extent of their missionary enterprise, the following membership figures from the latest annual report at my disposal are presented: Australasian: 78,367; Central European: 39,487; China: 21,168; Far Eastern: 190,436; Inter-American: 211,440; Middle East: 2,537; North American: 391,014; Northern European: 83,753; South American: 183,026; Southern Asia: 35,372; Southern European: 124,683; Trans-African: 260,399; U.S.S.R.: 40,000 (est.).

Adventists operate more than 300 sanitariums, hospitals, and treatment rooms in many countries, with a value of \$126,000,000. Employed in these institutions are 696 doctors, and 19,271 nurses and other helpers. To provide skilled, experienced physicians, "with the advent hope in their hearts," they established the College of Medical Evangelists (now Loma Linda University).

Their principle co-educational colleges and schools of graduate studies in North America are:

Andrews University	Berrien Springs, MI
Atlantic Union College	South Lancaster, MS
Canadian Union College College	Heights, Alberta
Loma Linda University	Loma Linda, CA
Oakwood College	Huntsville, AL
Oshawa Missionary College	Oshawa, Ontario
Pacific Union College	Angwin, CA
Southern Missionary College	Collegedale, TN
Southeastern Union College	Keene, TX
Union College	Lincoln, NB
Walla Walla College	College Place, Washington

### **COUNTING THE COLLECTION**

Requiring a tithe offering from each of their members, in 1966 the SDA took in \$92,000,000 to keep their schools and churches open. In addition, Adventists gave \$65,000,000 to home and foreign mission ventures. "In 1962 the Adventists contributed an average of \$213.97 to their church and another \$38.46 to missions. Remember that this figure is per member not per family; we might multiply these figures by a factor of three to obtain the average family contributions: about \$750."<sup>13</sup>

In the mid-60s the Adventists had 5,074 schools with 342,472 pupils enrolled from kindergarten to graduate and medical school. Adventists will open a grade school with as few as 20 pupils. In the United States only the Catholic Church and the LC-MS has more parochial schools. But the Seventh Day Adventists do enroll a higher percentage of their own members than does any other church body. According to the most recent statistics available to this author the Adventists educate six out of ten of their school age members in their own institutions from first grade through college.<sup>14</sup>

**THE DOCTRINE OF THE SDA**  
**A. THE ADVENTISTS AND SALVATION**

**SOLA GRATIA**

The theology of the Adventists is filled with many beautiful statements on salvation by grace. For instance,

Nothing we can ever do will merit the favor of God-salvation is of grace. It is grace that "bringeth salvation: (Ti 2:11) . . . Neither can we be saved by "law" (Rm 8:3), nor by the "deeds" of the "works" of the law (Rm 3:20, 38; Ga 3:2,5,10). Neither the "law of Moses", nor the Decalogue can save us (Ac 13:39; Rm 7:7-10). The law of God was never designed to save men. It is a looking glass, in which, when we gaze, we see our sinfulness. That is as far as the law of God can go with a sinful man. It can reveal his sin, but is powerless to remove it, or to save him from its guilt and penalty and power."<sup>15</sup>

But although we are saved "by grace alone", the Seventh Day Adventists also state: "We believe that man is free to choose or reject the offer of salvation through Christ; we do not believe that God has predetermined that some men will be saved and others lost."<sup>16</sup> They believe that God has predestined all men to be saved, but no everyone takes advantage of God's will for them.

**JUST BLAME YOURSELF**

Therefore our salvation is our own responsibility. "God freely extends (pardon) to those who ask Him in faith, and who fulfill the conditions upon which pardon is granted. These conditions may be briefly summarized as: (1) sorrow for sin; (2) confession, including restitution where possible and necessary; (3) sincere repentance, including a determination to 'go, sin no more;' (4) public acknowledgment of Christ."<sup>17</sup> The author of this quote continues and hastens to add, however, that this doesn't mean we can justify ourselves. But to me he seems only to make the issue cloudier. "the fulfillment of these conditions in no way 'earns' a man a pardon. they only make it possible for God to extend mercy to him. 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' (1 Jn 1:9)"<sup>18</sup>

To this same point another Adventist writer penned: "While salvation is of God, a surrender of the will is called for. After the primary prompting of the Spirit of God, the magnetic drawing of the love of God, the soul must accept, and must yield to, its great Deliverer."<sup>19</sup> In this quote we also are able to see how the Adventists view the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing one to faith.

**JESUS AND HUMILITY**

Adventist teach that the reason God forgives our sins is because of Jesus' perfect life and his suffering death. Unfortunately, they maintain that the pain Jesus endured while on the cross was not the pain of eternal hell. They can find no Scriptures which teach that a hell exists (more



on this later). Therefore, the suffering which Jesus went through for the sinner as He hung on the cross was the pain of humiliation. After beautifully portraying how Jesus "gave Himself a ransom for all" and how God "hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin. . . ." a SDA author marvels:

Seeking to bring home to the members of the church at Philippi the stupendous nature of the divine sacrifice, the apostle Paul penned these sublime and imperishable words: "Being in the form of God, (He) though it no robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." From the highest to the lowest; from the throne of glory to the criminals scaffold; from fullness of power to perfect submission; from supreme authority to deepest humiliation; from the praises of the angelic host to the curses of blasphemous men!"<sup>20</sup>

This is the pain the Savior suffered to forgive the sins of the world.

### **GOSPEL-LAW**

God's love in sending Christ into the world as Savior is without a moment's hesitation proclaimed by Adventists to be worthy of our eternal praise. But strangely enough, they maintain that the Law and Gospel are not actually two distinct and opposite doctrines. Ellen White has written: "In the Law is embodied the same principle as in the Gospel." In other words, the message proclaimed in the Gospel is essentially the same as the one proclaimed in the "Ten Principles." The reason they are equated is because God's love is behind Jesus' coming into the world (Gospel) and the one word with which we can sum up all of God's Law is also love.

Such reasoning led the Adventist pastor I interviewed to speculate that the fabled native on the south sea island who never heard the Gospel might still be saved because he was living the principle of love. This reasoning would agree with something that Mrs. Ellen White once said. "She believed that while in the Word we have clearer lines of the great work of atonement, yet the listening ear can hear and understand the communications of God through the things of nature. (She also) declared that even the heathen not only have heard God's voice in nature, but also have been touched by the Holy Ghost and are recognized as God's children."<sup>21</sup>

This reasoning further has lead to a distortion concerning the role of the Law in the life of the Christian--particularly concerning why we as Christians keep God's law.

### **LOVING THE LAW**

One can find many statements in Adventist writing which correctly point out why we keep God's Law. For example: "No one can 'work his way' into the kingdom of God. No degree of obedience, no works of penance, no amount of money entitles anyone to any divine favor. Nevertheless, 'faith without works is dead.' Keeping the commandments is the result, the evidence of salvation. It is a matter of love, not legal duty. 'If ye love me,' said Jesus, 'keep my commandments.' (Jn 14:15)"<sup>22</sup>

However, while Adventists can make statements like that, they unfortunately also make the Law into something it is not and stress that it is to be obeyed for reasons for which it should not be.

### **LAWING LOVE**

Such a position begins with that misunderstanding of what the Law which we spoke of earlier. One writer says: "The most precious document in the possession of mankind is the law of God contained in the Ten Commandments. In its original form, it is the constitution of the universe; as adapted to man it defines his every duty. Obeyed, it brings happiness, prosperity, and peace; disobeyed or ignored, it brings sorrow, disaster and chaos."<sup>23</sup> "Christ did not treat the law as a formal, cold, legal enactment. To Him it was the way of life, and not a series of prohibitions. He believed, as did Paul, that 'the commandments were ordained to life. (Rm 7:10)' Of a full heart He could say: 'I delight to do Thy will, O My God, yea, Thy law is within My heart.' (Ps 40:8)"<sup>24</sup>

Adventists even go so far as to interpret Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler (MT 19:16-23) and with the lawyer (LK 10:25) as Jesus' proclaiming the keeping of the law to be a practical way to open heaven's doors rather than just the opposite. They reason:

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (1 Jn 4:8) But to know God is life eternal (Jn 17:3). If, therefore, we do not know God unless we love and the knowledge of God is eternal life, and the only way that "we know that we know Him (is) if we keep His commandments," and this keeping of the commandments "is the love of God," we are again shut up to the proposition that the law of God plays a prominent part in our relationship to God. (1 Jn 2:3; 5:3)<sup>25</sup>

Therefore we keep God's law not only-- perhaps not even predominantly--out of love for the God who has completely forgiven us, but we keep God's law because loving (keeping the commandments) leads us to know God and to know God is to have eternal life.

### **ABROGATE THE LAW?**

But what of the passages which say that Christ has set us free from the law, that He has abrogated the law? Adventists would agree that now that Christ has come, the Old Testament ceremonial laws are no longer necessary.

The ceremonial laws embraced the types and shadows that entered into the sacrificial system of Israel...the sacrificial offerings feast days, and even the priesthood - -all that was typical of the sacrifice and ministry of Christ our Lord-- met its end on Calvary's cross. This we believe is what is meant by the apostle Paul when he wrote that Christ "abolished in His flesh the enmity even the law of commandments contained in ordinances. (Ep 2:15)"<sup>26</sup>

But this abrogation doesn't apply in any way to any of the Old Testament laws which were not typical. These reflect God's immutable will for man for all time. And therefore are to be

enforced for all time. Still to be obeyed, then, are the laws on the Sabbath, diet and tithing, for example, in addition to the moral law.

The idea that either Christ or the apostles would attempt to annul the law of God is so strange and amazing that we cannot believe that men who speak thus are aware of the implications of their words. Abolish the law! Abolish the Ten Commandments! We can conceive that the evil one might desire to have this done, but we cannot believe that either Christ or the apostles would have anything to do with such an undertaking; nor do we believe that those who advocate such doctrine have considered what it means to abolish the law.<sup>27</sup>

## **B. THE ADVENTISTS AND THE SABBATH**

### **WHY ARE YOU HERE?**

The "raison d'etre" of the SDA Church is summed up in their teaching concerning the Sabbath and Christ's Second Coming. It's to proclaim these doctrines that the Adventists exist. Therefore these two doctrines seen through the eyes of the Adventists deserve our study.

Sabbath-keeping--although originally drawn from the Scriptures, is substantiated for the followers of Bates and Whites, by a vision Mrs. White had in which "a warning was . . . issued against worshipping the Beast, the Anti-Christ, who introduced Sunday in the place of the Sabbath."<sup>28</sup>

But perhaps her most remembered vision on this point was when she saw Jesus in paradise raising the lid of the ark in the heavenly sanctuary and displaying a heavenly counterpart to Moses' Two Tables of the Law. As Christ picked up the tablets, Mrs. White was able to clearly see that the Fourth Commandment was surrounded by a halo. This indicated that of all the commandments, the Sabbath commandment was superior.

### **SATURDAY IS FOR SAINTS**

Their arguments for the universally binding character of the Sabbath Law revolve around four points: 1) the moral law is still binding; 2) the Sabbath laws instituted were instituted at creation; 3) the Sabbath laws were not abrogated in the New Testament; 4) the keeping of the Sabbath is the "seal". of God. A closer look at these would be helpful.

1. The moral law is still binding We have already noted how the Adventists feel about the moral law. Their argument then follows easily that since the Sabbath commandment is part of the Decalog, and since the Decalog and all the non-typical laws of the Old Testament still apply to man, the Sabbath law is also to be kept.

2. The Sabbath laws were instituted at creation "The Adventists say that by resting on the first seventh day, the Lord instituted the Sabbath and now demands that men observe each succeeding seventh day. They insist that the seventh day Sabbath has been observed uninterrupted since creation and it is man's solemn duty to continue it so until Christ's return."<sup>29</sup> They argue that since the Scriptures say: "On the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested..." (Gn 2:2,3) "it is eminently fitting that God should end His work on the seventh day, thus making the Sabbath a definite part of creation, a part which cannot be detached-or separated from the rest. Whoever believes in a finished creation must, of necessity, believe in the Sabbath;

and conversely, whoever does not believe in the Sabbath does not believe in a finished creation of God."<sup>30</sup>

3. The Sabbath laws were not abrogated in the New Testament They believe that:

It is distinctly stated of Christ that it was His "custom" to attend the synagogue on "the Sabbath day" (Lk 4:16). After His crucifixion, His closest disciples were so loyal to His teachings and example that they would not even embalm His body on the holy seventh day. Instead, "they rested the Sabbath day, according to the commandment." (Lk 23:56). As the SDA have never been able to find a single test in the Bible suggesting that Christ authorized a change of the Sabbath from the seventh day of the week to the first, they say, "What else can a true Christian do but follow the clear teaching of the Word?"<sup>31</sup>

4. The keeping of the Sabbath is the "seal" of God. Exodus 31:12,13 says: "And the Lord spake..., 'My Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you.'" (cf. Ez 20:12,20) Adventists compare this passage with Revelation 7:2,3 "And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels...saying 'Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.'" Therefore the "seal" of God is actually the keeping of the Sabbath. Conversely, those who do not keep the Sabbath have the seal of the Beast, the Anti-Christ.

The Sabbath is said to be God's seal that He is the Creator of the universe and and Christ's sign that He has power to save in the new creation. On the other hand, keeping the Sabbath is man's sign to accept God's work to save man from sin through Christ. Those who insist on observing the Sunday, thereby indicate their allegiance to the Beast, the express opponent of God. The Beast of Daniel 7:25 which changes times, is said to be none other than the Pope."<sup>32-33</sup>

### **C. THE ADVENTISTS AND CHRIST'S SECOND COMING**

#### **THE END IS NIGH!**

The second reason the Adventists use to justify their existence is to proclaim the imminent return of Christ. The SDA have an eschatology all their own. Basically, we might catalog them as millennialists -- but they are millennialists with a twist. Before we can get to that, however we must back up --to 1844.

As we've already noted, SDA maintain that the date set by Miller and based on a series of Bible given computations (see Addendum A) was essentially correct. The only mistake Miller made was concerning what was to happen on that date. Obviously, October 22, 1844, was not the time of the Second Coming. What it signaled was Christ's entering the heavenly sanctuary for a period of "investigative judgment."

To understand what Adventists mean by that phrase, we must first of all recall some about the Old Testament system of worship

The ceremonies of the Great Day of Atonement are said (by the Adventists) to be anti-typical of Christ's work from the first Good Friday until 1844. The Old Testament

priest daily entered the Holy of the Temple to offer sacrifices and plead for the people. Only once a year did he enter the Holy of Holies, the sanctuary, with the blood of the first goat to sprinkle the mercy seat. Thereupon the High Priest placed the sins of the people upon the second goat, the scapegoat, which was driven into the wilderness (Azazel) to symbolize that the sins for which the first goat had been sacrificed had been completely removed from the people (Lv 16 1-10).

The SDA say that Christ, the Antitype, entered into the Holy of the heavenly sanctuary on Good Friday and remained there for 18 centuries to plead his blood on behalf of sinners (as the Old Testament priests did daily). But on October 22, 1844, Christ, according to Hebrews 8:1,ff, entered the Holy of Holies in the heavenly sanctuary to begin the "investigative" judgment of all men's conduct, especially as to their attitude toward the Decalogue. Upon completion of this investigation Christ will come forth bringing the sins of the people with Him to place them upon Satan, the anti-type of the goat, Azazel. As this goat was destroyed in the wilderness, so Satan and all the wicked will be annihilated and with him the sins of the righteous will be forever destroyed.<sup>34</sup>

(Note: All the bracketed remarks are my own.)

### **WHILE WE WAIT**

Between now and Christ's coming, it is the duty of the Adventists to proclaim the message of the three angels of Revelation 14:6ff. These angels proclaim that we should adhere to the Sabbath laws, that Babylon (the church united with the world) is fallen, and that we should avoid the Beast.<sup>35</sup> This is the proclamation that the world needs to hear before Christ returns, Adventism tells us.

When Jesus comes back to earth, they believe that He will call all Christians (Old Testament believers included) from their graves. Then both the living saints and the resurrected saints will be translated into heaven to receive their reward and to live with Jesus there for 1000 years. Those left on earth-- the living unjust-- will be consumed by "the brightness of His coming," i.e. by Christ's glory. This will render them physically dead and leave the sinful world a desolate and uninhabited place. It is then, to this scorched and empty earth,--that Satan and all his angels will be banished. For the next thousand years, Satan and his hosts will roam the earth bearing the sins of mankind as did the scapegoat, Azazel.

### **SATAN IS THE GOAT!**

Adventists argue that if it is Christ who is pictured as the Old Testament sacrificial lamb whose blood is poured on the altar to forgive sins, than the scapegoat, upon whose head the sins of the people were laid, must represent Satan. They believe there are good reasons why Satan should have to suffer for a thousand years on earth bearing the sins of mankind.

First, he is responsible as the instigator of all sin. Whether he personally does his evil work, as in the garden of Eden, or whether he uses one of his agents as is usually the case -- guilt is clear. Even in the case where the man is entirely willing to sin, Satan must bear primary responsibility. As the liquor dealer becomes partly responsible for the crimes committed by a man who is under the influence of the liquor he has sold, so Satan must be held responsible for his part in every sin.

Second, Satan is also responsible for the part which he had in the sin itself. To use the illustration of the barkeeper: he ordinarily restricts his activity to the selling of liquor and lets the man find his own victim. But not so Satan. He follows the man, suggests possible victims, and helps him accomplish his evil desires. Satan thus becomes a direct partaker in the sin . . . In the judgment he will be charged with sins which he did not personally commit but in which he was, nevertheless, a partaker. These sins will be placed upon him and he must bear his responsibility for them.<sup>36</sup>

The time which Satan spends on earth, Adventists believe, is the time referred to in Revelation 20 where Satan is prophesied to be "bound with a chain." They maintain that during these thousand years, he will be bound with the chain of circumstance -- he can do no harm because there is no one there to harm.

### **HOW ABOUT THE SAINTS?**

During the millennium, the saints in heaven will be given important work to do as they rule with Christ. "The work of judgment (which believers will do in heaven) may well involve a careful investigation of the record of evil men and a decision regarding the amount of punishment due each sinner for his part in the rebellion against God."<sup>37</sup>

Although Adventists deny the existence of hell, it does seem that based on the judgment of the heavenly saints, the wicked will be made to suffer varying degrees of punishment during this thousand years.

### **ADVENTISTS HAVE NO SOUL, BROTHER**

Such a doctrine, however, does not seem to jibe with their teachings on the soul. Adventists maintain that the existence of the soul is not Scriptural. They say that the dichotomy of man into body and soul is rooted in Platonism, not Scripture. Therefore, when a person dies, he does not immediately find himself in heaven or hell. Rather, he sleeps. Prior to Jesus' coming "the souls are neither in bliss nor in condemnation out in a state of unconsciousness. . . ."<sup>38</sup> Adventists believe the term soul might better be rendered "person" as when Adam received the breath of life and became a living "soul."<sup>39</sup>

### **DOUSING HELL'S FIRE**

But what of their denial of the existence of hell? They argue, how can someone speak about eternal death and maintain that souls will continue to eternally exist even though it is in hell? To exist--even in hell-- is to have life and to have life is not to be eternally dead. They would also argue that the Scriptures plainly say that eternal death is separation from God. Can people in hell really be separated from God? Isn't God everywhere? In addition they would have trouble seeing how a just God could punish the six-year-old who died in unbelief in the same eternal hell with a 90-year-old who spent his life raping, robbing, rampaging. Finally, the Adventists also point to 2 Peter 3:13 where Peter tells us Christ will create a new heaven and

earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness." Upon this Scripture they would reason, if Christ is going to establish a new heaven and earth filled with perfect righteousness, how can that possibly leave room for a hell filled with the wicked?<sup>40</sup>

## **THE SECOND COMING**

At the end of the millennium, Christ will return to the earth to judge the unjust. However, after they are resurrected, Satan will organize the wicked into an assault force which will attempt to attack the holy city, New Jerusalem, which has come down from heaven and now stands on the Mount of Olives. The city will be populated with the saints. Before Satan and his vast army can do any damage, however, Christ will annihilate all the unjust and Satan with a consuming fire. At this point the wicked and all evil will cease to exist.

Through this same fire which consumed the wicked the Lord will work a marvelous miracles. He will cleanse the earth, purify it and regenerate it. This new earth will then become the home of the righteous for the rest of eternity. (2 Pt 3:13).

Of the new era, the SDA remind us the Scriptures say: "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." (Rv 21:4) "Then all will be over, and all man's brightest hopes will be realized. This will be 'heaven on earth' at last, not only for the Seventh Day Adventists, but for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."<sup>41</sup>

## **D. THE ADVENTIST AND OTHER DOCTRINES**

### **ON THE SCRIPTURES**

#### **THE BIBLE IS TRUTH**

As is already evident from their teachings on the Sabbath and the Second Coming, SDA "take the Bible in its entirety, believing that it not merely contains the Word of God, but is the Word of God. (They) believe in the authority, veracity, reliability and truth of the Holy Scriptures."<sup>42</sup> This faith leads the Adventists to a very literal method of interpreting the Bible. In fact "the doctrine of verbal inspiration enables them to interpret the prophecies in a very literal sense, especially, the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation which tell with dramatic forcefulness that God will assume leadership in human affairs and will ultimately triumph over all the forces of evil."<sup>43</sup> In other words, the Adventists use the Scriptures too literally, as we have already seen.

This stand on the Scriptures also has led them to refuse to accept any creeds. They hold that the Bible itself contains a sufficient rule for faith, morals, and practice. This does not mean that they would take issue with the expression of the truth in any of the ecumenical creeds. They just do not feel comfortable using such faith formulas. Having no real confessional writings would seem to be an open invitation to great doctrinal variation in the adventist camp. However, the pastor I interviewed did not see that happening except in a very few cases.

#### **AND SO IS ELLEN WHITE**

We might be left to wonder, since the Adventists hold the Scriptures to be God's Word, how can they also hold Mrs. Ellen White's writings in such high esteem? Adventist theologians would be quick to tell us:

We do not regard the writings of Ellen G. White as an addition to the sacred canon of Scripture. We do not think of them as of universal application as is the Bible, but particularly for the Seventh Day Adventist Church. We do not regard them in the same sense as the Holy Scriptures, which stand alone and unique as the standard by which all other writings must be judged. We test the writings of Ellen G. White by the Bible, but in no sense do we test the Bible by her writings. White is like Nathan, Gad, Asaph, Simeon, John the Baptist, Miriam, Deborah who lived contemporaneously with the Biblical prophets, were called by God to deliver His Word to the people, but were never a part of the sacred canon.<sup>44</sup>

## **ON THE SACRAMENTS**

### **BAPTIST BAPTISM**

SDA practice adult baptism by immersion. Baptism is restricted to those who understand what baptism is and are old enough to know what they are pledging through this act. Baptism must be accompanied by a public confession. Immersion is used mostly on the basis of Romans 8 where Paul describes the symbolism of baptism--drowning of the old nature, buried with Christ resurrected to a new life. They believe "that Baptism is to be administered by single immersion; (they) do not believe that it may be administered by sprinkling, pouring, or trine immersion."<sup>45</sup>

They maintain that we are all born sinful. However, they would deny that baptism is properly used on infants. Babies are "dedicated to the Lord" instead. They reason that to baptize an infant is to say you are making a decision for him which is only his to make.

### **A REMINDER IN HIS MEAL**

Lord's Supper for the Adventists is not actually the sacrament we believe it to be. They view it as a reminder that Jesus gave His body and blood to forgive us. Taking the body and blood into oneself is a type of re-dedication to Christ, a miniature baptism (in their understanding of baptism). They seem to acknowledge the real presence of Christ's body and blood, but would definitely not go as far as the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation.

Prior to receiving communion, the congregation segregates itself, men and women, and engage in "foot washing," a rite they believe is asked of them by the Scriptures. Seventh day Adventists hold "that the ordinance instituted by Christ--that of washing one another's feet at the time of the Lord's Supper-- is to be practiced; we do not believe that this was merely an accommodation to the customs and necessities of those times."<sup>46</sup> Their communion table is open to all who wish to participate. On the basis of 1 Corinthians 11, they put the emphasis for the proper reception of the elements on the individual. They do not feel that the pastor or the congregation should police this. Communion is served four times a year in their churches. It is felt this practice will help Adventists avoid taking Lord's Supper only as part of their routine.

## **REGARDING DIVORCE**

### **ONCE IS ENOUGH**



Although it is currently a debated subject, SDA have traditionally taken a very hard-line stand against divorce. Simply, their position regarding divorce was "enunciated by Jesus Christ when He said, 'Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and who so marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery' (Mt 19:9). Seventh Day Adventists believe that this counsel is very clear and that members who knowingly depart from it should not continue in the fellowship of the church."<sup>47</sup>

## **TOWARD DRINKING AND SMOKING**

### **"LIPS THAT TOUCH WINE . . ."**

Because the Adventists have taken the view toward the Law that they have, not only are most SDA vegetarians, but they also refuse to drink alcoholic beverages and smoke (or chew) tobacco. they, in fact, have banned the use of any stimulants including coffee or tea. "They refrain from all harmful indulgences which might weaken their efficiency and the sincerity of their witness, as workers for God. They are also motivated by a regard for the example that true Christians should set before others who do not acknowledge Christ, and in particular, before children and youth."<sup>48</sup>

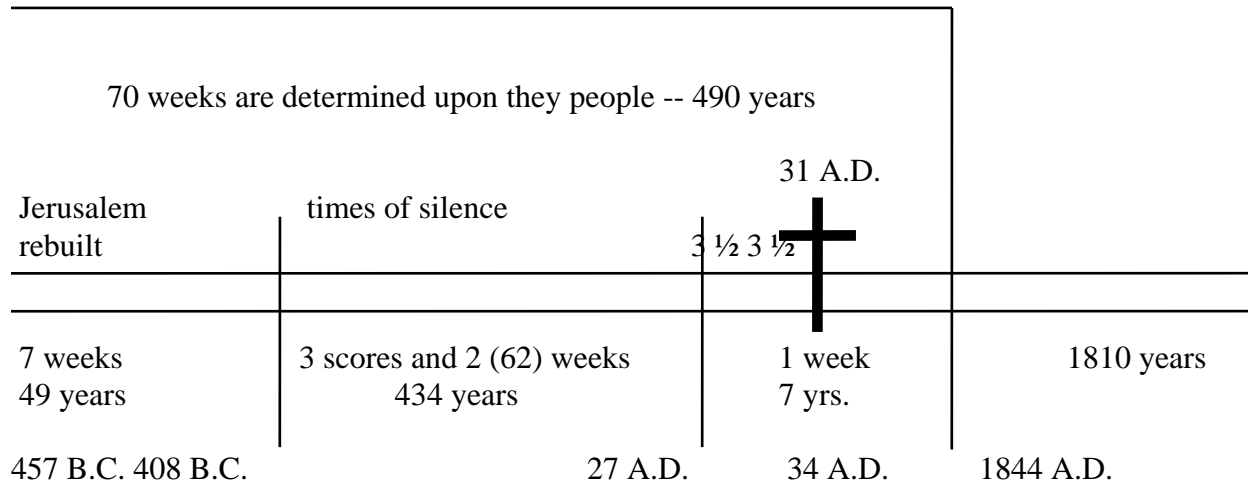
## **ADDENDUM A**

On the basis of his studies, Miller "said he had learned that the millennium would be established at a relatively early date. On the basis of his computations he ventured even to predict the exact date of Christ's second coming. Miller held that the cleansing of the sanctuary (Dn 8:13,14) is prophetic language describing Christ's second advent. He held that the Temple, i.e. the earth, would be desecrated for 2,300 days, which according to Numbers 14:34, denote so many years. He arrived at the following computation:

The desolation of the Holy Place is to continue for 2,300 "prophetic days," or 2,300 years. The "terminus a quo" of this period is 457 B.C., when the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem was given (Dn 9:24,25). 2,300 subtract 457 equals 1843. Therefore, the end of the desolation and the cleansing of the sanctuary, i.e., Christ's advent, will occur A.D. 1843. Miller predicted his computation on the correctness of the date 457 B.C., his "terminus a quo." He said that the 69 weeks (483 "days" i.e., years) and the 70 weeks (490 "days" or years) of Daniel 9:24,25 support the date 457 B.C., inasmuch as they refer respectively to Christ's Baptism, A.D. 26-27, and Saul's conversion. Subtracting the 26 from 483, or 33 from 490, one arrives at 457 B.C., the year in which, according to Ezra 7:11-26, the king issued the command to rebuild Jerusalem.<sup>49</sup>

### **DANIEL 8-9**

Unto 2,300 days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed, 2,300 years



### ADDENDUM B

Breakfast cereals and snack foods. The modern packaged breakfast-food industry owes its beginning to a America religious sect, the Seventh-day Adventists, who wished to avoid consumption of animal foods. In the 1860's they organized the Western Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek, Michigan, later renamed the Battle Creek Sanitarium. James Jackson of Dansville, New York, produced a cereal food by baking whole-meal dough in thin sheets, breaking and regrinding into small chunks, rebaking and regrinding. J. H. Kellogg of Battle Creek made biscuits about one-half inch thick from a dough mixture of wheat meal, oatmeal, and cornmeal. The dough was baked until fairly fry and turning brown, and the product was ground and packed. A patient at the sanitarium, C. W. Post, saw the possibilities in such a product entirely apart from the original conception of healthfulness and started a business. Kellogg's brother, W. H. Kellogg, did likewise, and the breakfast-food industry was launched, soon achieving mass sales of cereal products in flake, granule, shred and puffed forms, with flavor obtained by roasting and the addition of sugar.<sup>50</sup>

### NOTES:

1. A. S. Maxwell, *Your Friends the Adventists* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1967), p. 81.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
3. Edwin S. Gaustad, *The Rise of Adventism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 2.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

7. Ibid., p. 161.
8. *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1964), volume 1, p. 179.
9. Frederick Mayer, *The Religious Bodies of America* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1954), p. 432.
10. Gaustad, op. cit., p. 178.
11. William J. Whalen, *The Seventh day Adventists* (Chicago: Claretian Publications, 1973), p. 18.
12. Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), p. 19.
13. Whalen, op. cit., p. 8.
14. Ibid., pp. 6,7.
15. *Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), p. 108.
16. Ibid., p. 23.
17. M. L. Andreason, *The Sabbath* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1942), p. 228.
18. Ibid., p. 228.
19. *Questions on Doctrine*, op. cit., p. 109.
20. Maxwell, op. cit., p. 22.
21. Mayer, op. cit., p. 434.
22. Arthur S. Maxwell (Leo Rosten, editor) *Religions in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), p. 177.
23. Andreason, *The Sabbath*, p. 108.
24. Ibid., p. 120.
25. Ibid., p. 131.
26. *Questions on Doctrine*, op. cit., p. 130.
27. Andreason, *The Sabbath*, p. 147.

28. Keith Kruck, *An Analysis of Adventist Arguments for a Seventh Day Sabbath* (Milwaukee: Metro North Pastoral Conference, 1970), p. 1.
29. Ibid., p. 2.
30. Andreason, *The Sabbath*, p. 52.
31. Arthur S. Maxwell, op. cit., p. 178.
32. Mayer, op. cit., pp. 435,436.
33. Concerning the mystifying number which Revelation 13:17,18 assigns to the Beast, i.e. 666, an Adventist scholar early in this century has come up with a solution. The Pope has taken the name VICARIUS FILII DEI for himself. If one takes the Latin letter in that name which doubled for Roman numerals (e.g., I,V,I,C,D) and totals them, the resulting number is 666 (V,I,V,I,V,I,L,I,D,I). The pastor I interviewed said that this isn't viewed as positive proof that the Pope is the Anti-Christ but it could well be one more piece of evidence pointing in that direction.
34. Mayer, op. cit., p. 439.
35. Francis D. Nichol, *Reasons for Our Faith* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947), pp. 147-225.
36. M. L. Andreason, *The Sanctuary Service* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947), p. 195.
37. *Questions on Doctrine*, op. cit., p. 497.
38. Mayer, op. cit., pp. 439,440.
39. Nichol, op. cit., pp. 379-392.
40. Ibid., pp. 379-392.
41. Arthur S. Maxwell, op. cit., p. 180.
42. *Questions on Doctrine*, op. cit., p. 27.
43. Mayer, op. cit., pp. 435.
44. *Questions on Doctrine*, op. cit., pp. 89,90.
45. Ibid., p. 23.

46. Ibid., p. 24.
47. Arthur S. Maxwell, op. cit., p. 182.
48. Ibid., pp. 182,183.
49. Mayer, op. cit., pp. 431,432.
50. *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1973), Macropedia, volume 3, p. 1171).

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