



Seventh-Day Adventism

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Introduction

The Seventh-day Adventist church is one of the largest international Christian denominations with approximately 21.9 million members across 212 countries and areas recognised by the United Nations. This church was formally established in 1863, but its roots trace back to the Second Great Awakening, a spiritual revival that swept through Protestant communities in the United States between the 1790s and 1840s. Originating in the Millerite movement, which flourished in the 1840s in the north-eastern United States, Sabbatarian Adventism began as a trans-denominational movement, attracting Christians from Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Christian Connectionist, Anabaptist, and other Protestant churches. It was nourished by apocalyptic thought, cast in a premillennialist mould and infused with a passion for retrieving various aspects of biblical faith that had been lost throughout church history.

Today, this worldwide Protestant Christian church is best known for its observance of Saturday as the divinely instituted weekly day of rest (Sabbath) and its emphasis on the imminent second coming (Advent) of Jesus Christ, as featured in its name 'Seventh-day Adventism.' Other doctrines that distinguish Adventism include teachings about the unconscious state of the dead and about the ongoing pre-Advent investigative judgement that will culminate in the pre-millennial, visible, universal, and personal return of Jesus Christ. Beside these most salient doctrinal tenets, the church also foregrounds its activities in health and medical care, humanitarian relief, religious liberty, and education.

Notwithstanding the remarkable geographical expansion and membership growth of this apocalyptic religious movement in recent decades, the key features of its eschatological outlook have remained relatively unknown to the public. The present critical profile of Seventh-day Adventism is intended to address this gap. It offers a brief overview of the origins and development of the core beliefs, practices, and institutions of Seventh-day Adventists before turning to a discussion about their apocalyptic and millenarian convictions. The review ends with a note on present-day challenges.

Origination

Seventh-day Adventism is a major surviving branch of the Millerite movement which flourished in the

1830s and 1840s in the north-eastern United States. Following the spiritual lead of Joseph Bates (1792–1872), James Springer White (1821–1881), and Ellen Gould Harmon (later Ellen G. White; 1827–1915), who were regarded as the principal co-founders of the movement, the small group of Sabbatarian Adventists survived the confusion and disappointment that accompanied the failure of William Miller's predictions about the coming of Christ on 22 October 1844. After a painful period of soul-searching and intense Bible study, they recovered their fascination with the Millerite premillennial eschatological conviction, which emphasised the imminent, visible, and literal advent of Christ. Albeit in a modified form, this conviction subsequently became one of the main impulses of the Seventh-day Adventist theological vision, which is apocalyptic in orientation.

Early Sabbatarian Adventists concluded that Miller had been correct about the time he identified in his preaching, but wrong about the event. In other words, according to those early Adventists, something of importance had happened in 1844, as a fulfilment of the prophecy of the 2,300 days in Daniel 8:14 that foretells the cleansing of the sanctuary. This important event, however, was not itself the Second Advent. In contrast to Miller, Sabbatarian Adventists claimed that the sanctuary referred to in Daniel 8:14 was God's heavenly temple rather than an earthly one. Thus, following the inner logic of their reinterpretation of Miller's views, they concluded that on 22 October 1844 Christ had entered a new phase of his heavenly mediatory ministry. In doing so, he had ushered in a new stage in the unfolding cosmic story of redemption.

Adventists believed that their discovery of new activity by Christ had radical implications for all aspects of Christian existence. The vision of the new phase in the work of Christ became, one might say, the *Punctum Archimedis* of Adventist thinking. It resolved the mystery of the October 1844 disappointment and provided an insight that could ground the rediscovery of other aspects of biblical faith, which, according to the Adventist believers, had been overshadowed and gradually lost throughout the history of Christianity.

Formation

The formative years of this movement (1840s–1880s) were marked by major developments. These included the emergence of leading personalities, the broadening of mission awareness, a rapid growth rate and geographical expansion, the consolidation of publishing work, and the choice of a denominational name. A more efficient organisational structure was developed, along with the definition and integration of lifestyle principles and the incorporation of health, educational, and other reforms into the church's mission. However, the discovery and subsequent refinement and consolidation of the movement's unique doctrinal system formed the greatest achievement of this early period.

Core Beliefs and Practices

As early as 1848, after a series of six Sabbath Conferences in New England and New York State and other formal meetings, where the Sabbatarian Adventists met to discuss the core findings from their study of the Bible, the movement established itself around five key beliefs. These have been referred to since then by the members of the Adventist community as the five 'doctrinal landmarks' or 'pillars' of their faith.

The first pillar involves a continued belief in the premillennial, personal, and visible Second Advent of Christ. Contrary to the almost universally accepted view of their contemporaries, and similarly to Miller, Sabbatarian Adventists placed the Advent of Christ at the *beginning* of the millennium (the 1,000 years of Revelation 20) rather than at the *end* of it. According to them, the renewal of the world will happen not as a result of a gradual human transformation (conversionist approach) but through the sudden and cataclysmic intervention of God at the coming of Jesus Christ (interventionist approach). In light of this realisation, God's people are to live in continual anticipation of this event, focusing their energy and time on proclaiming their preparatory message and embodying the kingdom of God that is already here, yet is to reach its fullness only when Christ returns.

The second belief has to do with the aspect of Christ's mediatorial work that precedes, prepares for, and culminates in the Second Advent—the so-called 'Investigative Judgement.' Following the two-fold pattern of the annual ministry of the High Priest in Israelite sanctuary-based cultic life, Adventists deduced that Christ's post-ascension and pre-Advent mediatory ministry as the cosmic High Priest also unfolds in two stages—the second one commencing in 1844. This year marked the beginning of the first ('investigative') phase of the end-time cosmic judgement by God currently running in the spiritual realm. Its purpose is to confirm the names of those who will receive salvation and to vindicate God in the eyes of the universe as just in his dealings with humankind. Once the verdict is reached, Christ will come to earth as the King of Glory to fulfil the promise of salvation given to fallen humanity. Since this is a unique aspect of Adventist eschatological vision, the inner logic and implications of this foundational insight will be analysed later in this article.

The third pillar of Adventist faith emphasises the sanctity, perpetuity, and end-time importance of the seventh-day Sabbath and the law of God. Adventists believe that the Ten Commandments of God (Decalogue)—including the commandment about the Sabbath—are still valid and provide a normative expression of the principles that undergird God's cosmic reign of love. This covenantal law, the essence of which is disclosed most fully in the life of Christ, is to be followed by all humanity as the moral code that shapes their attitudes, thoughts, and actions. Adventists believe that Christians should steer between the pitfalls of antinomianism and legalism. Salvation is not earned through keeping the law (legalism) but should be accepted through faith as a gift from God. Yet Christians should not disregard the law (antinomianism) as it is a genuine expression of God's unchangeable character; they should embrace it as a perpetual sign of their covenantal loyalty and belonging to God. Any human tradition or law that goes against God's commandments should be rejected. It is in this context that Adventists anticipate the clash ('the time of trouble') that the faithful people of God will encounter when attempting to keep Saturday, rather than Sunday, as a divinely established monument of creation, a sign of salvation, and a foretaste of the future renewal of the world. This matter will become the final test of their ultimate loyalty to their creator and redeemer.

From the movement's inception to the present day, Adventists have maintained their commitment to making the weekly Sabbath experience as spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially uplifting as possible. They meet for communal worship and the study of the Bible (so-called 'Sabbath School'). In the midst of what they see as an ever-changing and broken world, this day stands as a reminder of what it means to be truly human in their relationship with the creator and the community of creation, both human and non-human. Yet, as expected, the exact way this Sabbath-keeping practice is manifested varies widely, depending on the cultural, ethnic, and social backgrounds of individuals.

The fourth pillar includes belief in the conditional immortality of the human soul. Stemming from the holistic view of every human being as an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, the Adventist conviction is that humans do not possess immortal souls on their own. Only God himself is immortal. So, when a person dies, all mental and biological processes stop and there is no consciousness (known as 'soul sleep,' psychopannychism, or thnetopsychism). It is only during the first resurrection, accompanying Christ's coming, that believers will be made alive and will receive their new and incorruptible, glorified bodies. Contrary to many other Protestant traditions, Adventists also believe that the wicked—or those who oppose God and actively reject his gift of eternal life—will not suffer eternal torment in hell, but will instead be permanently annihilated.

The fifth pillar of Adventist faith stresses the perpetuity of spiritual gifts, including the gift of prophecy, as manifested in the person and writings of Ellen G. White. Already in the first few years of the existence of Sabbatarian Adventism, Ellen—together with her husband, James S. White, and Joseph Bates—played a vital role in gathering, developing, and encouraging yet-not-fully-formed communities of Sabbatarian Adventists. In subsequent years she continued to be instrumental in shaping Adventist views on health, education, theology, and mission. She had very limited exposure to formal education due to a physical injury in childhood and other health issues. Nevertheless, she wrote over 5,000 periodical articles and 50 books during her lifetime. As of 2023, more than 200 of her titles are accessible in English, published by the Ellen G. White Estate, including posthumous compilations from her 100,000 pages of manuscript. Her most notable and popular books are *Steps to Christ* (1892), *The Desire of Ages* (1898), and *The Great Controversy* (1911). According to most present-day Adventists, her writings (referred to as the 'Spirit of Prophecy') "speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church," though are ultimately subject to the Bible (FB 18).

Early Adventists considered these five doctrines to be significant ideas—central to Christianity—that had been overlooked or disregarded by the wider Christian Church, but which they were now restoring. These beliefs not only set the Sabbatarian Adventists apart from other Millerites but also from other Christians in general. In so doing, they provided "the answer to the question of what was Adventist in Adventism" (Knight 2000, 74) and established the theological foundation for the distinctive (eschatological) core of the Seventh-day Adventists' prophetic identity and mission.

However, starting with the 1880s, a new generation of Adventists saw the need to reaffirm and re-evaluate those traditional beliefs that they shared with other Christians (trinitarian and soteriological foundations). This pro-evangelical impulse had a new theological emphasis and vocabulary and a new question as to its religious identity—"What is Christian in Adventism?" (Knight 2000). This led Adventists to engage in the task of refining and consolidating their belief in the Trinity—Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit—as a unity of three co-equal and co-eternal divine persons. Similarly, the church affirmed its belief in Jesus Christ as truly God and truly man, the unique saviour of the world (*solus Christus* or *solo Christo*). Hence, like other Protestants, Adventists believe that human salvation is through grace alone (*sola gratia*), by faith alone (*sola fide*), as revealed in scripture alone (*sola scriptura*) (Pöhler 2000). Adventists had previously adopted the Arminian perspective on Christ's atonement instead of the Calvinist viewpoint, which posits that Christ's death was provisionally and potentially meant for all of humanity, but it only proved effective for individuals who actively make use of its benefits.

In subsequent years, distinctive and shared beliefs were gradually refined and integrated into a reasonably coherent doctrinal system. It was in this newly constructed theological synthesis that Adventists saw their

unique contribution to the larger Christian world. They viewed themselves as true heirs of the great reformers of Christian history, and their principal task was finishing the 'unfinished' project of the Protestant Reformation by fully and consistently applying the principle of *sola scriptura* in their quest for the ever-expanding truth of divine revelation. This work of rediscovering, restoring, and proclaiming the forgotten aspects of the 'eternal gospel' to every nation, tribe, language, and people stands at the core of their message, identity, and mission in the world (Canale 2013). It has been (and still is) the driving force behind the Seventh-day Adventist 'end-time' prophetic mandate that includes the proclamation of hope in the context of the apocalyptic messages of the three angels of Revelation 14:6–12 in preparation for the second coming of Jesus Christ (LaRondelle 2000).

Institutions

Driven by strong eschatological expectations and the vision of its 'last days' prophetic mandate, the relatively small movement of Sabbatarian Adventists in Northern America in the 1840s has grown into a multifaceted and global church. Its formal establishment took place in 1863, during the first General Conference session in Battle Creek, Michigan. The appointed 20 delegates, who represented 3,500 members, reached an agreement about a centralised church order that, among other things, involved the election of the president of the General Conference as well as the official appointment of church officers within a threefold structure of ministers, elders, and deacons. This centralised organisation, which resembled a Methodist conference system in its supra-local structures, provided a greater unity among the members and contributed to the efficient coordination of the movement's missional outreach.

In 1874, the first Adventist missionary, John Nevins Andrews, was sent to Europe. Others followed soon afterwards, and this marked the beginning of a new chapter in the international growth of Adventism. Membership rapidly increased, the territory covered by denominational work expanded, and the number of educational, medical, and missional institutions multiplied. From 1901 to 1903 the denomination underwent a major restructuring. In order to facilitate "the rapid dissemination of the third angel's message" globally and regulate the common life of its members more effectively (Oliver 2014), the church created a fivefold organisational structure—local churches, conferences or missions, unions, divisions, and the General Conference (operating via divisions). Leaders at every organisational level are elected for specified periods by democratically chosen representatives at regular sessions of the respective organisations (GC TED 2021). Consequently, Seventh-day Adventist polity can be described as "representative" in its form (GC 2021f). Worldwide General Conference sessions are held every five years.

By the end of 2021, the church had 21,912,161 baptised members in 212 of the 235 countries and areas recognised by the United Nations (ASR 2022, 9). This makes it one of the most widespread Protestant denominations in the world today. The world headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist church is based in Silver Springs, Maryland, United States, and is known as the 'General Conference.' The lower levels in the structure comprise 13 divisions, 137 unions, and 742 conferences. Together, these operate 95,297 local churches, 72,562 organised companies, 118 colleges/universities, 2,699 secondary schools, and 6,721 primary schools. In addition, the church operates 230 hospitals/sanitoriums, 131 nursing homes/retirement centres/orphanages/children's homes, 2,034 clinics/dispensaries, 22 food industries, 57 publishing houses, 19 media centres, and a global humanitarian aid organisation known as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) (GC 2021e; ASR 2022).

Eschatological Vision

From its beginnings, Adventism depended on a new sense of what Christian truth was. Like other Christians, Adventists have claimed the central role that the embodied word of God (Jesus Christ) and the written word of God (scripture) have in the continual quest for the truth of God's self-revelation. Akin to the rest of the Christian world, Adventists view these two aspects of divine *logos* as intertwined: scripture in its entirety points to Christ, and Christ gives meaning to scripture. What distinguishes Adventists is the specific emphasis they place on the revelation of the sanctuary in this interplay. By combining their historicist system of interpretation with their conviction about the predictive-prophetic role of the Old Testament Jewish cultic system (the structure of the temple, its priestly staff, sacrifices, activities, and so on), early Adventists developed a heuristic vision that undergirded all their subsequent theological endeavours (White 1911, 423; Canale 2004; 2005; 2006).

They concluded that the concept of the sanctuary could function as the most comprehensive motif in scripture and should play a decisive role in guiding biblical interpretation and the formation of theological thought. This hermeneutical perspective provided the Adventist pioneers with the lenses to view the meaning and the structure of an unfolding story of cosmic redemption. The adoption of this system of interpretation was precisely the point at which Adventist theology diverged from other Protestant and traditional Christian hermeneutical approaches (Canale 2004). This system follows a typological method of biblical interpretation whereby an element (i.e., person, event, object) in the Old Testament is viewed as a *type* that prefigures the *antitype* (the fulfilment) found in the New Testament.

In interpreting the sanctuary as a typological tool through which God revealed to his people, by his Son, the nature and order of major salvific actions in human history, Adventists agree with a common Christian interpretation that the entire Jewish ceremonial system points to the past, present, and future aspects of the salvific work of the promised Messiah. However, they would claim that mainstream Christian traditions have not been consistent in tracing the entire typological prefiguration inherent in the annual Jewish feasts and temple services (Davidson 1981).

Christ's death and resurrection, along with his inauguration as cosmic High Priest and King during Pentecost, have been interpreted by some Christian scholars as fulfilling the spring festivals of Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and the Feast of Weeks. Adventist scholars argue that a similar typical meaning should also be applied to autumn festivals. These scholars claim that the biblical texts show Christ's work was not finished at his accession to the heavenly throne. They argue that there are additional post-ascension restorative actions of God through Christ and the Holy Spirit that have yet to occur, extending even beyond the Second Advent of Christ (Rodríguez 2005).

According to Adventists, the three remaining Jewish autumn festivals, known as the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), and the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkoth*), symbolise various phases of Christ's post-ascension activity. The first autumn feast is initiated within the ancient Jewish tradition with a blast of trumpets and has the goal of reminding people that God is the creator and judge of the world (Davidson 1992). The trumpets summoned ancient Israel to prepare for the coming of the Day of Atonement. This type, according to Adventists, was fulfilled in the great revivals that reached their climax in the Millerite proclamations during the pre-1844 period (Rodríguez 2005, 4-8).

Adventists believe that the specific timing of the Day of Atonement is announced in Daniel 8:14. Every year, ten days after the Jewish new year (*Rosh Hashanah*), the High Priest enters the Most Holy place of the sanctuary in order to cleanse the entire sanctuary building from the blood (sin) that has been accumulated during the daily sacrifices throughout the year. Although this day, foreshadowing the day of the Last Judgement, is approached by Jews with a humble and prayerful heart and is preceded by repenting and fasting, it culminates in an atmosphere of utmost joy and freedom. On that occasion, God cleanses his covenant people, removes all the barriers that have stood between them, and accepts them back into the reality of his holy presence and its transformative influence.

According to Adventists, the results of the great eschatological judgement of the Day of Atonement are envisioned during the last autumn feast, the Feast of Tabernacles. This annual holy season represents the end of the harvest of salvation, when all the nations of the world will come to worship God, bringing their praises for everything that he has done (Rodríguez 2005, 7-8).

The Day of Atonement and the Eschatological Judgement

Some influential Adventist scholars have argued that an understanding of the essence of the Day of Atonement can be summarised in the Hebrew term *nišdaq*. This term is crucial for understanding the nature of the Adventist conceptualisation of the cosmic act of God that transpired in 1844 and will reach its climax in Christ's second coming (Treiyer 1992). This association is based on Daniel 8:14, which claims that "Unto 2,300 evening-mornings, then shall the sanctuary be *nišdaq*" (Rodríguez 1994). A brief survey of the Old Testament use of the word *nišdaq* reveals a wide range of different meanings. Along with the basic notion of being 'made right/just,' the verb's extended meanings can all be clustered around three basic ideas—to restore, to cleanse, and to vindicate. These three layers of meaning can apply to relational, cultic, and legal contexts (Davidson 1996).

This understanding of the Day of Atonement led Adventists to develop their unique teaching concerning a three-fold eschatological judgement (Shea 1982; Moskala 2004; Moore 2010). These three stages stress the centrality of the figure and function of Christ and revolve around his mission to restore, cleanse, and vindicate his people and bring the entire universe back to its initial undefiled condition.

The first phase in this sequence is the pre-Advent (or premillennial) investigative judgement, which commenced in 1844. This part of the universal Last Judgement presents God the father as judge ("the ancient of days" from Daniel 7:13, 22) and Christ as defence advocate (the "son of man" from Daniel 7:13). It takes place in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary in the eyes of the celestial beings, and deals with the totality of God's professed people, both true and false believers. The main purpose of investigative judgement is to (1) vindicate God's true believers in the eyes of other intelligent beings in the universe, (2) defend them from the satanic forces on earth, (3) decide who will inherit the future kingdom, and (4) vindicate God, whom Satan has accused (as well as his followers) of being a capricious, non-caring, distant, and judgemental ruler of the universe (Hasel 2000; Moore 2010).

The second phase is subsequent to the return of Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven and may be referred to as the millennial judgement. In this millennial phase of the Last Judgement, Christ and all his faithful followers are the judges (Webster 2000, 927-46). The millennial judgement goes beyond human beings. It

also judges the fallen angels, who were thrown to earth with Satan. The purpose of this judgement is to (1) determine the punishment deserved, (2) explain why the names of the lost are not in “the book of life” (Revelation 20:12), and again, (3) vindicate God’s character and his righteous ways (Hasel 2000, 146–47).

The last and final phase of the universal divine judgement includes the postmillennial executive judgement. It deals with the final result of sin and separation from God. Its primary purpose is to eradicate sin, death, and sinners from the universe. This also includes the originator of sin, Satan, who will carry the responsibility for all his wrongdoings. After the problem of evil has been undone, God will restore the entire creation to its pristine condition and bring it to its fullness.

The Cosmic Conflict Framework

The overarching scriptural motif of the sanctuary has had immense effects, determining the way Adventists interpret scripture and the nature of reality. It has brought into sharper focus the nature, setting, characters, plot, purpose, and last stages of the great cosmic conflict (or, as referred to by Adventists, ‘the Great Controversy’), between the rebellious creatures, led by Satan, on one side, and the Godhead and his followers on the other (White 1911). The central issue of this conflict is the character and law of God. The great extra-terrestrial war started before the creation of earth, when the exalted angel in heaven, Satan, decided to challenge God’s character and government as selfish, arbitrary, and tyrannical. He incited a significant insurrection, turning angels—and later, fallen humans—into God’s opponents. Christ’s incarnation, his selfless life of service, and his death have disproven the veracity of Satan’s accusations and have opened the way of salvation to those who have chosen to follow God and live with him eternally (Gulley 2003; 2011; 2012; 2016).

Based on the Adventist interpretation of the sanctuary, the account of God’s redemptive work in history can thus be viewed as unfolding in seven successive stages or ‘acts’: (1) Creation; (2) the Fall; (3) the Promise and the People (Israel); (4) the Fulfilment in Jesus; (5) the Fulfilment and the People (Church); (6) the Day of the Lord (consisting of the three phases of the universal judgement described above); and (7) the New Creation (Pedersen 2009; Barna 2012). Each of these stages is discernible because of major transitional events, or divine salvific actions, which advance the cosmic story of restoration from Creation to New Creation. The members of the Adventist church have remained firm over the years in their conviction that the Bible plays a central role in providing some basic guidelines on how the community of his followers should live in reaction to what Christ is doing at any given stage of the ongoing cosmic story of redemption. This leads us to the concluding section, dealing with Adventist self-understanding.

The Remnant People of God

There is a prevailing consensus among Adventists that the role of God’s people is to participate in Christ’s historically unfolding mission by responding with their entire lives in an appropriate way to each stage of his cosmic ministry. To use this theodramatic framework, Adventists believe that their movement was brought into existence in fulfilment of the prophecy that coincides with the beginning of the first stage of the threefold sixth ‘act’—the Day of Atonement that is soon to reach its culmination in the Second Advent of Christ (Pedersen 2009). They see themselves as being a part of the expression of God’s not-yet-fully-

visible remnant that is called to proclaim the gospel in preparation for Christ's second coming. They believe that the special emphasis and the framing of this last-day message to the world is found in the description of the three angels' message of Revelation 14 (LaRondelle 2000; Pfandl 2009; Rodríguez 2009b; Höschele 2013). Their role is to witness to the restorative work of Christ that commenced in the heavenly realm and is soon to be extended to transform the inhabitants of the earth and the earth itself. The effects of the initiated restoration will be fully realised only in the event of the second coming of Christ. However, the results of Christ's restorative work can still be traced in the life of his pilgrim people, who form the fellowship of Jesus Christ. The proclaimed effects of Christ's cosmic deeds are understood to be at work in three major areas of the church's life.

The first area encompasses the renewal of the right disposition in the believers' hearts (*orthopathy*). This is expressed in ideas about an attitude of complete openness and submission to continual divine revelations and guidance. This kind of reform is often referred to in Adventist circles as an attitude of worship and faithfulness to the 'present truth' of God, and is linked to the first angel's message in Revelation 14:6 (LaRondelle 2000, 872-79).

Secondly, this openness enables the church to receive new light, reflected in the church's belief (*orthodoxy*). Here the church embarks on a journey of restoration of truth, which has been "cast down to the ground" (Daniel 8:12) and distorted in the post-Apostolic period. The restoration of the right faith, for Adventists, is a gradual process of re-discovery that does not happen overnight but involves many years of diligent private and corporate Bible study. As a result of this process, Adventists believe that they have already arrived at a fuller understanding of the nature of Sabbath rest, the second coming, Christ's twofold ministry, the state of the dead, spiritual gifts, the sanctuary, the three angels' messages, and other biblical teachings (for an official statement about the 28 official beliefs of Adventism, see GC 2021a). However, the journey of rediscovery of the forgotten truths of the Bible is to be continued until the second coming of Christ. Therefore, this passion for understanding and embodying the truth of divine revelation represents one of the most prominent factors to shape Adventist communal life.

Finally, following doctrinal reform comes the corresponding transformation of believers' lives (*orthopraxy*). In this regard, Adventists have insisted not only on keeping the commandments of God (the Decalogue, with particular attention to the fourth commandment) and living in obedience to known truth, but also on valuing the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle (the 'health message'). This involves, among other things, adherence to the principles of moderation in everything, simplicity (avoiding excessive jewellery and overly expensive clothes, for instance), abstinence from harmful substances (alcohol, narcotics, and other damaging substances), and a reformed diet (Reid 2000). This diet, among other things, includes adhering to the food laws prescribed in Leviticus 11 (abstinence from pork, shellfish, and other animal products categorised as 'unclean'). In addition, Adventists are known for their emphasis on the value of holistic education (Greenleaf 2005), the promotion of religious liberty, and conservative principles and lifestyle.

It is emphasised that restoring the right lifestyle includes not only morality on the part of human beings, but also their physical, social, emotional, and spiritual lives. Adventists claim that they try to be faithful to their holistic view of human nature, in which the various aspects of a human being cannot be treated in isolation but instead function as inseparable parts of one interwoven whole (GC 2021d).

Recent Challenges

The substantial growth of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the last few decades has been accompanied by various internal and external tensions (Rodríguez 2009a; Lazić 2019, 22-33). For instance, increasingly, the denomination is challenged to retain its unity, which has been threatened from within by theological polarisations undergirding the clash between historical, evangelical, fundamentalist, progressive, ecumenical, and other strands of Adventism.

In addition, the denomination faces the challenge of remaining relevant in a rapidly changing world, with questions asked by the current generation differing from those of the pioneers of the movement. The prolonged waiting for the Second Advent of Christ raises essential questions for members of the Adventist denomination. These questions pertain to how and to what extent they should interact with the world around them in areas such as social, economic, and environmental justice and equality. The question, "What shall Adventists be and do in the present world while waiting for Christ to come?" remains increasingly important for Adventist believers with the passing of time.

Finally, the denomination is under pressure to clarify its interaction with other Christian and non-Christian communities. There are still ongoing tensions and misunderstandings inherent in the way Adventists relate to others, as well as how others relate to Adventism. This is evidenced by misconceptions and prejudices on both sides of these relationships, as noted by various scholars (Rock n.d.; Bruinsma 2010; Höschele 2022). Adventists, like other Christians, have argued in theological terms that to fulfil their mission of extending the kingdom of God, they need to ground their particularity in God's universality (Lazić 2019, 31-33). Like all other Christian communities, they face the challenge of explaining claims about inclusivity in relation to ideas of a community of persons with God, in Christ, and through the Spirit, and a vanguard of a movement looking towards a future in which God is all in all.

Resources

Websites

Official Website of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists: www.adventist.org

Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ARSR): <http://adventiststatistics.org>

Adventist Television Network: www.adventisttv.org

Official Beliefs: <https://www.adventist.org/beliefs>

Official Documents and Statements: <https://www.adventist.org/official-statements>

Mission Statement:

<https://www.adventist.org/official-statements/mission-statement-of-the-seventh-day-adventist-church>

Seventh-Day Adventist Yearbook: <https://www.adventist.org/resources/directories/yearbook>

Church Manual: <https://www.adventist.org/resources/church-manual>

Periodicals

The Catalogue of Periodicals: <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/Forms/AllFolders.aspx>

Major Adventist magazines: Review and Herald/Adventist Review, Liberty, Adventist World, Youth's Instructor, Signs of the Times, Message, Dialogue, Ministry.

Major scholarly journals: *The Journal of Adventist Education*, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, *Spectrum*, *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, *Spes Christiana: The Journal of European Adventist Society of Theology and Religious Studies*, *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary*, *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies*, *Asia Adventist Seminary Studies*, *Journal of Pacific Adventist History*, *Journal of AIIAS African Theological Association*

Independent periodicals: historic/reversionist perspective—*Our Firm Foundation*, *Pilgrim's Rest*, *Adventists Affirm*; more moderate perspective—*Perspective Digest/Journal of Adventist Theological Society*; progressive/revisionist perspective—*Adventist Today*, *Spectrum*, *Adventist Heritage*, *Present Truth Magazine*, *Adventist Professional*, *Adventist Currents*, *Evangelica*.

Further Reading

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