

Review Article

The Pillars of Faith: A Guide to the 28 Fundamental Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs

Sayed Mahbub Hasan Amiri^{1,*} 

¹Department of Computer Science, Dhaka Residential Model College, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Abstract

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, a Christian denomination with a global presence, articulates its theology through a formal statement of 28 Fundamental Beliefs. This article, titled "The Pillars of Faith: A Look at the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of Adventists," seeks to demystify these doctrines by presenting them not as a rigid checklist, but as a cohesive and interconnected story. Drawing on the historical metaphor of "pillars" used by early Adventist pioneers, the article organizes the beliefs into thematic categories to enhance understanding. It explores the foundational doctrines of Scripture and the Godhead, the distinct Adventist understanding of humanity as a holistic unity, and the cosmic narrative of the "Great Controversy" between good and evil. The piece further examines the beliefs concerning salvation, the practical expressions of faith including the seventh-day Sabbath and stewardship and culminates in the eschatological hope centered on the Second Coming and the restoration of a New Earth. Ultimately, this article argues that the 28 beliefs are more than a list of theological propositions; they form a comprehensive description of a relationship with a creating, redeeming, and returning God, offering a framework for understanding human existence and destiny. The goal is to provide the curious reader with a clear, accessible roadmap to the core tenets of Adventist Christian faith.

Keywords

Fundamental Beliefs, Adventist doctrine, Pillars of Adventism, SDA Church beliefs, Seventh-day Adventist beliefs

*Corresponding author: amiri@drmc.edu.bd

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1. Introduction

In the lexicon of Seventh-day Adventist theology, few metaphors carry as much weight as that of the "pillar." This evocative imagery, deeply embedded in the denomination's historical consciousness, finds its origin in the reflections of the early Adventist pioneers who emerged from the ashes of the Great Disappointment of 1844. As they diligently searched the Scriptures to make sense of their profound disillusionment, certain doctrines began to crystallize in their understanding with such clarity and force that they came to view them as foundational pillars immovable truths upon which the structure of their faith could be securely built. Ellen G. White, a key figure in the formation of the church, explicitly articulated this concept, urging the fledgling community to understand "what the pillars of our faith are the truths that have made us as a people what we are, leading us on step by step" (as cited in "Pillars of Adventism," 2024). These original pillars, including the Second Coming of Christ, the seventh-day Sabbath, the non-immortality of the soul, and the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, served as the doctrinal anchors that provided identity and direction to a movement searching for its purpose (Whidden, 2005).

Yet, from this historical foundation of a few core pillars, the denomination has over time developed a formal statement of 28 Fundamental Beliefs, which today serves as the official expression of Seventh-day Adventist theology. While this comprehensive list reflects the depth and maturity of Adventist biblical study, it can present a significant problem for the modern seeker. For those outside the faith, or even for newer members within its ranks, confronting a list of 28 distinct theological propositions can be an intimidating and disorienting experience (South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.). The sheer volume of statements risks obscuring the coherent and beautiful narrative they collectively tell. They may appear as a fragmented checklist of doctrines to be mentally assented to, rather than a unified vision of God's relationship with humanity. This perception is further complicated by the Adventist understanding that these statements are not a static creed but are subject to revision at a General Conference Session when the church is led

by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language to express the teachings of God's Holy Word (Grenada Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.).

This article, therefore, seeks to demystify the 28 Fundamental Beliefs. Its purpose is not merely to list them but to break them down into digestible thematic categories, showing how they fit together to form a cohesive story a grand narrative about God, humanity, and the future. By exploring these beliefs as interconnected parts of a larger whole, we will see how they move from the character of God and His creation, through the cosmic conflict that explains the presence of evil, into the experience of salvation and practical Christian living, and finally culminate in the eschatological hope of a restored new earth (Hong Kong-Macao Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2025). This framework reveals that the 28 beliefs are more than a theological inventory; they are a map of God's plan to redeem and restore a lost world.

Before embarking on this exploration, however, a foundational clarification regarding authority is essential. Seventh-day Adventists hold firmly to the Protestant principle of sola scriptura "Scripture alone." The Bible is accepted as the ultimate, infallible, and sufficient rule of faith and practice (Timm, n.d.). The 28 Fundamental Beliefs are not considered an addition to Scripture or an authority equal to it. Rather, they are a descriptive statement, a human attempt to articulate what the Scriptures teach. As the official preamble to the beliefs states, they "constitute the church's understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture" (Grenada Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., para. 1). This principle was powerfully affirmed by early Adventist pioneer James White, who declared the Bible to be "a perfect, and complete revelation" and "our only rule of faith and practice" (as cited in Schaidinger, 2025). In this light, the pillars of Adventist faith are not independent monuments but are themselves firmly anchored in the bedrock of the Bible, and it is to that Word that all beliefs must point and by which they must be tested.

2. The First Pillar: The God Who Speaks (Beliefs 1-3)

Contains how data is collected, data sources and ways of data analysis.

To understand the structure of Seventh-day Adventist theology, one must begin not with humanity's questions, but with God's revelation. The first three fundamental beliefs form the indispensable foundation upon which all subsequent doctrines are constructed. They address the most basic questions of faith: How do we know anything about God? Who is this God? And what is His character like? Together, Beliefs 1 through 3 establish that the God who exists as a triune communion of Persons has chosen to reveal Himself authoritatively through Scripture, inviting humanity into a relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three beliefs constitute the first pillar of Adventist faith the doctrine of the God who speaks.

BELIEF 1: THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, THE PILLAR UPON WHICH ALL PILLARS REST

The very first fundamental belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not about God directly, but about how God is known. This ordering is intentional and significant. Before declaring the nature of the Trinity or the character of the Father, the church affirms its unwavering commitment to the Holy Scriptures as the sole source and norm of all doctrine. The official statement reads: "The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration. The inspired authors spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 1). This affirmation establishes the Bible as the foundational pillar the "pillar upon which the pillars rest" because it is only through Scripture that the other beliefs are known and validated.

The doctrine of Scripture articulated in Belief 1 carries several weighty implications. First, it affirms the divine inspiration of the biblical writers, who "spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (Grenada

Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 1). This phrase echoes 2 Peter 1:21, affirming that the Bible is not merely a collection of human religious reflections but a divinely orchestrated revelation. Second, the belief statement declares that the Scriptures are "the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will" (Southern Africa Union Conference, 2019, Belief 1). The language of supremacy is crucial it means that when any other authority (tradition, reason, experience, or even prophetic writings) conflicts with the Bible, Scripture must prevail. Third, the belief identifies the functional roles of Scripture in the life of the believer: "They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 1).

This high view of Scripture places Seventh-day Adventists firmly within the Protestant tradition of sola scriptura "Scripture alone." As Alberto R. Timm (n.d.) explains, "Seventh-day Adventists have always subscribed to the Protestant principle of sola Scriptura (by Scripture alone)." Timm documents that as early as 1847, James White, one of the church's co-founders, stated that the Bible is "a perfect, and complete revelation" and "our only rule of faith and practice" (as cited in Timm, n.d., para. 1). This commitment was formally articulated in the 1872 declaration of fundamental principles, which affirmed that the Scriptures "contain a full revelation of his will to man, and are the only infallible rule of faith and practice" (as cited in Timm, n.d., para. 1). Ellen G. White, whose writings Adventists believe manifest the biblical gift of prophecy, consistently pointed away from her own work and toward the Bible, declaring, "But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms" (as cited in Timm, n.d., para. 1).

The implications of this first belief for understanding all subsequent beliefs cannot be overstated. The 28 Fundamental Beliefs are not presented as additions to Scripture or as doctrines derived from extra-biblical revelation. Rather, as the official preamble states, they "constitute the church's understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture" (Grenada Conference of Seventh-day

Adventists, n.d., para. 1). The Bible is the norm that norms all other norms; it is the test by which every teaching must be evaluated. When Adventists speak of the "pillars" of their faith, they acknowledge that these pillars are themselves anchored in the bedrock of biblical revelation. Belief 1 thus functions as the epistemological foundation for everything that follows the guarantee that the God who speaks has made Himself known in a trustworthy and accessible form.

BELIEF 2: THE TRINITY, ONE GOD IN THREE COETERNAL PERSONS

With the foundation of Scripture established, the second fundamental belief addresses the identity of the God who has spoken. The doctrine of the Trinity, while shared with historic Christianity, has a distinctive place in Adventist history and theology. The official statement reads: "There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension yet known through His self-revelation. God, who is love, is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 2).

This affirmation of the Trinity represents a significant development in Adventist theological history a fact that is openly acknowledged within the church. As Ted N. C. Wilson (2016), president of the General Conference, explains, "Our pioneers were very careful to require a 'thus saith the Lord' for every doctrine and precept. As they studied the Bible, the Lord gave increasing light on many subjects, including the Godhead or Trinity." This statement candidly admits what scholars have documented: many of the early Adventist pioneers did not hold a Trinitarian theology. Academic research confirms that "most of the pioneers of the Adventist Church did not believe in the Trinitarianism" (Continuity and Change about the Doctrine of Trinity in Seventh-day Adventist's History, 2023, p. 97). Early leaders such as Joseph Bates and James White came from the Christian Connexion, a movement with Unitarian tendencies, and figures like Uriah Smith actively emphasized anti-Trinitarian views in the church's early decades. The first official statement

of beliefs published in 1872 reflected this non-Trinitarian perspective (Continuity and Change, 2023, p. 97).

However, through continued biblical study and the influence of Ellen G. White's writings, the church's understanding developed. By 1931, when a new statement of fundamental beliefs was published, the church had officially embraced Trinitarianism (Continuity and Change, 2023, p. 97). Ellen White herself used language that clearly affirmed the personhood and divinity of all three members of the Godhead, referring to "three living persons of the heavenly trio" and describing how "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gave themselves to the working out of the plan of redemption" (as cited in Wilson, 2016). This historical development illustrates the Adventist understanding of progressive revelation not in the sense of new truth added to Scripture, but in the sense of believers coming to a fuller understanding of what Scripture has always taught. As Proverbs 4:18 states, "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (as cited in Wilson, 2016).

The Trinity belief emphasizes both the unity and the diversity within the Godhead. There is "one God," yet this one God exists as "a unity of three coeternal Persons." The language of "coeternal" is significant it affirms that the Father has always been the Father, the Son has always been the Son, and the Holy Spirit has always been the Holy Spirit. There was never a time when any person of the Godhead did not exist. Furthermore, the belief statement grounds the reality of God's love in this triune nature: "God, who is love." Love requires an object; within the Trinity, before any creation existed, there was already an eternal relationship of love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The love that God extends to humanity is not a new development but flows from His eternal character.

BELIEF 3: GOD THE FATHER- CREATOR, SOURCE, AND SOVEREIGN

The third fundamental belief focuses specifically on the first person of the Godhead: God the eternal Father. While Belief 2 affirms the unity of the three persons, Belief 3 explores the distinct identity and role of the Father. The official statement declares: "God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to

anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also those of the Father" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 3).

This belief addresses a common misconception about the Father the idea that He is somehow different in character from the Son. As Ted N. C. Wilson (2022) observes, "some view God the Father as the harsh, vindictive God of the Old Testament, with Jesus as the warm, loving God of the New Testament." The third fundamental belief directly challenges this dichotomy by affirming that "the qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also those of the Father" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 3). In other words, the love, mercy, and compassion revealed in Jesus Christ are a perfect revelation of the Father's own character. Jesus Himself declared, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9, as cited in Wilson, 2022).

The Old Testament, far from presenting a harsh and unloving deity, actually portrays the Father in deeply relational terms. Wilson (2022) surveys the rich biblical testimony: God is described as a Father who redeemed Israel (Deuteronomy 32:6), a Father who pities His children (Psalm 103:13), a God who is "full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth" (Psalm 86:15). The prophet Micah captures the Father's forgiving heart beautifully: "Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy" (Micah 7:18, as cited in Wilson, 2022). Even when the Old Testament speaks of God's vengeance, it must be understood in context as Wilson (2022) explains, "God's vengeance is reserved for the wicked those who have spurned God's mercy and have refused His offer of salvation, although it is freely available to all."

The New Testament provides the fullest revelation of the Father through the Son. Paul identifies the Father as the ultimate source of all things: "There is only one God, the Father, of whom are all things" (1 Corinthians 8:6, as cited in Wilson, 2022). And John 3:16, perhaps the most beloved verse in Scripture, reveals the Father's heart of sacrificial love: "For God so loved the world that He gave

His only begotten Son" (as cited in Wilson, 2022). The Father is not a distant, detached monarch but the loving parent depicted in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son eagerly watching for His children to return, longing to embrace them, and celebrating their homecoming with unrestrained joy (Wilson, 2022).

The first three beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church thus establish a coherent and beautiful foundation. Belief 1 affirms that the God who exists has chosen to speak through Scripture, providing humanity with a trustworthy revelation of His will. Belief 2 affirms that this God exists eternally as a unity of three coeternal Persons Father, Son, and Holy Spirit whose essential nature is love. Belief 3 focuses on the Father as the source and sustainer of all creation, whose character of justice, mercy, and steadfast love is perfectly revealed in the Son and made effective in the life of the believer through the Holy Spirit. Together, these beliefs constitute the first pillar of Adventist faith: the doctrine of the God who speaks, inviting humanity into a relationship of love and worship that will last for eternity.

3. The Pillars of Creation and Humanity (Beliefs 4-7)

Having established the foundation of a God who reveals Himself through Scripture and exists as a triune communion of love, the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of faith naturally turns to the question of origins. Who are we, and where did we come from? The fourth through seventh fundamental beliefs address these existential questions by focusing on the role of Jesus Christ in creation and the unique nature of humanity. Together, these beliefs form a cohesive vision of human identity and purpose: we are not cosmic accidents but intentional creations, fashioned by the Son of God Himself, designed for relationship, and endowed with dignity, freedom, and responsibility. This pillar of Adventist theology grounds human existence in the creative act of God and establishes the framework for understanding both the tragedy of sin and the hope of redemption.

BELIEF 4: GOD THE SON - THE AGENT OF CREATION

The fourth fundamental belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, while primarily focused on the incarnation and redemptive work of Jesus Christ, begins with a profound declaration about His role in creation: "God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 4). This opening statement deliberately echoes the prologue of John's Gospel, which declares, "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3). The placement of this creative activity at the very beginning of the belief statement about the Son is theologically significant; it establishes that the same Jesus who walked the dusty roads of Palestine, who suffered and died on a cross, is none other than the divine agent through whom the entire universe came into existence.

Pastor Ted Wilson (2022a), former president of the General Conference, expounds on this truth by emphasizing the eternality of Christ: "In this episode, Pastor Ted Wilson shares about the fourth fundamental belief God the Son. John begins his Gospel with these words: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men' (John 1:1-5)." Wilson further notes that Ellen G. White, in her classic work *The Desire of Ages*, affirms that "in Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived" (as cited in Wilson, 2022a). This means that Jesus is not merely a conduit for creative power originating elsewhere; He is Himself the source and sustainer of all life.

The implications of this belief for understanding the natural world and human life are profound. If Jesus is the agent of creation, then the material world is not an illusion to be escaped or a prison from which the soul must be liberated. Rather, it is the deliberate handiwork of the Son of God, and as such, it possesses inherent goodness and dignity. The official belief statement affirms that "by His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 4). These miracles calming storms, multiplying loaves, healing the sick, and

raising the dead were not arbitrary displays of power but demonstrations that the Creator was present, exercising His dominion over the very world He had made. As Wilson (2022b) explains, "Jesus Christ is fully God and man. Although it is a mystery we cannot understand, He is the Son of God and the Son of Man."

Furthermore, the creative work of the Son establishes a basis for human dignity that transcends mere biological existence. If we are created by Christ, then our value is not contingent upon our utility, our intelligence, or our moral performance. It is inherent, bestowed by the Creator Himself. This truth anchors the Adventist understanding of human worth and provides the foundation for the ethical responsibilities that flow from it. The same Jesus through whom "all things were created" (Colossians 1:16) is the one who "will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 4). Creation and redemption are thus united in the person of Christ the Creator is also the Redeemer, and His work of restoration is aimed at reclaiming and perfecting the world He originally made.

BELIEF 5: GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

The fifth fundamental belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church affirms the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Godhead, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son. This belief rejects any notion that the Holy Spirit is merely an impersonal force or an emanation of divine power. Instead, the Spirit is presented as a personal being with a will, intellect, and emotions fully divine and actively engaged in the work of creation, revelation, and redemption.

The official statement declares: "God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He is as much a person as are the Father and the Son. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God." This understanding is rooted in biblical passages such as Genesis 1:2, where the Spirit broods over the waters of creation; John 14:16-18, where Jesus promises the Spirit as another Comforter (Greek *parakletos*, meaning "one called

alongside to help”); and Acts 5:3-4, where lying to the Holy Spirit is equated with lying to God.

The Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in the life of the believer. First, He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). Without this conviction, no one would recognize their need for a Savior. Second, the Spirit brings about the new birth regeneration transforming a spiritually dead person into a living child of God (John 3:5-8). Third, He indwells believers, making their bodies temples of God (1 Corinthians 6:19) and empowering them to live holy lives. Fourth, the Spirit bestows spiritual gifts on members of the church for the common good and the advancement of God’s mission (1 Corinthians 12:7-11).

In the context of the Great Controversy, the Holy Spirit’s work is directly opposed to the forces of evil. He restrains sin, guides believers into all truth, and seals the redeemed for the day of salvation (Ephesians 4:30). He also illuminates the Scriptures, enabling readers to understand and apply God’s Word. Adventist theology emphasizes that the Spirit’s ministry is never independent of or contrary to the Bible; rather, He works in harmony with the written Word.

Thus, Belief 5 completes the Adventist understanding of the Trinity. The Father is the Source, the Son the Agent of creation and redemption, and the Holy Spirit the personal presence who applies the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice to individual lives. Through the Spirit, God dwells among His people, equips them for service, and prepares them for the return of Jesus the blessed hope that frames all twenty-eight beliefs.

Belief 6: Creation - A Recent, Literal, and Historical Act

While Belief 4 establishes the personal agency of Christ in creation, Belief 6 provides the specific contours of that creative activity. The official statement reads: "God has revealed in Scripture the authentic and historical account of His creative activity. He created the universe, and in a recent six-day creation the Lord made 'the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them' and rested on the seventh day. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of the work He performed and completed during six literal days that together with

the Sabbath constituted the same unit of time that we call a week today" (South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 6).

This belief statement contains several carefully chosen phrases that reflect the church's commitment to a particular understanding of Genesis. The word "recent" indicates that the creation week occurred thousands, not billions, of years ago. The phrase "six literal days" affirms that these were ordinary 24-hour days, not long geological ages. And the term "authentic and historical account" asserts that Genesis presents real history, not myth or metaphor. These emphases were not accidental but were the result of intentional theological reflection and revision. In 2013, the church's Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee proposed significant clarifications to Belief 6, recommending that the wording be strengthened to specify that creation took place "in a recent, six-day creation" and within "six literal days" (Inter-American Division, 2013). Artur Steele, co-chair of the committee, explained that the suggested version "doesn't bring anything new to the belief. It just states with a firmer voice, or a more clear voice, what we have always believed" (Inter-American Division, 2013, para. 5).

The rationale for this specificity is rooted in the Adventist understanding of the relationship between creation and the Sabbath. If the Sabbath is to function as a meaningful memorial of creation, then the creation it commemorates must be the kind of event that a weekly memorial can appropriately honor. As the belief statement explains, God completed His work "during six literal days that together with the Sabbath constituted the same unit of time that we call a week today" (South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 6). The seven-day week, with its rhythm of six days of labor and one day of rest, is thus presented as a divine institution established at the very beginning of human history. To reinterpret the creation days as long ages is to sever the connection between the commandment and its foundation, undermining the Sabbath's significance as a memorial.

Research conducted among Adventist church members reveals both strong support for creation beliefs and some variation in how specifically those beliefs are held. According to Bailey and McBride (2024), data from three

waves of the Global Church Member Survey (2013-2023) shows that "at least four-fifths of each sample strongly agreed with a broad belief in creation (e.g. 'God created the world') and at least 95% agreed overall." However, the researchers also found that "in all four samples, fewer respondents strongly agreed with a more specific statement that paralleled the Adventist Fundamental Belief ('...in six days of 24 hours/six literal days/exactly 24-hour days in the relatively recent past')" (Bailey & McBride, 2024, p. 2). This gap between general and specific belief was most pronounced among younger members, with the decline in strong agreement "approaching 30% among Adventist Millennials" (Bailey & McBride, 2024, p. 2). These findings suggest that while commitment to creation remains strong, the church faces ongoing challenges in transmitting the specific contours of its historic belief to rising generations.

Belief 6 also emphasizes the dignity and responsibility of the first human pair: "The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it" (South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 6). The language of "dominion" must be understood in its proper context not as a license for exploitation but as a call to responsible stewardship. The world was pronounced "very good" (Genesis 1:31), and humanity was placed within it as caretakers, reflecting God's own loving governance over His creation. This charge to care for the environment is not an optional add-on to Adventist faith but flows directly from the creation narrative itself.

BELIEF 7: THE NATURE OF HUMANITY, A UNIFIED WHOLE

If Belief 6 establishes the when and how of human origins, Belief 7 addresses the what the very nature of human existence. This seventh fundamental belief represents one of the most distinctive and crucial points of Seventh-day Adventist theology, setting the stage for understanding death, resurrection, and the hope of eternal life. The official statement reads: "Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit,

dependent upon God for life and breath and all else" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 7).

The phrase "indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit" stands at the heart of this belief. It represents a deliberate rejection of the ancient Greek philosophical concept of the immortality of the soul the idea that humans possess an immaterial essence that survives the death of the body and continues conscious existence in another realm. Instead, Adventists look to the Hebrew Bible's understanding of human nature as a holistic unity. The account of Adam's creation in Genesis 2:7 describes how "the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature" (ESV). As the Adventist.org (n.d.) article on human nature explains, "This account in Genesis tells us exactly where we come from: dust. The only reason we live is because God has breathed life into us." The "living creature" (Hebrew *nephesh chayyah*) is not a body inhabited by a soul but a unified being a living person constituted by the integration of bodily form and divine breath.

This holistic understanding of human nature carries profound implications for how Adventists understand death. If humans do not possess an immortal soul that naturally survives death, then death itself is properly understood as a sleep a state of unconsciousness from which the dead will be awakened only at the resurrection. The belief statement acknowledges the reality of sin's consequences: "When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 7). The language of "subject to death" is carefully chosen death is not the release of an immortal soul from its bodily prison but the cessation of life for the whole person. The hope, therefore, is not in an innate immortality but in the resurrection, when God will restore life to the whole person.

The belief statement also addresses the universal human experience of moral struggle. The psalmist's

confession, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5, ESV), is cited as evidence that "their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 7). This is not a statement about the biological transmission of guilt but an acknowledgment that all humans enter the world with a propensity toward selfishness and sin. As the Adventist.org (n.d.) article explains, "Without a connection to God, humanity loses the perfection it once had. Mankind no longer resembles the God they were created to represent, and sin is left to have its way in the world." Yet even in this fallen condition, the image of God, though marred, is not entirely erased. It remains as the target of God's redemptive work.

The concluding sentences of Belief 7 point to the solution for humanity's predicament: "But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 7). Here, the doctrine of human nature connects directly to the gospel. Salvation is not escape from material existence but the restoration of the image of God in human beings. The Spirit's work is to progressively transform believers into the likeness of Christ, who is Himself "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). This restoration has both present and future dimensions it begins now in the process of sanctification and will be completed at the resurrection, when God's people will finally and fully bear the image of their Maker.

The ethical implications of this belief are significant. If humans are "created for the glory of God," then their highest purpose is found in loving God and loving others. The call to "care for their environment" flows naturally from the creation narrative, as those who bear God's image are entrusted with caring for His world. And the understanding of humans as an "indivisible unity" has practical implications for how the church approaches health, education, and ministry body, mind, and spirit must all be addressed because they are all integral to authentic human existence.

Together, Beliefs 4 through 7 form a coherent vision of creation and humanity. Belief 4 establishes Jesus Christ as the divine agent through whom all things were made, grounding human dignity in the creative work of the Son. Belief 6 provides the specific contours of that creation recent, literal, and historical while also establishing human responsibility for the environment. Belief 7 offers a distinctive and biblically grounded understanding of human nature as a unified whole, setting the stage for the Adventist hope of resurrection and the restoration of God's image in redeemed humanity. These pillars of creation and humanity anchor Seventh-day Adventist theology in the opening chapters of Genesis and provide the essential background for understanding both the tragedy of sin and the triumph of redemption.

4. The Pillar of The Great Controversy (Belief 8)

If the first seven beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church establish the identity of God and the nature of humanity, the eighth belief provides the interpretive lens through which all subsequent doctrines are understood. This is the belief in the Great Controversy the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan, good and evil, which frames the entire biblical narrative and answers the most profound questions of human existence: Why does suffering exist? Why does a loving God permit evil? What is God doing about it, and what role do we play in His plan? As Ted N.C. Wilson (2023) explains, this belief addresses the universal human experience of "wars and devastation. Sickness, disease, and death. Disasters of various kinds. Where is God in all these? If He is kind, loving, and good, why does He let these happen?" The Great Controversy provides a coherent and biblically grounded answer to these age-old questions, establishing that this world has become "the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated" (Wilson, 2023).

THE "LENS" BELIEF OF ADVENTIST THEOLOGY

Scholars and church leaders alike recognize the Great Controversy theme as the organizing principle of

Seventh-day Adventist theology. Herbert E. Douglass (2000) articulates this with particular clarity, arguing that for Seventh-day Adventists, the Great Controversy Theme (GCT) "is the core concept that brings coherence to all biblical subjects. It transcends the age-old divisions that have fractured the Christian church for centuries. It brings peace to theological adversaries who suddenly see in a new harmony the truths that each had been vigorously arguing for." Douglass goes so far as to suggest that "the distinctiveness of Adventism rests in its overall understanding of the central message of the Bible that is governed by its seminal, governing principle the Great Controversy Theme" (Douglass, 2000, para. 4). In this sense, the GCT functions as what scientists might call a "theory of everything" a unifying framework that makes sense of all the disparate parts of biblical revelation.

This understanding is echoed by Gerhard Pfandl (n.d.), who writes that "the great controversy theme not only explains why humankind is lost and in need of a Savior, it also provides a coherent explanation for all other events in history. It is the paradigm that helps Seventh-day Adventists to understand the message and mission of their church." John K. McVay (2024) similarly affirms that Adventist eschatology the understanding of last-day events is "informed by the metanarrative of the Great Controversy or cosmic conflict between God and Satan, especially as set out in Ellen White's volume, *The Great Controversy*." This metanarrative is not a peripheral addition to Adventist theology but the central storyline that gives meaning and direction to every other belief.

The official statement of Belief 8 itself captures this comprehensive scope: "All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe" (Wilson, 2023). The controversy is thus not merely about individual salvation but about ultimate questions of God's character and governance. Is God truly loving, just, and worthy of trust? Or is He, as Satan has insinuated, arbitrary, unforgiving, and self-serving? These are the questions at stake in the cosmic conflict, and the entire history of the world is the arena in which they are being definitively answered.

THE ORIGIN OF THE CONTROVERSY

IN HEAVEN

The Great Controversy did not begin on earth, nor did it begin with human sin. As Wilson (2024a) explains, "There was a time when sin did not exist. There was peace and joy throughout the universe. 'All was in perfect harmony with the Creator's will. Love for God was supreme, love for one another impartial'" (quoting White, n.d., as cited in Wilson, 2024a). The foundation of this perfect harmony was the law of love, which formed the basis of God's government. Crucially, "God has never, and still does not force anyone to accept His will for them. He longs for all His created beings to choose to have a relationship with Him based upon love, and He grants freedom of will to everyone" (Wilson, 2024a).

It was this very freedom of will that made the origin of sin possible. The biblical record identifies its source in a created being of extraordinary perfection and privilege. Wilson (2023) draws from Ezekiel 28 to describe this being: "You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty... You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you" (Ezekiel 28:12-15, as cited in Wilson, 2023). This being, originally named Lucifer, was not created evil. As Wilson (2024a) emphasizes, "This description of Lucifer shows that God did not create a devil. When He created Lucifer, this heavenly being was 'full of wisdom and perfect' until 'iniquity was found in [him].'"

The question of how sin could originate in a perfect being is, in a sense, unanswerable and that is precisely the point. Wilson (2024a) quotes Ellen White's observation: "Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin" (White, n.d., as cited in Wilson, 2024a). However, Scripture provides clues about the process by which Lucifer fell. Isaiah 14 records his heart's aspirations: "For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God... I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High'" (Isaiah 14:13-

14, as cited in Wilson, 2023). Wilson (2024a) summarizes, "Somehow, pride had risen up in the heart of this angelic being, and little by little, he started seeking self-exaltation." Ezekiel adds, "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor" (Ezekiel 28:17, as cited in Wilson, 2023).

This pride and self-exaltation led to open rebellion in heaven. "With this," Wilson (2023) continues, "Lucifer, then Satan, deceived one-third of the angels, who joined him in rebellion." Revelation 12 describes the cosmic conflict that ensued: "And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:7-9, as cited in Wilson, 2023). The controversy had begun, and its theater of operations would soon shift to a newly created world.

THE CONTROVERSY EXTENDED TO EARTH

Following his expulsion from heaven, Satan brought his campaign of deception to the Garden of Eden. Wilson (2023) explains, "He won by convincing Adam and Eve to take the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, resulting in their disobedience to God, expulsion from the garden, and miserable life." The temptation he offered to Eve was the same aspiration that had led to his own downfall: "to be like God" (Wilson, 2024a). To Adam, "he offered the temptation of doubting God's word and goodness, and Adam succumbed" (Wilson, 2024a). With this act of disobedience, sin entered the human race and the controversy that had begun in heaven was now firmly established on earth.

Yet even in the moment of humanity's fall, God revealed His plan of redemption. Wilson (2024a) highlights Genesis 3:15, where Christ spoke to the serpent: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." This protevangelium the first announcement of the gospel contained "the wonderful promise that Jesus would come to this earth, and that

while He would endure suffering, sorrow, and even death for our sake, He would rise again and crush the serpent's head" (Wilson, 2024a). From that moment forward, human history has been the unfolding of this cosmic conflict, with every generation caught up in its drama.

Gerhard Pfandl (n.d.) traces the biblical trajectory of this conflict, noting that "the history of the world bears witness to this fact. Abel was the first victim of this enmity (Gen. 4:8), then came the great flood (Genesis 6-9) which left only eight people on this Earth." The history of Israel, with its cycles of faithfulness and apostasy, its worship of the golden calf, its rebellion at Kadesh Barnea, and its repeated rejection of God's leadership, all illustrate "Satan's strategy of leading astray as many people as possible" (Pfandl, n.d., para. 4). The Book of Job provides a particularly vivid window into the controversy, showing Satan as "the cause of humanity's troubles, yet at the same time, it also reveals that there are limits imposed on Satan's ability to afflict those who are loyal to God" (Pfandl, n.d., para. 5).

The climax of the controversy on earth came in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Pfandl (n.d.) summarizes the conflict as depicted in Revelation 12: Satan's attempt to destroy the Christ child through Herod's massacre, his temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, his incitement of Jesus' own people to kill Him at Nazareth, and ultimately, the crucifixion itself. Yet "when Jesus was nailed to the cross, Satan thought he had achieved his goal, but in dying on the Cross, Jesus fulfilled the plan of redemption and achieved the decisive victory over Satan (John 19:30)" (Pfandl, n.d., para. 7). Ellen White captures the significance of this victory: "All heaven triumphed in the Saviour's victory. Satan was defeated, and knew that his kingdom was lost" (as cited in Pfandl, n.d., para. 7).

THE CHARACTER OF GOD VINDICATED

Beyond the redemption of humanity, the Great Controversy framework reveals that the death of Christ served another crucial purpose: the vindication of God's character. As Pfandl (n.d.) explains, "Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had

not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion." But when they witnessed the cross when they saw the innocent Son of God suffering the full penalty of sin at the hands of sinful beings they finally understood the true nature of Satan's accusations and the depths of his rebellion.

This revelatory aspect of the cross addresses the fundamental issue at stake in the Great Controversy: the character of God. Satan had accused God of being arbitrary, unforgiving, and self-serving a ruler who demanded obedience but was not Himself worthy of trust. The cross demonstrated the opposite. As Douglass (2000) articulates, "The controversy between God and Satan is over whose plan is best for the universe God's will (as expressed on earth in His commandments and yet more fully in Jesus) or Satan's notion of individual self-determination. The heart of this conflict focuses on motivation and character: Satan has charged (and influenced men and women to believe) that God is unfair, unforgiving, and arbitrary." God's defense against these charges has been twofold: passive, in that "He has allowed time to proceed so that Satan's principles could be seen for all their suicidal destructiveness"; and active, in that "He has revealed His character and trustworthiness in Christ so that all inhabitants throughout the universe as well as on earth are able to make up their minds as to who has been right or wrong in the controversy" (Douglass, 2000, para. 11).

Thus, the Great Controversy is not merely a battle for territory or souls; it is a battle for truth. The universe is watching as this drama unfolds. Douglas Morgan (2014), writing from an academic perspective, notes that Ellen White's Great Controversy narrative "employs the Whig or republican view of history, centering on the Protestant struggle for liberty from the union of ecclesiastical and royal power." From the beginning, "the theme of freedom drives White's 'great controversy' narrative. Since 'the exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government,' God did not snuff out the primeval rebellion the fountainhead of all the evil, suffering, and death that afflicts humanity. Redemption from Satan's domain and the full restoration of God's government on earth likewise must unfold in accordance with the principle of freedom" (Morgan, 2014, p. 4).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR BELIEVERS TODAY

The Great Controversy is not merely a theoretical framework; it has urgent practical implications for every believer. Nathan Brown (2017) challenges Adventists to move beyond treating the controversy as "a biblical puzzle" to be solved and instead recognize that "a 'wide-screen' view of cosmic history must have implications for how we live faithfully to God's kingdom established in Jesus, and how we respond to suffering, injustice, oppression, and all forms of evil in our world." He cites C.S. Lewis's memorable description of Christianity as "the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage" (as cited in Brown, 2017, para. 9). This sabotage involves working "against the powers of sin and death in the power and pattern of Christ" and being "agents of reversal" who "serve, to help, and to heal wherever and whenever we can" (Brown, 2017, para. 6).

Ellen White saw the Great Controversy framework as directly shaping Adventist engagement with social issues. Morgan (2014) documents how, beginning in the late 1850s, she urged Adventist involvement in the temperance movement, later promoting cooperation with the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. In 1881, she declared that Adventists should vote for prohibition "to a man, everywhere," adding that "if necessary, vote on the Sabbath day for prohibition if you cannot at any other time" (as cited in Morgan, 2014, p. 6). Yet her approach was always tempered by the conviction that the ultimate solution to society's problems is not political reform but the return of Christ. As a premillennialist, "she emphasized reforming the individual rather than society" (Morgan, 2014, p. 1) and "urged the primacy of presenting the gospel" (Morgan, 2014, p. 2).

The controversy also has implications for how believers understand the end of time. Wilson (2024b) warns that "Satan's great objective is to destroy our confidence in God and in His Word." This attack on Scripture takes many forms locking the Bible away from common people, creating confusion and division through erroneous interpretations, making the Bible appear to contradict science,

and enticing people to accept only parts of Scripture as inspired. Wilson (2024b) urges believers to "take God at His word, accepting it as the wonderful gift that it is, saying with the Psalmist: 'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path' (Psalm 119:105)." The ultimate choice facing every person is the same choice that faced Lucifer in heaven and Adam and Eve in Eden: Will we trust God's character and submit to His law of love, or will we follow the path of self-exaltation and rebellion?

Wilson (2023) concludes his exposition of Belief 8 with a pointed question: "Indeed, the great controversy is real. This world and our hearts are the battlefield. Which side are you on?" The answer to that question determines not only one's present experience but also one's eternal destiny. For those who choose to stand with Christ, the outcome is sure. As Wilson (2024a) reminds readers, "One day, all sin, suffering, and sorrow that we know so well will be put to death. There will come a day when God Himself 'will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away' (Rev. 21:4)."

Thus, the Great Controversy belief provides both an explanation for the present reality of suffering and a hope for its ultimate resolution. It assures believers that God is not the author of evil but is working tirelessly to redeem His creation from its consequences. It calls them to active participation in His mission of restoration. And it promises that the day is coming when the controversy will finally be ended, God's character will be fully vindicated, and the universe will be restored to the harmony of love that was God's original intention.

5. The Pillars of Salvation and the Christian Life (Beliefs 9-15)

With the foundation of creation established and the cosmic conflict between good and evil explained, the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of faith turns to the most personal and practical question of all: How does an individual participate in God's plan of redemption? Beliefs 9 through 15 form what might be called the "how-to" section of Adventist theology, addressing the

experience of salvation, the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, and the communal life of the church. These seven beliefs move from the objective facts of Christ's atoning work to the subjective experience of being saved by grace, and finally to the corporate identity of believers as the body of Christ. Together, they constitute the pillars of salvation and the Christian life the doctrines that explain not only how sinners are reconciled to God, but also how they live in relationship with Him and with one another.

BELIEF 9: THE LIFE, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The ninth fundamental belief stands as the theological anchor for everything that follows in this section. It declares that "in Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-a, Belief 9). This statement encompasses the entirety of Christ's work His life, His death, and His resurrection as the single, complete provision for human salvation.

The life of Jesus is presented as essential to the atonement, not merely as a prelude to His death. His "perfect obedience to God's will" demonstrated what humanity looks like when fully submitted to the Father. As the Adventist.org (n.d.-a) article on this belief explains, "While on earth, Jesus also lived a sinless life of love so we could have an example to live by." This emphasis on Christ's example is balanced, however, by the recognition that His life was more than a model it was the life of the God-man, lived in our behalf. The belief statement affirms that Christ's life, death, and resurrection together constitute "the only means of atonement for human sin."

The death of Christ is described with four specific terms: it is "substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-a, Belief 9). The language of substitution affirms that Christ died in place of sinners, bearing the penalty that rightfully belonged to them. The term "expiatory" indicates that His death actually removes the guilt

and defilement of sin, rather than merely covering it. His death is "reconciling" in that it restores the broken relationship between God and humanity, and "transforming" in that it not only changes our legal status but also changes us. As 2 Corinthians 5:19-21 declares, "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them... God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (as cited in North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-a).

The resurrection of Christ occupies a central place in this belief, proclaimed as God's decisive triumph over the forces of evil. The bodily resurrection of Jesus "proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, and for those who accept the atonement assures their final victory over sin and death" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-a, Belief 9). This emphasis on the resurrection as both victory and assurance reflects the apostolic preaching of the early church, which consistently presented the empty tomb as the foundation of Christian hope. As Paul declared, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). For Adventists, the resurrection is not merely a past event to be celebrated but a present guarantee of future victory.

This belief also includes a cosmic dimension that echoes the Great Controversy theme. The atonement serves not only to save individual sinners but also to vindicate God's character before the watching universe. It "vindicates the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-a, Belief 9). The cross thus accomplishes multiple purposes simultaneously: it satisfies justice, demonstrates love, defeats evil, and provides a basis for forgiveness that upholds rather than undermines God's moral government.

BELIEF 10: THE EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

If Belief 9 describes what God has done in Christ, Belief 10 explains how that objective work becomes a subjective reality in the life of the believer. The official statement reads: "In infinite love and mercy God made

Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-b, Belief 10).

This belief traces the psychological and spiritual process by which an individual comes to salvation. The Holy Spirit takes the initiative, leading the sinner to "sense our need" and "acknowledge our sinfulness." This conviction of sin is not an end in itself but the necessary precondition for repentance the turning away from sin that accompanies genuine faith. The faith that saves is not a human achievement but a gift: "This saving faith comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-b, Belief 10). As Pastor Ted Wilson (2022a) explains, "Only through Christ can we experience salvation. There is nothing we can do. We have to accept His grace. His love. His salvation. He gives it freely and wants nothing more than for us to experience it."

The belief then describes the multifaceted results of saving faith. "Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-b, Belief 10). This statement carefully distinguishes between the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit. Justification the legal declaration that the believer is righteous in God's sight is the work of Christ on our behalf. Sanctification the actual transformation of character is the work of the Spirit within us. Both are essential aspects of salvation, and both are gifts of grace.

The doctrine of adoption receives particular emphasis here. Believers are not merely forgiven criminals; they are welcomed into God's family as beloved children. Wilson (2022a) quotes Galatians 4:4-7 to illustrate this truth: "God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent

the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'" The assurance that flows from this relationship is emphasized in the belief's conclusion: "Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-b, Belief 10).

This assurance is not presumption but a settled confidence grounded in the character of God and the finished work of Christ. As Wilson (2022a) notes, "Once we accept this gift, He forgives our past sins and looks at us as if we've never sinned. He then helps us overcome sin." The same God who justifies also sanctifies, and His work in the believer will not fail. Yet this assurance does not lead to carelessness; rather, it produces gratitude and obedience. As Jesus Himself said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15, as cited in Wilson, 2022a).

BELIEF 11: GROWING IN CHRIST

The eleventh fundamental belief addresses the ongoing process of spiritual development that follows the initial experience of salvation. This belief was formally added to the statement of fundamental beliefs at the 58th General Conference Session in St. Louis, Missouri, on July 4, 2005 (Adventist News Network, 2005). Its addition reflects the church's recognition that the Christian life is not static but dynamic a journey of continual growth into the likeness of Christ.

The official statement reads: "By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love" (Adventist News Network, 2005, Belief 11). This opening section grounds the believer's growth in the objective victory of Christ. Because Jesus has already defeated the powers of evil, believers can live in freedom from their dominion. The victory is not something they achieve but something they receive and walk in.

The belief then describes the subjective experience of life in Christ: "Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our

Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life" (Adventist News Network, 2005, Belief 11). The contrast between the old life and the new is stark darkness replaced by light, fear replaced by peace, ignorance replaced by knowledge, meaninglessness replaced by purpose. This transformation is not merely positional but experiential, worked by the indwelling Spirit.

The practical means of growth are explicitly identified: "In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church" (Adventist News Network, 2005, Belief 11). Pastor Ted Wilson (2022b) distills these practices into four essential building blocks for spiritual growth: prayer, reading the Bible, applying what has been learned, and meeting with other believers. Each of these disciplines connects the believer to Christ and to the community of faith, providing the nourishment necessary for spiritual development.

Wilson (2022b) draws on Ellen White's classic description of transformation: "When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven." This transformation is not the work of a moment but the work of a lifetime. As the belief concludes, "As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience" (Adventist News Network, 2005, Belief 11).

BELIEF 12: THE CHURCH

The twelfth fundamental belief shifts focus from the individual believer to the corporate body of believers the church. The official statement defines the church as "the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and

we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for service to all mankind, and for the worldwide proclamation of the gospel" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-c, Belief 12).

This definition emphasizes both continuity and distinctiveness. The church stands "in continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times," meaning that the community of faith is not a New Testament innovation but the continuation of God's ancient purpose. Yet the church is also "called out from the world" the Greek word *ekklesia* literally means "called out ones" indicating that the church's identity is defined by its separation from the values and practices of fallen humanity.

The purposes of the church are multiple and comprehensive: worship, fellowship, instruction, celebration of the ordinances, service, and proclamation. Each of these activities is essential to the church's life and mission. The church gathers for worship and instruction, but it also scatters for service and proclamation. Both gathering and scattering are integral to its identity.

The belief also addresses the source of the church's authority and its relational identity: "The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word, and from the Scriptures, which are the written Word. The church is God's family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-c, Belief 12). Three metaphors family, body, and bride capture the intimate relationship between Christ and His people. As family, believers are adopted children of God. As body, they are organically connected to Christ and to one another. As bride, they are the object of Christ's sacrificial love and the focus of His sanctifying work.

BELIEF 13: THE REMNANT AND ITS MISSION

The thirteenth fundamental belief introduces a distinctive aspect of Adventist ecclesiology: the concept of the remnant. This belief declares that "the universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant

has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-d, Belief 13).

The term "remnant" is drawn from Revelation 12:17, which describes those who "keep God's commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus." This remnant is not understood as a separate denomination but as a group within the universal church that maintains faithfulness during a time of widespread departure from biblical truth. The identifying marks of this remnant are twofold: they keep the commandments of God, and they maintain the faith of Jesus. In Adventist understanding, these marks point specifically to the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath (as a distinguishing feature of commandment-keeping) and to the exercise of faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

The mission of the remnant is articulated in terms of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14: "This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-d, Belief 13). This mission is not optional but incumbent upon every believer: "Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness."

BELIEF 14: UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

The fourteenth fundamental belief addresses the quality of relationships that should characterize the church. It declares that "the church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-e, Belief 14).

This belief directly confronts the divisions that have plagued human history and too often infected the church. Racism, classism, sexism, and nationalism are all rejected as incompatible with the new creation in Christ. "We are

all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-e, Belief 14). This unity is not merely a human achievement but a divine gift with its source "in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children."

The practical implications of this unity are profound. If believers are truly one in Christ, then the distinctions that divide the world lose their power within the church. The wealthy sit beside the poor at the Lord's table. People of every race and nationality worship together as brothers and sisters. Men and women serve side by side in the mission of the church. This unity does not erase diversity the body has many members with different functions but it transcends the divisions that would set those members against one another.

BELIEF 15: BAPTISM

The fifteenth fundamental belief addresses the ordinance of baptism, which serves as the public declaration of faith and the doorway into church membership. The official statement reads: "By baptism we confess our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and testify of our death to sin and of our purpose to walk in newness of life. Thus we acknowledge Christ as Lord and Saviour, become His people, and are received as members by His church" (Adventist.org, n.d.-b, Belief 15).

Three specific aspects of baptism are emphasized. First, it is a confession of faith an outward demonstration of an inward commitment. As the Adventist.org (n.d.-b) article explains, "When Christians are baptized, we publicly declare our faith and obedience to Jesus. We are openly declaring our new found commitment to following Jesus." Second, baptism is a symbol of union with Christ in His death and resurrection. The motion of immersion under water and rising again "symbolizes Christ's death and resurrection, which provides the forgiveness of our sins" (Adventist.org, n.d.-b). Third, baptism marks incorporation into the body of Christ: by it, believers "become His people, and are received as members by His church."

The mode and prerequisites of baptism are carefully specified: "It is by immersion in water and is contingent

on an affirmation of faith in Jesus and evidence of repentance of sin. It follows instruction in the Holy Scriptures and acceptance of their teachings" (Adventist.org, n.d.-b, Belief 15). Immersion is practiced because it alone symbolizes burial and resurrection. The prerequisite of instruction reflects Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19-20 to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." Baptism is not magic; it is the response of a believing heart that has been instructed in the faith and has chosen to follow Jesus.

The belief concludes with an important clarification about the relationship between baptism and salvation: "It is the blood of Jesus that saves us, not baptism. Salvation is a free gift of God. We are saved by grace through faith. The Bible is very clear about how we are saved. Baptism symbolizes salvation but is not a way to earn salvation" (Adventist.org, n.d.-b). This distinction preserves the gospel of grace while honoring the command of Christ. The thief on the cross was saved without baptism, demonstrating that baptism is not necessary for salvation. Yet for those who are able, baptism is the God-ordained way of publicly professing faith and entering the community of believers.

Together, Beliefs 9 through 15 form a comprehensive vision of salvation and the Christian life. Belief 9 establishes the objective foundation in Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Belief 10 describes the subjective experience of receiving that salvation by grace through faith. Belief 11 charts the ongoing path of growth in Christ through spiritual disciplines and community. Beliefs 12 through 14 locate the believer within the corporate body of the church its identity, its mission, and its unity. And Belief 15 marks the point of entry into that body through the ordinance of baptism. These pillars of salvation and the Christian life provide both the theology and the practice of following Jesus in the fellowship of His people.

6. The Pillars of Wholeness: The Sabbath and Stewardship (Beliefs 16-21)

Having explored the doctrines of salvation and the church, the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of faith

now turns to the practical expressions of the Christian life the ways in which belief is embodied in daily worship, service, and living. Beliefs 16 through 21 form what might be called the "pillars of wholeness," addressing the ordinances of communion, the operation of spiritual gifts including the gift of prophecy, the enduring relevance of God's moral law, the centrality of the Sabbath, and the comprehensive stewardship of all God's gifts. These six beliefs move from the corporate worship of the church to the individual responsibility of every believer, demonstrating that authentic faith touches every dimension of human existence time, talent, treasure, and the very temple of the body.

BELIEF 16: THE LORD'S SUPPER ORDINANCES OF HUMILITY AND COMMUNION

The sixteenth fundamental belief addresses the Lord's Supper, a service of profound significance in Adventist worship. This ordinance, instituted by Jesus on the night before His crucifixion, comprises two distinct yet inseparable elements: the foot-washing service and the communion emblems. The official statement declares that "the Lord's Supper is a participation in the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus as an expression of faith in Him, our Lord and Saviour" (Zimbabwe West Union Conference, 2019, Belief 16). In this experience of communion, "Christ is present to meet and strengthen His people. As we partake, we joyfully proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again."

What distinguishes the Adventist practice of communion from that of many other Christian traditions is the inclusion of the foot-washing service as an integral part of the ordinance. This practice, drawn from John 13, reflects Jesus' own example when He washed the feet of His disciples on the night before His death. The belief statement explains its significance: "The Master ordained the service of foot-washing to signify renewed cleansing, to express a willingness to serve one another in Christlike humility, and to unite our hearts in love" (Zimbabwe West Union Conference, 2019, Belief 16). This "ordinance of humility" serves multiple purposes simultaneously: it symbolizes the spiritual cleansing from sin that Christ provides, it demonstrates the willingness of believers to

serve one another in practical ways, and it fosters the unity of heart that should characterize the body of Christ.

Preparation for the Supper is taken seriously, requiring "self-examination, repentance, and confession" (Zimbabwe West Union Conference, 2019, Belief 16). This introspection ensures that participants approach the table with hearts rightly related to God and to one another. The communion service itself is marked by inclusivity, as it "is open to all believing Christians" (Zimbabwe West Union Conference, 2019, Belief 16), reflecting the understanding that the Lord's table belongs to the Lord and that all who love Him are welcome at His invitation.

For many Adventists, the communion service carries deep personal significance. As one believer reflects, "The words read from the Scripture, the solemn silence of the church, the stack of washing basins in the corner, the sweet taste of the grape juice and the texture of the communion bread – they have marked my Christian journey like little road posts, coming in regular intervals" (Kalmus, 2021, para. 2). Even when circumstances prevent gathering together, as during the global pandemic, believers have found ways to "experience and take part in the mystery of salvation, completed long time ago on a Friday afternoon near Jerusalem" (Kalmus, 2021, para. 3). The Lord's Supper thus serves as a regular reminder of Christ's sacrifice and a tangible means of grace in the life of the believer.

BELIEF 17: SPIRITUAL GIFTS EMPOWERMENT FOR MINISTRY

The seventeenth fundamental belief addresses the distribution of spiritual gifts within the church. These gifts, bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon individual believers, are given for the purpose of building up the body of Christ and extending His mission to the world. The official statement, while not directly quoted in the search results, is affirmed in discussions of the gift of prophecy, which is understood as one specific manifestation of this broader category of spiritual gifts (Wilson, 2022a).

The foundational biblical passage for understanding spiritual gifts is 1 Corinthians 12, where Paul explains that "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:4). These gifts are not given for personal exaltation but for the common good they are distributed

"for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). As Pastor Ted Wilson (2022a) explains, spiritual gifts "bring about unity, equip God's people for the work of ministry, build up the body of Christ, protect it from being deceived by false doctrine, and foster individual and collective spiritual growth" (citing Ephesians 4:11-15).

The diversity of gifts reflects the diversity of needs within the church and the world. Some are gifted for teaching, others for administration, others for service, others for encouragement, and still others for prophetic ministry. No single believer possesses all gifts, and no gift is given to every believer. Rather, the body depends on the proper functioning of each member with his or her unique gifts. This interdependence fosters humility, as no one can claim self-sufficiency, and love, as each member values and serves the others.

The exercise of spiritual gifts is not optional for the healthy functioning of the church. When believers neglect their gifts or fail to use them in love, the body suffers. When they recognize, develop, and deploy their gifts in humble service, the body is built up and the mission advances. The gift of prophecy, which Wilson (2022a) describes as "an identifying mark of the remnant church," receives particular attention in Adventist theology and is addressed separately in the next fundamental belief.

BELIEF 18: THE GIFT OF PROPHECY ELLEN G. WHITE'S MINISTRY

The eighteenth fundamental belief addresses a distinctive and often misunderstood aspect of Seventh-day Adventist faith: the gift of prophecy as manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. The official statement, as cited by Wilson (2022a), declares: "The Scriptures testify that one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and we believe it was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. Her writings speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested."

This belief affirms that the gift of prophecy, which operated throughout biblical history, has not been

withdrawn from the church but continues to function for its guidance and edification. Wilson (2022a) traces this gift through Scripture: "When Aaron and Miriam rebelled against Moses' leadership, God said to them, 'Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream'" (Numbers 12:6). Moses himself promised that "the Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear" (Deuteronomy 18:15), a prophecy ultimately fulfilled in Christ but also pointing to the ongoing prophetic gift in Israel. In the New Testament, Paul wrote to the Ephesians that this gift would remain in the church "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:13).

Ellen G. White, a woman "of remarkable spiritual gifts who lived most of her life in the nineteenth century" (Wilson, 2022a, para. 7), is recognized as having exercised this gift on behalf of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her literary output was prodigious: "She wrote more than 5,000 periodical articles and 40 books. Her writings made a revolutionary impact on millions of people around the world. These cover subjects including religion, education, social relationships, evangelism, prophecy, publishing, nutrition, and management" (Wilson, 2022a, para. 8). From age 17 until her death at 70, "God gave her 2,000 dreams and visions. The knowledge and counsel she received through these revelations were all in her writings."

The 2010 General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia, issued a formal resolution affirming the church's gratitude for Ellen White's ministry. The delegates acknowledged "the continuing contribution to the Seventh-day Adventist Church found in the writings and ministry of Ellen G. White," and testified that "the Church has been blessed and guided by God through the inspired counsel of His messenger" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2010, para. 1). The resolution called upon "Seventh-day Adventists everywhere to prayerfully study her messages and benefit from the inspiration and instruction found there" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2010, para. 4).

Crucially, the church maintains a clear distinction

between the writings of Ellen White and the Scriptures. As Wilson (2022a) emphasizes, "the writings of Ellen White are not a substitute for Scripture. They cannot be placed on the same level. The Holy Scriptures stand alone, the unique standard by which she and all other writings must be judged and to which they must be subject" (quoting Seventh-day Adventists Believe..., p. 227). This principle of sola scriptura remains foundational: the Bible alone is the ultimate rule of faith and practice, and the gift of prophecy functions to draw attention to the Scriptures, not to replace or supplement them.

BELIEF 19: THE LAW OF GOD THE CHARACTER OF GOD WRITTEN

The nineteenth fundamental belief addresses the moral law of God as summarized in the Ten Commandments. The official statement declares: "The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-a, Belief 19; Australian Union Conference, 2023).

This belief carefully positions the law in relation to the gospel. It affirms that "these precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-a, Belief 19). The law serves a diagnostic function: "Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Savior" (Australian Union Conference, 2023, para. 2). This diagnostic purpose is not an end in itself but leads the convicted sinner to Christ.

The relationship between law and grace is carefully articulated: "Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-a, Belief 19). Obedience is not the basis of salvation but its evidence the natural fruit of a life transformed by grace. This obedience "develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is an evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men" (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists,

n.d.-a, Belief 19). Far from being legalistic, the law-keeping that flows from faith demonstrates "the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness" (Australian Union Conference, 2023, para. 2).

The law is thus deeply connected to the character of God. The Ten Commandments are not arbitrary rules imposed from without but an expression of God's own loving character. They describe the way relationships function best relationship with God (commandments 1-4) and relationships with others (commandments 5-10). Jesus Himself summarized the law in terms of love: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39, as cited in North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-a). The law, rightly understood, is a law of love.

The new covenant promise, as articulated in Jeremiah 31, is not the abolition of the law but its internalization: "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33, as cited in Australian Union Conference, 2023). The goal of God's redemptive work is not to set aside His law but to restore it to its rightful place in the hearts of His people. As the psalmist declared, "I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8, as cited in North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-a).

BELIEF 20: THE SABBATH THE CENTERPIECE OF WHOLENESS

The twentieth fundamental belief occupies a central place in Adventist theology and practice. The Sabbath, observed from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, is understood as a gift from God a memorial of creation, a sign of sanctification, and a foretaste of the eternal rest to come. The official statement declares: "The gracious Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation" (Zimbabwe West Union Conference, 2019, Belief 20).

The foundation of the Sabbath is rooted in the creation narrative itself. As the French-language resource explains, "God finished the heavens and the earth, and all

their host. And on the seventh day God finished His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done" (Genesis 2:1-2, as cited in West-Central Africa Division, n.d., para. 1). The fourth commandment explicitly grounds Sabbath observance in this creative act: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exodus 20:11, as cited in West-Central Africa Division, n.d., para. 2).

The Sabbath serves multiple purposes in the life of the believer. First, it is a memorial of creation a weekly reminder that the world and everything in it were made by a loving God. As such, it answers the fundamental questions of origin and purpose. Second, it is "a sign of our sanctification" (Zimbabwe West Union Conference, 2019, Belief 20). As Ezekiel 20:12 declares, "I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them" (West-Central Africa Division, n.d., para. 6). The Sabbath signifies that God not only created us but also redeems and transforms us He is the one who makes us holy.

Third, the Sabbath is "a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom" (Zimbabwe West Union Conference, 2019, Belief 20). Observing the seventh day is an act of loyalty to the Creator, a declaration that we acknowledge His authority over our lives. At the same time, it points forward to the ultimate rest that awaits God's people in the new creation. The prophet Isaiah envisions a future when "from new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the Lord" (Isaiah 66:23, as cited in West-Central Africa Division, n.d., para. 7).

The Sabbath is also "a day of delightful communion with God and one another" (Zimbabwe West Union Conference, 2019, Belief 20). It is not a day of rigid restrictions but of joyful fellowship a time to rest from the labors of the week and to focus on relationship with the Creator and with fellow believers. Jesus Himself, who "according to His custom" went to the synagogue on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16, as cited in West-Central Africa Division, n.d., para. 8), demonstrated that "the Sabbath was

made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27, as cited in West-Central Africa Division, n.d., para. 3). The Sabbath is God's gift to humanity, not a burden to be borne.

The observance of the Sabbath from "evening to evening, sunset to sunset" (Zimbabwe West Union Conference, 2019, Belief 20) follows the biblical pattern established in creation: "And there was evening and there was morning, the first day" (Genesis 1:5). This rhythm of rest and worship provides a weekly anchor for the believer's life, a recurring invitation to step out of the frantic pace of human activity and into the restful presence of God. In a world marked by constant busyness and unrelenting demands, the Sabbath stands as a countercultural sign of trust in the God who provides.

BELIEF 21: STEWARDSHIP MANAGING ALL OF GOD'S GIFTS

The twenty-first fundamental belief addresses the comprehensive responsibility of every believer to manage faithfully all that God has entrusted to them. The official statement, while not directly quoted in the search results, is reflected in the church's understanding of stewardship as encompassing "time, talents, treasure, and the temple of our bodies" (North American Division Stewardship, 2025, para. 3).

The traditional framework for understanding stewardship is summarized as the "Four T's": Time, Talents, Temple, and Treasure (Stewardship Council of the Franco-Belgian Union, n.d., para. 1). Each of these dimensions represents an area of life over which God is the ultimate owner and for which humans are accountable as managers. Time, the most fundamental resource, is to be used wisely for God's glory. Talents, the abilities and gifts given to each person, are to be developed and deployed in service to others. Temple, the physical body, is to be cared for as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Treasure, material resources, is to be used generously in support of God's mission.

The North American Division's recent emphasis on youth stewardship illustrates how this holistic understanding is being communicated to the next generation. At the 2024 International Pathfinder Camporee, stewardship educators taught the Stewardship Honor using "a

dynamic mix of videos, PowerPoint slides, small group discussions, worksheets, interactive activities, and even small incentive-based gifts" (North American Division Stewardship, 2025, para. 4). The curriculum emphasized "whole-life stewardship the understanding that everything we are and have is entrusted to us by God" (North American Division Stewardship, 2025, para. 6). Pathfinders were required to engage in "at least four hours of community service using their unique talents to benefit others" (North American Division Stewardship, 2025, para. 8), making the concept of stewardship tangible and practical.

The response to this emphasis was overwhelming. "Originally prepared for 900 participants, the team had to print an additional 150 worksheets due to high demand. Ultimately, between 900 and 1,000 Pathfinders attended the class sessions, and 209 completed the community service component, earning their Stewardship patches on-site" (North American Division Stewardship, 2025, para. 12). This enthusiastic response demonstrates that "young people want to learn. They are curious, capable, and ready to be challenged, especially when education is experiential and tailored to their stage of life" (North American Division Stewardship, 2025, para. 15).

The deeper purpose of stewardship education is not merely to teach financial management but "to form faithful, purpose-driven disciples" (North American Division Stewardship, 2025, para. 18). When believers understand themselves as stewards rather than owners, they are freed from the tyranny of possessions and empowered to use their resources for eternal purposes. The goal of stewardship, as the Franco-Belgian Union material explains, is that believers "should develop all aspects of his being: the physical, intellectual, emotional, psychological, and spiritual" (Stewardship Council of the Franco-Belgian Union, n.d., para. 6). This holistic development is possible only through connection to Christ, "the only source of knowledge and strength that will allow him to grow and be like Christ" (Stewardship Council of the Franco-Belgian Union, n.d., para. 9).

The example of Joseph, sold into slavery by his brothers yet remaining faithful to God, illustrates the character development that stewardship fosters. When

Joseph was "broken, naked, and blind when he relies entirely on God that he is ready to grow in his relationship with Him" (Stewardship Council of the Franco-Belgian Union, n.d., para. 20). This journey of growth, marked by increasing trust and faithfulness, is the path to which every steward is called.

Together, Beliefs 16 through 21 form a comprehensive vision of practical faith. Belief 16 invites believers to regular participation in the ordinances of humility and communion. Beliefs 17 and 18 affirm the distribution of spiritual gifts, including the prophetic gift manifested in Ellen White's ministry. Belief 19 establishes the moral law as an expression of God's character and a guide for holy living. Belief 20 places the Sabbath at the center of weekly worship and rest. And Belief 21 calls believers to faithful stewardship of all God's gifts. These pillars of wholeness demonstrate that authentic faith touches every dimension of human existence, transforming worship, relationships, time, talents, and resources into instruments of God's grace.

7. The Pillars of the Future: Living in Hope (Beliefs 22-28)

Having traced the biblical narrative from creation through the great controversy and into the practical life of faith, the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of theology now turns to its ultimate horizon the future. Beliefs 22 through 28 address the questions that have haunted humanity since the beginning: What happens when we die? Will justice ever prevail? Is there any hope beyond the grave? These final seven beliefs form the pillars of the future, offering a comprehensive vision of God's plan for the culmination of history. They move from the practical guidelines for holy living in the present, through the blessed hope of Christ's return, to the reality of death as sleep, the millennium of judgment, and finally the creation of a new earth where suffering and death will be no more. Together, they constitute the eschatological framework that gives meaning to present experience and direction to future hope.

BELIEF 22: CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR

The twenty-second fundamental belief addresses the

practical outworking of salvation in daily conduct. It affirms that believers are called to a life of holiness, reflecting the character of Christ in every aspect of their behavior. The official statement reads: "We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with the principles of heaven. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things which will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives."

This belief recognizes that behavior matters because the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Therefore, Adventists are urged to practice healthful living, including a balanced diet, regular exercise, adequate rest, and abstention from substances that harm the body and mind. Specifically, the church has long counseled against the use of alcohol, tobacco, and recreational drugs. Modern research into lifestyle medicine often echoes these biblical principles, but the Adventist motivation remains spiritual: to honor God and to maintain clarity for service.

In addition to physical health, Belief 22 addresses moral and social conduct. It emphasizes modesty in dress, integrity in speech, and purity in thought and action. Believers are encouraged to avoid entertainment and amusements that are vulgar, violent, or sexually suggestive, as such influences corrupt the soul and undermine spiritual growth (Philippians 4:8). Instead, Adventists are called to fill their minds with what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable.

The belief also touches on media, music, and literature. While not imposing a rigid list of prohibited items, it encourages each believer to exercise discernment based on biblical principles. The goal is not legalism but freedom from addictions, from degrading influences, and from anything that would separate one from the love of God.

Importantly, Christian behavior is not presented as a means of earning salvation. It is the fruit of a saving relationship with Christ. Because believers have been justified by grace, they seek to live in a manner worthy of their calling (Ephesians 4:1). This holistic view of life integrates physical, mental, and spiritual health as a witness to a watching world.

Thus, Belief 22 serves as a practical guide for living in hope while awaiting the Second Coming. It reminds Adventists that every choice what they eat, drink, wear, or watch is an opportunity to honor God and to grow into the likeness of Jesus, who is the ultimate standard of Christian behavior.

BELIEF 23: MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

The twenty-third fundamental belief addresses one of God's most intimate and foundational institutions: marriage and the family. The official statement declares that "marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship." Rooted in the creation narrative (Genesis 2:18-25), marriage is presented not as a human invention but as a divine gift, designed for mutual help, companionship, and the propagation of the human race.

For Seventh-day Adventists, marriage is more than a civil contract; it is a covenant relationship that reflects the faithful, self-sacrificing love between Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:22-33). As such, it is to be entered into only between a man and a woman who share a common faith, since spiritual unity strengthens the partnership and provides a foundation for raising children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The belief explicitly states that marriage is intended to be a lifelong commitment, and that divorce should be avoided except in the most extreme circumstances, following Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19:3-9.

Belief 23 also emphasizes the sacredness of the family unit. Parents are called to model Christlike love, respect, and forgiveness within the home, creating a safe environment where children can grow in wisdom, stature, and favor with God. The Adventist Church encourages family worship, daily Bible study, and prayer together as means of nurturing faith across generations. Children are viewed as a blessing from the Lord, and parents bear the primary responsibility for their spiritual and moral education.

The belief does not ignore human brokenness. It acknowledges that sin has marred even the best of human relationships, and therefore offers grace, counsel, and

support to those whose marriages have failed or whose families have experienced dysfunction. The church provides marriage enrichment programs, counseling services, and community support to strengthen families and heal wounded relationships.

In the context of contemporary debates about marriage, the Adventist Church maintains its historic, biblical position: marriage is exclusively the union of one man and one woman. This conviction flows from the creation order, the example of Jesus, and the consistent witness of Scripture. However, the church also calls its members to treat all people with respect, compassion, and dignity, recognizing that every person is created in the image of God.

Thus, Belief 23 proclaims that marriage and the family are central to God's plan for human flourishing. When lived according to divine principles, they become a foretaste of the joyous, eternal fellowship that awaits the redeemed in the new creation.

BELIEF 24: CHRIST'S MINISTRY IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

The twenty-fourth fundamental belief describes the present work of Jesus Christ in heaven a distinctive doctrine that sets Adventist theology apart from most other Christian traditions. The official statement declares: "There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross."

This belief is rooted in the Old Testament sanctuary service, where the earthly tabernacle served as a "copy and shadow" of the heavenly reality (Hebrews 8:5). In the earthly sanctuary, the high priest daily offered sacrifices for individual sins and once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), performed a special cleansing of the sanctuary itself (Leviticus 16). Adventists understand these rituals as divinely appointed symbols pointing to the two phases of Christ's heavenly ministry.

First, since His ascension, Jesus has served as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. His ministry includes intercession on behalf of believers, applying the merits of His sacrificial death to those who confess their sins and seek forgiveness (Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1). This ongoing work ensures that the benefits of Calvary

are continually available to all who come to God through Him.

Second, Adventists believe that in 1844, Christ entered a new phase of His ministry the antitypical Day of Atonement, often called the "investigative judgment." Based on the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 ("Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed"), the church teaches that Jesus began a work of final judgment that will vindicate God's character and determine which individuals are worthy of eternal life. This judgment is "investigative" in that it reviews the lives of those who have professed faith in Christ, demonstrating that they have truly accepted His grace and allowed the Spirit to transform their characters. It is a judgment in favor of believers, not a divine fishing expedition to find reasons for condemnation.

The purpose of this heavenly ministry is twofold: to cleanse the sanctuary (the heavenly record of confessed sins) and to prepare a people for Christ's return. The doctrine assures believers that Jesus is not idle in heaven; He is actively working for their salvation. It also inspires holy living, as the judgment reveals the importance of a genuine, authentic faith.

Thus, Belief 24 provides a powerful vision of Christ's present care for His people. He is not a distant, indifferent Lord but a compassionate High Priest who sympathizes with human weaknesses and who is now completing His final work before He returns to take His faithful followers home. This sanctuary doctrine anchors Adventist hope in the sure ministry of Jesus, the one "who always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

BELIEF 25: THE SECOND COMING THE BLESSED HOPE

The twenty-fifth fundamental belief stands at the very heart of Adventist eschatology. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is presented as the "blessed hope" of the church the climactic event toward which all history moves and the ultimate answer to human longing. As Willie E. Hucks II (2011) writes in Ministry Magazine, "The only true answer to the issues of life is the blessed hope, for this hope lifts us above the temporal and fixes our gaze upon the eternal. In this life we move from one challenge, one frustration, to another. But God offers us an eternity

with no pain, death, sorrow, or crying" (para. 11).

This hope has sustained believers throughout the ages. A devotional reflection on the Second Coming draws from Ellen White's classic work: "The coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of His true followers. The Saviour's parting promise upon Olivet, that He would come again, lighted up the future for His disciples, filling their hearts with joy and hope that sorrow could not quench nor trials dim" (Revival & Reformation, 2019, para. 2). From the Thessalonian Christians grieving their departed loved ones, to the martyrs who faced death with courage, to the Waldenses who cherished the same faith, the hope of Christ's return has been "the 'blessed hope'" that sustained believers through every trial (Revival & Reformation, 2019, para. 2).

The Adventist commitment to this hope is reflected in a remarkable initiative to place a visual reminder of the Second Coming in every division office and Adventist academy in North America. Artist Nathan Greene's painting, "The Blessed Hope," was commissioned for the world church headquarters and subsequently reproduced for worldwide distribution (Adventist Review, 2016). The painting offers "a culturally diverse depiction of the Second Coming that allows all people to recognize and identify with it," portraying multiple races of people welcoming Jesus in the clouds and angels with diverse ethnic features (Adventist Review, 2016, para. 6).

Mark Finley, speaking at the painting's distribution ceremony, emphasized its significance: "The Second Coming of Christ is at the very heart of the biblical message and the Adventist faith. It defines who we are as Seventh-day Adventists" (Adventist Review, 2016, para. 10). Greene himself expressed the hope that the painting would "help all who see it to keep their eyes focused on what will be the greatest event of all times" and "give hope and courage to those who are worn down by life's struggles" (Adventist Review, 2016, para. 17).

Yet Hucks (2011) raises a concern that the blessed hope may be receiving less emphasis than it deserves. He observes that "the 'cares of this life' have consumed my time and attention more than I ever thought they would," that "I hear fewer sermons preached that focus on the Second Coming," and that "there has been a shift in music

themes" away from songs that herald Christ's return (paras. 4-6). His response is intentional: "I have intentionally increased my efforts to spend more time in prayer and Bible study," "I vow to preach more on the Second Coming," and "I want to see a greater emphasis on Christ's soon return in our church music" (paras. 8-10). This personal commitment reflects the broader need for the church to keep the blessed hope central to its identity and mission.

BELIEF 26: DEATH AND RESURRECTION

The twenty-sixth fundamental belief addresses one of humanity's most profound questions: What happens when we die? The official statement declares: "The wages of sin is death. But God, who alone is immortal, will grant eternal life to His redeemed. Until that day death is an unconscious state for all people" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 26). This teaching stands in sharp contrast to the common belief in the innate immortality of the soul.

Adventists base their understanding on the biblical teaching that human beings are an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit not a mortal body housing an immortal soul that survives death. The account of creation in Genesis 2:7 describes that "the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature" (English Standard Version). The Hebrew phrase *nephesh chayyah* (living creature or living being) refers to the whole person, not an immaterial component. Therefore, death is not the release of an immortal soul but the cessation of life for the entire person. As Ecclesiastes 9:5 states, "the dead know nothing" (ESV).

For Seventh-day Adventists, death is consistently described in Scripture as a sleep. When Jesus spoke of Lazarus, He said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him" (John 11:11, ESV). Stephen, at his martyrdom, "fell asleep" (Acts 7:60, ESV). This metaphor of sleep conveys two essential truths: first, the dead are unconscious and experience no passage of time, no suffering, and no activity; second, their future is not annihilation but resurrection. As the Adventist.org (n.d.) article explains, "When a person dies, they have no

consciousness or activity. They are not aware of the passing of time. The next thing they will know is the voice of Jesus calling them from the grave at His return."

This doctrine directly supports the blessed hope of the resurrection. Because death is a sleep from which only God can awaken, the resurrection is not merely a spiritual event but a bodily one. Paul writes, "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16, ESV). The resurrection is God's definitive answer to the tragedy of death.

The belief also affirms that God alone possesses immortality inherently (1 Timothy 6:16). Humans do not possess eternal life as a natural attribute; it is a gift granted by God to those who accept salvation through Jesus Christ. Conversely, the wicked do not suffer eternally in hell. Instead, after the millennium, they will be raised to face final judgment and then be destroyed the "second death" (Revelation 20:14-15). Adventists reject the doctrine of eternal conscious torment as inconsistent with the character of a loving God.

Practical implications flow from this belief. The Adventist practice of not cremating loved ones, while not a strict rule, reflects respect for the body as that which will be resurrected. More importantly, this teaching brings profound comfort to mourners. Death is not an endless separation but a temporary sleep. The grave holds no victory, for Christ has conquered death. As Paul triumphantly declares, "Death is swallowed up in victory... thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:54-57, ESV).

Thus, Belief 26 anchors Adventist hope in the sure promise of the resurrection. It frees believers from fear of death, encourages holy living, and points forward to the day when God will "wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more" (Revelation 21:4, ESV).

BELIEF 27: THE MILLENNIUM AND THE END OF SIN

The twenty-seventh fundamental belief addresses the thousand-year period known as the millennium and the final eradication of sin from the universe. The official statement declares: "The millennium is the thousand-year

reign of Christ with His saints in heaven between the first and second resurrections. During this time the wicked dead will be judged; the earth will be utterly desolate, without human inhabitants, but occupied by Satan and his angels. At its close, Christ with His saints and the Holy City will descend from heaven to earth. The wicked dead will then be resurrected, and with Satan and his angels will surround the city; but fire from God will consume them and cleanse the earth. The universe will thus be freed of sin and sinners forever" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d., Belief 27).

This teaching is grounded in Revelation 20:1-10, the primary biblical passage describing the millennium. Adventist understanding differs from both premillennialism (which places Christ's reign on earth) and amillennialism (which spiritualizes the thousand years). Instead, Seventh-day Adventists hold that the millennium occurs in heaven, not on earth, and that it takes place between the first resurrection (the resurrection of the righteous at Christ's second coming) and the second resurrection (the resurrection of the wicked at its close).

The sequence of events unfolds as follows. First, at the Second Coming, the righteous dead are raised, and the righteous living are translated. Together, they are caught up to meet the Lord in the air and taken to heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The wicked are destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8), and the earth is left desolate. Satan and his fallen angels are bound on this empty planet not by literal chains, but by circumstances. With no humans left to tempt, their activity is completely restrained (Revelation 20:1-3). The earth lies in chaotic ruin, resembling the "waste and void" of Genesis 1:2.

Second, during the thousand years, the redeemed participate with Christ in the judgment of the wicked and the fallen angels. Paul asked, "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" (1 Corinthians 6:2, ESV). This judgment is not punitive but investigative; believers will review the records of the lost, confirming God's justice in condemning them. This process vindicates God's character, showing that He was both merciful and fair. As Ellen White explained, "The whole universe will be convinced that God is just and good" (as cited in "Seventh-

day Adventist eschatology," 2006).

Third, at the close of the millennium, the New Jerusalem descends from heaven to earth (Revelation 21:2). The wicked dead are resurrected the second resurrection. Satan rallies this vast multitude to attack the Holy City, but fire from God consumes them, destroying sin and sinners forever (Revelation 20:7-9). This is the "second death" (Revelation 20:14-15), which results in complete annihilation, not eternal torment. The earth is then purified and recreated as the eternal home of the redeemed.

Three important implications arise from this belief. First, the millennium assures believers that justice will ultimately prevail. The suffering and injustice of this present age will be fully addressed. Second, it demonstrates that God's judgments are transparent and defensible. The redeemed participate in the judgment process, confirming that no one is lost arbitrarily. Third, it provides a powerful motivation for evangelism. The knowledge that sin will finally be eradicated gives urgency to the gospel commission.

Thus, Belief 27 completes the Adventist understanding of the end-times. The millennium is not a period of earthly bliss but a heavenly interlude when God's justice is vindicated. Its conclusion brings the final eradication of sin, setting the stage for the new creation. As the last pages of Scripture promise, "Death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4, ESV).

BELIEF 28: THE NEW EARTH RESTORATION AND ETERNAL HOME

The twenty-eighth and final fundamental belief brings the entire theological narrative to its glorious conclusion. The official statement reads: "On the new earth, in which righteousness dwells, God will provide an eternal home for the redeemed and a perfect environment for everlasting life, love, joy, and learning in His presence. For here God Himself will dwell with His people, and suffering and death will have passed away. The great controversy will be ended, and sin will be no more. All things, animate and inanimate, will declare that God is love; and He shall reign forever. Amen" (Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia, 2024, para. 1).

This belief echoes the vision of the apostle John in Revelation 21: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away'" (as cited in Cristo Vai Voltar, n.d., para. 1). The new earth is not merely a restoration of Eden but an escalation a reality in which God Himself dwells with His people in a way not possible before the entrance of sin.

Ellen White's description of the new earth, drawn from *The Great Controversy*, paints a picture of endless discovery and joy: "All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God's redeemed. Unfettered by mortality, they wing their tireless flight to worlds afar worlds that thrilled with sorrow at the spectacle of human woe and rang with songs of gladness at the tidings of a ransomed soul. With unutterable delight, the children of earth enter into the joy and the wisdom of unfallen beings" (as cited in Cristo Vai Voltar, n.d., para. 6). This vision of eternal learning and exploration gives content to the promise of everlasting life not static existence but dynamic, growing relationship with God and His creation.

The new earth is also the place where the great controversy finally ends. As the belief statement affirms, "The great controversy will be ended and sin will be no more" (Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia, 2024, para. 1). The questions that have haunted the universe for millennia will be definitively answered. God's character will be fully vindicated. And "all things, animate and inanimate, will declare that God is love" (Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia, 2024, para. 1). The final verse of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs echoes the closing words of Scripture: "He shall reign forever. Amen."

Ellen White continues her description with words that capture the eternal progression of joy and worship: "And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the

amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise" (as cited in Cristo Vai Voltar, n.d., para. 7).

The video presentation by Pastor Ted Wilson concludes with a personal appeal: "Do you want to be part of that mighty chorus of praise? God longs to give each of us the gift of salvation and eternity. Have you given your heart and recommitted your life to Him? He is inviting you now" (Cristo Vai Voltar, n.d., para. 8). This invitation captures the essential purpose of the entire 28 Fundamental Beliefs not merely to inform the mind but to draw the heart into relationship with the God who created, redeemed, and will ultimately restore His people to Himself.

Together, Beliefs 22 through 28 form a comprehensive vision of the future that gives meaning to the present. Beliefs 22-24 provide guidance for holy living while awaiting Christ's return. Belief 25 centers on the blessed hope of the Second Coming as the climax of history. Beliefs 26 and 27 address the state of the dead and the millennium, assuring believers that death is but a sleep from which Christ will awaken them. And Belief 28 paints the glorious picture of the new earth the eternal home where God will dwell with His people and suffering and death will be no more. These pillars of the future anchor Adventist faith in the sure promises of God, inviting believers to live in hope and to prepare for the day when faith will become sight.

8. Conclusion: More Than a List

As we have journeyed through the twenty-eight fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a remarkable narrative has unfolded before us. What might initially appear as a collection of discrete theological propositions reveals itself, upon closer examination, to be a cohesive and beautifully integrated story a grand narrative that stretches from the dawn of creation to the eternal ages beyond the end of sin and suffering. The metaphor of "pillars," so cherished by the early Adventist pioneers,

proves apt not only because each doctrine stands firmly on biblical foundation, but because together they support a comprehensive understanding of God's relationship with humanity and His plan for the restoration of all things (Grenada Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.; "Pillars of Adventism," 2024). These beliefs are not an end in themselves but a means to an end and that end is relationship.

THE GRAND NARRATIVE SUMMARIZED

The story begins with creation. Beliefs 1 through 7 establish the foundational reality that there is a God who speaks, who exists as a triune communion of love, and who has made Himself known through Scripture and through His creative works (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.). The God who is love called the universe into being, fashioned this world as a perfect home for humanity, and created our first parents in His own image, endowing them with freedom, dignity, and purpose (South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.). The Sabbath, planted in the very fabric of time at the conclusion of creation week, stands as a perpetual memorial of this original perfection a weekly reminder that we are not cosmic accidents but beloved creatures of a personal Creator (Zimbabwe West Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2019).

But the story takes a tragic turn. Belief 8 introduces the great controversy that cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe (Wilson, 2023). This interpretive lens, unique to Adventist theology, provides the framework for understanding why suffering and death exist in a world created by a God of love. The controversy did not originate on earth but in heaven, when a created being of surpassing beauty and wisdom allowed pride and self-exaltation to corrupt his heart, becoming Satan, the adversary of God and accuser of His character (Wilson, 2024a). When he tempted our first parents into sin, the world became the arena of the universal conflict a conflict that would ultimately be decided on a hill called Calvary.

The heart of the narrative is redemption. Beliefs 9 through 15 proclaim that God did not abandon His creation to its tragic fate. In infinite love and mercy, He sent

His own Son, Jesus Christ, to live a perfect life, to die a substitutionary death, and to rise again in victory over the grave (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-a). Through Christ, atonement was accomplished not merely as a legal transaction but as the definitive revelation of God's character and the means by which sinners can be reconciled to their Creator. By grace through faith, we are justified, adopted as God's children, and delivered from the lordship of sin (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-b). The Holy Spirit works within us to transform us progressively into the image of Christ, writing God's law of love upon our hearts and empowering us to live lives of holiness and service (Adventist News Network, 2005).

The narrative then flows into the life of the church and the practical expression of faith. Beliefs 16 through 21 call believers to embody their faith in worship, in community, in the exercise of spiritual gifts, and in faithful stewardship of all God's gifts (Zimbabwe West Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2019; North American Division Stewardship, 2025). The Lord's Supper, with its distinctive ordinance of humility, invites us to regular self-examination and renewed commitment to Christ and to one another (Kalmus, 2021). The gift of prophecy, manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White, provides comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church, always directing attention back to the Scriptures as the ultimate standard of faith and practice (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2010; Wilson, 2022a). The law of God, far from being abolished, is written on the hearts of believers as the expression of God's character and the guide to holy living (Australian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2023). The Sabbath stands at the center of this practical piety a day of rest and delight, a sign of our sanctification, and a foretaste of the eternal rest that awaits God's people (West-Central Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.). And stewardship calls us to recognize that all we have time, talents, treasure, and the temple of our bodies is entrusted to us by God, to be used for His glory and the blessing of others (Stewardship Council of the Franco-Belgian Union, n.d.).

Finally, the narrative culminates in restoration.

Beliefs 22 through 28 lift our eyes to the horizon of hope, assuring us that the God who created us and redeemed us will not abandon us to the grave (Adventist Research, 2019). The blessed hope of the Second Coming the literal, visible return of Jesus Christ is the climactic event toward which all history moves (Hucks, 2011; Adventist Review, 2016). At His coming, the righteous dead will be raised, the living righteous will be translated, and together they will meet the Lord in the air. The millennium follows, a thousand-year period during which the redeemed reign with Christ in heaven, participating in the judgment that vindicates God's ways ("Seventh-day Adventist eschatology," 2006). At its close, the New Jerusalem descends, the wicked are raised to face final judgment, and fire from God consumes sin and sinners, purifying the earth. Then comes the new creation a new earth where righteousness dwells, where God Himself dwells with His people, and where suffering and death will be no more (Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia, 2024). "The great controversy will be ended, and sin will be no more. All things, animate and inanimate, will declare that God is love; and He shall reign forever. Amen" (Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia, 2024, para. 1).

MORE THAN A CHECKLIST

It would be a profound mistake to view these twenty-eight beliefs as merely a checklist of doctrines to be mentally assented to, a theological hurdles course to be completed on the way to membership, or a boundary marker to distinguish insiders from outsiders. As the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (2024) affirms on its official website, "Together, these teachings reveal a God who is the architect of the world. In wisdom, grace and infinite love, He is actively working to restore a relationship with humanity that will last for eternity" (para. 1). The beliefs are not an end in themselves but a means to an end and that end is relationship.

The God who emerges from these pages is not a distant deity demanding abstract assent to correct propositions. He is the God who spoke the universe into existence and then formed Adam from the dust of the ground, breathing into his nostrils the breath of life. He is the God who walked in the garden in the cool of the day, seeking fellowship with the creatures He had made. He is the God

who, when sin shattered that fellowship, immediately promised a Redeemer and began the long, patient work of reclaiming His lost children. He is the God who called Abraham, who delivered Israel from Egypt, who spoke through prophets, and who at last sent His own Son to live among us, to die for us, and to rise again in victory.

The God of these beliefs is the God who, in the person of Jesus Christ, washed the feet of His disciples, healed the sick, welcomed the outcast, and forgave His enemies. He is the God who, even now, ministers as our great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, applying the benefits of His sacrifice to all who come to God through Him (Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1975). He is the God who sends His Spirit to convict, to guide, to comfort, and to transform to write His law on our hearts and to produce in us the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

And the God of these beliefs is the God who is coming again. He is not content to leave us in a world of sin and suffering, subject to decay and death. He is returning to raise the dead, to transform the living, and to take us to be with Him forever. He is preparing a new earth a place where tears will be wiped away, where mourning and crying and pain will cease, where death will be no more. He is preparing a home for us, and He will dwell with us, and we will be His people, and He will be our God.

The twenty-eight beliefs, then, are not a checklist but a description a description of a relationship with this God. They describe what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do. They describe who we are as His creatures, what went wrong with us, and how He is fixing it. They describe how we are to live in grateful response to His grace, and they describe the hope that sustains us in the journey. As the Middle East and North Africa Union of Seventh-day Adventists (n.d.) beautifully expresses it, "In each teaching, God is the architect, who in wisdom, grace and infinite love, is restoring a relationship with humanity that will last for eternity" (para. 1).

This relational understanding transforms how we approach the beliefs. We do not study them merely to pass a test or to win an argument. We study them to know God more deeply, to love Him more fully, and to serve Him more faithfully. We study them to understand His

character, to grasp His purposes, and to align our lives with His will. We study them to find assurance in His promises, strength for the journey, and hope for the future. And we study them together, as a community of faith, recognizing that we see through a glass darkly now, but one day we shall see face to face.

AN INVITATION TO EXPLORE FURTHER

Perhaps as you have read through these pages, one of these pillars has resonated with you in a particular way. Perhaps the vision of a God who created you in His image and pronounced His creation "very good" has awakened a sense of your own dignity and worth. Perhaps the story of the great controversy has provided a framework for understanding the suffering and evil that so often seem senseless and overwhelming. Perhaps the experience of salvation by grace through faith has spoken to your deepest need for forgiveness and acceptance. Perhaps the vision of the new earth has kindled a hope that transcends the disappointments and losses of this present life.

If any of these pillars has resonated with you, we invite you to explore further. The journey of faith is not meant to be walked alone. It is meant to be shared with others who are also seeking to know God and to follow Him. As the apostle Paul wrote, we are "members one of another" (Romans 12:5, King James Version), and it is in the fellowship of believers that we grow, learn, and are strengthened for the journey.

One way to explore further is to visit a Seventh-day Adventist church in your community. Around the world, every Saturday morning (the seventh-day Sabbath), Adventists gather to worship, to study the Bible, and to encourage one another (Rotorua Adventist Church, n.d.). You will find a community of people who are not perfect but who are learning to live by grace, who have questions as well as answers, and who would love to welcome you. As the Rotorua Adventist Church (n.d.) invites on its website, "Church really is for everyone of all ages, size and shapes and we'd love you to join us!" (para. 1). You need not bring anything but yourself no special knowledge, no particular level of spirituality, no requirement to give money or to speak publicly. Just come as you are, and see what you discover.

Another way to explore further is to engage with the questions that have arisen in your mind as you have read. Which of these pillars resonates most with you? Which raises questions you would like to explore further? Which challenges you to think differently about God, about yourself, or about the world? These questions are not obstacles to faith but invitations to deeper understanding. As the Grenada Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (n.d.) reminds us, the church's understanding of Scripture is not static but dynamic revision of these statements "may be expected at a General Conference Session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word" (para. 1). There is always more to learn, always deeper depths to explore.

If you would like to engage further, we invite you to leave a comment below sharing which pillar resonated most with you and why. Or if you have questions, please ask them there are no bad questions, only opportunities to learn together. You might also consider reaching out to a local Adventist pastor or contacting the Seventh-day Adventist Church in your region to request a Bible study or to receive literature that explores these beliefs in greater depth.

The twenty-eight pillars of Adventist faith are not a fortress to defend but a foundation to build upon and an open door to walk through. They invite us into a relationship with the God who created us, who redeems us, and who is coming to take us home. They invite us into a story that began before the foundation of the world and will continue throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. They invite us into a community of faith that spans the globe and includes millions of people from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people (North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.-e).

And they invite us into hope that transcends the brokenness of this present world, hope that anchors the soul in the promises of God, hope that looks beyond the horizon of death to the resurrection morning. As the apostle Peter wrote, we have been "born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4, English

Standard Version). That living hope is the heartbeat of Adventist faith, the thread that runs through all twenty-eight beliefs, and the gift that God offers to all who will receive it.

May you find in these pillars a foundation for your faith, a framework for your understanding, and an invitation into a deeper relationship with the God who loves you more than you can ask or imagine. And may the hope of the new earth sustain you until that day when faith becomes sight, and we dwell with God forever.

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11. Biography



Amiri, Sayed Mahbub Hasan is a dedicated and visionary professional committed to advancing education through innovation, technology, and collaborative leadership. With a passion for lifelong learning and a track record of excellence, he has established himself as a pivotal figure in curriculum development, digital content creation, and educational reform, both nationally and internationally. As a Master Trainer under the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education in Bangladesh's Ministry of Education, Amiri has spearheaded curriculum design, digital content development, and Advanced ICT training programs, empowering educators to thrive in evolving technological landscapes. His expertise extends to authoring training manuals for Advanced ICT under the TQI-II project and crafting model secondary-level educational content, ensuring alignment with modern pedagogical standards. In recognition of his exceptional contributions, he earned the Best Content Developer

Award on the Teachers Portal and was honored as a National Competition Winner by a2i (Access to Interface) under the Prime Minister's Office for pioneering educational solutions. A creative force in educational media, Amiri has authored content for Bangladesh's historical national newspaper, The Daily Ittefaq, and produced engaging video scripts and e-Learning tutorials for platforms like Muktopaath and a2i. His leadership in education was further celebrated with the Education Leadership Award 2018 from DSHE. Globally, he is acknowledged as a Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert (2018–present), driving tech-integrated teaching practices, and holding credentials as a Google Registered App Developer, blending technical acumen with educational insight. Committed to fostering inclusive, future-ready learning environments, Amiri continues to bridge technology and education, inspiring educators and learners alike to embrace innovation. His work emblemizes a steadfast dedication to elevating educational quality, accessibility, and impact locally and beyond.