

Seventh-day Adventists and Their
Work

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Uriah Smith

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By Uriah Smith

THE questions, “Who are these people known as Seventh-day Adventists?” and “What is the work they are trying to do?” are being asked more and more among the people of our land, as our cause is coming more prominently before them. Many, ignorant of what they affirm, or prompted by a spirit of opposition, answer these questions with the most grotesque and foolish misrepresentations. We are happy, when opportunity occurs, to answer them for ourselves; for the apostle tells us to be ready always to give to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us with meekness and fear. *1 Peter 3:15*. Under an assumed conversation between an inquirer and a Seventh-day Adventist, a concise answer to these queries may perhaps be most conveniently given.*SDAWK 1.1*

Inquirer — Why do you take the name Seventh-day Adventist?*SDAWK 1.2*

Adventist — This name is assumed by us for two reasons: one is to distinguish us from other organized Christian bodies, and another is to show the nature of our work. To call ourselves “Disciples,” “Christians,” “Church of God,” or by many other names that might be mentioned, would be of no account, because such a name would not distinguish us from others who have the same name. Secondly, the name we have taken indicates that we have enlisted in a work which we understand from the Scriptures is to be done in the present generation, having for its chief characteristics the keeping of the seventh day as the Sabbath, and a belief in, and promulgation of, the doctrine of the second personal coming of Christ as now at the door.*SDAWK 1.3*

I. — When did this movement begin?*SDAWK 2.1*

A. — A few Adventists began to observe the seventh day just before the passing of the time set for the Lord to come, Oct. 22, 1844.*SDAWK 2.2*

I. — Then did you once set a time for the Lord to come?*SDAWK 2.3*

A. — No; not as Seventh-day Adventists; for this view of the time

had become a settled belief of the Adventists before any of them had begun to keep the seventh day. Never since such views were advocated and received as made us Seventh-day Adventists, has any time been set by us for our Lord to come; and it never can be, according to our views of the prophetic periods.*SDAWK 2.4*

I. — When, then, do the people known as Seventh-day Adventists, date their origin?*SDAWK 2.5*

A. — In the following year, 1845; for then were brought out the views on the subject of the sanctuary, which explained why the Lord did not come in 1844, as had been expected, and furnished additional evidence concerning our duty to turn to the observance of the seventh day as the Sabbath of the Lord.*SDAWK 2.6*

I. — What is this doctrine of the sanctuary, of which you speak, and how did it explain the previous disappointment?*SDAWK 3.1*

A. — The prophecy on which the setting of the time for the Lord to come was based, was that of *Daniel 8:14*: “Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” It was easy to ascertain that the days would end in the autumn of 1844. “Then,” said the prophecy, “the sanctuary shall be cleansed.” Adventists reasoned that the earth was the sanctuary, and that its cleansing was to be by fire. But the earth, they said, is not to be destroyed by fire, according to the Scriptures, until Christ comes; hence the coming of Christ is then to take place. They therefore made this the burden of their message, and proclaimed that Christ would come at the end of the days, in 1844. But when the time passed, and Christ did not come, they carefully re-examined the subject. They found no flaw in the reckonings respecting the time; but they did find that the earth, according to the Scriptures, was not the sanctuary, but that in every instance of the one hundred and forty-four times the word “sanctuary” occurs in the Bible, it refers either to the tabernacle built by Moses, or to the antitype of that tabernacle, which Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, says is the “Sanctuary” and “true tabernacle” in heaven, where Christ is now acting as priest and mediator for the world. This connection between the Mosaic type and Christian antitype being seen, a flood of light was at once thrown upon many Scripture questions.*SDAWK*

3.2

In the type the high priest cleansed the sanctuary by a special service once every year, and he did this by going into the second apartment of the tabernacle and making an atonement. When Christ died upon the cross, type gave place to antitype; the tabernacle of Moses gave place to the sanctuary and true tabernacle in heaven, of which Christ is minister, as is plainly stated by Paul in *Hebrews 8:1, 2*, and the work of the priests on earth then gave place to the work of Christ as our great high priest in heaven. The temple or sanctuary in heaven has two apartments, — the holy, and the most holy place (for the earthly sanctuary had two such places, and it was built after the “pattern” of the heavenly;) and Christ ministers in both these apartments of the heavenly temple, as the high priests ministered here upon the earth. *Hebrews 9:23; 8:4, 5.SDAWK 3.3*

So when the time comes for this sanctuary to be cleansed in heaven, as the apostle in *Hebrews 9:23* says that it must be, Christ simply passes into the most holy place of the sanctuary above, there to make the atonement, which is the cleansing of the sanctuary, and thus make ready a people for His kingdom, before He comes in the clouds of heaven to receive them to Himself. This shows why He did not come in 1844, when the prophecy said only that then the *sanctuary* should be *cleansed*. Instead of coming to this earth He was to enter into the second apartment of the sanctuary in heaven, and there close His work as priest, make an atonement, and cleanse the sanctuary. He does not do this every year, like the priests in the type, but in one great round of service once for all, beginning with His ascension to heaven, and ending with His second advent. In this work of cleansing the sanctuary he has been engaged since the end of the twenty-three hundred days, in 1844, according to the prophecy. When this is finished, then He will come the second time without sin (or a sin offering) unto salvation. *Hebrews 9:28.SDAWK 4.1*

Seeing, then, that Christ had entered the second apartment of the sanctuary to make the atonement, the minds of those who accepted this view were naturally led to consider that apartment, the furniture it contained, and the object of the work to be performed

therein. *SDAWK 5.1*

The most holy place of the sanctuary was the apartment in which the ark of the testament was always situated. *Exodus 25:16, 21; 31:18*. The ark was called the *ark of the testament*, because it contained the ten commandments, or testimony, written upon the two tables of stone by the finger of God. *Exodus 25:16; 31:18; Deuteronomy 10:5*. But John, as stated in *Revelation 11:19*, sees the ark in heaven, when that apartment of the heavenly temple where it is situated was opened; and it is there called “the ark of His testament,” for the reason that it contains the same law which gave it this name upon the earth. The law of the ten commandments, therefore, as placed in the sanctuary on earth, was simply a *copy* of those commandments which are in the ark in heaven. This connection between type and antitype demonstrates that the law in the ark in heaven must read just as it did in the ark on earth. This precludes utterly and forever the ideas of any change in the law. It can not possibly read one way in type, and a different way in the antitype; hence the seventh day of the law as it is in heaven, means just what it did when spoken from Sinai, and guarded every week by the threefold miracle of the manna given to the people in their journey of forty years to Canaan, every day, excepting the seventh day of the week. This was the seventh day of that week which has come down from that day to this, without change. It is, therefore, utterly futile to harbor the idea of any change in the law of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment of the decalogue, or the idea that that commandment has been abolished by the substitution of another day than the seventh day of the week, as the Lord’s day. Again, the twenty-three hundred days is the longest prophetic period brought to view in the Bible, and reaches down to a later point than any other; but this period has now ended; hence it will be seen that we can never set a time for the coming of the Lord; for no prophetic period revealed reaches to that advent; and there are, consequently, no data on which to build an argument in that respect. We are in that time of which the prophet speaks when he says: “Hence is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” *Revelation 14:12*. *SDAWK 5.2*

I.— All, of course, did not adopt the views you have suggested;

what became of the other Adventists when the time passed?*SDAWK 6.1*

A. — They went into great confusion and great fanaticism; but their fundamental error was in still holding to their old view of the sanctuary, and coming to the conclusion that the mistake was in regard to the time; for that made it logically necessary for them, ever afterward, to try to readjust the prophetic periods. Thus they fell into the error of continually setting new times for the Lord to appear, as often as the previous times set were proved to be wrong. In this work they were, of course, always doomed to disappointment. And this is one great difference between them and Seventh-day Adventists. Seventh-day Adventists let the arguments on the subject of time stand as they were, still believing them to be invulnerable, but their study of the sanctuary question elicited new light, which they followed. On the other hand, First-day Adventists still clung to their views of the subject of the sanctuary, and went to work to readjust their theory in regard to time, holding their former views on that subject to be wrong, and that the days have not yet ended. Hence, as already stated, they have been employed in fixing new times for the Lord to come. They can present no harmonious theory upon the point. They have set forth so many conflicting theories, one after another, that people have come to look upon their expositions as mere makeshifts and guesswork, which in reality they are, so far as they pertain to the prophetic periods. They are without chart and compass, and are making no impression upon the world.*SDAWK 6.2*

I. — Who are the pioneers in this work?*SDAWK 7.1*

A. — Elder Joseph Bates was the first to commence the observance of the Sabbath as connected with the third angel's message of *Revelation 14:9-12*, and was its pioneer in some of the western states; Elder James White was the founder of the publishing work; Mrs E.G. White, in the exercise of the gift of prophecy, one of the gifts expressly placed in the church, and designed to continue to the end (1 Cor., *Chap. 12; 1:7; Ephesians 4:7-13*,) has given the spiritual mould to the work; and Elder J. N. Andrews, with a mind of wonderful clearness and logical power, laid broad and deep the theoretical pillars on which our system of faith

rests. Mrs. White is still alive and active; all the others named have passed away.*SDAWK 7.2*

I. — Did not the death of these laborers retard your work, and threaten the very existence of your cause?*SDAWK 7.3*

A. — Many predicted that the movement would disintegrate and come to nothing when these able pioneers were taken away; but it has moved steadily forward, showing that it is not dependent upon men, however able and efficient they may be, or however prominently the Lord may have used them in the work.*SDAWK 8.1*

I. — Have you not had opposition and enemies to contest your progress?*SDAWK 8.2*

A. — Yes, opposition of every kind; the general opposition which comes from without, from open enemies, and opposition and defection which come from within. But such things we are to expect. The gospel net gathers of every kind. The Reformation had obstacles not only from open enemies and organized opposition of the established church, and the nations of the earth, but from fanatical movements of those who were its professed friends; and even the disciples of the Lord had a Judas among their number. There are always men who think everything is not just as it should be, and who seem to think that their skill is necessary to put things in proper shape, and to insure their continuance.*SDAWK 8.3*

Some have believed that a movement containing the doctrine of the Sabbath without that of the second advent, would be the right kind; others have thought that a cause having the doctrine of the advent without that of the Sabbath, would be more prosperous; others have claimed that the teaching of the advent and of the Sabbath without that of spiritual gifts, was necessary to the progress and triumph of the work; and all these have been tried sufficiently, it would seem, to satisfy the most exacting. The Seventh-day Baptists have the Sabbath without the advent; the First-day Adventists have the advent without the Sabbath. But what are they doing to influence the world, and draw them to their teaching? — Comparatively little. Factions have broken off from our own body who have had the advent and the Sabbath without spiritual gifts; but these have already entirely failed, or are eking out a precarious and feeble

existence. In 1854, 1856, and 1865, opposition of this kind broke out among us, but all having failed, we have a further object lesson, furnishing another evidence that the work is not of man, and that man can do nothing to overthrow it.*SDAWK 8.4*

Our cause has gone constantly forward with unretarded pace and unshaken credit; and these opposers have disappeared and been lost in the fog of their own creating.*SDAWK 9.1*

I. — You consider, I understand, the press an important factor in your work?*SDAWK 9.2*

A. -Yes; the publishing work was started by Elder White, already mentioned, as far back as 1849. In 1850, the first periodical, called the *Present Truth*, was enlarged, and the name changed to the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* This paper is still issued under the same name, as the organ of the denomination. The central office of publication is Battle Creek, Mich. Other periodicals have been added, until their present number amounts to twenty-two, in the leading languages of the world, besides the local papers issued in many of the thirty-six of our conferences, which cover the field of our work in this and foreign lands.*SDAWK 9.3*

I. — You also have an interest in educational matters?*SDAWK 9.4*

A. — Yes; over twenty-five years ago an interest began to be awakened in this line of work. It has grown until at this writing, 1896, we have six colleges, or seminaries, and several academies and industrial schools, besides numerous church schools.*SDAWK 10.1*

I. — In the medical and health lines, I learn you have some enterprises already in operation.*SDAWK 10.2*

A. — Yes; interest on these subjects has resulted in the establishment in Battle Creek, Mich., of the largest and most thoroughly equipped sanitarium in the world. Besides this, there are three others already opened in this country, and two in foreign lands, all of which are designed to be effective agents in medical missionary work. A medical college was opened last year. *SDAWK 10.3*

I. — How do you organize your churches and raise funds for your work?*SDAWK 10.4*

A. — Our organization is very simple. A body of believers associate together, taking the name of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of (whatever locality they may be in,) and adopt a covenant “to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” They have no creed but the Bible. Elders, deacons, and clerks are the officers employed. A local organization to hold church property is formed the same as in other denominations, according to the laws of the various states. Next to the churches come the state conferences, embracing all the churches in a state, or other district; next is the General Conference, embracing all the state conferences. This is the highest body, and its decisions, although only advisory, are generally cheerfully complied with by all the members of the organization. Tract and missionary societies, and Sabbath schools throughout our denomination, are organized on the same lines, the headquarters of the first being the “International Tract and Missionary Society,” at Battle Creek, Mich; that of the second being “The International Sabbath School Association,” at Oakland, Cal.*SDAWK 10.5*

Funds are provided by the adoption of the Bible system of tithing, and by free-will offerings. The tithe is the tenth of what comes into one’s hands for the support of himself and those dependent upon him. Free-will offerings are what one has the ability and disposition to give in addition to the tithe. Such a system leaves no occasion for a resort to such unscriptural methods of raising money as festivals, grab-bags, lotteries, donkey socials, broom brigades, kissing bees, wife auctions, and all that kind of buffoonery.*SDAWK 10.6*

Our membership for 1894 was 42,763, a gain in ten years of 24,061. Funds raised as just stated, in 1894 amounted to \$321,517.66, a gain in ten years of \$215,973.65. Thus in that decade, between 1884 and 1894. while the enemies of this work have been most active and unscrupulous in their efforts to retard our work, our cause, in both membership and regular church contributions, has more than doubled. In 1895 statistics showed 583 public laborers, 1,331 churches, and 47,680 members; an increase over 1894 of 68 public laborers, 106 churches, and 4,917

members.*SDAWK 11.1*

I. — What is your relation to the missionary work?*SDAWK 11.2*

A. — Great interest is developed in this line. Our workers are now operating in Mexico, Central America, West Indies, Columbia, Argentine, Chile, and Brazil, in the western hemisphere; they are going forth on our missionary brigantine, the *Pitcairn*, to the islands in the Pacific Ocean; in the east, they are entering Central, Southern, and Western Africa, Northern Europe, the Caucasus, Siberia, Asia Minor, Syria, China, India, and Burma. The results of these efforts are encouraging and gratifying. We are stirred to make them because we hold that the work committed to us is in fulfillment of *Matthew 24:14* and *Revelation 14:9*, and is enjoined upon us in the commission of Christ to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; for the nations of the earth must have an opportunity to learn the truth before the Lord appears to judge the world in righteousness.*SDAWK 11.3*

I. — How does it happen that your people are now coming into conflict with the powers of the state in so many places, and are being arrested and imprisoned? and what is the nature of your offense?*SDAWK 11.4*

A. — It is accounted for, first, on the general principles that the carnal heart is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (*Romans 8:7*;) that evil men and seducers shall, in the last days, wax worse and worse; that they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 *Timothy 3:1-12*;) and that the followers of Christ shall be hated of all nations (*Matthew 24:9*.) But more particularly it arises from one of the vital points of our faith not yet spoken of, and that is that the last part of the prophecy of *Revelation 13* applies to the United States. The Symbol there brought to view, having two horns like a lamb, is proved to belong to this country, from (1) its location, (2) its chronology, (3) its profession, (4) its manner of coming up, (5) its religious standing, (6) its political organization, (7) its progress, and (8) the wonder-working power (Spiritualism) that has been here developed. All these particulars have a wonderful fitness here, but can be found in no other nation. It is also a power that is to be opposed to true

religion, for it speaks “as a dragon,” and causes its subjects to worship the first beast, which is Roman Catholicism, and to receive its mark, which is the first-day Sabbath, set up by that church in the place of, and in opposition to, the seventh day, the Sabbath of the Lord. Whoever adopts the Sabbath of the Bible, necessarily rejects the Sunday, as a Sabbath which the Lord can not tolerate. But, unfortunately, the most of the states have brought over and incorporated into their laws, statutes for the observance of the first day of the week as the sabbath, from the old medieval, or church-and-state laws, adopted in ages of darkness, ignorance, and superstition; and religious bigots, who, when committed to error, are the bitterest opposers of the truth, now seize upon these old laws to try to break down the work of those who teach the keeping of the seventh day as the Sabbath, and are giving the message of *Revelation 14:9-12*, to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord.*SDAWK 11.5*

I. — But do not these Sunday laws require rest on that day simply on civil grounds, and can you not comply with that requirement without any violation of conscience?*SDAWK 12.1*

A. — To claim that a Sunday law is a *civil* law merely is a piece of sophistry too barefaced and shameful to be found, as it is so often, on the lips of the ministers of the gospel. Sunday has never been distinguished from the other days of the week, never had any honor conferred upon it, and never had any legislation in its behalf, except as a *religious* institution. It owes all these things to the fact that it has from the beginning been regarded by certain classes of people as a *religious* day; and except for that character, it never would have been brought into the position that it is in. It is just because, and *only* because, Sunday has been deemed a holy, sacred, and religious day, that *any law* has ever been made in its favor. Then how can it claim to be simply a civil institution? It can not possibly be; and a law which enforces it can not be anything else than a *religious* law, whatever men may call it. Giving the thing a different name does not change its nature. A Jew might have been compelled to eat the flesh of the swine on the plea that it could not conflict with his conscience, because they had decided to call the animal a sheep. Would it not have been swine’s flesh just the same? So a Sunday law can be nothing else but a religious law; for

it is such in its origin, in its nature, in its position in the religious world, and in its aim. Being such, the state has no right, according to our Constitution, to make a law concerning it, and to enforce that law upon the people. To enforce it is to infringe upon the rights and conscience of those who do not regard it as a sacred day. It is discriminating in matters of religion, and bringing oppression upon one class, from which others are exempted. *SDAWK 13.1*

I. — But must it not be, in such governments as this, that the majority must rule? and as the majority sustain the law for Sunday, ought you not, as the minority, to submit? *SDAWK 13.2*

A. — Yes; we are willing to go by that rule; but it must be decided by the nature of a question what constitutes a majority. In all religious questions, God must be taken into account; for He is the author of all true religion. Whatever side, then, God is on, that has a majority; for “God is always a majority.” The Sabbath is a religious institution, and God is on the side of His truth in that matter, and while we are with Him, we are with the majority. *SDAWK 13.3*

I. — But would it not be well to have patience and observe the law until it can be repealed, and have no conflict or trouble, such as seems to be taking place over this matter? *SDAWK 14.1*

A.— In all matters of human policy, or convenience, yes. However oppressive and unjust a law may be, if it has nothing which bears against our duty to God, nothing which infringes upon our rights of conscience, we will observe it, until, by agitation and discussion, a repeal can be lawfully secured; but in this religious realm it would not be very appropriate for the creature to say to the Creator, “Lord, I know what you require, and I would obey you, but my fellow-men will not allow me to do so; as soon as the law which forces me to disregard your requirements can be set aside, I will return to obedience to your laws.” How would the Lord regard such a servant? He says, “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me;” and who is your god? Is it your fellow-men, human lawmakers, or the Lord Jehovah? Peter expressed the true position on two occasions, when he said, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye” (*Acts 4:19*;) and again, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” *Acts 5:29*. Seventh-day

Adventists seek no unnecessary antagonism with any of the laws or customs of society. They try to obey the Saviour's injunction to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's;" but while they do this, they must also observe the other part of the injunction, "render unto God the things that are God's." Those things are God's which pertain to his worship, and are summarily expressed in the first table of the decalogue.*SDAWK 14.2*

Governments are ordained to secure protection to every man in his inalienable rights. In any of these matters which pertain only to the individual and his God, government must not interfere. If our government intends to carry out the noble aims and purposes of the founders of the nation, it will arise in the name of freedom, and wipe off from the escutcheon of this country every law that conflicts with the law of God, leaving every man free to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience; for it was this right, as the most sacred boon to men, which it was the design of the framers of the Constitution to secure to the people. But if the nation shall turn its back upon this glorious principle, it will seal its own doom, and that speedily.*SDAWK 14.3*

For more than fifty years Seventh-day Adventists have raised the warning voice that if the church should cling to her errors, and seek for the civil power to enforce her dogmas, the nation must resist such claims, or this government would become a persecuting power, and the image to the Papacy would here be formed, and papal oppression be enacted over again. The work has already begun. Over one hundred arrests have been made of those who have gone quietly about their useful and appropriate work on Sunday, after having rested on the Sabbath of the Lord, while the prosecutors have, in many cases, passed by the most flagrant violations of the law on the part of others, showing that the real purpose was to persecute those who kept the seventh day of the week, and because they kept it. We regret to have to say that the ministry of certain religious denominations are urging on this work of oppression, and trying to silence, not by reason and Scripture, but by the strong arm of the law, views which they are determined not to accept themselves, nor have their people accept. They forget that every plant that God has not planted is to be rooted up (*Matthew 15:13*;) that if the work is of man, it will come to nought;

but if it is of God, they can not overthrow it, but will only be found fighting against God (*Acts 5:38, 39.*) In their efforts to break down this work, they are demonstrating the fact that our position is right, and that what we are teaching is the truth; for it is just what the prophecy points out, and which we have for years been teaching was to come. The great controversy of the ages is involved in this question, and it is not to be settled in a corner. The agitation will increase, the discussion will become more widespread, and the bitterness of the opposers, we have reason to believe, will grow stronger and stronger.*SDAWK 15.1*

The question is, Shall God's way be vindicated, and His power maintained? or shall apposition to His throne and to His truth triumph at last? On the one side is the original rebel against God, the arch-deceiver, his evil angels, and wicked men; on the other are the loyal hosts of heaven, and the true followers of Christ on earth. Of this latter company we fain would be; and so we are trying to bear our testimony for Jesus, believing that happy are they who take their position on the side of Jehovah; for He will prove to be stronger than all his foes, and will bring His people at last triumphantly out of the conflict, and seat them with Himself upon a throne of such beauty and glory as earth has never seen, and of which men, in the loftiest flights of their imagination, have never dreamed.*SDAWK 16.1*

I. — That will, indeed, be a glorious issue; and it would certainly be strange if you were not earnest and zealous in your work, as you seem to be. The principles you set forth are mostly new to me, but they are surely worthy of thoughtful consideration; and I promise to give them careful attention and study.*SDAWK 16.2*

A. — I am rejoiced to hear you say so; and may He who is the Author of all truth, and desires all men to be saved, give you grace to carry out your resolution, and guide you to an understanding of His word. Truth alone will save; and truth grows brighter by investigation. We are persuaded that nothing less than the issues of eternity are involved in the question now before the world for its final solution.*SDAWK 16.3*

