

Fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists

About this statement on doctrines

The Statement of Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists as published in the *Church Manual* and the *Yearbook* is an endeavor to set forth in comprehensive form the doctrines that the Seventh-day Adventist Church holds. It is not intended as a creed, but, as the introduction to the statement affirms, as a way in which the church's beliefs "may be summarized."

For a number of years there has been a growing feeling among church members and workers that these beliefs should be restated so that they may be expressed more clearly and that certain points of faith not now covered should be included. For more than a year a group appointed by the General Conference has worked on this matter. Its members have taken wide counsel within the church and have been assisted by a group of scholars at the SDA Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

The statement of beliefs drawn up was pre-

sented to the 1979 Annual Council, which voted that the rewritten statement be recommended to the General Conference session in Dallas in April, 1980. The statement as adopted by the Annual Council appears below. We urgently invite church members to consider it carefully and to send comments or suggestions, if they have any, to: W. Duncan Eva, 6840 Eastern Avenue NW., Washington, D.C. 20012.

In the meantime, to assure that delegates to the General Conference session at Dallas are informed, copies of the recommended statement incorporating suggestions received from the world field thus far will be mailed to delegates at least six weeks before the session convenes.

In harmony with the accepted practice of the church and as required by the *Church Manual*, changes in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs must be adopted by the General Conference in session.—EDITORS.

Seventh-day Adventists hold certain doctrines to be the evident teaching of the Holy Scriptures. Affirming that the Bible sets forth a coherent body of truth, we believe:

1. The Holy Scriptures

That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through "holy men of God" who spoke and wrote as they were "moved by the Holy Spirit." These Scriptures are the all-sufficient, authoritative, and effective revelation of His gracious purpose and will. They are the source of all true doctrine and the only unerring standard of faith and practice. (2 Pet. 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 10:35; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.)

2. The Trinity

That there is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a self-existing Unity in Trinity. God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, transcendent and immanent, the absolute Reality whose infinite and personal being is a mystery forever beyond human comprehension. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:6, 7.)

3. God the Father

That God the eternal Father is the Creator, the ultimate Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all that is. He is infi-

nite and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11; John 3:16; 1 John 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:17; Ex. 34:6, 7.)

4. God the Son

That God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became truly man, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a man, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's Messiah. According to the Scriptures He suffered and died voluntarily for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people. (John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:15-19; John 10:30; 14:9; Rom. 5:18; 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Luke 1:35; Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Cor. 15:4; Heb. 2:9-18; 4:15; 7:25; 8:1, 2; 9:28; John 14:1-3; Rev. 22:20.)

5. God the Holy Spirit

That God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in creation, incarnation, and redemption. He in-

spired the writers of Scripture and filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts us, renews and transforms us into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with us, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and leads it into all truth. (Gen. 1:1, 2; Luke 1:35; 2 Pet. 1:21; Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:11, 12; Acts 1:8; John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26, 27; 16:7-13.)

6. Creation

That God, through Christ and by the power of His Spirit, is creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the only authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made "the heavens and the earth" and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. 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. When the world was finished it was "very good," declaring the glory of God. (Gen. 1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6-9; John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16, 17.)

7. The Nature of Man

That man and woman were made in the image of God and endowed with powers akin to those of their Creator. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment. Though created free beings, they are dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents denied their creatureliness and disobeyed, they fell from their high position under God, causing all of us to be born in sin. The image of God was distorted, affecting our whole being and existence and making us subjects of death. But God in Christ has reconciled us to Himself and by His Spirit is restoring in us the image of our Maker. (Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 8:4-8; Acts 17:24-28; Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12-17.)

8. The Great Controversy

That all humanity is now involved in a great controversy between God and Satan regarding the character of God's sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when in self-exaltation God's adversary, himself a created being, led into rebellion many of the angels whom God had created. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin by deceiving them in the Garden of Eden. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in man, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual destruction at the time of the Flood. Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, in which the love of God will ultimately be vindicated. As a help to us in this controversy, God sends the angels who remained loyal to Him to guide, protect, and sustain us in the way of salvation. (Rev. 12:4-9; Gen. 3:6-8; 2 Pet. 3:6; Rom. 1:19-32; 5:12-21;

8:19-22; Heb. 1:4-14; 1 Cor. 4:9; Isa. 14:12-14; Eze. 28:12-18.)

9. The Death of Christ

That in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, God Himself provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who accept this atonement by faith may have eternal life, and the whole creation understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator. This act of atonement forever establishes the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and forgives it. Thus the death of Christ is a complete and perfect atonement, substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming. (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; Rom. 3:25; 6:23; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Isa. 53.)

10. The Experience of Salvation

That in infinite love and mercy God has provided the way whereby we may be delivered from the penalty and power of sin. He "so loved the world that He gave His only Son," Jesus Christ the Righteous, who offered Himself a sacrifice for all, that we might be reconciled to God. For our sake He 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 exercise faith in Christ's substitutionary death and thus are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and granted an abiding assurance of salvation now and in the final judgment. Through the Spirit we are born again and delivered from the lordship of sin. In the experience of the new birth, the Spirit renews our minds, writes the law of God in our hearts, and provides the power for us to live a holy life. (Ps. 27:1; Isa. 12:2; Jonah 2:9; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Gal. 1:4; 2:19, 20; 3:13;

4:4-7; Rom. 3:24-26; 4:25; 5:6-10; 8:1-4, 14, 15, 26, 27; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 1 John 1:9; 2:1, 2; Eph. 2:5-10; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 3:16-19; John 3:3-8; Matt. 18:3; 1 Pet. 1:23; Heb. 8:7-12.)

11. The Church

That the Church is the company of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. 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 instruction in the Word, for fellowship, for the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and for the world-wide proclamation of the gospel. The Church finds and exercises its authority in Christ who is the incarnate Word, and in the Scriptures which are the written Word. The Church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head. The universal Church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ; but in a time of widespread apostasy a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant Church now calls all humanity to repent and prepare for the kingdom of God. (Deut. 4:20; Ex. 6:7; 2 Sam. 7:24; Matt. 16:13-20; 1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:11-16; Rev. 14:6-12.)

12. Unity in the Body of Christ

That the Church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; former distinctions of race, culture, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, have ceased to be divisive among us. For we are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one an-

other in the church at large and in the local congregations where we serve and are served without partiality or reservation. Through one baptism and the breaking of the one Bread, we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity finds its source and goal in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children. (Ps. 133:1; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; Acts 17:26, 27; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Gal. 3:27-29; Col. 3:10-15; Eph. 4:1-6; John 17:20-23; James 2:2-9; 1 John 5:1.)

13. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

That through baptism and the Lord's Supper we are united to Christ and to the Church which is His body, becoming His people, acknowledging His Lordship, and sharing in His death and resurrection life. Baptism is by immersion, is contingent upon faith and repentance, and signifies the forgiveness of sins and the reception of the Holy Spirit. It follows instruction in Christian truth, and is an event of faith in which we enter into Christ's death, so that as He was raised from the dead we too might walk in newness of life. The Lord's Supper, open to all who believe in Christ, is a participation in His body and blood; in this experience of communion Christ is present to meet and strengthen His people. As we partake of the appointed emblems, we are one body, joyfully proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes again. In preparation for the Supper, Christ ordained the service of foot washing, giving us a means to seek renewed cleansing, express our willingness to serve one another in humility, and unite our hearts in love. (Matt. 3:13-16; 28:19, 20; Acts 2:38; 16:30-33; Rom. 6:1-6; Col. 2:11, 12; Gal. 3:27, 28; 1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 6:17; Matt. 26:17-30; 1 Cor. 11:23-30; 10:16, 17; John 6:48-63; Rev. 3:20; John 13:1-17.)

14. Spiritual Gifts

That God has placed in His church spiritual gifts, which are "inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills." These gifts will continue in the Church to equip the saints for ministry, to build up the body of Christ, and to develop the unity of the faith. (1 Cor. 12, 13; Eph. 4:8, 11-13.)

15. The Spirit of Prophecy

That the presence of the spiritual gift of prophecy is an identifying mark of the remnant Church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger she provided guidance to the Church, instruction in the Scriptures, and counsel for spiritual growth. Her writings uplift the Scriptures as the standard of faith and practice, and function as a continuing source of divine counsel. (Joel 2:27, 28; Acts 2:14-21; Rev. 12:17; 19:10.)

16. The Mission of the Remnant Church

That we are called to proclaim the arrival of the judgment hour and the approach of the Second Advent, in harmony with Christ's commission to

Night symphony

By MRS. LEONARD M. LARSON

*When the night hours come in softly like a black velvet fog,
Pulling a mantle over the struggles of the day,
Enfolding assurance that God is near,
A weary content, tranquility penetrates the soul.
There's time to wonder at the glory of the heavens.
Listen to the quiet night noises, God's symphony,
A restful accompaniment to my prayers.*

preach the gospel to the whole creation and with God's plan of warning humanity of coming events that affect its destiny. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with a work of judgment in heaven, and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a part in this world-wide witness. (Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:18-20; 24:14; Amos 3:6, 7; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 14:6-12; 2 Pet. 3:11-14.)

17. The Ministries of the Church

That the work of the Church is accomplished through a variety of ministries, which find their source and mandate in Christ's own ministry. These include the ministry of proclamation, the ministry of intercession, the ministry of healing, the ministry of teaching, the ministry of administration, and the ministry of compassion. Persons are called by God, endowed with the Spirit, and are set aside by the Church for the specific tasks required by these ministries. (2 Cor. 5:14-21; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Rom. 12:4-8; Eph. 4:11, 12; Acts 6:1-7.)

18. The Ten Commandments

That the Ten Commandments are an expression of God's will concerning human conduct and relationships, and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are part of God's covenant with His people; they point out sin, the penalty of which is death, awaken our sense of need for a Saviour, and are the standard of God's judgment. Though our salvation is all of grace and not of works, it leads to obedience to the Commandments. This obedience which brings well-being is an evidence of our love for our Lord and our concern for our fellow men. (Ex. 20:1-17; Matt. 5:17; Deut. 28:1-14; Ps. 19:7-13; John 14:15; Rom. 8:1-4; 1 John 5:3; Matt. 22:36-40.)

19. The Sabbath

That the fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath as a day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of our Lord. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. Joyful observance of this holy time from sunset to sunset is a celebration of God's creative acts, a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; 31:12-17; Luke 4:16; Heb. 4:1-11; Deut. 5:12-15; Isa. 58:13, 14; Lev. 23:32.)

20. Stewardship

That we are stewards, responsible to God and to our fellow men for the use of our time and opportunities, our abilities and possessions, which He has placed in our charge. We acknowledge God's ownership by our work and faithful service and by returning tithes and giving offerings, for the advancement of His gospel and the support of His church. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15; Hag. 1:3-

11; Mal. 3:8-12; Matt. 23:23; 1 Cor. 9:9-14.)

21. Style of Life

That we are called to be a godly people, rejecting all worldly principles and unholy practices, and allowing the Spirit to reproduce in us the character of our Lord. We are to dress neatly and modestly, avoiding ostentation and jewelry while seeking instead the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Recognizing ourselves to be temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to take intelligent care of our bodies. We are to adopt a healthful diet that excludes unclean foods; to abstain from alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the harmful use of drugs and narcotics; and to turn away from every defiling practice. We are to bring every thought into captivity to Christ, directing our minds to that which is true, just, pure, and gracious. (1 John 2:6; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31; 1 Tim. 2:9, 10; Lev. 11:1-47; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Pet. 3:1-4; 2 Cor. 10:5; Phil. 4:8.)

22. Marriage and the Family

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. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus said that "whoever divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery." Marriages may fall short of the ideal, but through the guidance of the Spirit and with the assistance of the Church those who have thus committed themselves to each other may maintain loving unity in Christ. When God blessed the first husband and wife and told them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, He intended the family to help each of its members toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children in the admonition of the Lord, teaching them by precept and example and leading them to become members of the body of Christ and the family of God. (Gen. 2:18-25; Deut. 6:5-9; John 2:1-11; Eph. 5:21-33; Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:3-9; Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:1-4.)

23. Death and Resurrection

That for all human beings death is a condition of unconsciousness until their resurrection. Immortality will be bestowed upon the redeemed at the second coming of Christ, when the righteous dead are raised from the grave and the righteous living translated to meet their Lord. The resurrection of the unrighteous will take place a thousand years later, at the close of the millennium. (Ps. 146:4; Eccl. 9:5, 6; John 5:28, 29; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; Rev. 20:1-10.)

24. The Heavenly Sanctuary and the Judgment

That there is in heaven a sanctuary in which Christ ministers in our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once

for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension; He entered the second and last phase of this atoning work in 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days. Thus began an investigative judgment, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. This work reveals who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore worthy of a part in the first resurrection, and who among the living are abiding in Him and therefore worthy of translation. The completion of this work will mark the close of human probation before the second coming of Christ. (Heb. 8:1-5; 9:11-28; Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27; Lev. 16; 1 Pet. 4:17, 18; Rev. 20:12; 22:12.)

25. The Second Advent of Christ

That the second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the Church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Saviour's coming will be literal, personal, and visible; and when He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, the righteous living, translated, the unrighteous living, destroyed. Then the saints will be received into His everlasting kingdom. The almost complete fulfillment of many lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ's coming is "near, even at the door." The exact time of that event has never been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times. (Tit. 2:13; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 2 Thess. 2:8; Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Joel 3:9-16; Heb. 9:28.)

26. The Millennium and the End of Sin

That the millennium is the time of Christ's reign with His saints in heaven between the first and second resurrection, after which Satan and his angels and the finally impenitent will be destroyed. During the millennium the earth will be without human inhabitant and utterly desolate; at its close Christ with His saints and the Holy City will descend from heaven to earth. The wicked will then be resurrected, and with Satan at their head will attack the City; but fire from God will consume them and cleanse the earth. The universe will thus be freed of sin and sinners. (Rev. 20; Zech. 14:1-4; Mal. 4:1; Jer. 4:23-26.)

27. The New Earth

That God will make "new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells," an eternal home for the redeemed and a perfect environment for everlasting life and love and learning in the presence of God. For here God Himself will dwell with His people, and death and pain 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 will reign forever. Amen. (2 Pet. 3:13; Gen. 17:1-8; Isa. 35; 65:17-25; Matt. 5:5; Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5; 11:15.) □