



Fundamentals of What We Believe

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS.

1889 Yearbook (pages 147-151)

As elsewhere stated, Seventh-day Adventists have no creed but the Bible; but they hold to certain well-defined points of faith, for which they feel prepared to give a reason "to every man that asketh" them. The following propositions may be taken as a summary of the principal features of their religious faith, upon which there is, so far as we know, entire unanimity throughout the body.

They believe,—

I. That there is one God, a personal, spiritual being, the creator of all things, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal; infinite in wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and mercy; unchangeable, and everywhere present by his representative, the Holy Spirit. Ps. 139:7.

II. That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom he created all things, and by whom they do consist; that he took on him the nature of the seed of Abraham for the redemption of our fallen race; that he dwelt among men, full of grace and truth, lived our example, died our sacrifice, was raised for our justification, ascended on high to be our only mediator in the sanctuary in heaven, where, through the merits of his shed blood, he secures the pardon and forgiveness of the sins of all those who penitently come to him; and as the closing portion of his work as priest, before he takes his throne as king, he will make the great atonement for the sins of all such, and their sins will then be blotted out (Acts 3:19) and borne away from the sanctuary, as shown in the service of the Levitical priesthood, which foreshadowed and prefigured the ministry of our Lord in heaven. See Lev. 16; Heb. 8:4, 5; 9:6, 7; etc.*

*NOTE.—Some thoughtless persons accuse us of rejecting the atonement of Christ entirely, because we dissent from the view that the atonement was made upon the cross, as is generally held. But we do nothing of the kind; we only take issue as to the time when the atonement is to be made. We object to the view that the atonement was made upon the cross, because it is utterly contrary to the type, which placed the atonement at the end of the yearly sanctuary service, not at the beginning (see scriptures last referred to), and because it inevitably leads to one of two great errors. Thus, Christ on the cross bore the sins of all the world. John said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away [margin, beareth] the sin of the world!" John 1:29. Peter tells us when he thus bore the sins of the world: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." 1 Peter 2:24. Paul says that "he died for all." 2 Cor. 5:14, 15. That which Christ did upon the cross, therefore, was done indiscriminately and unconditionally for all the world; and if this was the atonement, then the sins of all the world have been atoned for, and all will be saved. This is Universalism in full blossom. But all men will not be saved; hence the sins of all were not atoned for upon the cross; and if Christ's work there was the atonement, then his work was partial, not universal, as the scriptures above quoted assert, and he atoned for only a favored few who were elected to be saved, and passed by all others who were predestined to damnation. This would establish the doctrine of election and predestination in its most ultra form,—an error equally unscriptural and objectionable with the former. We avoid both these errors, and find ourselves in harmony with the Mosaic type, and with all the declarations of the Scriptures, when we take the position that what Christ did upon the cross was to provide a divine sacrifice for the world, sufficient to save all, and offered it to every one who will accept of it; that he then, through the merits of his offering, acts as mediator with the Father till time shall end, securing the forgiveness of sins for all who seek him for it; and that, as the last service of his priesthood, he will blot out the sins of all who have repented and been converted (Acts 3:19), the atonement not being completed till this work of blotting out sin is done. Thus Christ atones, not for the sins of the whole world, to save all, not for a favored few only, elected from all eternity to be saved, but for those who, as free moral agents, have voluntarily sought from him the forgiveness of sin, and everlasting life. And all for whom the atonement is made, will be forever saved in his kingdom. This view in no way detracts from the merit of Christ's offering, nor from the value and glory of his atoning work for men. While on this line, we are not driven into Universalism on the one hand, nor into election and reprobation on the other.

III. That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, contain a full revelation of his will to man, and are the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

IV. That baptism is an ordinance of the Christian church, to follow faith and repentance,—an ordinance by which we commemorate the resurrection of Christ, as by this act we show our faith in his burial and resurrection, and through that, in the resurrection of all the saints at the last day; and that no other mode more fitly represents these facts than that which the Scriptures prescribe, namely, immersion. Rom. 6: 3-5; Col. 2: 12.

V. That the new birth comprises the entire change necessary to fit us for the kingdom of God, and consists of two parts; First, a moral change wrought by conversion and a Christian life (John 3: 3, 5); second, a physical change at the second coming of Christ, whereby, if dead, we are raised incorruptible, and if living, are changed to immortality in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Luke 20: 36; 1 Cor. 15: 51, 52.

VI. That prophecy is a part of God's revelation to man; that it is included in that Scripture which is profitable for instruction (2 Tim. 3: 16); that it is designed for us and our children (Deut. 29: 29); that so far from being enshrouded in impenetrable mystery, it is that which especially constitutes the word of God a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Ps. 119: 105; 2 Peter 1: 19); that a blessing is pronounced upon those who study it (Rev. 1:1-3); and that, consequently, it is to be understood by the people of God sufficiently to show them their position in the world's history and the special duties required at their hands.

VII. That the world's history from specified dates in the past, the rise and fall of empires, and the chronological succession of events down to the setting up of God's everlasting kingdom, are outlined in numerous great chains of prophecy; and that these prophecies are now all fulfilled except the closing scenes.

VIII. That the doctrine of the world's conversion and a temporal millennium is a fable of these last days, calculated to lull men into a state of carnal security, and cause them to be overtaken by the great day of the Lord as by a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5: 3); that the second coming of Christ is to precede, not follow, the millennium; for until the Lord appears, the papal power, with all its abominations, is to continue (2 Thess. 2: 8), the wheat and tares grow together (Matt. 13: 29, 30, 39), and evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, as the word of God declares. 2 Tim. 3: 1, 13.

IX. That the mistake of Adventists in 1844 pertained to the nature of the event then to transpire, not to the time; that no prophetic period is given to reach to the second advent, but that the longest one, the two thousand and three hundred days of Dan. 8:14, terminated in 1844, and brought us to an event called the cleansing of the sanctuary.*

*The Adventists of 1844 expected that the end of the world would come in that year because they held that certain prophecies would then transpire, which they believed reached to the coming of the Lord. Chief among these was the prophecy of Dan. 8, 13, 14, which says that at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days (years) the sanctuary should be cleansed. They believed that the earth was the sanctuary then to be cleansed, and that its cleansing was to be accomplished with fire, which would accompany the manifestation of the Lord from heaven. From these premises, the conclusion seemed inevitable that when the 2300 years ended, in 1844, the Lord would come.

But the day passed by, and no Saviour appeared. Suspended between hope and fear, and waiting until every plausible allowance for possible inaccuracies of reckoning and variations of time, was exhausted, it became at length apparent that a great mistake had been made, and that the mistake must be on one or both of the following points: either, first, the period of the 2300 days did not end at that time, and they had made a mistake in supposing that they would terminate in that year; or, secondly, the cleansing of the sanctuary was not to be the burning of the earth at the second coming of Christ, and hence they had made a mistake in expecting such an event at that time. While there was a possibility that they had made a mistake on both these points, it was certain that they had made a mistake on one of them; and either one would be sufficient to account for the fact that the Lord did not then appear.

X. That the sanctuary of the new covenant is the tabernacle of God in heaven, of which Paul speaks in Hebrews 8 and onward, and of which our Lord, as great high priest, is minister; that this sanctuary is the antitype of the Mosaic tabernacle, and that the priestly work of our Lord, connected therewith, is the antitype of the work of the Jewish priests of the former dispensation (Heb. 8:1-5, etc.); that this, and not the earth, is the sanctuary to be cleansed at the end of the two thousand and three hundred days, what is termed its cleansing being in this case, as in the type, simply the entrance of the high priest into the most holy place, to finish the round of service connected therewith, by making the atonement and removing from the sanctuary the sins which had been transferred to it by means of the ministration in the first apartment (Lev. 16; Heb. 9:22, 23); and that this work in the antitype, beginning in 1844, consists in actually blotting out the sins of believers (Acts 3:19), and occupies a brief but indefinite space of time, at the conclusion of which the work of mercy for the world will be finished, and the second advent of Christ will take place.

XI. That God's moral requirements are the same upon all men in all dispensations; that these are summarily contained in the commandments spoken by Jehovah from Sinai, engraven on the tables of stone, and deposited in the ark, which was in consequence called the "ark of the covenant," or testament (Num. 10:33; Heb. 9:4, etc.); that this law is immutable and perpetual, being a transcript of the tables deposited in the ark in the true sanctuary on high, which is also, for the same reason, called the ark of God's testament; for under the sounding of the seventh trumpet we are told that "the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament." Rev. 11:19.

XII. That the fourth commandment of this law requires that we devote the seventh day of each week, commonly called Saturday, to abstinence from our own labor, and to the performance of sacred and religious duties; that this is the only weekly Sabbath known to the Bible, being the day that was set apart before Paradise was lost (Gen. 2:2, 3), and which will be observed in Paradise restored (Isa. 66:22, 23); that the facts upon which the Sabbath institution is based confine it to the seventh day, as they are not true of any other day; and that the terms Jewish Sabbath, as applied to the seventh day, and Christian Sabbath, as applied to the first day of the week, are names of human invention, unscriptural in fact, and false in meaning.

A movement which had enlisted the whole interest of thousands upon thousands, and thrilled their hearts with enthusiastic hope, was not to be abandoned, especially by its more conservative and sincere adherents, without earnest thought and reflection. The whole field of evidence was therefore carefully re-surveyed. It soon became apparent that two methods were being adopted to account for the fact that the Lord did not come when he was expected, and to explain the consequent disappointment. One class at one rash bound, reached the conclusion that they had made a mistake in the time, and that the prophetic periods had not expired. This was, of course, to abandon the whole previous movement, with all its accompanying manifestations of divine power; for if the time was wrong, everything was wrong.

Another class, impressed with the fact that God had given too much evidence of his connection with the movement to allow them to abandon it, carefully reviewed the evidence on every point. The result with them was a clearer conviction of the strength and harmony of the argument on chronology. They saw no ground to change their views upon the reckoning of the time, but felt more convinced than ever that the 2300 days were correctly applied, and that they terminated at the time appointed in 1844. This they became satisfied that the error lay in their previous views of the subject of the sanctuary and its cleansing, and that they had made a mistake in supposing that the earth would be burned at the end of the 2300 days, because the prophecy said that then the "sanctuary" should "be cleansed." This brings us to note the difference between Seventh-day Adventists and those called First-day Adventists, as respects chronology. The latter, believing that the prophetic periods were given to make known the time of Christ's coming, and that they have not yet ended, are held to one of two conclusions; either that all that is said in the Bible about these periods is so much of revelation unrevealed, or else that the time of Christ's coming is to be known. The first conclusion, as consistent believers in the Bible, they cannot adopt, and hence their continual efforts to re-adjust the prophetic periods, and fix upon some new time for Christ to come. From this has arisen, in these later years, all the fantastic time-setting which has very naturally disgusted the world, and worse than this, has brought a stigma of reproach upon all prophetic study. On the other hand, Seventh-day Adventists set no time. While they believe that the prophetic periods are to be understood, they believe also that these periods have been correctly interpreted, and have all terminated; so that now there is no data from which to reason respecting a definite time for the Lord to come.

XIII. That as the man of sin, the papacy, has thought to change times and laws (the law of God, Dan. 7:25), and has misled almost all Christendom in regard to the fourth commandment, we find a prophecy of a reform in this respect to be wrought among believers just before the coming of Christ. Isa. 56:1, 2; 1 Peter 1:5; Rev. 14:12, etc.

XIV. That the followers of Christ should be a peculiar people, not following the maxims, nor conforming to the ways, of the world; not loving its pleasures nor countenancing its follies; inasmuch as the apostle says that "whosoever therefore will be" in this sense, "a friend of the world, is the enemy of God" (James 4:4); and Christ says that we cannot have two masters, or, at the same time, serve God and mammon. Matt. 6:24.

XV. That the Scriptures insist upon plainness and modesty of attire as a prominent mark of discipleship in those who profess to be the followers of Him who was, "meek and lowly in heart," that the wearing of gold, pearls, and costly array, or anything designed merely to adorn the person and foster the pride of the natural heart, is to be discarded, according to such scriptures as 1 Tim. 2:9, 10; 1 Peter 3:3, 4.

XVI. That means for the support of evangelical work among men should be contributed from love to God and love of souls, not raised by church lotteries, or occasions designed to contribute to the fun-loving, appetite-indulging propensities of the sinner, such as fairs, festivals, oyster suppers, tea, broom, donkey, and crazy socials, etc., which are a disgrace to the professed church of Christ; that the proportion of one's income required in former dispensation can be no less under the gospel; that it is the same as Abraham (whose children we are, if we are Christ's, Gal. 3:29) paid to Melchisedec (type of Christ) when he gave him a tenth of all (Heb. 7:1-4); the title is the Lord's (Lev. 27:30); and this tenth of one's income is also to be supplemented by offerings from those who are able, for the support of the gospel. 2 Cor. 9:6; Mal. 3:8, 10.

XVII. That as the natural or carnal heart is at enmity with God and his law, this enmity can be subdued only by a radical transformation of the affections, the exchange of unholy for holy principles; that this transformation follows repentance and faith, is the special work of the Holy Spirit, and constitutes regeneration, or conversion.

XVIII. That as all have violated the law of God, and cannot of themselves render obedience to his just requirements, we are dependent on Christ, first, for justification from our past offenses, and, secondly, for grace whereby to render acceptable obedience to his holy law in time to come.

XIX. That the Spirit of God was promised to manifest itself in the church through certain gifts, enumerated especially in 1 Cor. 12 and Eph. 4; that these gifts are not designed to supersede, or take the place of, the Bible, which is sufficient to make us wise unto salvation, any more than the Bible can take the place of the Holy Spirit; that, in specifying the various channels of its operation, that Spirit has simply made provision for its own existence and presence with the people of God to the end of time, to lead to an understanding of that word which it had inspired, to convince of sin, and to work a transformation in the heart and life; and that those who deny to the Spirit its place and operation, do plainly deny that part of the Bible which assigns to it this work and position.

XX. That God, in accordance with his uniform dealings with the race, sends forth a proclamation of the approach of the second advent of Christ; and that this work is symbolized by the three messages of Revelation 14, the last one bringing to view the work of reform on the law of God, that his people may acquire a complete readiness for that event.

XXI. That the time of the cleansing of the sanctuary (See proposition X.), synchronizing with the time of the proclamation of the third message (Rev. 14:9, 10), is a time of investigative judgment, first, with reference to the dead, and secondly, at the close of probation, with reference to the living, to determine who of the myriads now sleeping in the dust of the earth are worthy of a part in the first resurrection, and who of its living multitudes are worthy of translation, — points which must be determined before the Lord appears.

XXII. That the grave, whether we all tend, expressed by the Hebrew word sheol and the Greek word hades, is a place, or condition, in which there is no work, device, wisdom, nor knowledge. Eccl. 9:10.

XXIII. That the state to which we are reduced by death is one of silence, inactivity, and entire unconsciousness. Ps. 146:4; Eccl. 9:5, 6; Dan. 12:2.

XXIV. That out of this prison-house of the grave, mankind are to be brought by a bodily resurrection; the righteous having part in the first resurrection, which takes place at the second coming of Christ; the wicked, in the second resurrection, which takes place in a thousand years thereafter. Rev. 20:4-6.

XXV. That at the last trump, the living righteous are to be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and with the risen righteous are to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, so forever to be with the Lord. 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52.

XXVI. That these immortalized ones are then taken to heaven, to the New Jerusalem, the Father's house, in which there are many mansions (John 14:1-3), where they reign with Christ a thousand years, judging the world and fallen angels, that is, apportioning the punishment to be executed upon them at the close of the one thousand years (Rev. 20:4; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3); that during this time the earth lies in a desolate and chaotic condition (Jer. 4:23-27), described, as in the beginning, by the Greek term abussos ?? "bottomless pit" (Septuagint of Gen. 1:2); and that here Satan is confined during the thousand years (Rev. 20:1, 2), and here finally destroyed (Rev. 20:10; Mal. 4:1); the theater of the ruin he has wrought in the universe being appropriately made, for a time, his gloomy prison-house, and then the place of his final execution.

XXVII. That at the end of the thousand years the Lord descends with his people and the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2), the wicked dead are raised, and come up on the surface of the yet unrenewed earth, and gather about the city, the camp of the saints (Rev. 20:9), and fire comes down from God out of heaven and devours them. They are then consumed, root and branch (Mal. 4:1), becoming as though they had not been. Obad. 15, 16. In this everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord (2 Thess. 1:9), the wicked meet the "everlasting punishment" threatened against them (Matt. 25:46), which is everlasting death. Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:14, 15. This is the perdition of ungodly men, the fire which consumes them being the fire for which "the heavens and the earth, which are now, . . . are kept in store." which shall melt even the elements with its intensity, and purge the earth from the deepest stains of the curse of sin. 2 Peter 3:7-12.

XXVIII. That new heavens and a new earth shall spring by the power of God from the ashes of the old, and this renewed earth, with the New Jerusalem for its metropolis and capital, shall be the eternal inheritance of the saints, the place where the righteous shall evermore dwell. 2 Peter 3:13; Ps. 37:11, 29; Matt. 5:5.