

CHAPTER 2

**THE DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE
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It is widely believed that all Protestant churches are the same but in actuality it is not true. One particular church that is seemingly different from other Christian denominations is the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA). Basically, their teachings are rooted in the works of Jesus Christ as recounted in the *Bible*, which is the same with all Christian groups, but they have different beliefs and practices. In the previous chapter, the various features of Khasi-Jaintia society prior to the advent of the SDA missionaries to Khasi-Jaintia Hills have been discussed. This includes the analysis done on the changes in the social, cultural and religious conditions during the same period. It has also been pointed that there were many reasons that Seventh-day Adventism was almost completely shunned out of previous works done on Christianity and Christian missions. This treatment was perhaps due to the features of the SDA in its beliefs and practices which are different from other Christian denominations. Therefore this chapter deals with the philosophy of the church as reflected in its doctrines which distinguishes it from other denominations. Secondly, given the importance of the study on the history of SDA across the globe in general and Khasi-Jaintia in particular, it is appropriate to continue the examination by focusing on its beliefs and practices because they were the determining factors for its involvement in mission works in the region and contribution to comprehensive social development.

First and foremost the SDA is distinguished by its theology. This is due to the fact that the Adventists differed from other Christians in understanding and interpretation of certain parts of the Bible.¹ These were incorporated in the doctrinal teachings of the SDA which were compiled into a set of twenty eight statements known to the Adventists as the ‘28 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventists’. This chapter focuses on this doctrine from the historical and philosophical perspective and not from the theological. However, emphasis is laid on the doctrines which are different from those of other Christians. For the convenience

¹ Francis D. Nichol, et.al (eds.), *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. I, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, 1978, p.11.

of the study and the nature of these beliefs, the 28 beliefs can be and have been clubbed into six categories such as Fundamental Belief System of SDA, Institutional Dimensions: Church, Ministry and Sacrament, Emphasis on Christian Ethics and Life Style, Eschatological Teaching of the Church, SDA and other Christian faiths and the Seventh-Day Adventists and the World.

FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF SYSTEM OF SDA

First and foremost are the fundamental belief system of the SDA which include the doctrines on the understanding of the *Bible*, the Trinity, creation, fall, redemption, spiritual gifts, and the Sabbath.

Bible: The acceptance of the *Bible* as the religious book for the SDA is reflected in the first beliefs of the Church cited as ‘Holy Scriptures’.² However, there are opinions that the Adventists used two more versions of the *Bible*,³ *The Study Bible* and *The Clear Word Bible*,⁴ though the latter is not officially endorsed by the SDA. There were opinions that many of the Biblical texts in *The Clear Word Bible* were altered and writings of Ellen White are inserted in between the text.⁵

Trinity: The belief in the Trinity⁶ is another fundamental belief of the SDA which adds weight to the SDA’s alignment with other denominations.⁷ Although the concept of trinity is accepted by other denominations, it is interesting to note that

² General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventist, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013*, Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Maryland, 2013, (hereafter, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013*) p.7; also see General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, U.S.A., Revised, 1986, (hereafter, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*) p.23.

³ Protestant denominations mostly use King James Version and the Roman Catholic denominations use their own versions.

⁴ *The Clear Word Bible* (1994) was authored by Jack J. Blanco, former dean of the School of Religion at Southern Adventist University, Tennessee.

⁵ Matt Slick, “Introduction to the Seventh-day Adventist Clear Word Bible”, <https://carm.org/clear-word-bible-intro>. accessed on 18th April 2013.

⁶ *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013*, *op.cit.*, p.7; *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, *op.cit.*, p.23.

⁷ Trinity is the belief that there is one God in three persons, viz., ‘Father’, ‘Son’ and ‘Holy Spirit’. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, in Christian belief the Holy Spirit is also called Holy Ghost. Numerous outpourings of the Spirit are mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles of the New Testament, in which healing, prophecy, the expelling of demons, and speaking in tongues are particularly associated with the activity of the Spirit.

initially the founders of the SDA were against the concept of trinity.⁸ However, in the late 1890s, Ellen White in her writings supported this concept, although she never used the word ‘Trinity’ herself.⁹ In 1931, the word ‘trinity’ appeared in the Adventist statement of beliefs¹⁰ but it was entered as official statement of the fundamental beliefs of the Church in 1980.¹¹ Hence, the understanding of the three persons (‘Father’, ‘Son’ and ‘Holy Spirit’) in one God was systematically outlined in the third, fourth and fifth statements of the fundamental beliefs of the SDA respectively.

Creation: Closely related to the SDA’s fundamental belief in the Trinity is the relationship and participation of divine powers in the creation of the world and humankind. According to Biblical accounts, it is believed that God created “the heaven and the earth” and all living things in six days, and rested on the seventh day. The Adventists referred to this seventh day as the Sabbath, a perpetual memorial of the completion of God’s work.¹² The publication of Charles Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* in 1859 started a debate on the whole issue of creation¹³ and the SDA pioneers were not affected by the same. Unlike the other denominations,¹⁴ there was less opposition from the Adventists of the view of Darwin.¹⁵ The openness of the SDA to new scientific discoveries is clear from a writing of Ronald L. Carter, an Adventist scholar and minister:

We must be humble about discoveries in science as well as those in theology.. In addition, we should be charitable to others as we discuss these issues. We can't assume that someone who speaks in support of evolution necessarily supports atheism or theistic evolution.¹⁶

⁸ Russell Holt, “The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination: Its Rejection and Acceptance,” term paper, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1969.

⁹ Gerhard Pfandl, “The Doctrine of the Trinity among Seventh-day Adventists”, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol.17, No.1, 2006, pp.178-179.

¹⁰ General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventist, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1931*, Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Maryland, 1931.

¹¹ Declared at the General Conference held at Dallas in 1980, statement of Fundamental Beliefs reiterates that “there is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons.”

¹² *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013*, op. cit., p.7; *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, op. cit., p.23.

¹³ For details see Ronald L. Numbers, *Darwinism Comes to America*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 1998.

¹⁴ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1972, p.768.

¹⁵ Molleurus Couperus, “Seventh-day Adventists and Evolution”, *Ministry*, June, 1942, p.27.

¹⁶ Ronald L. Carter, “Should Adventists Consider Evolution?”, *Ministry*, September 2005, p.14-15.

This raised the question that despite the Adventists' strong emphasis on the literal six-days creation of the *Bible*, they are not very critical against Darwin's Theory of Evolution. Moreover, Ellen White is of the view that the earth is around 6000 years old. Therefore, while the Adventists mostly based their arguments on the opinions and writings of Ellen White,¹⁷ it seems they also have double stage theory when it comes to this debate.¹⁸

Fall and Redemption: Another aspect of creation is further elaborated in another fundamental belief of the SDA. This belief pertains to the understanding of the nature of man and woman.¹⁹ In addition to this, according to Adventist philosophy, the concept of the fall of human into sins and the redemption of human can be explained in two main aspects, the 'great controversy' and the atonement²⁰ for sins. Like all Christians, the Adventists believed that sin was introduced by Satan into the world and in the attempt to rebel against God; he misled the people who fell prey to universal conflict. In order to vindicate godliness, the Creator assists His people by sending Christ, the Holy Spirit and the angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in order to attain salvation.²¹ However, unlike them, the Adventists hold the view that because of sin, those who reject the law of God will be ultimately destroyed while believers will be saved by God's grace. It is interesting to note that the concept of hell is absent among the SDA. They further believed that after the final judgement, there

¹⁷ Frank M. Hasel, "Ellen G. White and Creationism: How to Deal with Her Statements on Creation and Evolution: Implications and Prospects", *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 17/1, 2006, pp.229–244.

¹⁸ Pfandl wrote "Millions of years ago God created the core globe of our earth, and 6-10,000 years ago he created all living organisms and their habitations in six days... According to the E. G. White laser-disc concordance, there are forty-two 6000-year and forty-one 4000-year statements in her writings. The former refers to the time since creation, the latter to the time from creation to the birth of Christ. It is from these statements that Spirit of Prophecy support has been garnered among Seventh-day Adventists for the commonly held belief that the earth is only about six thousand years old." See, Gerhard Pfandl, "Ellen G. White and Earth Science", *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol.14, No.1, 2003, p.187.

¹⁹ *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013, op.cit.*, p.7; *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, op.cit.*, pp.24-25.

²⁰ In Christian theology, 'atonement' means the reconciliation of God and mankind through the death of Jesus Christ at the cross.

²¹ *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013, op.cit.*, p.7; *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, op.cit.*, pp.24-25.

will be the establishment of a 'New Earth.' It will be the eternal peace and joy for God's people while the rest will be completely annihilated.²²

The doctrine of atonement that the Adventists advocated is also connected with their belief in the 'heavenly sanctuary'. An attempt to find out the corners of this belief is important because of its relation with the fundamental proposition of the SDA. This belief pertains to the ministry of Christ in heaven, the justification of its presence and the link it has with regard to the Second Coming of Christ. This belief gained ground after the failure of the predictions of the day set forth by William Miller and his associates for the Second Coming of Christ. It was a doctrine originated to stabilize the disappointed followers of Miller. When the Millerites were disappointed on 22nd October 1844 because Christ did not come, they revised their interpretation of certain prophecies. They believed that His work as a 'High Priest' had begun at the time of His ascension to heaven. They further believed that as soon as he entered the 'Holy of Holies' in heaven in 1844, He begun the last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of 'investigative judgment' through the sacrifice that Christ had made as part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement which was usually done by using the blood of animal sacrifices. It further denotes that through this kind of judgment, the selection of the righteous and the unrighteous is determined. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Coming.²³ Hence, the doctrine of 'heavenly sanctuary' and the investigative judgement placed the Adventists in an opposite direction with the rest of Christians. The Adventists did not consider that there might be miscalculation of the date; instead they argued that Christ did not appear as predicted by Miller because on that day He entered the most holy place at the sanctuary in heaven. Moreover, the doctrine of investigative judgment has been criticized by many scholars.²⁴ This

²² *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013, op.cit.*, p.10; *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, op.cit.*, p.31.

²³ *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013, op. cit.*, p.8; *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, op.cit.*, pp.25-30.

²⁴ For instance, Walter R. Martin, *The Truth about Seventh-day Adventism*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1959; Desmond Ford, *Daniel 8:14, The Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgment*, by Desmond Publications, n.p., 1980; Greg Taylor, *Discovering The New Covenant: Why I am No Longer a Seventh-Day Adventist*, Life Assurance Ministries Publications, Arizona, 2004; Gregory G. P. Hunt, *Beware This Cult an Insider Exposes Seventh Day Adventism and Their False Prophet Ellen G. White*, Self Published, n.d.,1981; Russell Earl Kelly, *Exposing Seventh-*

doctrine did not get any support from other denominations. The critics maintain that there is no Biblical basis for such a concept and others have even declared that the teaching is a cover up of the mistake made by Miller. Moreover, they opined that this doctrine is based on the writings of Ellen White, and not Biblical. The doctrine is a direct contradiction of the beliefs of other Christians that Christ had made full atonement for the sins of humans when He died at the cross. Another aspect was the doctrinal teaching about Jesus Christ's work of redemption and atonement which constituted two views: 'life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ' and the 'experience of salvation'. However, it does not clearly define whether the atonement meant only for those who would appear on the day of judgement during the Second Coming of Christ or it will include those who lived in the pre-Christian era.²⁵ Since the experience of salvation for the Adventists does not remain dependent wholly on atonement of sin through the death and resurrection of Christ as believed by most Protestant denominations but on other doctrines as well, hence, to have the assurance of salvation, the fulfillment of these doctrines also goes hand in hand.²⁶

Emphasis on Ellen White: Another distinctive belief of the Adventists which set them on a wider ground from the rest of the Christians is the doctrine of 'Spiritual Gifts' which was strongly emphasised in the ministry of Ellen White. The Adventists firmly believe that one of the gifts that have been granted by the Holy Spirit is the 'gift of prophecy' and this was manifested in the ministry of White.²⁷ Even before its official formation in 1863, the Adventists have recognized White as having the prophetic gift.²⁸ Hence she played an important role in building the fundamental beliefs of the early Adventists. White's interpretation of the Biblical narratives attracted little interest outside Adventist circles, but within the Adventist Church her

day Adventism, 2nd edition, Writer's Club Press, Lincoln, New York, 2005; D. M. Canright, *Seventh Day Adventism Renounced*, Gospel Advocate Company, 14th edition, Nashville, Tennessee, 1982; Dale Ratzlaff, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-Day Adventists: An Evangelical Resource and an Appeal to Adventists*, Life Assurance Ministries, n.p., 1996.

²⁵ *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013*, op. cit., p.7; *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, op.cit., p.25.

²⁶ For details see, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013*, op. cit., p.9; *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, op.cit., pp. 25-26.

²⁷ *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013*, op.cit., p.8; *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, op.cit., p.28.

²⁸ For further detail on this aspect see, Matilda Erickson Andross, *Story of the Advent Message*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Takoma Park, Washington, D. C., 1926, p.117.

writings acquired a stature comparable to the *Bible*.²⁹ Adventists opined that the *Bible* is the highest authority for their beliefs, however, White's prophetic writings are considered to be "a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provides the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction".³⁰ Not only that the Adventists gave importance to her writings but she was placed at the top most position among the founders of SDA. The messages that Ellen White claimed to have received from God were usually given to her in visions. Some have the opinion that during these visions it was evident that she was under divine control. Medical witness and examination refers to it as unscientific and not of this world. It is said that she looked intensely at some distant object; her breathing ceased but her face did not lose natural color, nor did her pulse fail.³¹ However, many of her prophecies did not come true.³² In spite of that after the death of Ellen White, many Adventists claimed to have received visions and some attempted to place themselves forcefully as her successor.³³

The Seventh-day Sabbath: Perhaps, the observance of the Sabbath on Saturday is the most significant among the SDA's doctrines. Historically, the Sabbath was a day of religious observance and abstinence from work, kept by Jews from

²⁹ Biblical Research Institute, "The Inspiration and Authority of the Ellen G. White Writings", published in *Adventist Review* (July 1982 & December 1982) and *Ministry* (August 1982 & February 1983); Also see Cushla Kapitzke, *Literacy and Religion: The Textual Politics and Practice of Seventh-Day Adventism*, John Benjamins Pub. Co., Amsterdam: Philadelphia, 1995, p.193.

³⁰ Lewis Harrison Christian, *The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts: The Influence and Guidance of Ellen G. White in the Advent Movement*, Review And Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C. 1947.

³¹ General Conference Youth Department, *Church Heritage Manual* (hereafter, *Church Heritage Manual*), 2002, pp.28-29. For further readings on visions of Ellen White see, F. C. Gilbert, *Divine Predictions of Mrs. Ellen G. White Fulfilled*, Good Tidings Press, South Lancaster, Massachusetts, 1922.

³² Ellen White's inaccurate prophecies are also well documented. She endorsed William Miller's prophecy that Jesus would return in 1844. She proclaimed that salvation for all sinners ended in 1844 when Jesus supposedly entered the Heavenly sanctuary. This was called "the shut door" doctrine. It was conveniently abandoned in 1850. She prophesied that some who were alive in 1856 would live to see the Lord's return. She predicted that England would enter the Civil War. She claimed she would be one of the 144,000 saints who would be living when Jesus returned. In 1850 she rebuked Bible scholars who were predicting an end time return of the Jews to Israel. She proclaimed that "Old Jerusalem will never be built up." See, "Ellen G. White's Failed Prophecy", www.bible.ca/7-prophecy-blunders.htm, pp. 1-6. Accessed on 16th March 2013.

³³ J. R. Spangler, "The Gift of Prophecy and 'Thought Voices'", *Ministry*, Vol.59 No.6, June 1986, pp.4-7. In 1916, Margaret Rowen, claimed to receive visions, and formed an alternative short-lived church, the Reformed Seventh-day Adventist Church. Also see Vance Ferrell, "Will There Be Another Prophet?", <http://www.ellenwhitedefend.com/Understanding-Gift/Another-Prophet.htm>. Accessed on 26th March 2012.

Friday evening to Saturday evening.³⁴ Ironically, the observance of Sabbath by Adventists was influenced by non-Adventists. Much before the Adventists, there were other Sabbath-keepers in America. In 1664, the Seventh-day Baptists in London sent Stephen Mumford to USA. He was the first Sabbath-keeper in America and was able to gather followers and established a church.³⁵ However, it was not until 1844 when Rachel D. Preston, a Seventh-day Baptist, introduced the Sabbath to some Adventists in Washington which later spread to other states.³⁶ Among the Adventists was Joseph Bates who influenced others too.³⁷ This was further confirmed by a vision of Ellen White which she claimed to have received in April, 1847.³⁸ Eventually when the SDA was officially established, the title ‘Seventh-day Adventists’ was adopted to signify this belief.

Strongly adhering to their doctrines, Adventists abstain from secular work on Saturday. However, family-oriented activities, charitable works and non-secular activities are encouraged. Some Adventists gather for Friday evening worship to welcome the Sabbath, a practice often known as ‘Vespers’ and some similarly gather at the close of the Sabbath. Saturday afternoon activities vary widely depending on the cultural and social background. In some churches, members and visitors

³⁴ Angus Stevenson & Maurice Waite (eds.) *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, Twelfth Edition (First published 1911), Oxford University Press, New York, 2011, p.1263.

³⁵ The first American Seventh Day Baptist church was organized in 1671. The Seventh-day Baptist General Conference was organized in 1802 with its headquarters at Alfred Center, New York. The American Sabbath Tract Society is the publishing agency of the denomination which publishes the *Sabbath Recorder*. For details see M. Ellsworth Olsen, *A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-Day Adventists*, Second Edition, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Takoma Park, Washington, D. C., 1926, pp.255-272.

³⁶ Le Roy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Vol. IV, Review and Herald, Washington, D.C., 1954, p.948.

³⁷ J. N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath*, Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, Battle Creek, Michigan, 1873, pp. 493-504. In 1846, both Ellen White and James White’s attention was drawn to the teachings about the Sabbath when they studied the pamphlet written by Joseph Bates. The pamphlet called “The Seventh-Day Sabbath a Perpetual Sign from the Beginning to the Entering into the Gates of the Holy City, According to the Commandment.”

³⁸ In this vision, she saw the ‘Ten Commandments’ with a soft halo of light around the fourth command³⁸ and heard an angel confirming its importance. She was revealed that if the Sabbath had always been kept, there would not have been an infidel or atheist, and the world would have been prevented from idolatry. This vision convinced her to stress on the importance of the seventh-day Sabbath. Immediately she began to observe Sabbath on Saturday and influenced other Adventist leaders as well. See, Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, Christian Science, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, USA, 1989.

participate in a fellowship lunch.³⁹ It is a fact that most Adventists would forfeit their jobs rather than work on Saturdays.

The Adventists believed that Saturday is the seventh day that God had sanctified. They argued that the holiness of the Sabbath was tainted by the transfer of the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday.⁴⁰ Thus this doctrine brought the Adventists into disagreement with both commercial and administrative interests. Some Adventists even criticize other Christians who regarded Sunday as a holy day and not keeping the Sabbath on Saturday as apostates.⁴¹ This strained the relations between the SDA and other Christian denominations.⁴² Non-Adventists were of the opinion that the declaration made by the Seventh-day Adventists about keeping of the Sabbath according to the fourth command of the Ten Commandments is not required since the laws of Moses applied only to the Jews and Christ has come to earth to establish the faith of the people in God and fulfilled the Mosaic law through his death and resurrection. To other denominations, worship and gathering on Sunday marks the importance of the resurrection day of Jesus Christ. There was no command in the *Bible* that Sabbath should be the day of worship. God rested and blessed the seventh-day but that does not mean that He required people to worship Him on the day. Adventists tried to justify their belief by stating that if the cross is the most important symbol in Christian history which is a sign of God's redeeming power, the same is the

³⁹ Kenneth H. Wood, Jr., "Remember the Sabbath Day", *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Centenary Issue 1861-1961, Vol. 138, No. 23, June 1961, pp.16-18.

⁴⁰ They argued that this was done in order to please the large number of Sun-worshippers in the fourth century A.D. The argument was based on the decree issued by Emperor Constantine of the Roman Empire and who was also in commanding position of the Roman Catholic Church. On 7th March 321, he issued an edict for the observance of Sunday as a day of celebration throughout the empire. Eventually, it was in the Council of Laodicea in 364 A.D. that the Roman Catholic Church established Sunday as a day of rest and worship. According to the Adventists, in the Laodicean Council, the Catholics not only forbade the observance of the Sabbath, they even pronounced a curse on those who not worship on Sunday. see, E.G. White, *Great Controversy: Plus Supplementary Material*, Harvestime Books, Altamont, Tennessee, 1998, p.97 (henceforth to be referred as E.G. White, *Great Controversy: Plus Supplementary Material*).

⁴¹ For details see, General Conference of SDA, *Seventh-Day Adventists Answer Questions On Doctrine: An Explanation Of Certain Major Aspects Of Seventh-Day Adventist Belief*, Review and Herald Publishing Association Washington, D.C., 1957, pp.183-184.

⁴² For more details on the Sabbath see, Uriah Smith, *Synopsis of the Present Truth: A Brief Exposition of the Views of Seventh-Day Adventists*, Seventh-Day Adventist Publishing Association, Battle Creek, Michigan, 1884.

Sabbath, a memorial of His creative power.⁴³ Walter R. Martin in his *The Truth about Seventh-day Adventism*⁴⁴ attempts to show that the teachings of the SDA concerning the binding obligation upon Christians to observe the seventh-day Sabbath are without Biblical foundation. It should also be noted that the use of the cross as a symbol was not mentioned in the Bible. However, the logo of the SDA contains the cross in the middle.

INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSIONS: CHURCH, MINISTRY AND SACRAMENT

This section dwells on three main elements, viz., the church, ministry and sacrament. They are highly significant in the understanding of the SDA structure because these are in many ways tangible manifestations of its conceptual belief and have significant impact on the mission among the people. Before discussing the organization of churches in the SDA, it is felt that a brief look at its administrative organization will shed light on the entire institutional structure of the denomination.

Administrative organization of the Church: The Seventh-day Adventist Church is organized in four different categories.⁴⁵

1. The local church is the foundation level of organizational structure and is the public face of the denomination. Every baptized Adventist is a member of a local church and has voting powers within that church.
2. Directly above the local church is the conference. The local conference/mission is an organization of churches within a state, province or territory (or part thereof) which appoints ministers, owns church land and organizes the distribution of tithes and payments to ministers.
3. Above the conference is the union conference or union field/mission, a united body of conferences or fields within a larger territory.

⁴³ Richard Hammill, "The Sabbaths or the Lord's Day", in in Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Doctrinal Discussions*, Review and Herald Publishing Association Washington, D.C.1961, p.74.

⁴⁴ Walter R. Martin, *The Truth about Seventh-day Adventism*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1959, p.36.

⁴⁵ Oliver Montgomery, *Principles of Church Organization And Administration*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Takoma Park, Washington, D. C., 1942, p. 94.

4. The highest level of governance within the church structure is the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (hereafter cited as GC) which consists of 13 Divisions,⁴⁶ each assigned to various geographic locations.⁴⁷

The GC is the highest administrative and supervisory body of the church. All organizations and institutions of the SDA throughout the world recognize the GC as the supreme authority in mission, administration, legislation and even judicial matters. The headquarter of the GC was moved from Battle Creek to Takoma Park, Maryland in 1903, where it remained until 1989. At present it is located at Silver Spring, Maryland.⁴⁸ The last major organizational step to take place after the Union and local Conference levels, done in 1901, came in 1913 when the world field was divided up into Divisions.⁴⁹ However, the present-day church organization is essentially the same as that established by the reorganization of the church in 1901 which was consolidated in 1903.⁵⁰ With the expanding work and increasing expenses of transporting delegates, the time between sessions was lengthened from annual to quinquennial. The offices of those who are in-charge of various areas of administration and ministry right from the GC to local Conference are also appointed.⁵¹ These include the officers in the departments of Adventist Chaplaincy, Communication, Education, Family, Health, Temperance, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, Publishing, Sabbath School and Personal, Stewardship, Trust

⁴⁶ According to the 2014 Annual Statistical reports, the following Divisions are working under the GC: East-Central Africa, Euro-Asia, Inter-American, North American, Northern Asia-Pacific, South American, South Pacific, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean, Southern Asia, Southern Asia-Pacific, Trans-European and West-Central Africa. Middle East and North Africa Unions and Israel Field are attached to the GC. See, Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, *2014 Annual Statistical Report*, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, 2010.

⁴⁷ For details see Emma E. Howell, *The Great Advent Movement*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Takoma Park, Washington, D. C., 1935.

⁴⁸ Jason Horn, "Seventh Day Adventist Archives", *The American Archivist*, Vol. 17, No. 3, July 1954, p.222.

⁴⁹ Each Division president is a vice-president of the GC. The administrators and departmental staff of both these levels are elected by the GC in session.

⁵⁰ Andrew G. Mustard, "Seventh-day Adventist Polity: Its Historical Development", *op. cit.*, p.15, for details see, Richard W. Schwarz, "Reorganization and Reform: The 1901 General Conference Session, Battle Creek, Michigan", *Adventist Heritage*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1985, pp.11-18.

⁵¹ The officials include, President, Secretary and Treasurer. In addition Directors of different departments are also appointed. The *SDA Yearbook*, published annually, gives a full list of all officers and departmental 45 persons at all levels.

Services, Children, Women and Youth ministries work.⁵² There are other meetings and committees attended by delegates around the world such as the Autumn Council presently known as Annual Council which is convened each year for allocation of money to the various world divisions and mission fields.

Establishment and membership: In a community where the SDA has not establish a church yet, the SDA converts have a home church or a home Sabbath school⁵³ and might start to worship services in the light of the Seventh-day Adventists' practices and disciplines. Once the number of the regular Adventists members begins to increase then the pioneer organizing family of a home Sabbath school informs the nearest local conference about its beginning and progress and also to place a formal application requesting the local conference to send an evangelist to hold regular services under an official supervision. From a home Sabbath school, the family congregation is organized into a 'company'. This is the first level of an organized group and that a group leader, treasurer and officers are chosen to oversee its daily activities and to carry on regular Sabbath services. Adventist members of the company are attached with an established local conference and once it is well organized and established, the company was assembled as a church and members are listed in the church's record book or register of the local conference. Following that, proper guidance and advice in terms of procedures for organizing a new church, financial aid, administrative connection and ministerial matters are introduced.⁵⁴ Besides, the sacrament of Baptism may be administered upon those who are willing to convert. However, the Adventists who are one or two in numbers and do not have the criteria for starting a company are known as 'isolated members'. They are visited by the members of the company or the local churches.

⁵² For detail about administrative affairs, bylaws, rules and regulations, duties of officers, nature of their works, etc. please see, Don F. Neufeld, *The Seventh Day Adventist Encyclopedia, Vol.10*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, 1966; General Conference Corporation, *Seventh Day Adventist Year Book*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, 2013; *Southern Asia Division Constitution By laws and working Policy, op.cit.*

⁵³ It is a service conducted on a Saturday and consists of different categories from children to adult. Its nature is equivalent to Sunday school of some Protestant churches. However, programmes and lessons were pre-planned accordingly in printed forms, quarterlies, tracts, periodicals, etc.

⁵⁴ Department of Education, General Conference of SDA, *The Story of Our Church*, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Mountain View, California, 1956, (Hereafter, *The Story of Our Church*), pp. 33 – 34.

In order to understand the SDA's ecclesiastical principle in their totality, an explanation of the establishment of a church is not complete unless a study of the related subject on membership is undertaken. It was expected that members of the SDA should abide by and follow the fundamental beliefs and rites of the church. Also, should be willing to assure and share the duties and responsibilities of the Church.

The seriousness of the SDA in this regard does not end in just giving classes on baptism and baptismal related subjects only but in conducting public examination of all the registered candidates to be held in the church and in the presence of the members and elders prior to their baptism.⁵⁵ However, if this procedure is not practicable, then the instructed baptismal candidates are placed before the church board or the board of elders for verification and scrutiny and whose reports are submitted to the church. Through this alternative procedure, candidates are expected to give public expression of their belief in the doctrinal teachings of the SDA and after having found satisfactory answer, the candidates are able to receive the sacramental rite of baptism.

The Church maintains strict discipline on its members. This aspect is observed even during the recruitment of members from another religious persuasion. When a member of the SDA moves from one place to another for a period of more than six months, he/she has to secure for a letter of transfer to another nearby local church for recognized and full participation in the SDA congregational life of worship.⁵⁶ The normal church's procedure is that such members have to make application so that they can associate or join the local church or conference adjacent to their relocated place. Unless such customary plan is followed, a member may remain isolated, be dropped from a church or may face disfellowshipped.⁵⁷

Secondly, admission of anyone who is a member of another religious organization to SDA church membership is normally done under strict examination and scrutiny. Every care is exercised to ascertain whether the candidates are moved to change their religious application only or out of their personal conviction and relationship with God in the light of the teachings of the SDA. Be that as it may, the Church normally prefers that before admitting a person who was previously a member

⁵⁵ *Church Manual of the Seventh Day Adventists, op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁵⁷ *The Story of Our Church, op. cit.*, pp. 38-40.

of another religious organization, a consultation with those in charge of the person's organization should be done.⁵⁸ Persons who have failed in Christian morals or character maybe considered eligible for membership provided they have given evidence of their repentance and reformation. Recruitment of persons who was employed by another religious organization could be maintained subject to an understanding after preliminary consultation with the other organization with which they were previously connected and employed.

Congregational Worship: Unlike other Christian churches that normally hold weekly service on Sunday, the SDA due of its firm belief on the observance of Sabbath on Saturday holds major weekly service on Saturday which is a major break from the practice of other Christian denominations. The SDA's Saturday service is a major worship life of the community. It is a service that demonstrates the unity and solidarity of its members. During this service, attention is given to personal devotion, singing from the *Adventist Hymnal*,⁵⁹ prayers and sermons. Other integrated and related items included readings, offerings, tithing and announcement.⁶⁰ Local churches use different form of musical instruments during the service for religious and spiritual dedication and harmony. The worship pattern is not confined to the general worship under the leadership of ordained ministers but it takes special care and concentration on different sections and categories like children, youth and women respectively.

It is evident from the fundamental beliefs of the SDA that the Church is distinct not only in its philosophy but in administrative management as well. However, this study also looks at other features of the SDA which further alienated the Adventists from the rest of the Christian community.

⁵⁸ For details on the discussion, see Southern Asia Division Sabbath School Department, "A Successful Sabbath School", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 29 No. 11, June 1934, p. 3.

⁵⁹ The General Conference, *The Seventh – Day Adventist Hymn and Tune Book for Use in Divine Worship*, , Review and Herald Publishing House, Battle Creek, Michigan, 1888.

⁶⁰ For details see Lilianne Doukhan, "How Shall We Worship?", *College and University Dialogue*, Vol. 15 No. 3, 2003, pp. 17-19.

MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

Ministry is another major component in the function of the Adventist Church. It pertains to the overall pastoral service, general supervision and works that look after the different sections and groups in the church.

Church leaders of SDA: The role of ministers in shaping the life and work of church members is not just important but necessary. One of the primary duties of a minister of the church is to instruct candidates before administering the sacramental rite of baptism individually. Discipleship training in baptismal classes is always conducted in church or any convenient designated location. The SDA church recognizes and maintains the three levels of ordination, viz., Pastors, Elders and Deacons.⁶¹ Ordination is restricted to male members only. It is a formal recognition bestowed upon selected candidates after observing and evaluating their services in the church after a number of years. Elders and deacons are appointed by the vote of a local church business meeting or elected committees. The church maintains non-celibate priests. Their duties are mainly to look after the church's spiritual oversight that includes the ministry of the sacraments, teaching the church's beliefs and rituals, preaching the word, praying for the sick, needy and the poor and defending the unity and integrity of the church.

Elders and Deacons are also ordained like the Pastors but their roles are mostly on non-sacramental affairs. Their recognized and authorized duties in the celebration of the sacraments are at the level of assistants but not the celebrants. They are appointed by the vote of a local church business meeting or elected committees. The role of elders is mainly on running the administration of the church's office, Pastoral care and visitation of church's members. In the absence of a Pastor, Elders must be capable of providing religious leadership. Deacons serve mainly in assisting for the smooth functioning of a local church and to maintain and take care of the church property.⁶²

⁶¹ For details on ordination see, General Conference of SDA, *Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*, Hagerstown, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2011; George R. Knight, *Organizing for Mission and Growth: The Development of Adventist Church Structure*, Review and Herald, Hagerstown, 2006.

⁶² For duties of deacons and deaconess see *Church Manual of the Seventh Day Adventists*, *op.cit.*, pp.62-64.

Ordination of women: Although there are deaconesses and female elders in the SDA, but till date only men are eligible for ordination for pastorship. The question of ordination of women was a matter of debate among the Adventists members as well as between the church administrative authorities. Women formed an integral and major part of the church in numbers, services and resources, and their presence was well acknowledged. Like most church traditions, the SDA believed and practiced that only men are recognized, accepted and eligible for ordination for pastoral ministry. The principle that the church holds against the ordination of women is based on Paul's writings in the New Testament. Paul was emphatic when he wrote that God's command insisted that women should remain silent in church, remain subordinate and should not teach or have authority over a man (cf. 1 Cor. 14:34-37; 1 Tim. 2:12). Though these instructions are accepted and implemented in a male-dominated church, they are however incompatible with most progressive and dynamic women of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Leading Adventist women began to raise questions in respect of the context where Paul had written about women and he might have referred to a particular place or region and meant only for that period.

Members of the church and the administrative authorities have so far engaged in frequent debates on the question of ordination of women. Even in the midst of these discussions, the church accorded ordination credentials to Ellen White in 1883. This development was an unexpected breakthrough in SDA. When Ellen White passed away in 1915, there were twenty eight women who held ministerial licenses. After 1915 the number of Adventist women in leadership began a dramatic and uninterrupted decline. This was due to rise of fundamentalism, the church followed rigid traditionalist views which result in the pushing out of women from the Church's ministry. Up to the late 1960s, the issue of women's ordination was kept on the light spot. Subsequently, the issue became a heated debate with the development in America's social and political scenario. The American Civil Rights Act of 1964, with emphasis on "equal employment opportunity" paved a way for women in the church to stand up for their rights.⁶³ This move for supporting the ordination of women was taken up by several liberal Adventists.⁶⁴ This was followed by a division of opinions

⁶³ Alberto R. Timm, "Seventh-Day Adventists on Women's Ordination: A Brief Historical Overview", Theology of Ordination Study Committee, 21-25 January, 2014, p.11.

⁶⁴ Arthur N. Patrick, "The Adventist Pastor and the Ordination of Women", *Ministry*, April, 1989, pp.9-12.

among the Adventists on this issue. An unofficial Adventist periodical *Adventists Affirm* was published by anti-women's ordination Adventists.⁶⁵ There are opinions which suggest that the reemergence of women in positions of influence within the church from 1980s onwards should be viewed not as a concession to secular feminist developments but rather as a return to Adventism's earlier conception of gender roles.⁶⁶ Of course most of the Christian denominations do not allow ordination of women, however, in the case of the SDA, it was rather unusual that the Church, which was originally founded on the leadership of women suddenly reversed its stand and restricted women's roles in the church. A query about whether this occurred due to the SDA's move toward the mainstream of American religion or the adoption of social conservatism by the Church can be studied separately.

At the GC Session held in Indianapolis in 1990, a major decision was adopted in which women could serve as ordained ministers, give the communion, baptize converts and solemnize marriages in Adventist churches with the consent of the regional executive authority but formal ordination was withheld.⁶⁷ While this decision was seen as a major step in favour of women's roles and leadership in the Church, however, it was followed by a rejection in 1995 of a request by the North American Division to permit regional groups to authorize ordination of women.⁶⁸ Following these developments, the church remained neutral and also remained static with restriction. These divergent precedents are central reasons of the debate in the SDA over the question of ordination of women in church.⁶⁹

Sabbath School Department: The SDA broadened its ecclesiastical building measures by introducing the Sabbath School Department – a department that was in place as the 'Sunday School' in most churches of Protestant tradition.⁷⁰ The Sabbath School Department was organized and started as one of the departments of the first

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.12. In 1987 Samuele Bacchiocchi published *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church*.

⁶⁶ Laura L. Vance, *Seventh-day Adventism in Crisis: Gender and Sectarian Change in an Emerging Religion*, University of Illinois Press, Illinois, 1999.

⁶⁷ Roger L. Dudley, "How Seventh-Day Adventist Lay Members View Women Pastors", *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 38, No. 2, December, 1996, pp. 134.

⁶⁸ Adelle M. Banks, "Adventist Women Ordination Decisions by Regional Bodies a 'Mistake' says Church." *Huffington Post*, 19th October, 2012.

⁶⁹ James Wibberding, "A History of Women in Adventist Leadership (1844-1995)", n. d.

⁷⁰ Sunday School was started by Robert Raikes in the eighteenth century. See, <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Robert-Raikes> accessed on 20th October 2013.

GC in the United States as early as 1902.⁷¹ Right from its inception, the church was serious about the implementations in local churches worldwide. In addition to this, the Personal Ministries Department was set up to provide a closer attention to the SDA members. Hence, the mission of the Sabbath School and the Personal Ministries Department of the GC are to provide resources and training coordination for Sabbath School, for works in edification of the home church, promotion of awareness in world mission and committed service. One of the activities that were carried out by the Sabbath School Department was the publication of the *Sabbath School Bible Study Guides* in different editions to meet the need of all age groups in the church. Though the main objective of the Sabbath School department is to bring up and shape members of the church in the knowledge of the *Bible* and Christian ethics but given its significant value, an open invitation is extended even to children whose parents are not church members.⁷² They too can become members of the Sabbath School. As of now, the Sabbath School Department is active in churches across the globe including India under the Southern Asia Division.⁷³

Funding: The SDA depends mainly from the contributions of its members for its financial resources. It generates its funds from two sources, tithes and offerings received from its members.⁷⁴ The Church encouraged its members to return a tithe (one tenth of their personal income) into the denomination's treasury. The tithe is not spent on other work, on paying church or institutional debts, or on building programs but used in payment to services of the SDA ministers and workers.⁷⁵ The tithe payer does not, as in the case of freewill offerings, decide where and how one's tithe should be disbursed.⁷⁶ Besides the tithe, the SDA from its early days followed the practice of giving offerings. There are also Special Offerings for the purposes of world mission work and for general and local enterprises. Collections are also made from all

⁷¹ For details about Sabbath School, see *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, The Sabbath School Centenary Number, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington D. C., 1952. The special issue contains many articles and information regarding the Sabbath School.

⁷² E. D. Thomas, "A Successful Sabbath School", *Eastern Tidings*, Vol. 29 No.10, May 1934, p.3.

⁷³ For details on the discussion see Southern Asia Division Sabbath School Department, "A Successful Sabbath School", *ibid.*, Vol.29 No.11, June 1934, p.3.

⁷⁴ Oliver Montgomery, *Principles of Church Organization and Administration*, Review And Herald Publishing Association, Takoma Park, Washington, D. C., 1942, p.259.

⁷⁵ *Church Manual of the Seventh Day Adventists*, *op.cit.*, pp.134-135; Also see, *Constitution, Bylaws and Working Policy*, *op.cit.*, pp.333-335.

⁷⁶ Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Doctrinal Discussions*, *op.cit.*, pp.127-140.

Adventists' Publishing Houses, Health Care Institutions, Educational Institutions, Adventist Book Centers, Food Industries, Media Centers, etc. During the sessions the GC Annual Council, reports are given from various departments and appeals are made from mission fields for schools, churches, hospitals, and other facilities.⁷⁷

SACRAMENT

Baptism: Another important teaching of the Church is in respect of the sacrament. Sacrament in the SDA constitutes Baptism and the communion service. The word baptism came from the Greek word *baptizein* meaning to immerse.⁷⁸ Baptism is the one of the rituals that the Adventists strictly adopted. They practiced baptism by immersion.⁷⁹ There are other denominations which used the same method of baptism as the Adventists, however, the difference is that baptism to Adventists not only signifies public display of the acceptance of faith in Jesus Christ but is also a necessary step to qualify as an official member of the SDA.⁸⁰ Before going for baptism, one is expected to attend baptismal classes and fulfill a list of thirteen baptismal vows. Baptismal classes are conducted by the Church which aim to teach the basic doctrines of the *Bible* as understood by the SDA.⁸¹ During the baptismal ceremony, the deacons make the necessary preparation and assist the male candidates into and out of the water while the deaconesses assist all female candidates. Candidates have to wear a modest robe or a dress. The baptismal ceremony is followed by extending the right hand of fellowship and the giving of few words of welcome by the pastor or elder in behalf of the entire church.⁸² Rebaptism is required for non-SDA members who have interest to join the Church. For members who may have fallen away in apostasy and have lived in such a manner that the faith and principles of the church have been publicly violated, reconversion and application for church membership is done as in the beginning, and have to be re-baptized.⁸³

⁷⁷ *The Story of Our Church*, pp.225-226.

⁷⁸ Angus Stevenson & Maurice Waite, *op.cit.*, p.106.

⁷⁹ *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013*, *op.cit.*, p.8; *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, *op.cit.*, pp.27.

⁸⁰ Wayne Willey, "The baptismal vow as the criterion of Adventist faith", *Spectrum*, Vol.13, No.4, June 1983, pp. 4-7.

⁸¹ See, Leo S. Ranzolin, "Making Youth Baptisms Mean Something", *Ministry*, Vol.56, No.2, February 1983, pp.18-19.

⁸² *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, *op.cit.*, p.45.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp.50-51.

Communion: Communion or what is popularly known in Christianity as the ‘Lord’s Supper’⁸⁴ is one of the rituals which the Christians adopted to adhere to the command of Jesus Christ who asked his disciples to do it in remembrance of Him. This ritual entered into the church service and is performed thrice or four times a year. It includes the foot washing ceremony and consumption of the Lord’s Supper. Some churches performed only the latter. Adventists usually practice both forms of communion four times a year.⁸⁵ The service is conducted by an ordained minister or a church elder. The service commences with a foot washing ceremony. Men and women sit in separate rooms, although some congregations allow married couples to perform the ordinance with each other and families are often encouraged to participate together. After the ordinance of the washing of feet the congregation reassembles for consumption of the Lord’s Supper. Bread, wine and linen are arranged on the communion table by the deaconesses while the deacons serve the congregation. After the service the deaconesses clear the table and the deacons dispose of any of the bread or wine left over, by burning the bread and pouring out the wine.⁸⁶

EMPHASIS ON CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND LIFE STYLE

The SDA also laid emphasis on the personal dedication of its members in terms of spiritual growth and personal care. For this purpose, the Church not only provides teachings and services but focuses on the basic understanding of its members pertaining to spiritual experiences as depicted through written statements. In this matter, the doctrines ‘Growing in Jesus Christ’,⁸⁷ ‘Unity in the Body of Jesus Christ’,⁸⁸ ‘Stewardship’,⁸⁹ ‘Christian Behavior’⁹⁰, ‘Marriage and the Family’⁹¹ and

⁸⁴ The ‘Lord’s Supper’ denotes the consumption of the elements of the bread and wine denoting the body and the blood of Jesus Christ.

⁸⁵ *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013, op.cit., p.8; Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, op.cit., p.27.*

⁸⁶ *Church Manual of the Seventh Day Adventists, op.cit., p.114.*

⁸⁷ For further details see, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013, op.cit., p.8.* This doctrine was mentioned in the 28 Fundamental beliefs of the church only in 2006 (see *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2005*, there were only 27 Fundamental beliefs).

⁸⁸ For details see, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013, op.cit., p.8; Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, op.cit., p.27.*

⁸⁹ For more details see, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013, op.cit., p.9; Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, op.cit., p.29.*

⁹⁰ For further readings see, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013, op.cit., p.9; Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, op.cit., p.29.*

‘Health and physical well-being’ are incorporated into the Fundamental Beliefs issued by the Church. However, the Church laid special emphasis on health issues and lifestyle which gained strong support from its members and at the same time provided non-Adventists plenty of room for criticisms. Hence for a comprehensive understanding of Adventism in social aspects, a brief study of the practices of Adventists with regards to health issues is discussed.

Diet: Since its inception, the SDA have laid greater emphasis on issues of health and temperance.⁹² The Adventists claimed that their concept regarding health care is found in the writings of Ellen White.⁹³ Ellen White was said to have visions which concerned health from 1863 onwards and put them in her writings. Since then she began advocating vegetarianism and the use of natural remedies in the place of drugs to treat illness.⁹⁴ Strictly following the writings of Ellen White, the SDA adopted many regulations about diet, hygienic practices and abstinence from various foods and drinks. This includes the prohibition against the use of swine and all its products. Animals belonging to the hare family and those which live in the waters without fins or scales were also prohibited. Interestingly some of the prohibited food items are also found mentioned in the Book of Leviticus.⁹⁵ Other prohibited items include tea, coffee and tobacco.⁹⁶ White also suggested that use of milk, cream, butter, and eggs should be avoided.⁹⁷ This prohibition is further explained due to the fact that,

⁹¹ For details see, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013, op.cit.*, p.9; *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, op.cit.*, pp.29-30.

⁹² M. Ellsworth Olsen in his *A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-Day Adventists*, Second Edition, Review and Herald Publishing Association Takoma Park, Washington, D. C., 1926, pp.255-272, outline the start of health and temperance issues in the early SDA. It can be seen that the Church rested fully on the visions of Ellen White as well as her writings to propagate the hygiene principles by members of the Church.

⁹³ Arthur Grosvenor Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, Pacific Press Publishing Association Mountain View, California, 1936, pp.297-319.

⁹⁴ Gary Land, *The A to Z of the Seventh-Day Adventists*, Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Toronto, Plymouth, 2009, p.126.

⁹⁵ Book of Leviticus, chapter 11. *King James Version Bible*.

⁹⁶ Carlyle B. Haynes, *Our Times and Their Meaning*, Southern Publishing Association Nashville, Tennessee, 1929, pp.380-384.

⁹⁷ Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, The Trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland, 1938, (Hereafter cited as Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*), pp. 136, 178, 325, 326, 328, 507, 512, 547, 555-556, 573.

The sin of intemperate eating, eating too frequently, too much, and of rich, unwholesome food, destroys the healthy action of the digestive organs, affects the brain, and perverts the judgment, preventing rational, calm, healthy thinking and acting. And this is a fruitful source of church trials. Therefore, in order for the people of God to be in an acceptable state with Him, where they can glorify Him in their bodies and spirits, which are His, they must with interest and zeal deny the gratification of their appetites, and exercise temperance in all things.⁹⁸

In addition to the concept as mentioned above, Ellen White suggested that on Sabbath, food should be simple and less should be eaten. This will allow a person to concentrate on the sacredness of the day rather than paying attention to the food they eat.⁹⁹ She also advised avoidance of cakes, sweet puddings, pastries, jellies, jams as well as spiced foods, soda, mustard, pepper, pickles besides many others since they cause indigestion and pollute the mind of a person.¹⁰⁰ According to her, in order to attain Christian perfection, the prohibited foods should not be given to the children.¹⁰¹

From the above prohibitions of certain food items, Ellen White's suggestions may be primarily credited to her poor economic background. The foods prescribed by her were lower in rates while compared with market prices. It may also be due to the fact that since she herself in her early career could not afford to procure rich food, hence it was formulated that everyone in the Church should adopt her preference of choices. She also shared a vision which she claimed to have received from God regarding the foods to be eaten and prohibited. The use of such kind of authority and persuasion on other individuals put the Adventists in a position of being a highly conservative sectarian group having cultic behaviour.

In 1866, Ellen White urged the GC to develop its own health institutions. Hence the Health Reform Institute was opened in Battle Creek Michigan in 1867. The institute became famous after John Harvey Kellogg took charge as the superintendent. He renamed it Medical and Surgical Sanitarium and after two decades it was known as the Battle Creek Sanitarium.¹⁰² The pioneers of the Church had much to do with the invention of breakfast cornflakes in the Western diet. Kellogg's interest in strict vegetarianism led him to invent cornflakes which are popular even in India and other

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.78.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.212-213.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.178, 524,525, 537, 541, 542.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp.371-372.

¹⁰² Gary Land, *op.cit.*, p.157.

baked multigrain cereals which were sold through the Sanitarium Food Company.¹⁰³ It was also expressed by the Church that the maintenance of a healthy body is important in preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Dress: By the early nineteenth century clear definitions had developed regarding how American women and men were supposed to appear in public and how they were meant to lead their lives. As part of the temperance movement in America, the dress reform movement also took its shape in the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁴ Adventists adhered to Ellen White's concern about dress for the members of the Church. According to her visions which deal with the topic of health reform, she claimed that in order to display proper Christian behavior, women's clothing should be proper. She was also concerned about the dress being too much like men's clothing, which would violate the caution in the Bible that women and men should not wear each other's clothing. She encouraged her followers to follow her example by wearing only very simple clothes with minimal adornments which according to her assessment would be both economical and healthy. Decorative ornamentation was considered sinful and fashionable dress as immodest.¹⁰⁵ Hence, Adventists refrained from using of jewellery altogether, including items as rings, earrings and bracelets.¹⁰⁶

One can challenge the claim of the SDA that vegetarianism and healthy diet are apparent only through the writings of Ellen White. A movement on dietary reform was started by Sylvester Graham in the 1830s in America. His emphasis on vegetarianism and temperance movement later influenced the beliefs of the early Seventh-day Adventists, including White and Kellogg. Graham wrote extensively on foods that are harmful and gave lectures on diet and hygiene. He opposed using of coffee, tea, alcohol, spices and eating of meat. *The Graham Journal of Health and Longevity* was published by the American Physiological Society founded in Boston in 1837. Following Graham, William Alcott called for a reformed diet and reliance on bathing, exercise and rest.¹⁰⁷ In 1845, Joel Shew's *Water Cure Journal and Herald of*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁰⁴ Patricia A. Cunningham, *Fashioning the New Woman: Dress Reform - Politics, Health and Art, 1850-1920*, Kent State University Press, Ohio, 2002.

¹⁰⁵ Gaylo V. Fischer, *Pantaloon and Power: A Nineteenth-century Dress Reform in the United States*, Kent State University Press, Ohio, 2001, pp.125-129.

¹⁰⁶ Carlyle B. Haynes, *op.cit.*, p.388.

¹⁰⁷ Richard W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant*, Pacific Press Publishing Association, California, 1979, pp.104-105.

Reforms was launched and became the literary vehicle of many health reformers. Russell T. Trail began to promote the wonders of hydropathy and established hydropathic school in New York in 1857. Kellogg was a former student of this institute.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, a number of women health reformers such as Mary Gove Nichols, Amelia Bloomer, Catharine Beecher and many others also echoed ideas of Graham.¹⁰⁹

In addition, here also the idea of perfecting a community was displayed by the Adventists. Almost all the Christian denominations do not really lay down strict injunctions on the manner of dress and diet, however most adherents do follow decency in the manner of dress. It was seen that in the nineteenth century, the temperance movement had insisted on a decent dress code. However, Ellen White had insisted on stricter norms, emphasizing at the same time that women's dress should differ from those of men. To other Christian denominations, these principles depict signs of a cultic behaviour. The dress reforms introduced by Ellen White went well during her time. Although the Church suggested that women should not wear pants and skirts are advisable as modest, however, by the turn of the twentieth century, many Adventist women and girls were wearing the latest styles in trousers.

The emphasis on health and dietary issues of the SDA was experienced by its members both in America and other countries across the globe. The inclination that a person should remain fit in body and soul before the coming of Christ is deeply expressed by strict adherence to dietary laws. It is being observed that the Church's conservatism on dietary laws and the scrutiny of its members on dress and temperance earn the Church the status as one of the most conservative groups among the Christian denominations. While it imposed strict discipline on its members against non-vegetarianism, the Adventists also felt that it is their duty to promote their principles

¹⁰⁸ Ruth C. Engs, *Clean Living Movements: American Cycles of Health Reform*, Praeger Publishers, Westport, 2001, p.96.

¹⁰⁹ William G. Shade, "Grahamism", in Angela Howard and Frances M. Kavenik (eds.), *Handbook of American Women's History*, 2nd edition, Los Angeles, 2000, pp.224-225. For further reading on Grahamism see, Andrew F. Smith, (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2004; John P. Coleman, "Casting Bread on Troubled Waters: Grahamism and the West", *Journal of American Culture*, Vol. 9, Issue 2, 1986, pp.1-8; Stephen Nissenbaum, *Sex, Diet and Debility in Jacksonian America: Sylvester Graham and Health Reform*, Greenwood, Westport, 1980; Jayme Sokolow, *Eros and Modernization: Sylvester Graham, Health Reform, and the Origins of Victorian Sexuality in America*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, Rutherford, 1983.

and influence the non-Adventists. It is important to highlight that the influence of SDA's principles of vegetarianism is not only confined to the West but it is also highly effective in India. In 2012, the Central Board of Secondary Education in India published the textbook for class 6, *New Healthway: Health, Hygiene, Physiology, Safety, Sex, Education, Games, and Exercises* which encouraged children to go vegetarian on a false and unscientific pretext.¹¹⁰ The book was authored by David S. Poddar, Principal and Education Director, Seventh-day Adventist, Hosur, Tamil Nadu.¹¹¹ In the book, benefits of a vegetarian diet are mentioned along with details of the immoral behaviour of non-vegetarians right from the character to physical appearances. Page 56 of the book says "They (meat eaters/non-vegetarians) easily cheat, tell lies, forget promises, they are dishonest and tell bad words, steal, fight and turn to violence and commit sex crimes." It further states, "The strongest argument that meat is not essential food is the fact that the Creator of this Universe did not include meat in the original diet for Adam and Eve. He gave them fruits, nuts and vegetables". The chapters also refer to Eskimos as "lazy, sluggish and short-lived", because they live on "a diet largely of meat". It adds, "The Arabs who helped in constructing the Suez Canal lived on wheat and dates and were superior to the beef-fed Englishmen engaged in the same work." It claimed that the flavour of meat was the result of 'waste products' and said that the Japanese lived longer because they were vegetarians, completely ignoring the fact that fish formed part of the daily diets of people in Japan.¹¹² The book was withdrawn by the publisher after it drew widespread criticism.¹¹³ In a country of multi-cultural facets such as India, this kind of projection sow seeds of communalism and religious fanaticism which may lead to chaos.

Observation of Christian festivals and occasions: Adventists do not believe in the celebration of religious festivals observed by the rest of Christians such as Good Friday and Easter Sunday because according to them, these were not suggested or mentioned in the *Bible* as events to be celebrated.¹¹⁴ Initially the church does not

¹¹⁰ Ajoy Ashirwad Mahaprashata, "Messing with Food Habits", *Frontline*, 26th December 2014, p.24.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.25.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.25.

¹¹³ "Non Vegetarians Lie, Cheat, Commit Sex Crimes' Textbook Withdrawn", *India Times*, 20th November 2012.

¹¹⁴The Adventists believe that Easter is a pagan day in honour of Ishtar, the mother goddess of the Babylonians.

celebrate Christmas. They argued that the historical reason for adapting 25th December as the birthday of Jesus has no biblical foundation.¹¹⁵ Ironically, despite this fact, Ellen White did not reject the celebration of Christmas. Her counsel on how Seventh-day Adventists can incorporate Christmas into their lives is found in the book *Adventist Home*.

As the twenty-fifth of December is observed to commemorate the birth of Christ, as the children have been instructed by precept and example that this was indeed a day of gladness and rejoicing, you will find it a difficult matter to pass over this period without giving it some attention. It can be made to serve a very good purpose. "The youth should be treated very carefully. They should not be left on Christmas to find their own amusement in vanity and pleasure seeking, in amusements which will be detrimental to their spirituality."¹¹⁶

Ellen White in her writing suggested that Christmas tree is essential to please God. To quote from her writings:

God would be well pleased if on Christmas, each church would have a Christmas tree on which shall be hung offerings, great and small, for these houses of worship.. The tree may be as tall and its branches as wide as shall best suit the occasion; but let its boughs be laden with the golden and silver fruit of your beneficence, and present this to Him as your Christmas gift. Let your donations be sanctified by prayer, and let the fruit upon this consecrated tree be applied toward removing the debts from our houses of worship at Battle Creek, Mich., and Oakland, Cal.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ "December 25 was celebrated as the birthday of Mithra, the Iranian god of light. In 274 A.D. Emperor Aurelian capitalized on the heathen worship of the Sun by declaring 25 December as the birthday of the Unconquered Sun. During the fourth century the church in Rome designated the date as the Feast of the Nativity of the Sun of Righteousness. The earliest mention of December 25 for the birth of Christ is in the Philocalian Calendar (an almanac for Christian use) from the year 354. By the middle of the fifth century... it was generally observed throughout the Christian world. Various Christmas customs come from different sources. The exchange of gifts goes back to the feast of Saturnalia, the greenery and lights come from the Roman New Year, and Santa Claus derives his name from *Sinter Klaas*, the Dutch form of Saint Nicholas, a Christian bishop in Asia in the fourth century, who supposedly gave away all the money he had inherited from his wealthy parents. The name *Christmas* comes from the Roman Catholic medieval custom of celebrating a midnight mass on the eve of Christ's birth. In the course of time, Christmas, as the day on which Christ's birth was celebrated, became the most important Christian festival, and its pagan origins became lost in history.", cited in Gerhard Pfandl, "Seventh-Day Adventists and Christmas", *Perspective Digest*, Vol. 11, issue 4, 2006, pp.52-53.

¹¹⁶ *The Adventist Home*, pp. 477, 478.

¹¹⁷ E. G. White, "The Holidays", *The Review and Herald*, Vol.54, No. 24, Dec, 1879, p.189.

In the light of what has been mentioned above, it comes as a surprise, that even though SDA does not recognize Christmas, Ellen White encourages the celebration of Christmas and the use of the Christmas tree which are not Biblical.

ESCHATOLOGICAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

Second Coming of Jesus Christ: The belief in the imminent Second Coming of Jesus Christ is also one of the main pillars of the SDA.¹¹⁸ They believed that the advent of Christ will occur when Christianity has been proclaimed throughout the world, hence this encouraged them to adopt measures for vigorous proselytization.¹¹⁹ In connection with this doctrine, the concept of millennialism is also adopted by the SDA. It strongly believed that the millennium is the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints in heaven between the first and second resurrections.¹²⁰ They rest their theology heavily upon the prophetic and apocalyptic teaching of the Books of Daniel and Revelation which refer to the reigning of Jesus through the thousand-year period.¹²¹

The Remnant: From these doctrines, SDA drew its strength to propagate and practice wide evangelism. Through its different channels such as the literature, health activities and educational institutions, the urgency of evangelization is seen and reflected in its mission. Perhaps, it was for this reason that made the SDA to consider itself as the remnant church.¹²² The term ‘remnant’¹²³ is a Biblical word which describes the church in the last days before the coming of Christ.¹²⁴ This doctrine is

¹¹⁸ *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013, op.cit.*, p.9; *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, op.cit.*, p.31.

¹¹⁹ John Bocker (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religion*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1997, p.22.

¹²⁰ *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013, op.cit.*, p.10; *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, op.cit.*, p.31.

¹²¹ Recorded in the Book of Revelation 20: 1-6, *King James Version Bible*. Also see, K. M. George, *Christianity in India Through the Centuries*, Authentic Books, Secunderabad, 2007, p.47.

¹²² *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013, op.cit.*, p.8; *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, op.cit.*, p.26.

¹²³ Angus Stevenson and Maurice Waite (eds.), *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, Twelfth Edition (First published 1911), Oxford University Press, New York, 2011, p.1216.

¹²⁴ For further details on the remnant church, see Gerhard Pfandl, “The Remnant Church”, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 8/1–2, 1997, pp. 19-27.

primarily based on the Book of Revelation 12:17.¹²⁵ Further they lay claim that in the same way as John the Baptist was the herald of the first advent of Jesus Christ, so is the remnant church, the SDA is to be the herald of His Second Advent.¹²⁶ During the course of several meetings, the Sabbath keeper Adventists came to identify themselves as members of the church of the last generation or 'remnant' who keep the commandments of God.¹²⁷ According to Adventist doctrine, the true remnant church must have a prophet.¹²⁸ This argument was introduced as early as 1855. After White's death, the SDA never had another prophet. Therefore, they redefined their previous teachings, and began teaching that White continues to live on through her writings. The concept of the remnant was also outlined in the baptismal vows to be fully understood by the candidates who are ready for baptism.¹²⁹ Therefore, since looking upon itself as the remnant church, SDA members were expected to maintain complete health and purity.

It is also important to note that the early Adventist pioneers emphasized on sanctification and the possibility of moral perfection in their life. The urgency of attaining such perfection was earlier part of the Millerite Movement and after the formation of the SDA; it comes from the knowledge that the Church as a 'remnant church' which should stand till the last days before the Second Coming must attain

¹²⁵ It states: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Book of Revelation 12:17, *King James Version Bible*. Ekkehardt Mueller in his "The End Time Remnant in Revelation", *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 11/1-2, 2000, pp.188-204, discusses at length about how the term remnant is used in Revelation.

¹²⁶ The Adventists argued that in the Book of Revelation, John gives many characteristics of the remnant church. The concept of the 'remnant' was found in different aspects such as keeping of the commandments of God (12:17), have the testimony of Jesus Christ, or the spirit of prophecy (12:17; 19:10), proclaim the three angels' messages to every nation, kindred, tongue and people (14:6-12), call attention to the judgment hour of God (14:7), announce that spiritual Babylon is fallen (14:8), warn men and women against receiving the mark of the beast (14:9, 10), have the patience of the saints (14:12), have the faith of Jesus (14:12). The remnant church is to "contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Further discussions on the remnant see Siegfried H. Horn, "Remnant" in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, Review and Herald, Washington, D.C., 1960, pp.908-909.

¹²⁷ Robin Theobald, "From Rural Populism to Practical Christianity: The Modernisation of the Seventh-day Adventist Movement", *Archives de Sciences Sociales Des Religions*, No. 60.1, July-September 1985, p.112.

¹²⁸ For further details see Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: Messenger to the Remnant*, Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, D.C., 1959.

¹²⁹ "Do you accept and believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy and that people of every nation, race and language are invited and accepted into its fellowship? See *Church Manual of the Seventh Day Adventist*.

perfection. It seems that the motive of the early Adventists was to create a utopian community within the church to save themselves from the embarrassment of the Great Disappointment of 1844 and also to challenge those who discarded their beliefs. As a matter of fact, even members and workers of the SDA had their jobs terminated once they opposed the SDA doctrines.¹³⁰

Unconscious state of the dead and ‘annihilationism’: In connection with the doctrines on the Second Coming, the concept of the unconscious state of the dead emerged in SDA’s theology. This means that when a person dies, he/she is asleep and is aware of nothing. It was claimed that the righteous people will be resurrected in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ while the resurrection of the unrighteous, will take place a thousand years later.¹³¹ Adventists believe that when people die they do not go to heaven or hell but all the dead remain unconscious until the return of Jesus Christ. The condition between death and the resurrection is a dreamless sleep, which can be awakened only by Jesus Christ. They also believe that after death the body returns to dust and decay; but it will be resurrected when Christ returns.¹³² This doctrine was formulated in the middle of the nineteenth century and enabled the Adventist movement to argue against ‘Spiritualism’.¹³³ In addition, the Church’s belief in death gave rise to a thought that when a person expires it is equivalent to sleep and hence it remains impossible for the spiritualists to have any medium of contact with the spirit of the dead. They strongly believe that if the soul goes to heaven or hell after a person died then a pre-Advent judgment or the Second Advent of Jesus Christ will not be required anymore. But human beings who give their life to Jesus Christ will find that they are eventually saved and resurrected to a new and immortal life while sinners and

¹³⁰ For further readings on this matter see A. F. Ballenger, *Cast Out for the Cross of Christ*, Tropicco, California, 1909; Also see Peter H. Ballis, *Leaving the Adventist Ministry: A Study of the Process of Exiting*, Praeger Publishers Inc, Westport, Connecticut, 1999. The investigative judgment doctrine has been criticized, in part or whole, by a few Adventists since the late nineteenth century, such as D. M. Canright, A. F. Ballenger, W. W. Fletcher, W. W. Prescott, Louis R. Conradi, and Raymond Cottrell. Many of these individuals ultimately left the Adventist church.

¹³¹ *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2013, op.cit.*, p.10; *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, op.cit.*, p.31

¹³² Milton C. Wilcox, *Questions and Answers: Gathered from the Question Corner Department of the Signs of the Times Vol. I*, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Mountain View, California, 1911, p.45. Also see the Vol. II, 1919.

¹³³ Spiritualism is a belief that spirits of the dead have both the ability and the inclination to communicate with the living. The afterlife, or ‘spirit world’, is seen by Spiritualists, not as a static place, but as one in which spirits continue to evolve.

‘unbelievers’ will ultimately meet death eternally.¹³⁴ Furthermore, this entire idea subsequently provide the SDA a new stand point on the theory of ‘annihilationism’,¹³⁵ a phenomena that Satan and his followers will be completely annihilated after the ‘last judgement’. Hence the concept of hell does not exist in SDA theological and philosophical teachings. This is another difference which bridges a huge gap between the Adventists and other Christian faiths.

The mission of the SDA as articulated in the church's mission statement of the remnant church, is to proclaim to all people the “‘three angels' messages’” as stated in the book of Revelation 14:6-12.¹³⁶ The first angel’s message calls to give allegiance to God and warns about the imminent judgment hour. This can be compared to the proclamation and predictions of William Miller. The second angel’s message declares that spiritual Babylon has fallen and people should come out from it. The Babylon here is referred to the Roman Catholic Church. Adventists constantly urged the Protestants not to adhere to the teachings and practices which are propagated by the Catholics. The third angel’s message might be identical with the rising of Seventh-day Adventism.¹³⁷ The SDA referred to itself as the only church which keeps God’s commandments and that as a church they have the testimony of Jesus Christ

¹³⁴ For further details see R. Allan Anderson, “*The Immortality of the Soul: Natural immortality Unsupported by Hebrew and Greek*”, in Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Doctrinal Discussions, op.cit.*, pp.127-140.

¹³⁵ Annihilationism (also known as extinctionism or destructionism) is a Christian belief that apart from salvation the final punishment of unrighteous human results in their total destruction rather than their everlasting torment.

¹³⁶ The Book of Revelation: {14:6} And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, {14:7} Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. {14:8} And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. {14:9} And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive [his] mark in his forehead, or in his hand, {14:10} The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: {14:11} And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. {14:12} Here is the patience of the saints: here *are* they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. *King James Version Bible.*

¹³⁷ For more readings on the three angels’ messages, see Stephen N. Haskell, *The Story of the Seer of Patmos*, Southern Publishing Association, Nashville, Tennessee, 1905.

manifested in the life and work of Ellen White.¹³⁸ It is also the duty of the SDA to warn the people against receiving the mark of the beast which is worshipping on Sunday and discard of seventh-day Sabbath. Some scholars tried to argue that Seventh-day Adventism can trace its roots back to the distinct form of seventeenth-century English Puritanism.¹³⁹ While others opined “early Adventists saw their mission was completing the Protestant Reformation in preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ.”¹⁴⁰

Further review can be done on the strong emphasis of the Adventists on the imminent Second Coming of Jesus Christ. In this connection, it is ironical that clashes with their heavy investment in publishing houses, old-age homes, hospitals and especially educational institutions. The expansion of their works in educational, health and evangelical domains helped the Church to establish a widespread network of their missions. It is hard to reason that the Church’s dedication towards these facilities continue to gain support by present day Adventists.¹⁴¹

SDA AND OTHER CHRISTIAN FAITHS

SDA and Protestant churches: When it comes to a dialogue or interaction with Protestants, Adventists are not so open. In the twentieth century as the ecumenical movement gained momentum through the World Council of Churches, Adventists declined to be part of it.¹⁴² The SDA do not seem to be happy with the Protestant Churches on the grounds that although they have moved out of the Roman Catholic Church, they have still retained the precepts laid down by the latter church for example, observation of Sunday as a day of worship. On the other hand, Adventists claimed that they do not completely alienate themselves from other denominations but cooperate with them in selected areas such as religious freedom

¹³⁸ Gerhard Pfandl, “The Remnant Church”, *op.cit.*, p.224.

¹³⁹ Bryan W. Ball, *The English Connection: The Puritan Roots of Seventh-day Adventist Belief*, second edition, James Clarke & Co., Cambridge, 2014.

¹⁴⁰ Jerry Moon, “Herbert E.Douglas: Greatest Contribution to Adventist Theology”, *Adventist World*, March 2015, p.5.

¹⁴¹ “noting their many good works, one observer has commented that seldom, while expecting a kingdom of God from heaven, has a group worked so diligently for one on earth.”, as cited in Gaustad, *Historical Atlas of Religion in America*, 115, as cited in Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America*, second edition, *op.cit.*, 347.

¹⁴² William G. Johnsson, “Seventh-day Adventists and Other Churches: The Never-ending Quest for Understanding”, *Adventist Review*, 6th May 2015.

and humanitarian causes.¹⁴³ According to Bert B. Beach, an Adventist scholar, “the GC Executive Committee has never voted an official statement regarding the Seventh-day Adventist relationship to the ecumenical movement as such.”¹⁴⁴ After the establishment of the Council on Interchurch Relations in 1980 by the GC, the SDA increased the extent of the interchurch relationships to larger church associations (e.g., World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and World Evangelical Alliance). This was done following the efforts directed toward those closer to Adventist beliefs and interests such as the Seventh-day Baptists.¹⁴⁵ In the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, the SDA joined the Bible Society of India.

SDA and Roman Catholic Church: The SDA opposition to the Roman Catholic Church is well noted. According to Adventists’ theology, Sunday Worship is the mark of the beast, the Roman Catholic Church is the Harlot Church of Revelation and the office of the Papacy is the Antichrist.¹⁴⁶ Eric Hobsbawm pointed out that during the peasant unrest in Italy in the 1960s, some branches of the Communist Party proposed Seventh-day Adventists as branch secretaries, probably because they were against the Catholic Church.¹⁴⁷ However, this notion changed drastically in 1997. The GC issued a statement that changed the Adventists’ view of Catholics. A short version of this statement is being pointed here for clarification.

Seventh-day Adventists seek to take a positive approach to other faiths. Our primary task is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of Christ's soon return, not to point out flaws in other denominations.. As Adventists relate to Roman Catholicism in particular, both the past and the future enter into our thinking. We cannot erase or ignore the historical record of serious intolerance and even persecution on the part of the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic system of church governance, based on extra-biblical teachings such as papal primacy, resulted in severe abuses of religious

¹⁴³ For details see Stefan Höschele, *Interchurch and Interfaith Relations: Seventh-day Adventist Statements and Documents A History of Interfaith Relations*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt, 2010.

¹⁴⁴ See, Bert B. Beach, *Ecumenism—Boon or Bane?*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Takoma Park, Maryland, 1974 .

¹⁴⁵ For details see, Stefan Hoschele, *op.cit.*

¹⁴⁶ Reinder Bruinsma, “Seventh-Day Adventist Attitudes toward Roman Catholicism 1844-1965”. Andrews University, 1994; also see Franklin Hutabarat, *Doctrine of Salvation: An Analysis of the Seventh-day Adventist and Roman Catholic Understandings*, Book Rix GmbH & Co.KG, Munich, 2014.

¹⁴⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, *Fractured Times: Culture and Society in the Twentieth Century*, Little Brown, Boston, 2013, p.220.

freedom as the church was allied with the state.. Adventists seek to be fair in dealing with others. Thus, while we remain aware of the historical record and continue to hold our views regarding end-time events, we recognize some positive changes in recent Catholicism, and stress the conviction that many Roman Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ.¹⁴⁸

On the other hand, Seventh-day Adventists agree with many Catholics and other Protestant denominations on many doctrines which include the Trinity, physical resurrection of the dead and Christ's Second Coming. They believe in original sin and reject the evangelical teaching that when a person is once saved will always be saved. However, there is a strong belief that on the basis of biblical predictions, that just prior to the second coming of Christ this earth will experience a period of unprecedented turmoil, with the seventh-day Sabbath as a focal point. In that context, major Christian bodies will align themselves with the forces in opposition to God and to the Sabbath. Once again the union of church and state will result in widespread religious oppression.¹⁴⁹

SDA and its critiques: Many of the SDA historians and theologians uphold the Christian doctrines and teachings. Some scholars are of the opinion that although with the passing of years, the Adventists have tried to assimilate themselves with the rest of Christians, the isolation of SDA from them is mainly due to the extreme legalism that the Adventists follow.¹⁵⁰ The Adventists' doctrines on atonement, state of the dead, diet and emphasis on Sabbath observance and especially the most distinctive, the reverence they give to the authority Ellen White's writings, invites dramatic confrontations from different corners. When it comes to interacting with the public they are often characterized by a commitment to secrecy. This is manifested in the way they try to hide their identity when attempting to draw non-members into the SDA. This was often done through their media ministries which seldom identify themselves as being affiliated with the SDA. Their advertisements for seminars or gatherings hardly reveal any connection with the SDA. Such occasions are always held at a neutral site and audiences are not conscious that they are being injected with

¹⁴⁸ This statement was recorded on 15th April 1997, by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and released by the office of the President, Robert S. Folkenberg.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1972, p.481.

SDA doctrines. Adventist publishing houses also keep the terms "Seventh-day" and "Adventist" out of their names. Typical Adventist and Adventist-related publishing houses have names such as Inspiration Books, Amazing Truth Publications, Review & Herald Publishing Association, and Pilgrims' Press.¹⁵¹

In the middle of the 20th century, a non-Adventist author of *The Truth about Seventh-day Adventism*, Walter Martin concluded that the Seventh-day Adventist church is a legitimate Christian body with some 'heterodox doctrines'.¹⁵² However, the debate continues as other scholars such as D. M. Canright, Ronald L. Numbers, Walter T. Rea, Anthony A. Hoekema, Wallace D. Slattery, Dale Ratzlaff, Sydney Cleveland, Russell Earl Kelly, and others disagreed and continued to classify the church as a cult, while some scholars wrote significantly on the major doctrinal problems that separate the SDA from other Christians.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ The extensive collection of Ellen White unpublished manuscripts and letters is housed at The Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, D.C., and is replicated in large part at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, and in the Heritage Room of Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California. Her voluminous published works have been indexed in *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*, 3 vols., Pacific Press Publishing Association, California, 1962-1963; other works which provide information about the life and works of White include: John Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement: Its Rise and Progress*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C., 1909; Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White*, Harper & Row, New York, 1976; Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 6 vols., Review and Herald Publishing Association Washington, D.C., 1981-86; Ronald D. Graybill, "The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century," Ph.D. diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 1983; Ronald L. Numbers, "Ellen Gould White," in Mircea Eliade (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Macmillan, New York, 1987; C. C. Goen, "Ellen Gould Harmon White," in Edward T. James (ed.) *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1971; "Ellen Gould (Harmon) White," Don F. Neufeld (ed.), *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C., 1976.

¹⁵² Walter R. Martin, *The Truth about Seventh-day Adventism*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1959.

¹⁵³ D. M. Canright, *Seventh Day Adventism Renounced*, Fleming H. Revell Company, New York, Chicago, Toronto, London, Edinburgh, 1914; Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White*, Harper & Row, New York, 1976; Walter T. Rea, *The White Lie*, M & R Publications, 1982; Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1989; Wallace D. Slattery, *Are Seventh-Day Adventists False Prophets?*, P & R Publishing, Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1990; Dale Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Crisis*, revised edition, Life Assurance Ministries, Arizona, 1995; Dale Ratzlaff, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-Day Adventists: An Evangelical Resource and an Appeal to Adventists*, Life Assurance Ministries, Arizona, 1996; Sydney Cleveland, *White Washed: Uncovering the Myths of Ellen G. White*, Life Assurance Ministries,

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS AND THE WORLD

In this aspect, SDA's stand point in its relation to the secular world can be studied from these backgrounds, the Church in the nineteenth century America, attainment of non-combatant status by the SDA and usage of SDA doctrines during war period.

SDA in nineteenth century America: Although the early Seventh-day Adventist leaders who formed the church in 1863 make attempts to base the movement's beliefs and culture on the *Bible* alone, it would be naïve to think they were unaffected by the Second Great Awakening in the United States. The reform movements in the U.S.A in the 1830s and 1840s constituted the Adventist pioneers' spiritual and moral breeding ground. In addition to increased religious fervor during these periods, significant attention was also given to social causes such as temperance, prison reform, expanded education and the abolition of slavery by different religious groups and secular societies and organizations. Hence, with regards to the issue of slavery, Ellen White stated that condemnation and divine wrath will fall on the slave owners; however, the slaves who have been so degraded cannot be taken to heaven.¹⁵⁴ Critics claim that Ellen White wrote racist statements in her book *Spiritual Gifts*.¹⁵⁵ This criticism is compounded by a defense of her statements which was published 8 years later by SDA leader and personal friend of Ellen White, Uriah Smith, in which the latter inferred that this "amalgamation" produced certain "lesser" races which he

Arizona, 2000. Russell Earl Kelly, *Exposing Seventh-day Adventism*, second edition, Writer's Club Press, Bloomington, 2005;

¹⁵⁴ Doug Morgan, "Ellen White, Slavery and Politics", *Spectrum*, 4 April 2008. "I saw that the slave-master would have to answer for the soul of his slave whom he has kept in ignorance; and all the sins of the slave will be visited upon the master. God cannot take the slave to heaven, who has been kept in ignorance and degradation, knowing nothing of God, or the Bible, fearing nothing but his master's lash, and not holding so elevated a position as his master's brute beasts. But he does the best thing for him that a compassionate God can do. He lets him be as though he had not been; while the master has to suffer the seven last plagues, and then come up in the second resurrection, and suffer the second, most awful death. Then the wrath of God will be appeased." For details see, Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts Vol. 1*, James White, Battle Creek, Michigan, 1858, pp. 189-193.

¹⁵⁵ "Every species of animal which God had created were preserved in the ark. The confused species which God did not create, which were the result of amalgamation, were destroyed by the flood. Since the flood there has been amalgamation of man and beast, as may be seen in the almost endless varieties of species of animals, and in certain races of men." For details see *ibid*.

claimed were difficult to differentiate from animals.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, Ellen White was not interested at all in the women's rights movements. She declined the invitation to join the movement for women's suffrage in the 1860's.¹⁵⁷ A part of that movement was an attempt to bring reform in women's dress. In this regard, White commented:

Those who feel called out to join the movement of Women's Rights, and the so called Dress Reform, might as well sever all connection with the third angel's message. The spirit which attends the one cannot be in harmony with the other. The Scriptures are plain upon the relations and rights of women and men. Spiritualists have, to quite an extent, adopted this singular mode of dress. Seventh-day Adventists, who believe in the restoration of the gifts, are often branded as Spiritualists. Let them adopt this costume, and their influence is dead. The people would not listen to them, but would place them on a level with Spiritualists.¹⁵⁸

She further said:

With the so-called Dress Reform, there goes a spirit of levity and of boldness just in keeping with the dress. Modesty and reserve seem to depart from many of them as they adopt that manner of dress. I was shown that God would have us take a course consistent and explainable. Let the sisters adopt the American Costume, and they destroy their own influence and that of their husbands. They would be a by-word and a derision. Our Saviour says, Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.¹⁵⁹

Ellen White spoke out against the "American Costume" as well as the rebellious spirit of the women's rights advocates declaring it incompatible with the Seventh-day Adventist women.¹⁶⁰

Non-Combatant Status: By the time the SDA was established in 1863, the United States was fully engaged in the Civil War. This forced the Church to struggle with the issue of participation as defence personnel. Questions arose within the church

¹⁵⁶ See, Uriah Smith, *The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White, A Manifestation of Spiritual gifts According to the Scripture*, Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, Battle Creek, Michigan, 1868.

¹⁵⁷ "Ellen White and the Role of Women in the Church", <http://egwtext.whiteestate.org>, p.19. Accessed on 23rd June 2012.

¹⁵⁸ Ellen G. White, *Testimony for the Church No. 11*, Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, Battle Creek, Michigan, 1867, p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁶⁰ "History of Women's Dress in Pictures", <http://www.remnantraiment.com>. Accessed on 19th December 2013.

on whether Adventists should serve in the military and bear arms or not.¹⁶¹ The dilemma for the Adventists of the 1860s was multifaceted: if they resisted military service out of faithfulness to the teachings in the *Bible*, they risked accusations of disloyalty which could be followed by a severe government crackdown on their movement. Joining freely in armed combat, though, would make a mockery of their claim to be a 'remnant church' faithful to the commandments of God. Their belief to the fourth command of keeping the seventh-day Sabbath holy as well as the sixth command that one should not kill, would also be compromised.¹⁶² However, benefits appeared to the Church when the United States government granted noncombatant status to SDA members in 1864.¹⁶³ For non-SDA this was an act of cowardice and unpatriotic. At the same time this alienated the relation with other Christians. The same issue arose during the First World War. The non-combatant status received from the US government applied only in America. In Germany due to fear of the persecution, the church approved the participation of their young men in the military, including the bearing of arms even on Sabbath.¹⁶⁴ This led to disintegration of the SDA in Germany since those who did not comply with the order were badly

¹⁶¹ George Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, Review & Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, 1999, p.73.

¹⁶² Jeff Boyd, "A Brief History of Seventh-Day Adventists in the United States Regarding Military Service: Convictions in Transition", in Howard Yoder, Theodore J. Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker (eds.), *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, December 2009, pp. 2-5; For more detail see Douglas Morgan, "Following the Prince of Peace in a Time of War: How the Adventist Pioneers Dealt with Issues of War, Peace, and Military Service", *Adventist Review* 14, June 14, 2007; Idem, *Adventism and the American Republic*, University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, 2001; See also John Howard Yoder, Theodore J. Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker (eds.), *op.cit.*

¹⁶³ *Church Heritage Manual, op.cit.*, p.35; also see Everett N. Dick, "Military Chaplaincy and Seventh-day Adventists: The Evolution of an Attitude", in *Adventist Heritage: A Magazine of Adventist History*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1976, p.33.

¹⁶⁴ In the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, Commentary Reference Series, the following explanation is given: "On the German mobilization, in August, 1914, the SDA's of that country were faced with the necessity of making an immediate decision concerning their duty to God and country when called into the armed service. After counseling with the few SDA leaders locally available at that time, the president of the East German Union Conference informed the German War Ministry in writing, dated Aug. 4, 1914, that conscripted SDA's would bear arms as combatants and would render service on the Sabbath in defense of their country. . . . Admittedly, the three SDA leaders in Germany took a stand concerning the duty of SDA's in military service that was contrary to the historic stand officially maintained by the denomination ever since the American Civil War (1861-1865)." -*The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, Commentary Reference Series*, Vol. 10, p. 1183, Edition of 1966.

treated.¹⁶⁵ Some of them left the SDA and formed the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement.¹⁶⁶

Eventually, in order to avoid such conflicts in the future, steps were taken to train Adventist boys to serve in the medical department where major problems of bearing arms and Sabbath observance had not been encountered. When the Second World War broke out in 1939, the GC voted to adopt the plan of military medical training, calling it the Seventh-day Adventist Medical Cadet Corps. However, the doctrinal base of Adventists was not so strong in some parts of the world during the Second World War. When the Nazi regime came to power, many Protestant denominations lost their religious rights and vanished. However, the SDA in Germany was the only one to survive. When Adolf Hitler came to power, the German Adventists believed it was time for a strong leader in Germany.¹⁶⁷ Presumably he became their favourite because of his abstinence from tea, coffee, alcohol and meat.¹⁶⁸ During the initial years of Nazi government, Adventists did not oppose the Nazi government, because Hitler let them keep the Sabbath. In some parts of Germany, Adventists schools incorporated Nazi symbols, nationalistic observances, and teachings into their curriculum.¹⁶⁹ Ironically, the SDA which strongly emphasised the issue of religious liberty, instigated against the SDA Reform Movement. Many members of Jewish origin were dis-fellowshipped from the SDA in Germany. To show allegiance to the Nazi government, Jewish words such as 'Sabbath' was

¹⁶⁵ Denis Kaiser, "Adventist Leaders in Germany Apologize for World War I Stance", in *Adventist News*, posted on 30th May 2014.

¹⁶⁶ Those dis-fellowshipped from the SDA, not only in Germany but also in many other countries in Europe, organized the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement was organized as a church, separate from the main body of Seventh-day Adventists in 1925. The Reform Movement continues with the original teachings and practices of the SDA.

¹⁶⁷ Throughout Adolf Hitler's rule, Adventists continued to support him and the Nazi ideology. This is cited from German Adventists publication the *Morning Watch* on 20th April 1940, which was also his 50th birthday – "Trust in his people has given the Führer the strength to carry through the fight for freedom and honour of Germany.. In Christian humility, at important times when he could celebrate with his people, he gave God in Heaven honour and recognized his dependence upon God's blessings. This humility has made him great, and this greatness was the source of blessing, from which he always gave for his people.. We compare the unnumbered words, which he has issued to the people from a warm heart, with seeds which have ripened and now carry wonderful fruit."

¹⁶⁸ Christine E. King, *The Nazi State and the New Religions: Five Case Studies in Non-Conformity*, Edwin Mellen Press, New York, 1982, p.92.

¹⁶⁹ For details see, Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics*, Macmillan Press (UK) & St Martin's Press Scholarly and Reference Division, New York, 1998.

changed to 'Rest Day' and 'Sabbath School' to 'Bible School'. Forced sterilization of the mentally disabled, epileptics, drug addicts, and alcoholics by the Nazi was appreciated by the SDA.¹⁷⁰ Though the Nazi government had passed the law for opening of schools on Saturday but during the war, Adventist soldiers were excused from duties from morning to noon on Saturdays.¹⁷¹ Surprisingly, there was no action taken by the GC against the SDA in Germany.

SDA Literature and Media: It is a well-known fact that the SDA grew due to its literature. The writings of its pioneers are circulated among the Adventists and the non-Adventists as well. The Church owns a huge number of publishing houses in several parts of the world. This enables the Church to publicise its mission through the literature. In addition to literature, the SDA also started broadcasting religious programmes on radio in 1941/1926.¹⁷² W. A. Fagal started television broadcast of "Faith for Today" in New York in 1950. *It Is Written*, founded by George Vandeman, was the first religious program to be aired on colour television and was the first major Christian ministry to utilize satellite uplink technology. Today the *Hope Channel*, the official television network of the church, operates 8 international channels broadcasting 24 hours a day on both cable and satellite networks. Hope Channel also has 3 internet channels. Additionally, there exists a range of privately owned media entities representing Adventist beliefs. These include the 3ABN and Safe TV networks. *Amazing Facts* and *The Quiet Hour* are two other radio and television programs.

CONCLUSION

The above mentioned distinctive beliefs of the SDA projected the Church as conservative and reactionary among the Christian denominations. The SDA is the largest among the denominations which observe the Sabbath on Saturday.¹⁷³ The

¹⁷⁰ For further readings see, Jack M. Patt, "Living in a Time of Trouble: German Adventists under Nazi Rule", *Spectrum*, Vol.8, No. 3, March 1977.

¹⁷¹ Erwin Sicher, "Seventh-day Adventist Publications and The Nazi Temptation", *ibid.*, p.21.

¹⁷² *Belief and Work of Seventh-day Adventists*, *op.cit.*, p.9.

¹⁷³ The Sabbath is one of the defining characteristics of Seventh-day denominations, including Seventh Day Baptists (The movement originated in the mid-17th century in England and spread within a few years to the British colonies in North America - 50,000 members), the Seventh-Day Evangelist Church (1985 in South Sudan), the Church of God 7th Day (Salem, West Virginia 1884 11,000 members), True Jesus Church (1917 China and Taiwan 1.5 million members), and the United Church of God (1995, Indianapolis) among many others.

observance of Sabbath on Saturday not only separates the SDA from the rest of Christians who worship on Sunday, but also signifies the attention of their interest mostly in the Old Testament of the *Bible*. This is also confirmed by their stress on dietary laws of the Book of Leviticus and the interpretation of the prophecy in the Book of Daniel. By designating Christians denominations that do not observe the seventh-day Sabbath as ‘Babylon’, ‘apostate Protestants’, etc., Adventists placed themselves in an adversary position with many Christians. It is interesting to find that from the earliest days of the establishment of the SDA, the Seventh-day Adventists have seen themselves as a special people to proclaim a distinct message to the world. For the Adventists, the difference between the saved and the lost is whether they choose ‘God’s seal’ (Saturday) or the ‘beast’s seal’ (Sunday) for worship. The extreme literalism and legalism of the Adventists can thus be seen. Unless one worships on Saturday, one cannot be saved. The doctrine on the Sabbath posed as a great obstacle for Adventists who opted for employment, studies or any matter that involved Saturdays.

The Second Coming doctrine was the central theme of Adventist evangelical mission. Although the doctrine of the Second Coming is also common with other denominations, but the Adventists’ strong emphasis on the ‘signs of the times’¹⁷⁴ made them unique in this aspect. They compare the events in the world with the prophecies in the *Bible*. Firstly, this was done in order to confirm the validity of their interpretation of the prophecies in the *Bible* and secondly, the events would also confirm the credibility of the prophetic gift in the ministry of Ellen White.¹⁷⁵

Compulsory baptism brought problems in marital issues among the Adventists. Prior to a marriage, non-Adventists have to be baptized to be recognized as a full fledged member of the Church. The demand of the SDA from its adherents to provide allegiance in Sabbath observance and in other issues especially with regards to health issues and habits as well as for both worship and social activities such that the time often consumed by activities dictated by the Church with which the members

¹⁷⁴ Natural calamities, wars and conflicts, etc. are taken as signs of the near advent of Jesus Christ.

¹⁷⁵ For details see E. J. Waggoner, *Prophetic Lights: Some of the Prominent Prophecies of the Old and New Testaments*, Pacific Press Publishing Company, Oakland, 1888, pp.105-134.

are bonded comes at a high cost. Members were given additional requirements that set them apart from the surrounding culture.¹⁷⁶

The interpretation and implication of the word ‘remnant’ by the SDA signifies the Church’s objective of instilling the attitude of perfection in its members. Non-SDA are often seen as unbelievers and heretics since they ignored the teachings of the Church. This also shows that the utopian character which the early Adventists tried to secure has not vanished at all. The claim that the SDA is the only church that will last till the days before the Second Coming was strongly criticized by many Christians and scholars.

With regards to the belief in the heavenly sanctuary, some opined that the doctrine was to cover up the failure of the Millerite Movement. Some are against the Adventists’ view that Jesus Christ entered the holy of the holies to perform work for human because it would mean that something is higher or holier than him. By declaring that a person undergoes a deep sleep after death and that the investigative judgment is being performed in heaven, the doctrine implies that all the prophets, saints and apostles have to face the final judgment and they might end up in damnation. This seem to contradict the Christian belief of ‘saved by grace through faith alone’¹⁷⁷ which the Adventists also advocated.

Incidentally, the Adventists also reject the immortality of the soul. They believe in the sleep of the soul until Christ’s return when the souls of those who keep the Commandments will be taken into heaven while the rest will be annihilated together with Satan. These doctrines further alienated the Adventists from other denominations. However, in recent years, SDA leaders have toned down such sentiments in their public statements. According to Adventist beliefs, one can attain salvation not only by faith alone but one’s own effort is also required for the ‘investigative judgment’, and observance of the Sabbath on Saturday is a must.

Furthermore, their emphasis on Ellen White as their prophetess had drawn negative impression from Protestants. Adventists’ adherence to the teachings and

¹⁷⁶ Ronald L. Johnstone, *Religion in Society*, Eight Edition, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2011, p.394.

¹⁷⁷ “{2:8} For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God: {2:9} Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Ephesians, *King James Bible Version*.

beliefs of the SDA also meant that they should believe in the ministry and writings of Ellen White. Due to their over emphasis on her, it seems if one denies that her writings are not equal with the Bible that would simply means denial of the foundation of the Church. In this regard, Hoekema concluded that,

Seventh-day Adventists do actually place Mrs. White's writings above the Bible, even while claiming they do not. What is really determinative for their theological position is not careful objective scholarly searching of the Scriptures, but the teachings and visions of Ellen G. White which are, for them, the court of final appeal. On the question of the source of authority, therefore, we must reluctantly insist that Seventh-day Adventists do not bow before the Scriptures as their ultimate authority in matters of faith and life.¹⁷⁸

Modern Adventist are of the opinion that they do not equate the writings of Ellen White with the *Bible*, however, they do admit that studying her writings while reading the *Bible* help one to understand better. The Adventists denied the claim of infallibility by White, but her writings were quoted in every Adventist publication and were compared with the verses from the *Bible* which most of the times are quoted in half. A question arises, does it mean that she alone possessed the divine wisdom to understand the *Bible*? This contested the idea of the infallibility of White whose words are taken as final in matters of personal understanding of every Adventist and the Church as a whole. Moreover, by claiming that her writings were inspired by the 'Holy Spirit', means that whatever she says it must be true and no one can question the writings. If her writings are counseled by the Holy Spirit they should be of universal application and not only to the Adventists.

There are general opinions that Ellen White, whom the Adventists regarded as their foremost leader and prophetess, is among the least known of women leaders in America, though she was one among those who are responsible for securing the Adventists a place among the major American sects. Her career as the Adventist visionary inspired the transformation of a disappointed movement into a complex and established denomination with wide-ranging interests in beliefs, rituals and practices. The Adventist lay claim that through her visions the establishment of an extensive global network of health institutions and a vast educational system was made possible. Ironically, though she left school at a very early age, she was able to produce

¹⁷⁸ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Seventh-day Adventism*, The Paternoster Press Ltd.: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1973, p.30.

a number of writings which are circulated among the members of the Adventist church.¹⁷⁹ It is in this context that it is important to note that mixing of divinity with worldly affairs is the main effort of the writers who write from religious perspective. The Adventists argued that Ellen. G. White is the most translated American author of both gender and the most translated woman in literature. With least level of education that she attained, she was able to write over 5,000 articles, 40 books and 50,000 pages of manuscripts. Though some non-Adventists accused her of committing plagiarism, however the debate still goes on.

It is highly doubtful that all members of SDA would really give so much importance to the writings of Ellen White, especially among the present generation. Whatever, White wrote and taught was based on the romanticism of religion in America's nineteenth century. It may appear that proving what she propagated was right or wrong infused a spirit of enquiry and curiousness especially among the youth members against the teachings of White and beliefs of the Church. Many Adventist youth saw the rules and regulations of the Church as burdensome and left the Church. This explained that Adventism in America had suffered a setback at home.

The study also found that in order to secure privilege for their beliefs, the Adventists did everything in their power to attain the non-combatant status from the government. This placed the Church in a different position among the Christians. To other Christians, this is clearly the misuse of religious liberty that a church exercises on its members. The right to worship any God or to profess any religion is individual freedom or at times family bounded. But it is the duty of every citizen to fight for one's own country. They also argued that the non-combatant status given to the Adventists is not acceptable; however, no one has raised the issue either with the state or the law. However, to the Adventists, going to the front lines as medics is an act of patriotism to serve the country. With regards to the World Wars, it may be said that those Adventists who compromised their beliefs either for their personal safety or for the church, may defend themselves by citing verses from the Bible or shed the blame on the situation, but their deeds revealed that neither there was strong faith in the teachings of their prophetess, Ellen White; nor were committed to their beliefs.

¹⁷⁹ Jonathan M. Butler, "Prophecy, Gender, and Culture: Ellen Gould Harmon [White] and the Roots of Seventh-day Adventism", in *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1991, p. 3.

It might appear to some Christians that Adventists' teachings on their beliefs and rituals are acts of heresy; however to others, Adventists are regarded as Christians in their theology.¹⁸⁰ The SDA was sometimes categorized by theologians and historians as a cult. Former members of the SDA strongly propounded that SDA is a cult and Ellen White is a false prophet. However, most of the Christians at present consider the SDA as a Protestant denomination which have unique beliefs and practices. The SDA irrespective of its errors and questionable nature from a philosophical point of view, the beliefs and practices of the SDA discussed earlier are important for an analytical and comprehensive understanding of the philosophy of the SDA and its history vis-à-vis the world.

¹⁸⁰ Irving Hexham, *Concise Dictionary of Religion*, Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1993, p.200.