

# *Adventism*

*Copyright 1995 by Allan E. McNabb: All Rights Reserved*

There are several denominations stemming from Adventism and originating from the splits following William Miller's failure to predict the second advent of Christ in 1843, 1844, and 1845. This paper is devoted to examination of Adventism, but the only specific Adventist denomination that will be considered is Seventh-day Adventist.

Adventism is based upon the second advent of Christ. Webster defines "Adventism" as: "1: the doctrine that the second coming of Christ and the end of the world are near at hand 2: the principles and practices of Seventh-day Adventists." <sup>1</sup> Since William Miller's three failures to predict the second advent of Christ, Adventists have laid less emphases upon the second advent, at least in terms of predicting the coming of Christ. And, because Adventism rests so heavily upon the eschatological, apocalyptic teachings in Daniel and Revelation, much of their teaching concerns cataclysmic world events.

## **William Miller**

Adventism was a slowly developing movement in the early 1800's during which William Miller (1782-1849) became the first strong leader of the movement in Low Hampton, New York. At first the movement was intrachurch. In the beginning, many denominations became involved in the movement (e.g., Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist) - there was no attempt to start a new denomination. William Miller became a Baptist in 1816 and began a study of apocalyptic Scripture. Because of his influential teaching concerning the second advent of Christ, people began following his teachings and eventually became known as Millerites.

Miller predicted that the second advent of Christ would come in 1843. This prophesy failed. Miller said that he had miscalculated the date and reset the date for the second advent of Christ to 1844. Again failing, he reset the date to 1845 which failed. Because these prophesies failed, many who had followed Miller went back to their previous churches or lost all faith. Those who remained Adventists formed various denominations (e.g., Church of God, Churches of God in Christ Jesus, Evangelical Adventists, Life and Advent Union, Seventh-day Adventists, and Advent Christian Church). Charles Taze Russell, founder of what is today known as Jehovah's Witnesses, was also influenced by Adventist doctrines being an Adventist early in life. Also, the Evangelical movement, which began around this time, was greatly influenced by Adventism. Evangelicals refer to this date as significant claiming the change in Christ's ministry necessitating the reappearance of supernatural gifts upon the earth.

Failing prophesies will be discussed later in relationship with Mrs. White who affirmed that Miller's prophesies concerning the second advent of Christ were from God. But for now, remember that Adventism sprang from Miller's failed prophesies. As will be discussed later, these failed prophesies discredit Miller and White as prophets proving them to be "false prophets."

During the time immediately after Miller's failed prophesies, the remaining Adventists held many of Miller's views and were united in believing that the second advent was premillennial. But today, many of the Adventist denominations are divided concerning key issues demonstrated by some

believing that the advent is amillennial.

### **Seventh-day Adventist**

The largest group of Adventists is the Seventh-day Adventists. They began in the 1840's after Miller's prophecies failed. The Seventh-day Adventists did not immediately cast away Miller's prophecies, but they studied the Scriptures for explanations as to the failing of the prophecies. After much study, Seventh-day Adventists concluded that Miller's date was significant in that it was not the second advent of Christ but the beginning of the change in Christ's heavenly ministry which they termed the Third Angel's Message (Rev. 14).

A group of Adventists began to observe the Sabbath as early as 1844 near Washington, New Hampshire. Later Joseph Bates began to circulate a pamphlet addressing the Sabbath which publicized the Sabbath question. Then Bates aligned with James White, Ellen Harmon who later married Mr. White, Hiram Edson, Frederick Wheeler, and S.W. Rhodes. Later, Mrs. White was considered to be a prophet of God, but her prophecies failed declaring her a fraud.

By 1855 the group had grown to a point that they set up headquarters and a publishing house (Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association) in Battle Creek, Michigan. In 1860, the name "Seventh-day Adventist" was adopted. The denomination's headquarters were moved in 1903 and are now located at 6840 Eastern Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20012.

The Seventh-day Adventists denominational "administrative body of the church is the executive committee of the general conference, chosen by delegates from the various church groups in the quinquennial sessions. Working under this general conference are three lesser governmental units: (1) 13 divisions, which administer church affairs on different continents; (2) 92 union conferences, which make up the divisional organizations; and (3) 388 local conferences, or missions, the smallest administrative unit." <sup>2</sup>

### **Seventh-day Adventists Use a Creed Book**

A Seventh-day Adventist "Pastor" gave me a copy of their creed book titled *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27*. This book contains the 27 beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists with a chapter devoted to each belief.

Webster defines "creed" as: a brief authoritative formula of religious belief, a set of fundamental beliefs. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27* is a creed. One may ask why the Seventh-day Adventists need a book, in addition to the Bible, to state their beliefs. Well, as with every denomination that uses a creed, catechism, or profession of faith, the sect must have a man-made document, in addition to the Bible, to establish beliefs not found in the Bible. Therefore, Seventh-day Adventists have a need for a creed. Otherwise, the Seventh-day Adventists would give someone a Bible as their book of beliefs instead of *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27*.

I further find it interesting that the Seventh-day Adventists' 27 beliefs do not contain any Scripture with exception of belief #12 which vaguely mentions the "three angels" in Revelation 14. While it is true that the book (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27*) uses scripture in the chapters attempting to justify the stated beliefs, other secular authorities are also cited. The cited authorities include

references as: Mrs. White, *Adventist Review*, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, and a multitude of others. I must say that a book of beliefs that names a denomination's own alleged "prophetess" with its own periodical, commentary, and dictionary is immediately suspect and anything but "above reproach."

### **Seventh-day Adventist Believe in the Present-day Gift of Prophecy**

Believing in the present-day gift of prophecy, the Seventh-day Adventist church is a charismatic denomination. Seventh-day Adventist Belief #17 states:

Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teachings and experiences must be tested. -Fundamental Beliefs, 17. <sup>4</sup>

The fact that Mrs. White is considered, by the Seventh-day Adventists, a prophetess is also documented by Alvin Jennings who writes:

The word of Mrs. White came to be regarded as the voice of God. She claimed to have had visions emphasizing the importance of Sabbath observance, and the Adventists regard her as a prophetess and her writings as inspired (see The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White, 144 pages. In this her inspiration is defended). Her writings are called Testimonials. "It is God and not an erring mortal, that has spoken" (Testimonials, Vol. III, p. 247. Those who oppose her are "not fighting against us, but against God," p. 260). <sup>5</sup>

D. M. Canright was a close associate of Mrs. White. He was an Adventist for twenty-eight years before renouncing Adventism as a false religion. Some Adventists alleged that Mr. Canright renounced his convictions against Adventism. But his daughter, Ms. O. E. Payne, strongly denies accusations that her father renounced his claims. Concerning the fact that Mrs. White is considered by Seventh-day Adventists to be an inspired prophetess, Canright writes:

Mrs. E. G. White, wife of the late Elder White, leader of the Seventh-day Adventists, claims to be divinely inspired, as were the prophets of the Bible. This claim is accepted by the whole denomination. They defend her inspiration as earnestly as they do that of the Bible. Year after year, in their state and general conferences, iron-clad resolutions have been unanimously adopted, endorsing her revelations in the strongest manner. Among themselves they quote her as we do Paul. A text from her writings is an end to all controversy in doctrine and discipline. It is common to hear them say that when they give up her visions they will give up the Bible, too.

Her visions, or "testimonies," as they are called, are so inseparably connected with the whole Seventh-day Adventist doctrine, that a person cannot consistently accept the one without accepting the other. Besides, they are so constantly urged

upon their people in every possible way, that a person cannot long feel comfortable among them unless he, too, accepts them. Anyone who rejects, or opposes them, is branded as a rebel fighting against God. Thus Mrs. White herself says: "If you lessen the confidence of God's people in the testimonies he has sent them, you are rebelling against God as certainly as were Kora, Dathan, and Abiram." Testimony No. 31, page 62. She claims that every line she writes, even in a private letter, is directly inspired by God - "the precious rays of light shining from the throne." Page 63. Of her own words she says: "It is God, and not an erring mortal, that has spoken." Testimonies, Vol. III, Page 257. Thus she states over and over, that those who doubt or oppose her are fighting against God; sinning against the Holy Spirit. Thus: "Fighting the Spirit of God. Those \* \* \* who would break down our testimony, I saw, are not fighting against us, but against God." Page 260. I could quote scores of passages like these.

These inspired "testimonies" now embrace ten bound volumes. Thus they have an addition to the Bible, just the same as the Mormons do. They have to read our old Bible in the light of this new Bible. Any interpretations of the Bible found in these "testimonies" settles its meaning beyond further dispute.

I have been well acquainted with Mrs. White for nearly thirty years; have been in her family for weeks at a time, and she has often been in my family. I am familiar with all her work and all her books. I am satisfied that the whole thing is a delusion. Her visions have been a constant source of quarrels and divisions among themselves. Many of their ablest men, and thousands of others, have left them on this account. There is a strong anti-vision party now. <sup>6</sup>

Paul teaches that spiritual gifts, including prophesy, would cease when that which was perfect had come (1 Cor. 13:1-13). I could argued that the time of prophecy has passed. But, let us move to the heart of the issue directly concerning Seventh-day Adventism and examine whether Mrs. White was a prophet of God or a false prophet. If we find that she was a false prophet, then we must reject her, her teachings, and the Seventh-day Adventist church.

### **Mrs. White Does Not Pass the Seventh-day Adventist Test - She Is a False Prophetess**

In *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27*, we find a section concerning "testing the prophetic gift."<sup>7</sup> In this section, the Seventh-day Adventist's four criteria to determine whether a prophet is of God or a false prophet are: "1. Does the message agree with the Bible?"<sup>8</sup> "2. Do the predictions come true?"<sup>9</sup> "3. Is Christ's incarnation recognized?"<sup>10</sup> "4. Does the prophet bear good fruit?"<sup>11</sup> For the purpose of this test, we will examine the second criteria.

In explaining the second criteria, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27* correctly states:

"How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?' If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him" (Deut. 18:21, 22, NIV; cf. Jer. 28:9).<sup>12</sup>

To test Mrs. White, we must examine her prophesies. If we find one prophesy that did not come to

pass, we know that she is a false prophetess and has not "spoken by the Lord."

First, be aware that Mrs. White believed that Miller's mistaken prophesy concerning the end of the world was from God; therefore, she cannot be a prophetess since this prophecy failed. Mr. Canright says:

Mrs. White was in the great Advent excitement of 1843-4, when they set the time for the end of the world. After the time passed, many fanatical persons went into trances and visions, spoke with tongues, claimed to be prophets, etc. Mrs. White was one of these. Her visions, over and over, in the strongest terms, indorse the setting of time in both '43 and '44, through Mr. Miller, himself, and all the leaders confessed that that was a mistake. This alone proves her fanaticism, for both times failed. She says: "God was in the proclamation of the time in 1843." Early Writings, page 36. Again: "Prophetic time closed in 1844." Page 107. That she is a false prophetess, see Deut. 18:22. <sup>13</sup>

Now this alone proves that Mrs. White is a false prophetess. Not only is she a false prophetess according to the Bible, but she is a false prophetess according to the Seventh-day Adventist book of beliefs (creed book). To further document the fact that Mrs. White was a false prophetess and to document that she was a plagiarist, Canright (writing around 1910) offers the following facts:

The fallacy of Mrs. White's claims are shown by these facts:

1. She still endorses the setting of the time in 1843-4.
2. Her visions originated in the fanatical spirit manifested by a class of extremists at the time, who were condemned by the body of the Adventists themselves.
3. She has never wrought one miracle as proof of her divine mission, though the old prophets often did.
4. She has never made one prophesy that has been fulfilled. This is remarkable, seeing that she has prophesied for seventy years and written twenty volumes. In all those twenty volumes not one single prophesy can be found which has come to pass! For years they have been urged to name one, and not one can they produce.
5. In writing her revelations, I have often seen her scratch out whole paragraphs, and even pages, and write them over differently. If God told her what to write, why did she change it? Did the Lord change His mind?
6. I have sometimes heard Elder White suggest changes in her writings, which she made. He would give her ideas, words, and whole sentences, which she would put right in. They do not deny this. Was he inspired, too?

7. Being uneducated herself, she employed an educated copyist to re-write all her matter and put it into popular style for the press. Thousands of words and phrases not her own are thus put into her books. Are these copyists inspired, too?
8. A short time since, her publications reprinted four volumes of her old books. On an average, they made twenty-four changes to the page, or 63,700 in the four books! Who would dare tamper with the Bible in that way? Who knows what changes they will make in the future? How much reliance can be placed upon such revelations?
9. A large share of her last book, "Great Controversy," she has copied from other authors, without credit in any way, or anything to indicate that she got it from others. She and her people claim that it was revealed to her by the Lord, but facts show that she took it from others. Webster says: "*Plagiary*: a thief in literature; one who purloins another's writings, and offers them to the public as his own." According to this she is a literary thief. This matter was investigated before a committee in Healdsburg, Cal., February

28, 1889, and it was proven that she had, on page after page of her book, copied right from Andrews' History of the Sabbath. Further investigation showed that she had done the same from Wylie's History of the Waldenses, D'Aubigne's History of the Reformation, the Life of Miller, the Sanctuary, and other books. This proves that her other writings and her claims to inspiration are a fraud.

10. Mrs. White and her publishers have suppressed several objectionable passages in her early visions, which contradict what she says now. I have both copies, and can prove the charge true any day, as it has frequently been proven by others.
11. After the passing of the time in 1844, the All Adventists believed and taught that probation for sinners ended then. Elder Butler, their leader, owns this. Thus he says: "There can be no question that for months after the time passed, it was the general sentiment that their work of warning the world was over." Advent review, March 3, 1885. Elder White confesses thus: "The unanimous feeling and testimony was that our work for the world was finished forever." Present Truth, May, 1850. Not another sinner could be converted. All but Adventists were lost and damned. This abominable doctrine Mrs. White confirmed in her visions. I will make only one quotation, out of scores. She said: "Those who profess a change of heart had only wrapped about them a religious garb, which covered up the iniquity of a wicked heart. Some appeared to have been really converted, so as to deceive God's people, but if their hearts could be seen they would appear as black as ever. My accompanying angel bade me look for the travail of soul for sinners as used to be. I looked, but could not see it, for the time for their salvation is past." Present Truth, page 22, August, 1849.

This language is too clear to be evaded. It stamps Mrs. White as a false teacher. In my book I give written testimony from persons who have heard her teach that probation ended in 1844.

12. For ten years she and her people broke the Sabbath, though trying to keep it. They began it at 6 P.M.. instead of at sundown, as now. So in the summer they would begin work Saturday afternoon, when the sun was up an hour or two high. Mrs. White was having visions almost daily, but saw nothing about this till others first settled it. What is such a teacher good for?
13. Mrs. White made a terrible blunder touching the reformed dress, which exposes the foolishness of her revelation. While at the Dansville Water Cure, about 1864 or 1865, she fell under Dr. Jackson's influence, adopted extreme vegetarian notions, and a short dress with pants for the women. Soon she had visions directing her people to adopt both as God's will. The results were fearful. Many literally starved themselves to death, and hundreds ruined their health for life. Mrs. White put on the dress, cut off about half way up to the knee, with pants. Everywhere the sisters followed her example, till they became the laughing-stock of the world. They looked like scarecrows. The dress was hot in summer, cold in winter, a nuisance in wet weather, and a shame every way. After a trial of eight years, it had to be abandoned. Mrs. White herself had to lay it off. Here was a shameful failure for an inspired leader. She can give no explanation of it.
14. For over seventy years she herself was constantly expecting the end of the world, and it has not come yet. This alone ought to open the eyes of all to see that she has no knowledge of the future.
15. In 1849, referring to the coming of Christ, she said: "I saw the pious slave rise in triumph and victory and shake off the chains that bound him while his wicked master was in confusion." Experience and Views, page 18. But now slavery is abolished, and this cannot be true.
16. So in 1849 she said: "Some are looking too far off for the coming of the Lord." Page 49. No Adventists then looked ten years off for the Advent, but now it has been seventy years.
17. After Jesus had been in the Most Holy place only six years, according to her, she said: "The time for Jesus to be in the Most Holy place was nearly finished." Page 49. He had then been there only six years, but has been there seventy years since! So her statement was false, and it also shows that she thought he was coming in less than six years.
18. Right in the above connection she said: "Now time is almost finished, and what we have been years [six years] in learning, they [new converts] will have to learn in a few months." Page 57. But, instead of a few months, it has been

seventy years. She thought then that time would close in a few months. Her predictions about the war are enough alone to destroy all confidence in her revelations. Here are short examples: "Slavery \* \* \* is left to live and stir up another rebellion." Testimonies, Vol. I, page 255. Has proved false. "It seemed impossible to have the war conducted successfully." Page 256. Yet it was. "When England does declare war \* \* \* there will be general war." Page 259. England did not declare war at all! "Had our nation remained united, it would have had strength; but divided it must fall." Page 260. It was not divided, nor did it fall. "It looked to me like an impossibility now for slavery to be done away." Page 266. Yet it was.

I could give scores of such quotations all through her writings, showing how they have failed always and everywhere.

I could give scores of predictions like the above, which have utterly failed, while not one has ever been fulfilled.<sup>14</sup>

### **Mrs. White was a False Prophetess, So Seventh-day Adventism is a False Religion**

We must conclude that Mrs. White was a false prophetess. Therefore, Seventh-day Adventism is a false religion according to the Bible and according to Seventh-day Adventists' own standards of validating a prophet.

Seventh-day Adventism is a false doctrine originating from men. Of such doctrines the Bible says:

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-8).

But there are also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgement has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

### **Seventh-day Adventism is a Cult - Not Christ's Church**

Webster defines a cult as: "formal religious veneration: worship."<sup>15</sup> Veneration is defined as: "respect or awe inspired by the dignity, wisdom, dedication, or talent to a person."<sup>16</sup> So the Seventh-day Adventist religion is a cult because it ascribes to the teachings of Mrs. White as authoritative. The fact that the Seventh-day Adventist church is a cult is also evident in the following quote wherein *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27* states that the Seventh-day Adventist church is Mrs. White's church. In other words, Seventh-day Adventists believe that the Seventh-day Adventist church is Mrs. White church - not Christ's church. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27* says:

More than a century has passed since Ellen White received the prophetic gift. Her church and the lives of those who have heeded her counsels reveal the impact of her life and messages. <sup>17</sup>

In contrast, the Bible says that the church is Christ's body (Eph. 1:22-23), that Christ's body is the church (Col. 1:18, 24), that God adds those who are saved to the church (Acts 2:47), that all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3), that grace is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:1), and that salvation is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). Anyone desiring to be saved from eternal death must be in Christ's body (the church; cf. Eph. 5:23; 1:22-23). Anyone in a body or church other than Christ's are not saved and will be eternally lost.

The fact that the Seventh-day Adventists church is not the body and church of Christ is demonstrated by a Seventh-day Adventist baptism I witness on March 21, 1995. I was attending a lecture at the Seventh-day Adventist church on Clay Street in Thomasville, Georgia. The lecture originated from Chattanooga and was being viewed via satellite. Before the lecture, three people were baptized (but most baptisms were being saved until the last evening of the lecture series). Mr. Finley said several things before each baptism, but before one he added that he was baptizing this man: "because of your belief in the Seventh-day Adventist church."

Now do not let this point escape your utmost attention. The foundation of the Seventh-day Adventist church has crumbled by its own admission - it is a cult, it is not Christ's church, and its members are not Christians. The Seventh-day Adventist church is Mrs. White's church and its members are called Seventh-day Adventists.

Allan E. McNabb

## Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (G. & C. Merriam Company, 1975), p. 17
- <sup>2</sup> Frank S. Mead, Revised by Samuel S. Hill, Handbook of Denominations in the United States, 9th ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), p. 24
- <sup>3</sup> Webster, p. 268
- <sup>4</sup> Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988), p. 216
- <sup>5</sup> Alvin Jennings, Traditions Of Men Versus The Word Of God, (Fort Worth, TX: Star Bible Publications, Inc., 1973), p. 68
- <sup>6</sup> D. M. Canright, Seventh-day Adventism Refuted In A Nutshell, (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1970), p. 29-30
- <sup>7</sup> Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27, p.223
- <sup>8</sup> Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27, p. 223
- <sup>9</sup> Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27, p. 223
- <sup>10</sup> Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27, p. 223
- <sup>11</sup> Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27, p. 223
- <sup>12</sup> Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27, p. 223
- <sup>13</sup> Canright, p. 30-31
- <sup>14</sup> Canright p. 32-35
- <sup>15</sup> Webster, p. 277
- <sup>16</sup> Webster, p. 1297
- <sup>17</sup> Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27, p. 226