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## **The Seventh-day Adventist Identity - Who Are We as a Community of Faith?**

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## The Seventh-day Adventist Identity —Who Are We as a Community of Faith?

Webster's dictionary defines *identity* as “the characteristics and qualities of a person, considered collectively and regarded as essential to that person's self-awareness.”<sup>1</sup> Identity is thus about who or what a person is. This personal identity needs to be enlarged to the group or collective identity, which is defined as “numbers of persons or things classified together because of common characteristics, community of interests, etc.”<sup>2</sup> The group identity has at least two main benefits: (1) it “gives a person a way to feel connected to something that is larger than him or herself”; and (2) “it gives us some cues about how to act. By knowing what group we belong to, we know what sorts of behaviors are expected of us.”<sup>3</sup>

self-awareness and self-perception? Before exploring these pertinent questions, we need to briefly review Jesus's identity, as He is our model, as well as the identities of the Old and New Testament churches, and learn from them.

### Christ's Identification

Jesus Christ asked His disciples questions that helped them to recognize His identity. First, He investigated what others said about Him, the Son of Man. By accepting this title for Himself, He identified not only with humanity as a human person (Psalm 8:4; Ezekiel; 2:1, 3), but it also pointed to the fact that He was the One described in Daniel 7:13, the divine Being coming down from heaven. The disciples responded: “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets” (Matthew 16:14 NIV). From that answer, it is obvious that people did not understand who Jesus was. Then Jesus posed to His disciples the principal question: “But what about you...who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16:15 NIV). Peter's response pointed to the outstanding revelation by God in regard to Jesus's identity: “You are the Christ [the Messiah], the Son of the Living God” (Matthew 16:16 NKJV). Jesus replied to Peter: “This was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven” (Matthew 16:17 NIV). Jesus Christ was more than a prophet; He was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies regarding the coming of the Messiah.<sup>4</sup> He was the incarnated God (John 1:1–3, 14; 1 Timothy 3:16).

Two dominant features become evident from this discussion. First, Christ's identity was recognized on the basis of **God's revelation**, which was given by the



So, who are we as Seventh-day Adventists? How do we describe our Seventh-day Adventist identity? What are the distinguishing characteristics and qualities of Seventh-day Adventists? What is essential for our

<sup>1</sup> Webster's New World: College Dictionary, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Cleveland, OH: Wiley Publishing, 2000), 708.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 628.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-benefits-group-identity-418320#:~:text=There%20are%20two%20main%20benefits%20to%20having%20a,something%20that%20is%20larger%20than%20him%20or%20herself>. For social identity theory in studies of social psychology that explore how people develop a sense of belonging to a particular group, see Henri Tajfel, ed., *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations (European Studies in Social Psychology)* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets, *Identity Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Seth J. Schwartz, Koen Luyckx, and Vivian L. Vignoles, eds. *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, 2 volumes (New York: Springer, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978).

guidance of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13–14; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21). His role, function and Messiahship was revealed in the Holy Writings. He was the Promised Seed, Immanuel (God with us), Shiloh, Scepter, Star, Prophet, Redeemer, Lord, Davidic King, Servant of the Lord and Judge.<sup>5</sup> Second, Jesus Christ was defined by His **close relationship** to His heavenly Father: “You are...the Son of the living God.” These *reve-lational* and *relational* aspects form two pillars of who He is. This is why He was and is followed, admired, obeyed and worshiped. Thomas confessed aptly: “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28 NIV).

### Identity of God’s People in Biblical Times

The same two factors prevail in regard to the Old Testament or the New Testament churches. God’s people are defined by (1) their relationship to their God; and (2) their following of God’s revealed instructions, His teaching. Their values, concepts, faith, doctrine, ethics, practical life and worldview were defined by God’s revelation as presented in the Holy Writings.

In both Testaments, God’s people are identified as **special** people who are called and set apart by God for a unique **mission**;<sup>6</sup> because of the exceptional revealed **truth**, they needed to practice and proclaim it to the world. Israel was appointed to be a light to the whole world and live God’s given message in an exemplary way to attract others to the living God, the Holy Creator.<sup>7</sup> God called Abraham to be a blessing to all: “All peoples [lit. all families; Hebrew: *kol mishpakahah*] on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:3 NIV). God said to Israel, through Moses, when He established His covenant with them: “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be *my treasured possession* [Hebrew: *segullah*, possession, personal property, peculiar treasure; LXX: *laos perusios*, special or chosen people] among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5–6 ESV; emphasis added). This phrase “you shall be my treasured possession” is rendered by the KJV as “ye shall be a peculiar treasure” (19:5). The NIRV expresses the same thought in the following way: “...out of all of the nations you will be my special treasure” (Exodus 19:5 NIRV). Thus, God states that Israel will be His special people because He personally treasured them and saw them as “a kingdom of priests” and “a holy nation.” The apostle Peter repeated these phrases as a commission for Christians: “But you are a chosen people [Greek: *genos eklekton*], a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:9–10 NIV).

This means that the distinctiveness of God’s people is closely associated with their relationship with God. The apostle Paul states the same about the believers in Christ in his letter to the Colossians: “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Colossians 3:12 NIV).

### Identity of Seventh-day Adventists

#### A. The Big Picture: General Observations

First, Seventh-day Adventists, as a community of faith, **believe in a personal God** who is a supernatural, spiritual Being, not a principle, nor a mere power. We do not worship nature, Mother Earth, the Cosmic Force, or other mystical, magnetic, magical, spiritualistic or evil energies or creatures. Humans can relate to this personal God and cultivate a meaningful relationship with Him because He communicates with humanity and reveals His truth. Thus, we are not atheists, agnostics, animists or naturalists, but believers in the invisible but loving God.

Second, in the spectrum of world religions, we are **Christians** (not Buddhists, Hindus, Jews or Muslims). We embrace the rich Judeo-Christian heritage and accept the existence of the living God, the Creator of life, the whole Universe and everything in it, and the fundamental ethical values, including the validity of the Decalogue. We have many things in common with other Christians (including Roman Catholics and Orthodox believers). For example, we believe in the inspiration of the Bible and accept it as the Word of God. We believe in the Trinity, the authority of God’s law, salvation in Christ from sin and death, the existence of Satan, eternal life only in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, one universal Church, obedience to God, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, the sanctity of marriage, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ our Lord, and the bodily resurrection.

Third, we are **Protestants** who belong to the family of Protestant churches, and with them we maintain that the early Christian Church is an ideal model to be followed. Together with them, we protest against the distortion of biblical truth, corruption, misbehavior and misuse of ecclesiastical authority, and stand for biblically-oriented Christianity. We believe that only Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, uniquely God, and can forgive sins. We also have other things in common with our Protestant friends, as we share with them the conviction about the rightness and relevance of five Protestant principles which further define the values we cherish:

(1) **Sola Scriptura** (by Scripture alone). Only the Holy Scripture, not Church tradition, votes of the Church, priestly office or ecclesiastical authority, is the foundational and highest authority in matters of doctrine

<sup>5</sup> Kaiser argues for 65 direct Messianic passages in the Old Testament.

<sup>6</sup> “The Mission of God’s People in the Old Testament.” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 19, nos. 1 and 2 (2008): 40–60.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 18–39.



and practice. We uplift the Bible as the final judge in questions of faith and ethics (Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:20–21; 2:20).

(2) *Sola gratia* (by grace alone). We confess that we are saved solely by God’s grace through faith in Christ Jesus. This excludes any merit done by a person to achieve salvation. God’s amazing grace is the source of our redemption. It is built on what Christ has done for us (Ephesians 2:8–9; Titus 2:11–14).

(3) *Sola fide* (by faith alone). We are saved through faith and not by our deeds (John 3:16; Galatians 2:16; 3:11; Ephesians 2:4–10). Salvation is a free gift coming from God and accepted by faith. However, faith is not our savior—it is a means by which we accept salvation. We are saved by faith alone, but faith never stays alone because it is then accompanied by good works performed out of gratitude for the gift of salvation. Faith is the root and good deeds are the fruit of



salvation. Obedience to God’s law and His revealed teaching is only possible for saved, regenerated people empowered to do so by the Holy Spirit, His Word and grace (Deuteronomy 8:3; Ezekiel 36:25–27; John 3:3–5; 15:4–5, 16; Romans 12:1–2; Philippians 4:13; Titus 2:11–14).

(4) *Solo Christo* (by Christ alone). Christ alone is our Savior and Intercessor between God and humans, not angels, saints, Mary, or someone or something else (John 14:6; Romans 8:34; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:25). He is our Lord and King (John 20:28; 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:15; Revelation 17:14; 19:16).

(5) *Soli Deo gloria* (to God the glory alone). Only to God belongs glory for everything He is doing for us, in us, through us, and around us (Jeremiah 9:23–24; 1 Corinthians 1:29, 31; 10:31).

To them one can add two additional biblical principles, which were added later:

(6) *Sola charitas* (by love alone). All we do only has true value when it is done out of love and gratitude to God for His goodness, kindness and faithfulness toward us. Love is and should be a genuine motif of all our activities (Psalms 100:1–5; 103:1–4; 1 Corinthians 13:1–13; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Colossians 3:14).

(7) *Sola Spiritus* (by the Spirit alone). The Holy Spirit alone is leading our lives and enables us to do God’s will, to follow, worship, obey and serve Him (Ezekiel 36:26–27; John 14:26; 16:13–14; Romans 8:13–15; Philippians 2:13).

Fourth, among the Protestant family of different denominations, we are not Lutherans, Anglicans, Reformed Christians, Methodists, Pentecostals, Baptists, or even Seventh-day Baptists, but Seventh-day Adventists. What does it mean, even though we share so much in common with all of them? There are a few more characteristics which makes us distinct with a specific flavor.

## B. Specific Details of the Seventh-day Adventist Identity

Please note that the following first two components are important overall factors of our Adventist identity. Elements 3–7 further expand on Adventist identity by giving specific details.

### 1. Derived from the Holy Scripture

Our identity comes to us from outside of us. It is given as a gift from God, from His revelation. Our identity depends on our understanding of the Word of God and is derived from the interpretation of the Holy Scripture. The Bible as God’s revelation is telling us who we are. More particularly, the identity question is expressed in our self-understanding based on the Bible, especially resulting from the **understanding of the prophetic interpretation** of the Bible, particularly from Daniel 7–9 (focused on 8:14), Malachi 4:4–6, and Revelation 14:6–13 (where the eternal Gospel is captured in the form of the Three Angels’ Message); cf. Revelation 10:1–11; 11:3–7, 18–19. For us, the Bible is not only informative but formative and has decisive and final authority in matters of doctrine and ethics. As the eschatological remnant movement, we have been entrusted with the end-time message summarized in Revelation 14:6–13, thus we understand that we are under the prophetic mandate to proclaim it.<sup>8</sup>

### 2. Centered in Christ

Our identity is **rooted in Christ** because we derive

<sup>8</sup> For an understanding of Seventh-day Adventist remnant theology, see Angel Manuel Rodriguez, ed., *Toward a Theology of the Remnant* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009); idem, ed., *Message, Mission and Unity of the Church* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013).

our existence and awareness of who we are from our relationship with Him. We are who we are because of Him (1 Corinthians 15:10; Galatians 3:20); He is our life (John 14:6; Colossians 3:4). We believe that we are God's sons and daughters (John 1:12; Galatians 3:26; 1 John 3:1). We are forgiven, redeemed and saved because of what He did for us (Romans 3:23–26; 5:1–2; 8:1; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 John 1:9). He died for us (Isaiah 53:4–6; 1 Corinthians 15:3), and this ultimate sacrifice gives us immeasurable worth and a sense of belonging, and also eternal life (John 3:16–17; 1 John 5:11–13). We are His twice, first, because He is our Creator and, second, because He redeemed us from eternal death and became our Savior (Psalm 100:3; Romans 5:6–11; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13–14).

Thus, our identity depends on our **knowledge** of Christ, on His **teaching**, and on our **relationship** with Him. We can only know Him fully on the basis of the testimony of the Holy Scriptures. Jesus is our Righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6; 33:16; Romans 5:21; 1 Corinthians 1:30), the Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2), and the only Savior (Acts 4:12). His sinless life (Luke 1:35; John 8:46; 14:30; Hebrews 4:15) and death on our behalf (Isa 53:4–6; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13–14) is the guarantee of our salvation, to which we cannot add anything but only humbly receive it with a grateful heart. His resurrection proves His unique position as our Redeemer (John 11:25; Romans 5:10; Revelation 1:18), and He is our living Intercessor (Romans 8:34) helping us in our everyday struggles (1 John 2:1), saving us completely (Hebrews 7:25), and silencing the accusations of Satan against us (Revelations 12:10–12). He is our wisdom and power of life (1 Corinthians 1:30). We are Christ's followers and His disciples (Matthew 28:19) and are called by God to observe everything God has revealed to humanity (Matthew 28:20). This is why we are His servants (Luke 17:20; 1 Corinthians 4:1; 2 Corinthians 6:4; Philippians 1:1), His friends (John 15:15), and His children, sons and daughters of God (John 1:12; Galatians 3:26; 1 John 3:1).

Christ is the central point of our theological system and doctrines and must be uplifted above all else. Ellen White underlines that He has to always be first in everything we proclaim: “The Sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the Cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, Salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross.

This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers.”<sup>9</sup> Again, she stresses this point: “Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world.”<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Summarized in Our Denominational Name

Our faith community's name “Seventh-day Adventist Church” reveals our identity and captures very well our two main theological anchors. (1) **We are Seventh-day Adventists**, which means that we look back to our roots: namely, to the biblical Creation and to our Creator, who created life on earth and everything on it in six days. He then established a memorial of His creative activity by instituting, on the seventh day, the weekly **Sabbath** in order for humans to engage in genuine worship, cultivating a close relationship with Him as well as with people around us. Doukhan put it eloquently: “The ‘yes’ to creation is a ‘yes’ to the joy of life. The seventh-day Sabbath connects us with the human reality of this world, with our families (Leviticus 19:3), but also with our servants and our employees and with the foreigners (Exodus 20:10), as well as with the animals of creation (Exodus 20:10).”<sup>11</sup> Sabbath connects our faith with real life. (2) **We are Seventh-day Adventists**, which means that we are looking to the future, an eschatological time, when a full re-Creation will take place, since sin has marred the beauty of God's original Creation and destroyed our relationship with God and consequently all other relations. Between these **two pillars—Creation and Eschatology**—lies the plan of salvation. We believe in a completed salvation, an eschatological movement, when physical life will be restored according to the original plan, without sin, death, sickness, crime, violence, pain, weeping and suffering. We look back to know from where we came, center our theology on the event of the cross, and look forward, expecting **the Second Coming of Jesus** and His kingdom with its eternal life, joy, peace and security. Creation points to our roots and eschatology anchors our hope in the future. This brings a healthy tension into our life and theology.

The **paradox** of our existence is expressed by these two chronological opposites: creation and eschatology. Our theology stands or falls on Creation theology,<sup>12</sup> and the eschatological dimension leads us to the eternal realm (Ecclesiastes 3:11; 1 John 4:14; 5:11–13). Salvation is much more than only our personal experience. It has eternal and cosmic dimensions because it leads to the ultimate restoration of all in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:10). In between these two pillars lies the plan of salvation, which is nothing else than God's

<sup>9</sup> Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2015), 315.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>11</sup> Jacques B. Doukhan, “The Tension of Seventh-day Adventist Identity: An Existential and Eschatological Perspective,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 26, no. 1 (2015): 31.

<sup>12</sup> “The President's Page: Creation—The Sine Qua Non of Adventism.” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 15, no. 2 (Autumn 2004): 1–4; Richard M. Davidson, “Back to the Beginning: Genesis 1–3 and the Theological Center of Scripture” in *Christ, Salvation, and the Eschaton: Essays in Honor of Hans K. LaRondelle*, ed. by Daniel Heinz, Jiří Moskala, and Peter M. van Bemmelen (Berrien Springs, MI: Old Testament Publications, 2009), 5–29.



perfect plan of re-Creation. The big biblical metanarrative goes from Creation to de-Creation (with the fall into sin and the first part of the Flood story) and re-Creation, from Genesis 1–2 to Revelation 21–22.<sup>13</sup> We need to understand God’s mighty acts in the past, see what He is currently doing, and look forward to what He will do in the future.

Our Church’s name and its theology help us to not fall into a spiritualizing trap that can be labeled as a “salvation-only Gospel” in which the biblical teaching is narrowed only to the cross and non-physical realities outside of time and space. In that case, salvation then becomes esoteric and detached from life and the joy of a physical creation. A proper balance with tensions and paradoxes of life is a true life mystery and is like spices added to one’s food. We need to avoid the temptation of neo-Marcionism, neo-Docetism, neo-Gnosticism or Neo-Platonism, where only the spiritual is good but the physical is marginalized (thus, e.g., biblical *kerygma* is what counts, but not so much factual history). We need to recognize the value of our bodies; our name and theology guard against sentimentalism, asceticism or mysticism, and guide us to an appreciation of the created things around us that are beautiful and physical. The physical is not of less value and importance since our lifestyle matters (1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 10:31; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:12–19; 1 John 4:1–3).

#### 4. Framed in the Great Controversy Theology

Our understanding of the biblical message is built on the recognition that there is a fierce battle between Christ and Satan, good and evil, light and darkness, and this **spiritual warfare** is embedded as a dominant and all-prevailing factor in our theology.<sup>14</sup> A right understanding of the character of God is the key. God is love (Deuteronomy 7:8; 1 John 4:16), which is the

foundational stone and all-encompassing truth of our theological system.

Satan, on the other hand, is an intruder and enemy of God, even though he was created as an anointed cherub, Lucifer, a most beautiful, wise and perfect creature (Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:12–15). He accused God of not being loving, fair or just, but a tyrant who takes away one’s freedom with His stringent commandments and demands for absolute obedience (Genesis 3:1–10; Job 1–2; Isaiah 14:12–15; Ezekiel 28:11–19; Matthew 4:1–11; Luke 10:18; John 8:44; Revelation 12:4–17).<sup>15</sup> John Peckham aptly states: “In brief, I argue that God’s love (properly understood) is at the center of a cosmic dispute and that God’s commitment to love provides a morally sufficient reason for God’s allowance of evil, with significant ramifications for understanding divine providence as operating within what I call covenantal rules of engagement.”<sup>16</sup> This metanarrative gives important insight into the overall biblical-theological teaching. The truth about who God is and His actions, as well as the believers’ allegiance to Him and His law, is at

*...this spiritual warfare is embedded as a dominant and all-prevailing factor in our theology.*

the core of this great controversy presented in biblical teaching. The spiritual warfare is also recognized by non-Adventist scholars.<sup>17</sup> This controversy has a cosmic dimension.<sup>18</sup> Already the Reformation recognized that it is not only important to present the beauty and teaching of Christ, but also unmask the deceptive work of the Antichrist in its various forms. Thus, the Great Controversy is not just about the right day of worship or worship itself, but about the character of God. The living God is the God of love, truth and justice, and only such a God can be respected, admired, loved, followed, served and worshiped.

#### 5. Focused on God’s Judgment in the Setting of the Sanctuary Doctrine

<sup>13</sup> David J. A. Clines, *The Themes of the Pentateuch*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 10 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1997), 81; Claus Westermann, *Beginning and End in the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 33, 37.

<sup>14</sup> See especially the five volumes of the Great Controversy Series by Ellen G. White: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1890); *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1917); *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898); *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911); and *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911). See also Richard M. Davidson, “Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 11.1–2 (2000):102–119.

<sup>15</sup> Ellen G. White, “Introduction,” *Great Controversy*, v–xii; Jiří Moskala, “Genesis 3 as a Model for Understanding the Nature of Sin and Salvation,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 27, no. 1–2 (2016): 1–36; idem, “The God of Job and Our Adversary,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 15, no. 2 (Autumn 2004): 104–117; Richard M. Davidson, “Satan’s Celestial Slander,” *Perspective Digest* 1, no. 1 (1996): 31–34; idem, “Ezekiel 28:11-19 and the Rise of the Cosmic Conflict” in *The Great Controversy and the End of Evil: Biblical and Theological Studies in Honor of Angel Manuel Rodriguez in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. by Gerhardt Pfandl (Silver Spring, MD/Nampa, ID: Biblical Research Institute/Review & Herald/Pacific Press, 2015), 57-69.

<sup>16</sup> John C. Peckham, *Theodicy of Love: Cosmic Conflict and the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 4.

<sup>17</sup> Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997); Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> See Jiří Moskala, “The Significance, Meaning, and Role of Christ’s Atonement,” in *God’s Character and the Last Generation*, ed. Jiří Moskala and John C. Peckham (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing, 2018), 190–218.

The Seventh-day Adventist identity is focused on **the divine judgment**, the central issue in the Sanctuary doctrine.<sup>19</sup> However, it needs to be underlined that the setting of this doctrine has two aspects in Adventist thinking: (1) The doctrine of the sanctuary is not just one doctrine among many, but it is the “heuristic key” into the biblical system of truth. In other words, it is the glue that holds together the entire coherent structure of biblical teaching. Ellen White maintains that the sanctuary “opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious.”<sup>20</sup> (2) The original and basic purpose of the heavenly (and earthly) sanctuary is the place where God lives in space and time and “dwells among” His creatures and invites them to come and worship and fellowship with Him in His heavenly palace/temple/home (Psalm 150:1; Isaiah 6:1–6; Revelation 4 and 5). This is a revelation of a God who is acting in time and space.<sup>21</sup> The aspect of the divine judgment is important, but became a reality only after the rise of sin and will eventually be finished with the Last Judgment of Revelation 20. However, the heavenly sanctuary has existed from the beginning (Jeremiah 17:12) and will continue forever as the place where God is with His people (Revelation 21:3).

The divine judgment truly and impartially defines our existence and vindicates God because it solves the problem of sin, saves people who trust God, and restores full harmony and peace in the Universe. The biblical teaching on judgment is not a peripheral or esoteric concept, but the central piece of the biblical view of life; it permeates everything. From the first trial judgment recorded in Genesis 3, through judgments on Cain, the antediluvian world, builders of the tower of Babel,

Sodom and Gomorrah, until the final judgment mentioned in Revelation 20, almost every page of the Bible speaks of divine judgment. The Day of Atonement is situated at the very center of the Pentateuch (Leviticus 16), the Day of Judgment, which culminates the Israelites’ yearly sacrificial system. The whole books of Judges and Daniel, as well as many Psalms, underlie the notion of judgment and explain its meaning.

We are **under God’s judgment** all the time; it is not a threat, but the good news of redemption. This Gospel according to God’s judgment is in reality a presentation of the divine plan of salvation and brings glory to God.<sup>22</sup> Christ is our Judge and Intercessor.<sup>23</sup> In view of the broad biblical teaching on the divine judgment and the strong emphasis on the cosmic restoration of justice, peace and harmony, it is no wonder that this doctrine is **the heartbeat of our Seventh-day Adventist theology**.

George Ladd correctly explains: “The doctrine of justification means that God has pronounced the eschatological verdict of acquittal over the man of faith in the present, in advance of the final judgment... Thus the man in Christ is actually righteous, not ethically but forensically, in terms of his relationship to God.”<sup>24</sup> God is just (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalms 31:5; 2 Chronicles 15:3;

2 Thessalonians 1:6; 1 John 1:9), He never perverts His judgment or can be accused of favoritism (Proverbs 17:15; Acts 10:34–35; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25). He is just while justifying sinners (Romans 3:26; Revelation 16:7), because He changes them. God sees in the present what we will become by the power of the Holy Spirit, His mighty word, and His blazing grace. He declares us righteous because, by His amazing grace, we will be righteous; our lives will be transformed.<sup>25</sup>

*The biblical teaching on judgment is not a peripheral or esoteric concept, but the central piece of the biblical view of life; it permeates everything.*

<sup>19</sup> For details, see Richard M. Davidson, *A Song for the Sanctuary: Experiencing God’s Presence in Shadow and Reality* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute; Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> White, *The Great Controversy*, 423.

<sup>21</sup> Fernando Canale demonstrates that the nature of God is not timeless and spaceless like most Christian systems, following neo-Platonism, still maintain, but is the One who comes into time and space in the sanctuary because He exercises the incarnational or Emmanuel principle of “God with us” from the very beginning of creation (Jeremiah 17:12). The biblical God is the personal God who invites His creatures to enter into intimate relationship and worship Him. For details, see Fernando L. Canale, “Philosophical Foundations and the Biblical Sanctuary,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 36, no. 2 (1998): 183–206; idem, *The Cognitive Principle of Christian Theology: A Hermeneutical Study of the Revelation and Inspiration of the Bible* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University LithoTech, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Jiří Moskala, “The Gospel According to God’s Judgment: Judgment as Salvation,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 22, no. 1 (2011): 28–49; idem, “Toward a Biblical Theology of God’s Judgment: A Celebration of the Cross in Seven Phases of Divine Universal Judgment (An Overview of a Theocentric-Christocentric Approach),” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 138–165; James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> Jiří Moskala, “The Meaning of the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus Christ on Our Behalf in the Heavenly Sanctuary,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Seminary* 28, no. 1 (2017): 3–25.

<sup>24</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 446.

<sup>25</sup> God’s grace is amazing not only because sinners can be saved, but because His grace is transforming. If His grace is not transforming, then it is not amazing. We are changed by beholding Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 3:1–4, 10; Hebrews 12:2; Philippians 2:13), and by the power of His Word and Spirit (Psalms 33:6; Ezekiel 36:26–28; John 3:5; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18).

We are new creatures in Christ, and His grace will grow in us (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; 1 Corinthians 3:7; 2 Corinthians 10:15; Ephesians 4:13–15; Colossians 2:19; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18). Grace is amazing because it changes people and does what we cannot accomplish for ourselves (Romans 7:14–18; Jeremiah 13:23; Isaiah 64:6; Matthew 11:28–30; John 1:12; 3:7; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:4–5; Romans 8:10–11; 1 John 3:1–6). When we pass through God’s acquittal, He justifies us as our Judge; then in His eyes, we are what we will be.

God is our Judge, and this fact makes us who we are. Peter Brunner, a Lutheran theologian and professor of systematic theology who lectured in Heidelberg until his retirement, excellently and with detailed precision explains the relationship between our identity and God’s judgment. He touches on the core of the matter: “Living in every instance in the judgment of God makes our life what it is. Living in the judgment of God is the creative power that makes us what we actually are. We do not make ourselves what we are; **God’s judgment about us makes us what we are**, for the judgment of God works very differently from human judgment.... I am what God thinks about me. God’s judgment carries with it the immediate power of execution. God’s decree creates what it says.... If God decrees, ‘He is my beloved child,’ then that is what I really am, even when so much seems to speak against it.... God’s judgment about you and me creates the basic foundation of our existence. I live as I live in the judgment of God. I am what I am through the judgment of God. Any weight that I might place on the scale of my life produces only a superficial and temporary swing. But what God’s judgment brings into my life shifts the balance for all time and eternity. That is why the question of what God thinks of me is the most important of all questions.”<sup>26</sup> God’s impartial judgment makes us a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). In Christ we have everything (Galatians 3:29; 4:7; Romans 4:13–16; 8:32; 1 John 3:1), and we can entirely wrap ourselves in His divine forgiveness (1 John 1:7, 9; 5:12–13, 20). God recreates through His judgments, which ultimately bring Him glory. The Gospel according to God’s judgment is actually the working out of the plan of redemption.

The time of God’s “judgment has come” (Revelation 14:7), and we need to announce the last Gospel message of love to the world that includes the reality of **the pre-Advent judgment**, which is currently going on in heaven (Daniel 7–9). This cosmic eschatological judgment brings the final solution to the problem of sin, resulting in the vindication of God’s character of love, the salvation of the righteous, the establishment of the eternal kingdom of God, and the annihilation of evil, the wicked, evil angels and Satan. This apocalyptic hope anchored in Christ’s love, truth and justice is the essence of the biblical good news and a unique contribution of Adventism to Christian theology.

## 6. Resides in a Recognition of the “and” but in a Proper Sequence

The genius of Seventh-day Adventism is in the conjunction **and**, like putting together the Gospel *and* the law, grace *and* obedience, faith *and* works (Romans 3:31; 1 Corinthians 7:19).<sup>27</sup> The *and* is exegetically and theologically well expressed in Revelation 14:12, which states: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12 NKJV). However, the **proper sequence** of applying God’s truth in life is crucial. First comes the indicative of the Gospel followed by the imperative of the Gospel. First comes grace and then obedience; first is faith and then works; first is experienced salvation and then the law is internalized. Grace accepted through faith is the root of salvation, and ethics is its fruit and result. One can give numerous examples of this truth. God first created everything perfect and only then did He make humans and command them to keep what He gave them as a perfect gift to be maintained in its original state (Genesis 2:15–17). When Adam and Eve sinned, it was God who searched for them in His grace: “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9). This is the pattern, because God always takes the first step and is the Initiator of our salvation. God brought Israel out of Egypt, gave them freedom, and only then did He give them the gift of the Decalogue. Paul, in the Epistle to Romans, first explains the Gospel: we are all sinners and need Jesus Christ as our Savior (Ch. 1–8). He follows by applying it to the Jewish nation (Ch. 9–11), and then he elaborates on the consequences of these facts, namely, obedience by the redeemed in Christ (Ch. 12–16). He is doing the same, for example, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where he first speaks about the riches of God’s mercy (Ephesians 1–3) and then points out how to walk in this light of the Gospel (Ephesians 4–6).

It must be stressed that biblical truth is **not a synthesis** of various thoughts, concepts and teachings (like in Hegelian philosophy when thesis and antithesis is converted into synthesis), because biblical teaching is expressed in **tension** and is recognized as a biblical paradox. We believe in the divine and human nature of Christ simultaneously; we accept the Bible as the Word of God, but written by human authors; and we acknowledge our God to be a Sovereign Lord, but we believe at the same time that humans are free to choose to follow Him or not. The Triune nature of God, Christ’s incarnation, the belief in resurrection or regeneration, to name a few mysteries of life, are beyond our comprehension. We as finite beings, with our very limited intellectual capacities, are unable to grasp the depth and ultimate wisdom of the divine. Yes, we are already saved, but yet may die (John 3:16; 11:25); we already have eternal life, but are still mortal (John 5:24); we are already in heaven, but yet physically living on earth (Ephesians 2:6). These paradoxes

<sup>26</sup> Peter Brunner, “The Forgiveness of God and the Judgment of God,” *Word & World* 21, no. 3 (2001): 282. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>27</sup> Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, October 8, 1861.



cannot be understood by simple human logic, but only make sense when one accepts God's revelation and bows down before His ultimate wisdom (Deuteronomy 29:29; Isaiah 66:2; Matthew 16:23b), then in a super logic of faith these revealed truths make perfect sense because in this way it becomes the wisdom of God for the redeemed (1 Corinthians 1:23–24, 30). Anselm's motto is right: *fides quaerence intellectum* (faith seeking understanding), and an individual who wants to know it will be helped by God to find it (Matthew 7:7–8; John 7:17). Adventists also begin with faith in God and His Word, and from that basis go forward to understand truth and the realities of life.

## 7. Expressed in 28 Fundamental Beliefs—Further Defining This Faith Community

The Seventh-day Adventist identity can be recognized in what we believe. As a worldwide Church, we agreed in a consensus manner on **28 Fundamental Beliefs** that unite us as an eschatological movement.<sup>28</sup> These fundamental beliefs form a coherent, interconnected and organic system of truth regarding our faith and practice. What we believe defines our existence. From biblical teaching comes our ethical behavior, and out of dogmatics springs our practice. The mosaic of biblical truth presents a unique picture that is tied together by a theocentric approach with the Triune God of love at its very center. **The atonement of Christ on the cross** is the core truth around which all is bound together; thus, Christ lies at the center of each belief and ties them together. Every biblical truth is important, but some items are more important, or to say it better, they play a key, principal and dominant role. Jesus made it obvious when He explained what is the greatest commandment of God: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matthew 22:36–40 NIV). Again, in His final public rebuke, He addressed the Pharisees: “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former” (Matthew 23:23 NIV). The Apostle Paul emphatically underlines that all actions must have the right motivation of love, otherwise they have no value: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand

all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1–3 ESV). Thus, principles of love, righteousness, justice, truth, compassion, obedience, peace, joy and faithfulness are weightier matters than anything else (see also Proverbs 21:3; Micah 6:6–8; Matthew 9:13; Romans 14:17). Who God is and that Christ is our Savior are the key beliefs because this is the fountain of our salvation and eternal life (John 3:16; 5:24; 17:3; 1 John 4:12–13).

Biblically, God is **the God of relationship**, and the primary task for Him is not an accomplishment, but to bring people into a close relationship with Him, a relationship sin destroyed (Exodus 19:4; Joel 2:12–13; John 12:32). This is the ultimate goal of all these 28 faith statements. All of them are about who God is and what He is doing. All of them should transform our own belief system, worldview, culture and customs, and influence how we see the world and live. Our emphasis is on the literal second coming of Christ, the 7th-day Sabbath, natural mortality, no immortal soul, no eternal punishment of the wicked in hell, justice, immortality received only in Christ at His Second Coming, the millennium in heaven, and the interpretation of prophecies. In the background of these beliefs is the usage of biblical hermeneutics, called historical-grammatical/literary-theological method to which the Seventh-day Adventist Church subscribes.<sup>29</sup>

In reality, **the Bible is our only creed**. Our pioneers had an overwhelming fear of accepting a creed because they thought that in this way doctrine would be fixed, put in stone, and over time become very sterile, and finally no one would be able to change it. “The Bible is our Creed. We reject everything in the form of a human creed.”<sup>30</sup> John Loughborough claimed: “The first step of apostasy is to get up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And, fifth, to commence persecution against such.”<sup>31</sup>

The Preamble to “The Seventh-day Adventist 28 Fundamental Beliefs” states this principle clearly: “Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the Church’s understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General

<sup>28</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: An Exposition of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2018).

<sup>29</sup> General Conference Annual Council Rio de Janeiro Meeting. “Methods of Bible Study” (October 12, 1986). Online: <http://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/bible-interpretation-hermeneutics/methods-bible-study>.

<sup>30</sup> James White, *Review and Herald*, October 8, 1861, 148.

<sup>31</sup> John Loughborough, *Review and Herald*, October 8, 1861, 148.

Conference session when the Church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teaching of God's Holy Word."<sup>32</sup>

Our 28 Fundamental Beliefs started in a very simple and humble manner. James White wrote in 1853, when the Advent group was slowly growing, that there were **three subjects of truth which unified Adventists together in the bond of love**: "As a people we are brought together from divisions of the Advent body, and from the various denominations, holding different views on some subjects; yet, thank Heaven, the Sabbath is a mighty platform on which we can all stand united. And while standing here, with the aid of no other creed than the Word of God, and bound together by the bonds of love—love for the truth, love for each other, and love for a perishing world—'which is stronger than death,' all party feelings are lost. We are united in these great subjects: Christ's immediate, personal second Advent, and the observance of all of the commandments of God, and the faith of his Son Jesus Christ, as necessary to a readiness for his Advent."<sup>33</sup>

Ellen G. White identified the following pillars in Adventism: "In Minneapolis God gave precious gems of truth to His people in new settings. This light from heaven by some was rejected ... and there was much talk about standing by the old landmarks. But there was evidence they knew not what the old landmarks were. There was evidence and there was reasoning from the word that commended itself to the conscience; but the minds of men were fixed, sealed against the entrance of light, because they had decided it was a dangerous error removing the 'old landmarks' when it was not moving a peg of the old landmarks, but they had perverted ideas of what constituted the old landmarks. The passing of the time in 1844 was a period of great events, opening to our astonished eyes the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven, and having decided relation to God's people upon the earth, [also] the first and second angels' messages and the third, unfurling the banner on which was inscribed, 'The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.' One of the landmarks under this message was the temple of God, seen by His truth-loving people in heaven, and the ark containing the law of God. The light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment flashed its strong rays in the pathway of the transgressors of God's law.

The non-immortality of the wicked is an old landmark. I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks. All this cry about changing the old landmarks is all imaginary."<sup>34</sup>

On the basis of this quotation, Morris Venden made a list of **seven pillars**: (1) the investigative judgment and the sanctuary; (2) the three angels' message; (3) the law of God; (4) the faith of Jesus; (5) the Sabbath; (6) the state of the dead; and (7) the gift of prophecy.<sup>35</sup> There were a few things that united us in early Adventism but it grew in time. Study how our Fundamental Beliefs developed and **increased to 28 Fundamental Beliefs** by going to the actual voted statement of Fundamental Beliefs from the following years in which the changes were made: 1931, 1946, 1980, 2005 and 2015.<sup>36</sup>

Ellen White encourages God's people to search constantly for a better understanding and for new truth. Consider the following statements: "We must not think, 'Well, we have all the truth, we understand the main pillars of our faith, and we may rest on this knowledge.' The truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light."<sup>37</sup> "We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible."<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, Ellen White also strongly warned not to remove solid landmarks or pillars of truth from Seventh-day Adventism: "It is impossible to estimate the evil results of removing one of the landmarks fixed by the word of God. Few who venture to do this stop with the rejection of a single truth. The majority continue to set aside one after another of the principles of truth, until they become actual infidels.... And this is the object which Satan seeks to accomplish. There is nothing that he desires more than to destroy confidence in God and in His word."<sup>39</sup> "No line of truth that has made the Seventh-day Adventist people what they are is to be weakened. We have the old landmarks of truth, experience, and duty, and we are to stand firmly in defense of our principles, in full view of the world."<sup>40</sup> "Never, never seek to remove one landmark that the Lord has given His people. The truth stands firmly established on the eternal Rock—a foundation that storm and tempest can never move.... Do not lower the banner of truth or allow it to drop from your hands in order to unite with the solemn message for these last days anything that will tend to hide the peculiar features of our faith."<sup>41</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, v.

<sup>33</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, August 11, 1853.

<sup>34</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1946), 30–31.

<sup>35</sup> Morris L. Venden, *The Pillars* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1982).

<sup>36</sup> See General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research for online *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* archives at <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/old-yearbooks>.

<sup>37</sup> White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 33.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>39</sup> White, *Great Controversy*, 525–526.

<sup>40</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 6 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1901), 17.

<sup>41</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1904), 162.

## Conclusion

Our Adventist identity is derived from a careful study of Holy Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, centered on Christ, rooted in Creation, focused on Eschatology, the Divine Judgment, conditional immortality in Christ, and brought together into a unique set of biblical teachings based on the paradoxes of God's revelation and the wonders of life, harmonized between faith and law, grace and obedience, and framed in the Great Controversy setting with the beauty of God's love and holiness at its very core. This context makes Seventh-day Adventism unique among all other communities of faith or religions.

I strongly believe that the best years of Seventh-day Adventism are still ahead of us. We are a worldwide movement called by God to proclaim the everlasting Gospel, and to stay on this journey we need to be God-centered, Spirit-filled, united in Christ, truth-rooted, eschatologically-focused, mission-oriented, and people-serving people. In this way, we can reflect Christ's loving and just character. Ellen White underlines: "The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian."<sup>42</sup>

Above all, we need to be loving, caring and grace-oriented people always warming others with God's love (John 13:34–35). Always combining love and justice, grace and judgment, faith and obedience, and doing it in the right sequence. God can use authentic, genuine

and transparent people, not actors and actresses, but sincere and honest and open believers. People of integrity, humble, teachable, learning, and a serving community. People full of compassion, empathy, trustworthy, for inclusion, equality, justice, freedom and diversity. Bringing peace and joy, bearing the fruit of the Spirit. Temperate and balanced. Always on the journey, searching, adapting to new situations and advancing. Becoming the light like stars in the sky—for orientation in time and space. Infused with love, hope, faith and led by the Spirit of God. Curious to discover more about God's loving, caring and holy character. Creative, innovative, effective, relevant, meaningful, and contemporary with present truth.

Our motto must always be the old yet still relevant Protestant slogan: "*Ecclesia reformata et semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei*" (the Church reformed and always reforming [being reformed] according to the Word of God). Only by following this motto will we be able to proclaim "the present truth" that will be meaningful to people, relevant to the 21st century, and oriented toward people's various needs—spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical and social—and satisfy them. In this way, we can fulfill our mission, and our lives, message and existence can bring glory to God's name.

<sup>42</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1905), 470.

## Seminary Student Week of Spiritual Emphasis (WOSE)

Tuesday, Sept. 22 – Thursday, Sept. 24, 2020



**Andrea Jakobsons** was born in the Czech Republic and had to learn English when the family moved to the U.S. right before her freshman year in high school. She is married to Michael Jakobsons, who makes sure that life is not boring. He has worked in education for many years as a principal and an associate superintendent.

After finishing at the seminary, Andrea worked as a Bible teacher and then as a youth and young adult pastor at the Spencerville Church in Maryland before answering the call to Kettering to serve as their lead pastor.

She loves teaching the Bible and seeing people grow in their relationship with Jesus while also taking time for friends, art, working out, hiking and biking.

Tuesday, March 9 – Thursday, March 11, 2021



**Pavel Goia** was born into communist Romania. He was trained in a variety of fields, from law to music, engineering and business, until he finally ended up studying theology. After six years of pastoring in Romania he spent some time in Norway at the European Bible School, becoming certified in Organic Agriculture & Healthy Lifestyle. He then moved to the United States where he pursued a Bachelor of Theology from Southern Adventist University, and later the MDiv

and DMin programs at Andrews University. Pavel pastored in Wisconsin for nine years and in Kentucky for seven years. He was a member of the Ministerial Advisory Committee for the North American Division, and is now serving as an associate ministerial director for the General Conference Ministerial Association as well as the editor for *Ministry Magazine*. Pavel is married to Daniela and they have two grown children, Gabriel and Ovidiu. His life has been filled with powerful answers to prayer and continues to be one miracle after another.