



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

Seventh-day Adventist Church

General Information

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was officially established in 1863, although it traces its date of birth to 1844 when it affirmed the beliefs that came to form its name. These beliefs include: the Bible as the infallible Word of God; the creation of the world in six days, with the seventh day (Saturday) set aside as the Sabbath; and the imminent return (Advent) of Christ.

Other distinctive beliefs include: the indivisibility of the human body, mind, and spirit; death as an unconscious state to be followed by a resurrection; humanity as embroiled in a great struggle between God and the Devil; the moral and dietary laws of the Old Testament as still binding upon Christians; and a final judgment, starting with God's people, which began in heaven in 1844 and will culminate when Christ returns to earth.

Because Adventists believe that body, mind, and soul are inseparable, spiritual import is given to physical health and mental education. This emphasis has inspired Adventists to establish schools, hospitals, clinics, and health food factories. It also has inspired the Church to encourage its members to refrain from alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine, and to adopt a vegetarian diet. Today, an estimated 35% of Adventists practice vegetarianism.

Number of members worldwide: 15.6 million

Number of members in the US and Canada: 1.06 million

Governing Body:

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has four levels of government: the local church; the local conference or mission; the union conference or mission; and the General Conference. The General Conference headquarters is in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Official Statements on Animals

The Seventh-day Adventist Church accepts the Bible as the infallible and historically trustworthy Word of God. The biblical story of creation, as presented in Genesis 1:1-1:31, narrates God's creative act as having taken place over the course of six days. On the final day, human beings were created in the divine image and given dominion over all other creatures. This story, say Adventists, presents

human beings as unique within creation--both different from and superior to all other forms of earthly life.

"God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made 'the heaven and the earth' and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week.... The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. "

--from Seventh-Day Adventist Church, "An Affirmation of Creation"

http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main_stat54.html

"Human beings, created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27), are distinct in kind and degree from all other earthly creatures..."

--from Seventh-Day Adventist Church, "A Seventh-day Adventist Statement Concerning Human Gene Therapy" http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main_stat48.html

Although human beings are the pinnacle of creation, all creatures are the handiwork of God and thus are deserving of our esteem and protection. Because we are sinful, we sometimes forget our obligations to other creatures. Ecosystem and species destruction are visible evidence of our sinfulness.

"Safeguarding God's creation includes esteem for the diversity and ecological balance of the natural world with its countless species of living creatures (Gen. 1)."

--from Seventh-Day Adventist Church "Christian Principles for Genetic Interventions"

http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/other_documents/other_doc2.html

"The human decision to disobey God broke the original order of creation, resulting in a disharmony alien to His purposes. Thus our air and waters are polluted, forests and wildlife plundered, and natural resources exploited."

-- from Seventh-Day Adventist Church, "Caring for Creation--A Statement on the Environment"

http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main_stat5.html

"Unfortunately, corruption and exploitation have been brought into the management of the human domain of responsibility. Increasingly men and women have been involved in a megalomaniacal destruction of the earth's resources, resulting in widespread suffering, environmental disarray, and the threat of climate change....These problems are largely due to human selfishness and the egocentric pursuit of getting more and more...The ecological crisis is rooted in humankind's greed and refusal to practice good and faithful stewardship within the divine boundaries of creation."

-- from Seventh-Day Adventist Church, "A Statement on the Environment"

http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main_stat9.html

In order to commemorate God's creative work and the close relationship that exists between Creator and creation, God has set aside the Sabbath and commanded us to observe it. Through the Sabbath, God reminds us that the world is His handiwork and that our destruction of species and disruption of ecological systems "should be prohibited."

"God set aside the seventh-day Sabbath as a memorial and perpetual reminder of His creative act and establishment of the world. In resting on that day, Seventh-day Adventists reinforce the special sense of relationship with the Creator and His creation. Sabbath observance underscores the importance of our integration with the total environment."

--from Seventh-Day Adventist Church, "Caring for Creation--A Statement on the Environment"
http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main_stat5.html

"Exploitations and manipulations that would destroy natural balance or degrade God's created world should be prohibited."

--from Seventh-Day Adventist Church, "Christian Principles for Genetic Interventions"
http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/other_documents/other_doc2.html

Safeguarding God's creation requires us to live wholesome lifestyles in which we consume and pollute less, avoid tobacco, alcohol and irresponsible drug use, and promote a vegetarian diet.

"Seventh-day Adventists advocate a simple, wholesome lifestyle, where people do not step on the treadmill of unbridled consumerism, goods-getting, and production of waste. We call for respect of creation, restraint in the use of the world's resources, reevaluation of one's needs, and reaffirmation of the dignity of created life."

--from Seventh-Day Adventist Church, "A Statement on the Environment"
http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main_stat9.html

"Because we recognize humans as part of God's creation, our concern for the environment extends to personal health and lifestyle. We advocate a wholesome manner of living and reject the use of substances such as tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs that harm the body and consume earth's resources; and we promote a simple vegetarian diet."

--from Seventh-Day Adventist Church, "Caring for Creation--A Statement on the Environment"
http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main_stat5.html

Historical References on Animals

One of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was Ellen G. White, whose visions, spiritual leadership, and extensive writings convinced her fellow Adventists that she possessed the gift of prophecy. White's visions inspired her to warn against the negative health effects of eating meat. These warnings eventually came to predict a time when "it will not be safe to use anything that comes from the animal creation."

"I advise every Sabbathkeeping canvasser to avoid meat eating...because it is not healthful."

--from Roger W. Coon, *Ellen G. White and Vegetarianism: Did She Practice What She Preached?* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing, 1986), 25.

"If meat eating was ever healthful, it is not safe now. Cancers, tumors, and pulmonary diseases are largely caused by meat eating."

--from Ellen Gould Harmon White, *Counsels on Health, and Instruction to Medical Missionary Workers*" (Nampa: ID: Pacific Press Publishing, 1923), 133.

"In many localities even fish is unwholesome, and ought not be used. This is especially so where fish come in contact with sewerage of large cities... "

--from Ellen G. White, *Healthful Living*, (Brushton, NY: Teach Services, 1994), 105.

"In a short time it will not be safe to use anything that comes from the animal creation..."

--from Coon, *Ellen G. White and Vegetarianism*.

"We do not mark out any precise line to be followed in diet; but we do say that in countries where there are fruits, grains, and nuts in abundance, flesh food is not the right food for God's people."

--from Ellen Harmon Gould White, *To Be Like Jesus* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Harold Publishing Assoc, 2004), 316.

Although White focused primarily on the positive health effects of vegetarianism, she also revealed that a vegetarian diet has positive effects on the mind and soul because mental, physical, and spiritual strength are interdependent.

"A pure healthy life is most favorable for the perfection of Christian character and for the development of the powers of mind and body... Since the mind and the soul find expression through the body, both mental and spiritual activity are in great degree dependent upon physical strength and activity. Whatever promotes physical health, promotes the development of a strong mind and a well-balanced character. Without health, no one can as distinctly understand or as completely fulfill his obligations to himself, to his fellow beings, or to his Creator."

--from White, *Counsels on Health*, 41 and White, *To Be Like Jesus*, 296.

"I have been instructed that flesh food has a tendency to animalize the nature, to rob men and women of that love and sympathy which they should feel for everyone, and to give the lower passions control over the higher powers of the being."

--from White, *Counsels on Health*, 133.

White also counseled Adventists to take the suffering of animals into consideration when making dietary choices. Although she never made vegetarianism a requirement of the faith, she did warn that, "A record goes up to heaven and a day is coming when judgment will be pronounced against those who abuse God's creatures."

"Think of the cruelty to animals that meat eating involves, and its effect on those who inflict and those who behold it. How it destroys the tenderness with which we should regard these creatures of God!

"The intelligence displayed by many dumb animals approaches so closely to human intelligence that it is a mystery. The animals see and hear and love and fear and suffer. They use their organs far more faithfully than many human beings use theirs. They manifest sympathy and tenderness toward their companions in suffering. Many animals show an affection for those who have charge of them, far superior to the affection shown

by some of the human race. They form attachments for man which are not broken without great suffering to them."

--from Ellen G. White, *Your Home and Health* (Read Books, 2007), 121.

"He who will abuse animals because he has them in his power is both a coward and a tyrant. A disposition to cause pain, whether to our fellow men or to the brute creation, is satanic. Many do not realize that their cruelty will ever be known, because the poor dumb animals cannot reveal it. But could the eyes of these men be opened, as were those of Balaam, they would see an angel of God standing as a witness, to testify against them in the courts above. A record goes up to heaven, and a day is coming when judgment will be pronounced against those who abuse God's creatures."

--from Ellen Gould Harmon White, *Patriarchs and Prophets or The Great Controversy between Good and Evil as Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of Old*, (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Harold Publishing, 1890), 445.

Contemporary References on Animals

Because the Bible is affirmed as the authentic and trustworthy word of God, it forms the basis of contemporary Adventists' views on animals. Passages from Genesis to Revelation reveal that God cares for and about animals and desires us to do the same.

"From the first chapter of Genesis to the end of the book of Revelation one finds an impressive doctrine of life. In the opening chapter of Genesis...both animals and human beings were created by God from the 'dust of the ground' and given the 'breath of life' (Gen. 2:7, 19) and identical blessings (Gen. 1:22, 28). This implies, at the very least, divine appreciation of them all. Humans and animals are given a vegetarian diet (Gen. 1:29, 30)...Later, Noah is told by God to take his family and animals into the ark 'to keep their kind alive on the face of all the earth' during a global catastrophe (Gen. 7:3)... After exiting the ark the animals are explicitly included in the divine covenant (Gen. 9:8-10; cf. Gen. 9:12, 15, 17)...

"Later the children of Israel are led to the Promised Land and carefully instructed on creation care. They had an obligation to be kind to their animals... (Deut. 25:4)...Humans and animals along with the land are included in the stipulations for the weekly Sabbath and the sabbatical year (Ex. 23:10-12, cf. Ex. 20:8-11; Lev. 25:6, 7; Deut. 5:12-15)...God's providence for all life inspired many of the prayers and hymns in the Psalter, expressing how this reveals God's glory (see Ps. 148:7-13). The wisdom books invite appreciation for nonhuman life (Prov. 6:6)...

"Jesus speaks of His affection for animals, stressing that even the lowliest of creatures is loved (Luke 12:6)...

"In the final book of Scripture, the entire created world is dramatically encompassed with divine judgment (Rev. 7:1-3). After the seventh trumpet sounds in Revelation 11, the 24 elders cry out against those who have wreaked havoc on creation: 'You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints . . . and should destroy those who destroy the earth' (Rev. 11:18)."

--from JoAnn Davidson, "Who Cares?: Environmental Ethics and the Christian," *Adventist Review* <http://www.adventistreview.org/article.php?id=2681>

“Animals were to be treated humanely. For example, the Lord said that if you find a donkey that is staggering under a heavy load and has fallen, you must help it up—even if that donkey belongs to your enemy (Ex. 23:5). Large work animals were not to be muzzled to prevent them from eating while assisting with the heavy work of agriculture (Deut. 25:4). They should be able to enjoy the fruits of the land that they are helping to reap. The Hebrew people had a distinctive obligation to be kind to creation.”

--from JoAnn Davidson, “And It Was Good,” August, 21, 2008, *Adventist Review*
<http://www.adventistreview.org/article.php?id=2030>

Today's industrialized animal-farms (known as factory farms) violate the biblical directive to be compassionate caretakers of God's creation. Factory farms damage ecosystems and treat animals brutally.

"[There are] critical ecological issues involved in eating flesh meat: the wasteful 'funnel effect' of many pounds of grain fed to a single steer, the same amount of grain feeding far more people; the huge amount of water used to grow fodder for feeding animals for slaughter. The same amount of water could serve a much larger community of people... [U]nderground water aquifers [are] being polluted by the seepage from immense amounts of ... manure resulting from present methods of the animal 'industry'...

"These are but a few of the serious ecological issues related to the meat industry, let alone the frightful cruelty to animals involved, including the transport to slaughter and the horrifying slaughtering process itself. Common practices certainly do not model the biblical directive for a quick and painless slaughter out of respect for the animal. Very few have any conception of the violence and brutality that are inflicted on animals in order to gratify a carnivorous diet."

--from Davidson, "Who Cares?," <http://www.adventistreview.org/article.php?id=2681>

"Millions of Americans recently watched news reports in dismay as video footage of grossly inhumane treatment of 'downer' cows at southern California's Westland/Hallmark Meat Company flashed across their television screens. Cows too sick or injured to stand were being shoved by forklifts or dragged with chains to the slaughterhouse chutes, where they were to be killed, then processed and sold for food. Other footage of the undercover video taken by the U.S. Humane Society included factory workers using electric prods and high-powered water hoses to force cows to stand, as well as kicking and heaving them to their feet... Tragically, this incident in inhumane treatment and total disregard for health standards is not an isolated one...

"Having compassion for animals...as well as being good stewards of the environment in which we live...should not fall below our radar screens. As children of our heavenly Father, who cares about even the sparrows, it is our duty not to neglect these responsibilities and to speak for those, even of the animal kingdom, who are not able to speak for themselves."

--from Sandra Blackmer, "A Wake-up Call" *Adventist Review*,
<http://www.adventistreview.org/issue.php?issue=2008-1510&page=6>

Frequently, facilities that perform experiments on animals also violate God's ethical directives. Although Adventists do not advocate the complete elimination of animal experiments, they do assert that animals should be used in experiments only when no other viable alternative is available and when protocols for minimizing animal suffering are strictly observed.

"While the Bible does not refer specifically to 'animal experimentation' as a permissible (or impermissible) activity, in the experimentation setting, the biblical imperative of respect and care for animals should translate into research protocol measures that would prevent or minimize pain and suffering to animals. Such measures could include analgesia, environmental temperature control, secure shelter, nutrition, hydration, and veterinary care. Physical handling of animals should be done in a manner that minimizes unnecessary stress. The number of animals used should be no more than needed to provide statistically defensible data. Animals should only be used in experiments that require them. Alternate models such as tissue culture or computer simulations should be used in place of animals as scientifically appropriate. Research protocols should be analyzed by an institutional review committee to ensure that the methodology is scientifically sound, and that measures are included that ensure animal welfare. Lastly, all research personnel should be trained with regard to principles of research ethics and animal welfare."

--from Katrina A. Branstedt, "Using Animals in Medical Research," *Dialogue: An International Journal of Faith, Thought, and Action* http://dialogue.adventist.org/articles/15_2_bramstedt_e.htm

Adventists believe that the return of Christ to earth is imminent and that a new heaven and a new earth will be created after the Advent. Despite expectations that our present world will pass away, Adventists warn against treating our current world carelessly or its inhabitants callously. We should care for all God's creatures, say Adventists, because we align ourselves with Christ whenever we work to end "suffering and protect the helpless," because our "attitudes toward creation now will color attitudes we take toward the new creation," and because those who destroy the earth with themselves be destroyed.

"How we treat animals reveals our true nature. When we have power over others, we display who has power over us. Satan's nature destroys, but Christ's nature ends suffering and protects the helpless...Whether our faith is theory or a living connection with Him will be felt by the people--and the animals--around us. It is our duty and joy to deny support to practices that harm others. Only then will we fully reflect Christ's love and peace."

--from Matthew Priebe, "How We Treat Animals--Does God Care? Should We?" *Adventist Review* <http://www.adventistreview.org/2005-1538/story3.html>

"Attitudes toward creation now will color attitudes we take toward the new creation. If we treat creation recklessly now, could we be expected to treat the renewed Earth differently? No wonder, Revelation 11:18 says those who destroy Earth will themselves be destroyed."

--from Henry Zuill, "The Environment: Should Christians Care?," *Dialogue: An International Journal of Faith, Thought, and Action* http://dialogue.adventist.org/articles/19_1_zuill_e.htm.

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For more information, visit The Humane Society of the United States Faith Outreach program at www.humanesociety.org/faith.