



THE 2026 DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES



A Proponent's Commentary

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Introduction

In anticipation of the 2026 Advent Christian General Conference Triennial Convention, I have prepared this booklet to provide context and commentary on the proposed 2026 Declaration of Principles. I do so as its original author, the proponent who began this work in the early months of 2025. Since then, I have received feedback and input from numerous Advent Christian leaders, considered and adjusted its form with contributions from the task force appointed by the Executive Council, and wrought the final version of the text in a meeting with the council on February 11, 2026. The council unanimously voted that the version now before you be presented to the delegate body at the 2026 triennial convention.

Why make this proposal now? It is long overdue. The current version of the Declaration of Principles does not accurately represent Advent Christian belief in the 21st century. It neither accurately describes the beliefs of the people in our pews nor the pastors in our pulpits. It demonstrably fails to explain what unites our people when its tenets are regularly violated. We need a Declaration of Principles that truly represents the beliefs of Advent Christians today.

On this basis alone, an updated version is warranted, but more can be said. We need a Declaration of Principles that communicates our commitment to theological excellence and the orthodox teaching of Scripture. We need a Declaration that gives appropriate weight to major and minor points of doctrine, setting boundaries that allow for tolerable differences. We need a Declaration of Principles that altogether reveals our commitment to Adventism, our hope in Christ's return and the convictions shaped by our anticipation of that day.

While I hope the text of this proposal will be easily understood by most readers, I have learned from experience that the nuance it contains inevitably invites explanation. Providing this explanation now has the

benefit of both preemptively addressing questions ahead of the convention and leaving no doubt as to the original intent of this proposal after the convention – should it be adopted by the delegate body.

The commentary that follows is not intended to be exhaustive and the importance of each principle should not be measured by the extent of my commentary. This is a purpose-built *proponent's* tool, aimed at addressing particular concerns that are likely to be raised among Advent Christians. If I offer little commentary on certain principles, it can be supposed that I anticipate broad acceptance and that not much explanation is needed.

The pattern of “affirm” and “deny” has been employed to provide a clear and concise outline of Advent Christian identity. The affirmations state positively what we believe and the denials provide further definition, thereby avoiding certain errors and misunderstandings. Functionally, it is an exercise of anticipation, imagining someone who hears what we affirm asking a follow up question, “So do you believe...” – to which we reply in these cases, “No, we don’t believe...” x, y, or z.

Some have noted that this version of the Declaration of Principles does not include Scripture references. While these could be added at a later date, I do not think it is necessary to include the references in the *official* body of the text itself. They can be editorially added after the fact according to need, with as few or as many references as may be called for. It is probable that some would include or exclude certain references based on their varying secondary doctrinal convictions, not because they intend to avoid challenging passages, but because bare references do not allow for interpretative explanation (e.g. Rev. 14:11). Many differences are intentionally permitted within the frame of this declaration, both by way of silence and by way of careful wording. With that in mind, it seems prudent not to present an authorized set of references at this time.

Indeed, in researching the history of the Declaration of Principles, I have found an inconsistent record of references being included across various publications; the origins of the references commonly included and presently featured on the ACGC website are currently unknown. In fact, documents from the time in which the 1900 Declaration of Principles was first published indicate that the original version did not include any Scripture references. I am content to allow Advent Christians to utilize their own verses of choice in presenting the declaration to others.

I have provided references in this proponent's commentary as just such a resource to address any questions regarding the biblical grounding of these doctrines. I have not exhausted all the texts that might be cited, providing more for some principles than others according to need. I thank Nathaniel Bickford for both his review of this commentary and the recommendation of additional references. Under some principles, these references might reflect my own secondary stances shared with most, but not all, Advent Christians.

Preamble

The Advent Christian Declaration of Principles is intended to provide a clear standard for membership in the denomination among regions, conferences, churches, and ministers. It is not a complete summary of everything Advent Christians believe. It is also not meant to serve as a statement of beliefs required for individual membership in an Advent Christian church. Members are often welcomed without agreeing to all the articles here. We recommend this declaration to all seekers of truth; it being both thorough in general theological conviction as well as faithful to the traditional distinctive teachings of our denomination. It reflects our theological heritage. We care about this document because the gospel we preach is the gospel of eternal life only through Christ.

This preamble strikes the ideal balance we would like to enjoy as a denomination.

On the one hand, we need to provide a definite outline of our identity. We are a broad and diverse denomination, but it must mean something to be an Advent Christian. If an Advent Christian can believe anything, then to be an Advent Christian would hold no meaning — it would

literally be an empty term. Moreover, in forming a denomination we have invited the responsibility of upholding the integrity of the Gospel message among all those who would claim the name Advent Christian.

On the other hand, we recognize that the Body of Christ extends beyond our denominational boundaries. There are people who might disagree with us in various respects (e.g. baptism) who are nonetheless brothers and sisters in Christ. It is commendable that our local churches are known for welcoming these believers into their fellowships. This preamble makes clear that this should continue locally even as we establish clear standards of Advent Christian belief for our pastors, churches, and all other formal members of the denomination.

Some may say the preamble should be removed because it presupposes that the DOP will serve as a standard. While I agree the framing here has been formed to be conducive with that development, this preamble does not *establish* the DOP as our standard – it can only go so far as to “*provide a clear standard.*” In other words, the preamble only explains the functional purpose of the 2026 DOP, that we are supplying a standard (theoretically, there could be others that might be chosen); as things currently stand it would be a standard that could be utilized or ignored by the members of our denomination. Such is already the case with some conferences who choose to use the present DOP as a standard of membership (e.g. Florida, Piedmont).

To drop the preamble would undermine the guiding logic which formed its content. If there is no prospect of it serving as a standard, we need not be concerned about any essential doctrines (people will believe whatever they want in any case) nor need we be concerned about our narrowness on secondary doctrines (we will simply continue the pattern of welcoming into pastoral leadership those who are not Advent Christian in any meaningful sense). Additionally, dropping the preamble would forfeit the helpful clarity it provides to those who visit our churches and might wonder if they must agree with everything contained in the DOP to be a member in the local church. With these

things in mind, it should be retained so that we might rightly consider the whole.

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES

1 Corinthians 1:10; 16:13-14; Ephesians 4:15; 6:14; 1 Timothy 3:15; Titus 1:9; James 5:19-20; Jude 3

PRINCIPLE I

The Bible

WE AFFIRM *that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God, being in its entirety God's revelation given to humanity under divine inspiration and providence; that its historic statements are correct, and that it is the only divine standard of faith and practice.*

WE DENY *that the authority of God's Word – the Bible – and the truth of its testimony can ever be overturned, superseded, or added upon by any claims of new revelation or the supposed wisdom of human knowledge.*

Advent Christians are people of the Bible – it is our final authority in all things. This does not mean that every truth of the faith must be perfectly encapsulated in singular proof texts or that we are limited to using “Bible words” in articulating these truths. Likewise, resting upon this foundation does not mean we should ignore the insights of Church tradition. The person who is singularly interested in his own interpretation of the text, thinking he possesses all insight, only reveals himself to be an arrogant fool. Wisdom welcomes the counsel of the Body of Christ, both past and present, in the study of Scripture.

At the same time, tradition is not absolute. Advent Christians ultimately descend from the Protestant Reformation. We are Protestants who have been known for our close study of the Bible’s teaching concerning death, immortality, final punishment, and Christian hope; we have differed at times from the popular consensus. We are willing to dissent because true doctrine is not a popularity contest – its final measure is Scripture above all.

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES

Psalm 19:7-11; Psalm 119:30,160; Isaiah 40:8, 55:10–11; John 10:35; 17:17; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:15-16; 2 Peter 1:21, 3:16; Revelation 22:18-19

PRINCIPLE II

Biblical Interpretation & Christian Unity

WE AFFIRM *the clarity of Scripture: that all things necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation are set forth clearly in Scripture, and that, as far as the meaning of the text can be understood, Christians should seek to be of one mind in the Spirit and uphold such teachings as authoritative.*

WE DENY *that human fallibility places the true meaning of the biblical text beyond reach; that the presence of differing interpretations indicates this; or that Christians must agree on every matter of the faith to share in one fellowship.*

This principle partially explains why Advent Christians tolerate a significant amount of theological diversity. It is not because we despair of knowing the true meaning of Scripture, such that we become functional relativists (e.g. “The Bible can mean different things to different people”). We believe the Bible can be understood and we strive to understand its teaching.

Even so, this does not compel us to arrive at complete uniformity in interpretation before we can enjoy unity of fellowship. Denominationally, this declaration of principles establishes our agreed upon interpretative boundaries within which we can abide many differences. In the local church, the boundaries will likely be broader, though I would suggest they should be no wider than the Advent Christian Statement of Faith (see appendix).

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES

[see Principle I]; Psalm 19:7; 119:105, 130; John 17; Romans 14:19; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:1-3; Colossians 3:14-16; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Titus 3:9-11; 2 Peter 3:15-16

PRINCIPLE III

The Doctrine of God

WE AFFIRM *that God is one in being and three in person, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that these three persons are fully divine and co-equal, of one substance, power, and eternity, and with one will; and that the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son.*

WE DENY *that these persons are three gods; that these persons are only three different manifestations of God; or that any of the persons are eternally subordinate to each other.*

Advent Christians are Trinitarians. However, while our Statement of Faith stakes out that conviction, the current Declaration of Principles (principle II) was constructed in such a way as to accommodate non-Trinitarian belief. As Dr. David Dean noted in *Alpha and Omega* (1980): “[T]he declaration’s content falls far short of an adequate expression of trinitarian theology [...] *the article on God is not trinitarian in content.*”¹

While God’s nature includes much that is mysterious to the human mind, he has nonetheless disclosed enough about himself in the pages of Scripture for us to arrive at the trinitarian beliefs outlined here. They are hardly novel on our part – a careful reader will notice we have followed the footprints of the Nicene and Athanasian creeds, as well as those of later confessions.

When it comes to such basic Christian doctrine, it should be expected we would likely draw the same conclusions as generations of Christians who have gone before us. The only conspiracy here is that we are all reading the same book. It is disingenuous for anyone to malign our commitment to the supremacy of biblical authority merely because we agree with this interpretative precedent.

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES

Genesis 1:26; Exodus 20:3; 23:20-21; Deuteronomy 6:4; 31:8; Judges 13:20-22; 1 Kings 8:60; Psalm 2; Isaiah 9:6; 45:5-6, 14, 22; 46:9; 63; Jeremiah 23:3-6; Ezekiel 3:24; Daniel 7:9-14; Joel 2:27; Malachi 2:10; Matthew 3:16-17; 11:27; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; 3:29; 4:39-41; 13:11; 14:62-63; Luke 3:21-22; 10:22; 12:10-12; John 1:1-18; 4:24; 6:63; 7:16; 8:58; 14:7-10, 15-18; 15:26; 16:7-15; Acts 5:3-4, 9; 28:25; Romans 3:30; 5:5; 8:16, 26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 8:4-6; 15:26-28; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Galatians 3:20; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; James 2:19; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 4:4-6; Revelation 7:17; 22:1

1. David A. Dean, “The Trinity in Advent Christian History,” in *Alpha and Omega: Essays on the Trinity in Honor of James A. Nichols Jr.*, ed. Caroleen Hillriegel, Lois Jones, and Freeman Barton (Lenox, MA: Henceforth Publications, 1980), 43.

The Person of Christ

WE AFFIRM *that the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father and the Spirit, took upon himself a human nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities belonging to it, yet without sin; that the person of Jesus Christ is one person with two distinct natures, fully God and fully man, possessing the true divine will and a true human will.*

WE DENY *that Christ becomes two persons in possessing a divine nature and a human nature; that these two natures are combined into one new nature; that Christ's body was a mere shell for his inner divinity; or that the exaltation of his human nature would indicate the absence of his divine nature.*

Much of what was stated under principle III could be stated here also. Advent Christians affirm that Jesus is both fully God and fully human in light of the biblical revelation. Those who draw any other conclusions are, intentionally or not, misinterpreting Scripture. While we stand against those who are resolutely committed to denying the complete humanity or divinity of Christ, we understand that others in our churches may be genuinely confused or misinformed. In such cases, instruction should be offered with a gentle and patient spirit.

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES

[see also Principle III] Jeremiah 23:3-6; Zechariah 12:10; Malachi 3:1-5; Matthew 1:22-23; 7:28-29; 9:2-6; 14:32-33; 16:27; 21:37; 22:41-46; 26:39-40, 64; 28:18; Mark 1:27; 2:5-7; 4:41; 12:35-37; 13:26; Luke 4:35-36; 5:20-24; 6:5; 7:47-49; 8:25; 9:26; 11:31-32; 20:13, 41-44; 21:27; 22:67-71; John 1:1-18, 29-30; 3:13, 16, 31; 5:21-23, 26; 6:32-52; 7:38; 8:23; 10:34-39; 13:31-32; 14:11, 17:3-5; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Romans 1:3; 8:3; 10:9-13; 1 Corinthians 2:8; 10:4; 14:21; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 4:9-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-20; 2:8-10; 1 Timothy 3:16, 6:13-16; Titus 2:11-15; 3:4-7; Hebrews 1; 2:5-18; 7:3; James 2:1; 3:9; 5:4-7; 1 Peter 2:2-5; 2 Peter 1:1; 3:2, 8-12; 1 John 1:1-3; 4:2-3; 5:20; 2 John 4, 7, 9; Revelation 1:8, 17-18; 2:8; 5:6, 13-14; 6:15-17; 14:1; 17:14; 19:10, 16; 21:6, 22-23; 22:8-9, 13

PRINCIPLE V

Immortality

WE AFFIRM *that God alone is immortal; that God created human beings as creatures with mortal natures who could yet receive and enjoy eternal life with God; that through sin they forfeited this divine birthright; and that because of sin they can only be restored to life with God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, resulting in a life of repentance from sin and consecration to the Lord.*

WE DENY *that human beings are inherently immortal or that God could be compelled to maintain human existence in opposition to his divine will.*

Maintaining the distinction between Creator and creature is vitally important. Advent Christians have rightly stressed that immortality is not an attribute inherent to human nature; only God is inherently immortal. To suggest otherwise comes dangerously close to deifying human beings, placing our continued existence beyond the jurisdiction of God's sovereign will.

This principle has been worded with extreme care so that Advent Christians who believe in eternal torment may affirm it. It allows for a distinction to be made between immortal life with God and immortal life apart from God under punishment. It implies that God determines punishment for sin only in accordance with his own just nature and nothing else.

Stated differently, under this view it is not because of human immortality that God must eternally torment the wicked; immortality is only provided to facilitate their just punishment.

Understood in this way, those who believe in the destruction of the wicked and those who believe in eternal torment can both agree that human beings are not inherently immortal. A basic distinction between God and his human creation is thus safeguarded.

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES

Genesis 2:7, 17; 3:19, 22-24; 18:27; Psalm 22:29; 90:3; John 3:16; 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 2:7; 3:21-26; 5:12; 6:23; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 53-54; Ephesians 2:8-10; 4:22-24; 1 Timothy 6:15-16; 2 Timothy 1:10; Hebrews 9:14-15; James 4:14

Salvation

WE AFFIRM *that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the eternal Son of God who took on human flesh; that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and lived a sinless life under the Law; that in his death on the cross he offered himself unto God as our substitute, making of himself the only sufficient sacrifice for the atonement of human sin; that Christ, having been bodily raised for our justification, has conquered sin, death, and the devil; that he has ascended to the right hand of the Father to present himself as the Lamb who was slain; that he presently intercedes for us as our Great High Priest; that both the Father and the Son have sent the Holy Spirit upon the Church to apply salvation and the benefits thereof unto her; and that the work of this salvation will be fully revealed upon the day of Christ's return.*

WE DENY *that there can be any salvation apart from the work of Christ alone or that there is any hope of salvation based upon human works, religious or otherwise.*

This principle represents the very heart of the Gospel. Only “the eternal Son of God” could atone for human sin. For this reason it was necessary that he become incarnate, live a perfect life, die our deserved death, and be raised to ascend to the right hand of the Father to present himself as our atonement. No less should it be noted – this redemption we preach culminates in Christ’s return. As Advent Christians, we are zealous to preach the whole Gospel, from beginning to end.

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES

Isaiah 53; Matthew 16:16-20; Luke 1:26-38; John 14:6, 26; 15:26; 20:31; Acts 2:33-36; 4:12; Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:20-21; Galatians 4:4-6; Ephesians 2:8-9; Colossians 2:11-15; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; Titus 3:4-7; Hebrews 4:15; 7:23-25; 10:5-18; 1 Peter 2:22-24; 3:18; 2 Peter 3:11-13; 1 John 3:2, 8; Revelation 5:5-14

PRINCIPLE VII

The Intermediate State

WE AFFIRM *that death is the consequence of sin, depriving human beings of the life for which they were created; and that the belief in the sleep of the dead, historically held by Advent Christians, is within sound biblical reason.*

WE DENY *that God created human beings to live apart from the body; that the dead in Christ have already been completely restored; and that those who have died apart from Christ have already received their final punishment.*

For some time now, I believe Advent Christians have felt some tension regarding our concern for the intermediate state. On the one hand, it seems so inconsequential – whether one exists in a conscious or unconscious state. On the other, there is an intuitive sense among us that our understanding here has downstream effects on our understanding of human identity and restoration. Our articulation here strives to address both realities.

Protections raised for belief in the sleep of the dead at the same time implicitly concede that other Advent Christians may differ on the question of consciousness. Meanwhile, differences on that point come together in agreement that human beings were created for a physical existence manifest in the human body. This is what it means to deny that “God created human beings to live apart from the body.” Human beings are not essentially spirits nor are we destined for an existence apart from the body. Whatever the nature of our existence in the intermediate state, our destiny is bodily resurrection; God does not abandon the work of his hands, he restores it.

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES

Genesis 1; Psalm 6:5; 115:17; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; Isaiah 38:18; John 5:28-29; 12:47-48; Romans 8:11, 18-23; 1 Corinthians 15:16-19, 35-49; 2 Corinthians 5:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 6:9-11

PRINCIPLE VIII

Christian Hope

WE AFFIRM *that in accordance with his promise, Jesus Christ will come again to this earth, even “in like manner” as he went into heaven – personally, visibly and gloriously – to reign here forever; and that this coming is the hope of the church, inasmuch as upon that coming depend the resurrection and reward of the righteous, the abolition of sin and its consequences, and the renewal of the entire cosmos, both the heavens and the earth – now marred by sin – to become the eternal home of the redeemed, after which event the earth will be forever free from sin and death.*

WE DENY *that there is any hope for the living or the dead apart from Christ’s return and the resurrection of the dead.*

The hope of the Church is Christ's Second Advent. Sadly, this basic doctrine continues to be neglected by too many Christians who know better. In the face of death, Christ's return and the resurrection of the dead goes unmentioned too often; instead, all consolation is vested in a heavenly abode. Whatever a person's state of consciousness may be in the intermediate, Advent Christians emphatically agree that this condition is only temporary and awaits the better hope of resurrection. This basic Christian truth is only distinctive of Advent Christians because of its broad neglect. We should aspire to gain enough influence such that this emphasis becomes commonplace among all denominations.

It should be noted that the only changes made here from the current DOP are the broader frame of renewal, “*renewal of the entire cosmos, both the heavens and the earth*” and the denial.

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES

Psalm 49:15; Ezekiel 37:1-14; Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14; Hosea 13:14; Zechariah 9:14-17; Matthew 24:23-28; Acts 1:11; Romans 8:18-23; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 19:11-21; 21:1-22:5; 22:12-13

PRINCIPLE IX

Final Punishment

WE AFFIRM *that the final judgment of all people awaits the resurrection of the dead at Christ's Second Coming; that those who belong to Christ will live eternally with God in the new heavens and new earth; and that those outside of Christ will be condemned to the Second Death and will perish in the lake of fire.*

WE DENY *that anyone condemned to this final punishment will be given another opportunity for salvation.*

Without a doubt, this principle favors an annihilationist reading. Can it be read otherwise? Certainly. “Second Death” and “perish” are biblical terms that those who believe in eternal torment must interpret otherwise. Destruction is the historically favored and presently dominant position among Advent Christians; this is an intentionally gracious adjustment to allow for continued fellowship across these differences. Additionally, the articulation provided here corrects anyone who would suggest that Advent Christians believe in annihilation at death or that we are somehow universalist. Judgment is on the day of Christ’s return and it is final.

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES

Malachi 4:1; Matthew 7:13; 10:28; 25:31-46; John 3:16; 5:28-29; 10:27-28; 15:6; Romans 2:12; 6:23; Philippians 3:18-21; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Hebrews 10:26-31; 2 Peter 2:12; 3:9; Revelation 2:11; 20:6, 11-15; 21:8

PRINCIPLE X

The Church

WE AFFIRM *that the Church is the Body of Christ; that it is an institution of divine origin, which includes all true Christians; that the Church visibly manifests itself in local congregations of believers; that these local churches are governed under the authority of Christ, with congregational involvement and biblical patterns of leadership such as elders and deacons; and that these churches should freely covenant together, agreeing to uphold standards common to the whole.*

WE DENY *that the liberties and prerogatives of the local church would preclude cooperation with a denominational body in maintaining such freely agreed-upon standards of membership.*

The Advent Christian denomination is not the be-all and end-all; the Body of Christ includes churches beyond our fellowship. We do not deny the legitimacy of churches governed under different patterns, but we do believe that the congregationalist tradition, *broadly* understood, tracks closest to the example we find in Scripture. Advent Christians believe in local church governance, acknowledging that there will be some variation in leadership patterns from one congregation to another. In relation to the denomination, Advent Christian churches ultimately retain their local autonomy as far as their ministries, properties, and calling of pastors is concerned. Likewise, churches retain their liberty to leave the denomination.

In being a member of the denomination, Advent Christian churches are covenanting together in a partnership of accountability to uphold the agreed upon standards and beliefs of our churches, thereby assuming an interest in the welfare of this fellowship of churches. Generally, we believe churches should enter into such relationships, following the example of connection between churches that we see in Scripture and the early Church. When a church decides to depart from that covenant, it is incumbent on the denomination to uphold the integrity of the whole by addressing this departure. When unity cannot be restored, such churches should be removed from the membership of the denomination if they will not exit of their own accord. To be clear, this does not necessarily mean that such a church is no longer a part of the Body of Christ; its ministry may very well continue independently or as a member of another Christian denomination. Such a church will simply no longer be an Advent Christian church.

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES

Matthew 18:17-20; Acts 6:1-6; 14:21-23; 15:1-33; Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 5:3-5, 11-13; 12:18; 2 Corinthians 8:16-19; Galatians 1:1-9; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; 2 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 5:1-3; 1 John 2:18-19; 2 John 1:9-10; 3 John 1:9-10; Revelation 2-3

PRINCIPLE XI

Church Ordinances

WE AFFIRM *that the only ordinances of the Church are Baptism and the Lord's Supper; that only those who have faith in Christ should be baptized, baptism taking the mode of immersion whenever possible.*

WE DENY *that baptism must be repeated for any who have been truly baptized and possess this faith.*

It was expected that there would be differences among Advent Christians on their view of the Lord's Supper. For that reason, this principle has been articulated in a way to allow for a variety of views. Any further specification in this area (e.g. excluding transubstantiation), I think, would be best shored up by way of an enduring resolution; I do not think this is a pressing matter at this time.

The Advent Christian denomination is a Baptist denomination, believing that only those who can make a personal confession of faith should be baptized. That said, the denomination does make room for recognizing the legitimacy of those baptized as infants. Again, I have phrased things carefully here to allow for some pastoral discretion in determining which baptisms are legitimate.

For example, we would expect that no one would accept a Mormon baptism, but there may be differences as to whether some would accept a Roman Catholic baptism as legitimate versus various forms of Protestant paedobaptism. Some may not be prepared to accept any forms of infant baptism, but this denial is useful in all the cases above. Even in the case of believer's baptism, this gives assurance that once a person has been baptized after making a confession of faith, they should not be repeatedly baptized thereafter.

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES

Matthew 28:19; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:38; 8:38-39; 16:30-33; 22:16; Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:23-29; Ephesians 4:5

PRINCIPLE XII

Worship and Sabbath Rest

WE AFFIRM *that the first day of the week, as the day set apart by the early church in commemoration of Christ's resurrection, should be observed as the Lord's Day; that in the freedom of the Spirit it should be used as a day for Christian worship and fellowship.*

WE DENY *that any continued practice of taking a Sabbath rest should be observed as though we remain under the Law.*

Advent Christians are not Seventh-Day Adventists. Under normal circumstances, we believe the Church should gather to worship on Sundays. This does not prohibit churches from gathering at additional times for worship or gathering at a different time when under duress; it does suggest that Sunday worship should not be casually discarded as a matter of mere preference.

There are divided opinions among us as to whether Christians should be admonished to rest on the Lord's Day. Even so, those who hold that conviction, or who would otherwise commend Christians taking a "Sabbath" at any other time, agree with all others that in Christ we are no longer compelled to Sabbath as though under the Law.

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES

Matthew 28:1-6; Mark 16:2; Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Galatians 4:9-11, Colossians 2:16-17; 3:16; Hebrews 4:9-10; 10:24-25, Revelation 1:10

PRINCIPLE XIII

Christ's Return

WE AFFIRM *that as servants of Jesus Christ, we have been commanded to be found ready at all times for his return, steadfastly pursuing personal holiness and the fulfillment of the Great Commission.*

WE DENY *that readiness entails speculating about the approximate time of Christ's "soon" return.*

When Advent Christians say that Christ is returning soon, they no longer necessarily mean within their lifetime (though it could be!). We have laid aside the prognostication of the founding generation who recklessly nurtured such expectations. Humbly, we admit we do not know the time of Christ's return.

Nevertheless, under the assurance that Christ is returning soon, we are ever more vigilant for the very reason that we do not know the day or the hour; his coming will be like a thief. Every day draws nearer.

As this principle indicates, we demonstrate our readiness not by standing on a hillside, but by occupying ourselves in the Master's work. The Gospel of this Kingdom will be preached to all mankind, and then the end shall come. Maranatha!

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES

Matthew 24:14, 36, 42-51; 25:1-13; Luke 12:35-40; 19:13; Acts 1:6-8; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-8; Titus 2:11-14; 2 Peter 3:1-12; 1 John 3:2-3; Revelation 22:12, 20

PRINCIPLE XIV

Human Government

WE AFFIRM *that the Bible teaches that properly constituted governments are ordained of God and are divine instruments for the welfare and protection of humanity, even as we await perfect justice and everlasting peace to be established in the coming Kingdom of God.*

WE DENY *that every war is just or that anyone should be compelled to take up arms in violation of their conscience.*

The Advent Christian denomination does not prescribe pacifism, but our Adventist heritage provides grounds for holding pacifist convictions. During the American Civil War, I.C. Wellcome and other Advent Christians contended that participation in war should be set aside in anticipation of Christ's return.

Principle XI in the current DOP was not always so conciliatory to participating in war. It was preceded for several decades by an earlier version of principle XI that was exclusively pacifist. The present "both sides" articulation strikes a very indefinite, mealy-mouthed tone.

While pacifism is an acceptable position to hold in our denomination, coherent with Adventist theology, we cannot say that Advent Christians are prescriptively pacifist in the 21st century. We welcome all Advent Christian conscientious objectors to claim their heritage as far as they are personally concerned, but Advent Christians are not generally opposed to just war. The language of this new principle reflects this reality, while providing just enough latitude in interpretation for the rare pacifist among us. Under this principle, one may conscientiously object to personally participating in war while acknowledging that governments may offer a just defense of their citizens. As with other secondary doctrines contained in this proposal, the articulation favors the position of the majority while allowing for differences within the frame of sound biblical interpretation.

RELEVANT SCRIPTURES

Psalms 82:3-4; Proverbs 31:8-9; Jeremiah 22:2-3; Matthew 22:17-21; John 19:10-11; Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Peter 2:17

Advent Christian Statement of Faith

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God. (2 Timothy 3:16 ; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Deuteronomy 6:4 ; Matthew 28:19)

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory. (Philippians 2:6-11 ; 1 Peter 3:18 ; Romans 5:9 ; Matthew 26:64)

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential. (Titus 3:4-7)

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life. (John 14:15-18 ; John 16:13 ; John 16:7-11)

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation. (1 Corinthians 15:10-23 ; John 5:28-29)

We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:22-23 ; Acts 2:41-47)

(As adopted by the National Association of Evangelicals.)

Declaration of Principles (current)

1. We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, being in its entirety a revelation given to man under divine inspiration and providence; that its historic statements are correct, and that it is the only divine and infallible standard of faith and practice. Rom. 15:4 ; 2 Tim. 3:15-16 ; John 17:17

2. We believe, as revealed in the Bible:

In one God, our Father, eternal, and infinite in his wisdom, love and power, the Creator of all things, “in whom we live, and move, and have our being.” Gen. 1:1 ; Isa. 40:28

And in Jesus Christ, our Lord, the only begotten Son of God, conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; who came into our world to seek and to save that which was lost; who died for our sins; who was raised bodily from the dead for our justification; who ascended in heaven as our High Priest and Mediator, and who will come again in the end of this age, to judge the living and the dead, and to reign forever and ever. 1 Tim. 3:16

And in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, sent from God to convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, whereby we are sanctified and sealed unto the day of redemption. John 14:16, 26 ; John 16:7-11 ; Eph. 1:13-14

3. We believe that man was created for immortality, but that through sin he forfeited his divine birthright; that because of sin, death entered into the world, and passed upon all men; and that only through faith in Jesus Christ, the divinely ordained Life-giver, can men become “partakers of the divine nature,” and live forever. 2 Tim. 1:10 ; Rom. 2:7 ; 1 Cor. 15:22 , 1 Cor. 15:51-54

4. We believe that death is a condition of unconsciousness to all persons, righteous and wicked; a condition which will remain unchanged until the resurrection at Christ’s Second Coming, at which time the righteous will receive everlasting life while the wicked will be “punished with everlasting destruction,” suffering complete extinction of being. Ecc. 9:5 ; Job 14:14 ; John 5:28-29 ; Matt. 10:28

5. We believe that salvation is free to all those who, in this life and in this age, accept it on the conditions imposed, which conditions are simple and inflexible, namely, turning from sin, repentance toward God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a life of consecration to the service of God; thus excluding all hope of a future probation, or of universal salvation. John 3:16 , 2 Cor. 6:1-2 ; Luke 13:22-30

6. We believe that Jesus Christ, according to his promise, will come again to this earth, even “in like manner” as he went into heaven – personally, visibly and gloriously – to reign here forever; and that this coming is the hope of the church, inasmuch as upon that coming depend the resurrection and reward of the righteous, the abolition of sin and its consequences, and the renewal of the earth – now marred by sin – to become the eternal home of the redeemed, after which event the earth will be forever free from sin and death. Acts 1:11 ; 1 Thess. 4:16-17 ; Rev. 22:12-13

7. We believe that Bible prophecy has indicated the approximate time of Christ’s return; and comparing its testimony with the signs of our times, we are confident that he is near, “even at the doors,” and we believe that the great duty of the hour is the proclamation of this soon-coming redemption, the defense of Bible authority, inspiration and truth, and the salvation of lost men. 2 Pet. 1:19-21 ; Matt. 24:42-45 ; Rev. 22:17

8. We believe the church of Christ is an institution of divine origin, which includes all true Christians, of whatever name; but that local church organizations should be independent of outside control, congregational in government, and subject to no dictation of priest, bishop or pope – although true fellowship and unity of action should exist between all such organizations. Matt. 16:18 ; Eph. 4:11-16

9. We believe that the only ordinances of the church of Christ are Baptism and the Lord's Supper; immersion being the only true baptism. Matt. 28:19 ; Rom. 6:3-5 ; 1 Cor. 11:23-26

10. We believe that the first day of the week, as the day set apart by the early church in commemoration of Christ's resurrection, should be observed as the Christian Sabbath, and used as a day of rest and religious worship. Ps. 118:22-24 ; Luke 24:1-12 ; 1 Cor. 16:2

11. We believe that war is contrary to the spirit and teachings of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ; that it is contrary to the spirit of true brotherhood; and that our influence should be used against it. We believe the Bible also teaches that properly constituted government is ordained of God and is a divine instrument for man's welfare and protection. When an Advent Christian decides on the basis of Scripture and conscience, either to bear arms or to submit to penalties imposed for his refusal to do so, local Advent Christian congregations should extend continued fellowship and nurture. Rom. 13:1-7 ; Matt. 15:15-22

The
Whitefield
League