

Developments in the Relationship between Seventh Day Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists, 1844-1884

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Michael W. Campbell
campbellm@aiaas.edu

Introduction

Seventh Day Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists share a fundamental conviction that the seventh-day Sabbath is the true, biblical Sabbath. Each tradition, although spawned two centuries apart, argue that soon after the New Testament period that the Christian church began to worship on Sunday rather than continue to observe the Jewish Sabbath. Both groups teach that the original Sabbath was the seventh-day, instituted at Creation and affirmed when God gave the Ten Commandments. Each tradition developed their view of the Sabbath during a time of chaos in which religious figures sought to return to what they believed was an earlier, purer form of Christianity. In this sense both traditions were “outsiders” in comparison to the wider religious culture, to borrow the phraseology of Paul Tillich, but because of their deep-rooted conviction of the seventh-day Sabbath they shared a sense of being “insiders” together.¹

Yet Seventh Day Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists were not afraid to be different either. Each group evolved out of a larger tradition, which was incredibly diverse and complex. Baptists and Adventists each have distinctive markers. In the case of Baptists this marker was baptism by immersion; for Adventists it was the Second Coming. Quite often these shared values overlapped. Each demonstrated similar approaches, for example, by their high regard and interpretation of Scripture. Since Baptists, after Methodists, were the second largest religious demographic in America during antebellum America, it comes as no surprise that Baptists made up a significant portion of Millerite Adventism. After all, William Miller was himself a Freewill Baptist.

In the chaos after the Great Disappointment, when Christ did not return on Oct. 22, 1844, many Millerite Adventists gave up their faith altogether. Of those who remained, the largest group gravitated around Miller’s lieutenant, Joshua V. Himes, at the May 1845 Albany Conference. These believers denounced as fanatics all those who believed in visions or who advocated the seventh-day Sabbath. Many of these Millerite Adventists faced significant persecution. Some former Baptist members were driven out of their churches. Thus Millerite Adventism imbibed of the wider “come outer” movements of the 1840s when Charles Fitch declared that the popular churches of the day, by rejecting the Advent message, had become Babylon.² Thus in the aftermath of the Great Disappointment, and especially at the Albany Conference, a small group of Sabbatarian Adventists found themselves isolated from the main body of those remaining Millerite Adventist believers who did not renounce their faith. This clearly placed the founders of Sabbatarian Adventism as outsiders to the main group of Millerite Adventists.

In the wake of all this, a small group of Sabbatarian Adventists, formed the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863. During this process they developed their own unique sense of identity and mission. Part of this identity included a combination of the restoration of the seventh-day Sabbath with

their own unique apocalyptic framework. God's "remnant church" at the very end of time would be distinguished by their observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. Gradually Sabbatarian Adventists developed a growing awareness of mission, first to reach out to those most similar to them such as other Adventist groups as well as Sabbatarians. Since Seventh Day Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists both kept the seventh-day Sabbath, the question of their relationship to one another grew increasingly as a matter of concern for both traditions. Would they relate to them as "insiders" or "outsiders" and in what form ("insiders to outsiders" or "outsiders to insiders")? Although a few publications have analyzed various aspects of their relationship between the two denominations, surprisingly very little work has been done to examine this pivotal relationship.³ This paper helps to fill this lacuna beginning with the earliest point of contact in 1844.

Beginnings

The issue of the seventh-day Sabbath was brought up by a few Millerite Adventists, most notably by the Scott James Begg who urged Adventists in America to study the topic in 1841. By and large Millerite Adventism, as previously pointed out, was a one-doctrine movement. Doctrinal differences were minimized. The heyday of the Millerite revival (1840-1844) corresponded with a series of resolutions by the Seventh Day Baptists during their General Conference sessions in which delegates resolved that it was their "solemn duty" to share the Sabbath truth with others. By June 1844 the primary periodical published by the Seventh Day Baptists, the *Sabbath Recorder* noted "that considerable numbers of those who are looking for the speedy appearance of Christ have embraced the seventh day, and commenced observing it as the Sabbath." They suggested that keeping the seventh-day Sabbath was "the best preparation" for the Second Coming.⁴

The earliest point of contact between Millerite Adventists and Seventh Day Baptists occurred when Rachel Oakes Preston visited her daughter in Washington, New Hampshire.⁵ She visited her daughter, a schoolteacher, and since there were no other Sabbatarians, they worshipped together with other Millerite Adventists on Sunday. According to one church member they remembered that Wheeler preached a sermon in which he stated that all persons confession communion with Christ should be "ready to follow Him, and obey God and keep His commandments in all things." Afterward Preston confronted Wheeler: "'I came near getting up in the meeting at that point,' she told him, 'and saying something.' 'What was it you had in mind to say?' he asked her. 'I wanted to tell you that you would better set that communion table back and put the cloth over it, until you begin to keep the commandments of God.'" According to a memory statement, Wheeler stated that these words cut him deeper than anything else ever spoken to him. After studying the topic, he became a Sabbatarian.⁶

It is presumed that Wheeler, or someone from the small band of Sabbatarian Adventists who banded together soon afterward, most likely shared their Sabbatarian convictions with Thomas M. Preble, the pastor of the Free Will Baptist congregation in Nashua, only 35 miles from Washington. He in turn shared his views in the Feb. 28, 1845, issue of *The Hope of Israel* (afterward distributed in tract form). Preble famously quipped that "All who keep the first [day of the week] for 'the Sabbath' are [the] Pope's Sunday-keepers!! And GOD'S SABBATH-BREAKERS!!!"⁷

It was Preble's influence that in April 1845 captured the attention of Joseph Bates, a local Millerite Adventist leader from Fairhaven, Massachusetts. He learned of the Sabbatarian Adventist group in Washington, New Hampshire, and traveled there to find answers to some of his lingering questions. Upon his return, he met his friend James Madison Monroe Hall who asked. "What's the

news?” Bates replied, “The news is that the seventh-day is the Sabbath of the Lord our God.” He was so enraptured by the Sabbath truth that friends later reminisced that even into old age he would enthusiastically tell friends “Oh, how I do love this Sabbath!”⁸ Initially Bates kept the Sabbath by himself, but in late 1850 Prudy, his wife, joined him. It appears that Preble’s tract was also influential in arresting the attention of fifteen-year-old John Nevins Andrews, who later became a stalwart Seventh-day Adventist minister and influential author (1859) of a book on the history of the Sabbath. Although Bates, Andrews, and others joined forces into a Sabbatarian Adventist movement, Preble in 1849 renounced his belief in the seventh-day Sabbath.

Thus the initial point of contact for Sabbatarian Adventism came through a Seventh Day Baptist woman, Rachel Oakes Preston. Although it appears that individuals brought up the topic, she was the influential catalyst that helped start a movement. Although the connection between Wheeler and Preble is unclear, it appears generally accepted by historians of both traditions that this was the birth of the Sabbatarian Adventist revival.

Bates and Sabbatarian Adventism quickly absorbed the Seventh Day Baptist understanding of the seventh-day Sabbath. This can be seen in Joseph Bates’ tract, *The Seventh Day Sabbath, a Perpetual Sign*, originally published in August 1846. He observed that truth is progressive, and he had discovered more light since the time when he first read the Preble tract. He worried about fanaticism, and that Preble’s emphasis about the Sabbath as connected to the original creation and the Ten Commandments was therefore overlooked. He believed that he needed to share his views in order to “save all honest souls seeking after truth.” Despite his assertion that he was following progressive truth, his arguments parallel those of Seventh Day Baptists.⁹ The second edition, published the next year, shows that Bates had in fact moved beyond a Seventh Day Baptist understanding of the Sabbath. Bates now saw the Sabbath within an eschatological framework. “The *seventh* day Sabbath” is “to be restored before the second advent of Jesus Christ.” He furthermore tied the Sabbath to the Three Angel’s Messages of Revelation 14.¹⁰ Adventist theologian Rolf Pohler observes that Bates deserves the credit as the first individual to connect “the newly discovered Sabbath truth” with this notion of “present truth.” He went even farther by connecting the Sabbath to the newly developing concept that the events of Oct. 22 actually occurred, not on earth, but in the heavenly sanctuary. He connected this concept with the vision of the ark of testament (Rev. 11:19). Thus the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath was a defining feature of God’s end-time or “remnant” people. From this perspective he noted that “the keeping of God’s Sabbath . . . saves the soul.”¹¹ Thus by the late 1840s early Sabbatarian Adventists now placed the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath in eschatological terms that had clearly moved well beyond the Seventh Day Baptists. As the church grew and matured, the question was how the two denominations would relate to one another? Would they treat each other as insiders or outsiders?

Defining Boundaries

Although Sabbatarian Adventists quickly moved in new eschatological directions, they found that Seventh Day Baptists, with a common commitment to the seventh-day Sabbath, were a logical place to share their views. Initially Sabbatarian Adventists followed through on their “come outer” inhibitions that other denominations had rejected the Second Advent message. In the midst of persecution, they applied the parable of Matthew 25 about the Bridegroom and the Ten Virgins to keep their lamps full and trimmed. When the bridegroom returned the door was shut. Yet as time persisted, the “shut door” turned into a partially open door by 1852. It was not until 1874 that the Seventh-day

Adventist Church sent out its first missionary and embraced a broad scope of Adventist mission that extended around the world.¹²

During the 1850s Sabbatarian Adventists and Seventh Day Baptists defined their boundaries. Joseph Bates noted with appreciation the influence Seventh Day Baptists had upon him, but expressed concern that Seventh Day Baptists do not believe in the “testimony of Jesus,” a euphemism for the latter day bestowal of the gift of prophecy, specifically as manifested through Ellen G. White.¹³ Thus the two religious groups viewed the Sabbath differently. The Seventh Day Baptists looked backwards seeking to restore what was lost, whereas the Seventh-day Adventists built on this legacy, but also went farther by looking forward eschatologically. In doing so they Sabbatarian Adventists saw a progressive development of truth about the seventh-day Sabbath that built upon the Seventh Day Baptist understanding, and so their understanding was complimentary rather than hostile to the Sabbatarian understanding of Seventh Day Baptists. As a result, Sabbatarian Adventists like James White, who edited the earliest Sabbatarian Adventist periodicals, felt comfortable reprinting Seventh Day Baptist articles and tracts, the earliest example being in 1852.¹⁴ Another significant development, later that same year, was a note by James White about the significance of *The Sabbath Recorder*. After the informal contact in 1844 with Rachel Oakes Preston, it was this periodical exchange in 1852 that appears to have begun an active dialogue through print between these two traditions.¹⁵

Despite such exchanges things during the 1850s and early 1860s appeared somewhat reserved between the two religious groups. Joseph Bates, who was fond of evangelizing Seventh Day Baptists. He reported that a Seventh Day Baptist who attended his meetings commented that Seventh-day Adventists have a power in their ability to evangelize others about the Sabbath that they lacked.¹⁶ Outreach to Seventh Day Baptists was a natural starting point for Sabbatarian Adventist ministers. In this way they functioned as insiders speaking to outsiders, to potential converts. Thus reports in the Sabbatarian Adventist periodical, *The Review, and Herald*, contain numerous reports about Seventh Day Baptist participation in Sabbatarian Adventist meetings. At least initially, for church members who lived in scattered and rural locations, it appears that at least for some that they felt that their mutual convictions about the seventh-day Sabbath allowed them to worship together (i.e. as “insiders”). In some localities Seventh Day Baptists opened their meeting houses for worship services and evangelistic meetings.¹⁷

Tensions grew when reports circulated about church members, and even a few ministers, who converted to Sabbatarian Adventism. Research suggests that such conversions were never extensive, not more than 5% of the fledgling Sabbatarian Adventist movement came from the Seventh Day Baptists, and it was still a cause for concern.¹⁸ At least one Seventh Day Baptist congregation disfellowshipped a church member in 1853 for agitating their convictions about the Second Coming.¹⁹ Such interactions caused Seventh Day Baptists to clarify their relationship to Seventh-day Adventists. On July 28, 1853, the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference passed a resolution to enquire about the beliefs of the “Seventh day [sic] Advent people.” In response to this inquiry James White encouraged them to read Seventh-day Adventist publications:

It is now a little more than eight years since the Sabbath was first introduced among the Advent people; and as a people, they rejected it. A few stood firm amidst violent opposition. The Sabbath cause did not advance with us but very little up to 1849. At that time it began to rise and its progress has been steady and firm till the present . . . 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 . . . 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.²⁰

James White affirmed that the Seventh Day Baptists were pioneer Sabbath reformers, and that their writings “have been a great comfort and strength to us.”²¹ In the response to the Seventh Day Baptist resolution Sabbatarian Adventists affirmed that they were grateful to learn that Seventh Day Baptists were inquiring about their beliefs.²²

Thus Sabbatarian Adventists and Seventh Day Baptists developed an initial posture of respect as they continued to dialogue and define their relationship to one another.²³ Most of this dialogue continued in the initial pattern through print forms such as articles and tracts. Despite a few problematic areas, overall it appears that church members through the 1850s continued to worship together.²⁴ In the case of one Sabbatarian Adventist believer who died in the midst of a Seventh Day Baptist community in Milton, Wisconsin, they held his funeral at their church, and buried him in the Seventh Day Baptist graveyard. The author wryly noted that although buried in a Seventh Day Baptist graveyard, he awaits the return of Jesus.²⁵ His life in that community was sufficient to inspire at least one other Seventh Day Baptist to subscribe to the *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*.²⁶

The pattern of exchanging periodicals along with respectful yet cautious relations between the two movements continued through the 1850s, and extended up through and even beyond the American Civil. Both movements upheld the seventh-day Sabbath, and Sabbatarian Adventists especially developed a significant respect for their activism in regard to religious liberty. As early as 1854 Sabbatarian Adventists reprinted articles by Seventh Day Baptists about religious liberty issues.²⁷ James White observed that this piece was published “not because we approve of their purpose to resist by legal means the injustice and oppression, to which the observers of the Sabbath are subjected, but because it is an able exposure of the unjust character of those laws which enforce the observance of Sunday.”²⁸ It appears that the Seventh Day Baptist role in promulgating religious liberty, along with the common enemy of Sunday laws, helped also by reinforcing the idea of the two groups being part of a common cause, and therefore their language in this respect reflects that of “insiders” speaking to one another.

In at least two instances, an entire congregation of Seventh Day Baptists converted.²⁹ As Sabbatarian Adventists grew increasingly successful in converting Seventh Day Baptists, the leaders of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference felt it necessary to distance themselves. They published an article on “The Kingdom of God”³⁰ They noted that some “disorganizers” have in certain areas disrupted Seventh Day Baptist congregations. Sabbatarian Adventists took the reference to the “class of people known as Adventists” who also advocate the Sabbath as a specific reference to themselves. Such individuals have “won their way to the hearts of our people.”³¹ Sabbatarian Adventists categorically denied the charge of disorganization. Even more sensitive was the fact that in some instances Seventh Day Baptists were reported to have been re-baptized. A former Seventh Day Baptist minister, D. P. Hall, now writing as a Seventh-day Adventist minister, defended himself from this charge. He noted that in

some cases as new believers accepted “present truth” they were re-baptized. A clearer understanding of God’s law, and its connection to baptism, meant that “many Adventists have been re-baptized.” This was not to discount the validity of the baptism of Seventh Day Baptists, but was instead a recognition of spiritual truth.³²

Another key tension between Seventh Day Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists centered upon what happened to human beings after death. Seventh-day Adventists, following the Millerite Adventist George Storrs, adopted the view of the non-immortality of the soul. This was resisted by Seventh Day Baptists, and both sides viewed this particular belief as a dividing line between the two groups.³³ From the point of the American Civil War forward (at least until 1884 within the confines of this study) this remained the main area of concern.³⁴ Eschatological concerns appear to have faded into the background. This can be seen in the extensive debate between the Seventh-day Adventist evangelist R. F. Cottrell and the Seventh Day Baptist minister N. V. Hull.³⁵

The period from 1852 up through the late 1860s was a time in which Seventh Day Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists defined their boundaries. Dialogue occurred primarily through the exchange of journals. The commonality of the seventh-day Sabbath was a natural bridge that caused them to see themselves as insiders. Believers worshipped together and opened their houses of worship to one another for evangelistic meetings. Thus it is not a surprise that some individuals converted, which caused some tension. The voted resolution by the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference in 1855 also created more distance between the two groups. In this way they clarified that they were not just “insiders” but must remember that key differences forced them to dialogue as “insiders to outsiders.” They had a common language. They even had a common enemy in Sunday laws. But neither group should feel compelled to follow the example of the other. Thus each group continued to define their boundaries. A default pattern of cautious respect appears to be the default attitude that continued through much of the 1860s.

Post War Dialogue

Many of the patterns from the 1850s up through the American Civil War continued after the war. During this time the editors from both the Seventh Day Baptist and Seventh-day Adventist churches exchanged periodicals. Articles continued to be re-published. A significant development was the publication, by Seventh-day Adventists, of the Seventh Day Baptist tract by T. B. Brown, *Thoughts Suggested by the Perusal of Gilfillan, and Other Authors on the Sabbath*. The Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association printed 10,000 copies.³⁶ Seventh-day Adventist church leaders were also very impressed by the publication by A. H. Lewis of his *History of the Sabbath*. Seventh-day Adventists were encouraged to buy copies, and viewed his book as a companion volume to a similar volume by the same title by J. N. Andrews. Even Ellen G. White kept a copy of the volume in her library.³⁷

Another pattern that continued from the 1850s was the participation of church members and leaders in worship services by the other denomination. Perhaps the most significant example of this was when in 1867 a group of Seventh Day Baptist leaders attended the Wisconsin camp meeting. Southern Wisconsin was a center for the Seventh Day Baptists. Thus the location of the Seventh-day Adventist camp meeting was only seven miles away from one of their key centers was a cause for concern to them.³⁸ It appears that when the Seventh Day Baptists sent Seventh-day Adventist church leaders in

1868 a copy of a pamphlet with the proceedings from their recent General Conference session that this triggered a positive response that in turn sparked increased dialogue between the two groups.³⁹ What was of particular interest for Seventh-day Adventists was the especially active role by Seventh Day Baptists toward religious liberty. Whereas early Seventh-day Adventists largely avoided politics, they were forced during the American Civil War to plead for non-combatancy status. Efforts for “Sabbath reform” were a cause for concern, and an indication for Seventh-day Adventists of increased persecution that would occur just prior to the Second Coming. Thus it appears that the Seventh Day Baptist work for religious liberty, already noted in the 1850s, was a significant catalyst for awakening increased dialogue and sympathy between the two religious bodies.⁴⁰

The patterns of print, attendance at meetings, and a mutual interest in religious liberty (along with a mutual antipathy for Sunday legislation) created the backdrop for a group of Seventh-day Adventist leaders to issue an “Address to the Seventh-day [*sic*] Baptists” in May 1868. The semi-official resolution was drafted by James White, J. H. Waggoner, J. N. Andrews, and R. F. Cottrell. They began by noting their admiration for Seventh Day Baptist Sabbath observance. “In all this our hearts are as yours,” they stated. “We have, as a people, been called to the observance of the Bible Sabbath, while deeply interested in the doctrine of the speedy advent of the Son of God. We may even add, that our connection with the Advent movement has lead us directly, and almost inevitably, to the observance of the Sabbath of the Lord.” They invited their counterparts to study the soon return of Christ and increase their zeal to keep the seventh-day. Previous differences related to the nature of humans in death were not mentioned. In commenting on this development, W. C. Gage, who served as foreman of the SDA Publishing House, noted the need to cultivate “fraternal feelings between . . . these two denominations being the only Christian people on this broad continent who are honoring God by defending his law and Sabbath.”⁴¹

In response the Seventh Day Baptists noted with appreciation the Seventh-day Adventist resolution. They found this as a “matter of rejoicing to us, that through God’s good providence he has, in you, so largely increased the number of those who observed his holy Sabbath.” While the doctrine of the Second Advent did not “seem to us of such pressing importance as it does to you,” they reciprocated by sending Jonathan Allen to attend their next General Conference. Seventh-day Adventists noted with approval “the spirit of Christian courtesy that breathes through this document.”⁴² This move was a significant development that began a formal relationship between the two denominations. It represented the first significant attempt by Seventh-day Adventists to formally exchange a delegate, and while Seventh Day Baptists had delegates from other Baptists groups, this was a unique phenomenon for them as well, at least for the nineteenth-century. The two churches changed their stance. Whereas earlier they considered each other as “outsiders” now they wished to be considered “insiders.”

Thus it appears that three factors brought about a significant shift during the 1860s that intensified from approximately 1865 to 1869. First, earlier patterns of dialogue brought about by the exchange of periodicals and reprinting of articles continued. Second, the sending a pamphlet containing the proceedings of the recent Seventh Day Baptist General Conference appears to have awakened more curiosity on the part of Seventh-day Adventists. And third, the active efforts by Seventh Day Baptists toward religious liberty were of great interest for Seventh-day Adventists. The formal exchange of delegates marks a new and special development between them.

Exchange of Delegates

The period of time from 1869 to 1879 marked a decade with an exchange of delegates between Seventh Day Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists. The exchange of delegates clearly represented a new era of curiosity and good feelings between them. After the initial resolution in 1868, the Seventh-day Adventists appointed R. F. Cottrell, J. N. Andrews, and Nathan Fuller to serve as a committee “to address the Seventh-day [sic] Baptists, and open such correspondence with them as they may deem fit.”⁴³ The resolution took some time before traction could build. In the meantime, John and Sarah Lindsay, a ministerial couple operated largely in Pennsylvania and western New York, attended the 1870 Seventh Day Baptist General Conference session. Their positive report no doubt encouraged further cooperation.

This cooperation was reciprocated when Professor Jonathan Allen attended the 1870 Seventh-day Adventist General Conference session. Seventh-day Adventists welcomed him with the “hope” that “as far as [is] consistent with the difference of our views of truth, to establish fraternal relations with the only people beside ourselves who hallow the day of the Creator’s rest.”⁴⁴ This initial contact by Allen was followed up later that year when for the first time, H. P. Burdick occupied the pulpit of the Battle Creek Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁴⁵ This was a gesture of goodwill on the part of Seventh-day Adventist church leaders and was an unusual opportunity indicating to Seventh Day Baptists that they considered them to be fellow believers. While in some areas church members had worshipped together, this invitation to preach at the largest Seventh-day Adventist Church at the time (with about 400 members) at their headquarters was a clear evidence that their relationship was different now.

In the Appendix A I have carefully traced the exchange of delegates. What follows is essentially a summary of some of the key points made by delegates during this decade. Reports from delegates to their respective churches highlighted the polity and procedures that occurred during their respective General Conference sessions. Seventh-day Adventists, for example, had delegates who arrived from each state conference. In contrast Seventh Day Baptists had only one delegate from each church, although multiple representatives could caucus together to decide how to vote. Another significant difference in terms of polity was that the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference voted resolutions that had to be implemented at the local church level, but Seventh Day Baptists resolutions could not necessarily be enforced.⁴⁶ From the Seventh Day Baptist reports it appears that what stood out to them from their perspective was the cohesive, centralized system of organization.⁴⁷

Perhaps the most interesting discussions, from the perspective of the Seventh-day Adventist delegates, concerned the internal debates by the Seventh Day Baptists over “closed” versus “open” communion. Since this was a widely debated topic among Baptists, the majority of Baptists during the nineteenth-century favored “closed” communion.⁴⁸ Seventh Day Baptists joined others, although a few occasionally protested this stance. Such discussions predated internal discussions by Seventh-day Adventist leaders who did not begin a debate in earnest about the topic until 1879, after the exchange with Seventh Day Baptist delegates came to an end.⁴⁹ One wonders if perhaps such discussions may have prompted reflection by Seventh-day Adventists upon the topic, who similarly were not uniform about who they allowed to participate in this church ordinance.

Another area of mutual interest concerned missions. This was discussed by delegates from both sides who earnestly noted their areas of growth, as well as their mutual desire to not compete with one another. J. N. Andrews, the year before he left as the Seventh-day Adventist denomination’s first official missionary, noted with interest the Seventh Day Baptist missionary presence in China.⁵⁰ Similarly, the

energy exerted by Seventh-day Adventists to print tracts in new languages, expand their missionary reach to California, and eventually to develop a missionary presence in Europe, was noted with keen interest by Seventh Day Baptists. It appears that their missionary efforts were synergistic and mutually beneficial to both denominations. Furthermore, the Seventh Day Baptist, William M. Jones who lived and operated in the vicinity of London provided a useful point of contact for J. N. Andrews on his way to Switzerland. Jones shared with Seventh-day Adventists the history of the early Seventh Day Baptists, and personally gave a tour of historic sites to Andrews while hosting him on his journey.⁵¹

The exchange of delegates marked a new and increased communication, as well as a “brotherly” fraternity between the two denominations. They spoke as “insiders” to one another, even if some theological tensions remained. Clearly there was goodwill that was reciprocated by key church leaders from both denominations. Yet this goodwill came to an end during the latter part of the 1870s.

Tensions

The exchange of delegates and increased interaction between the two denominations brought up new questions about their future. Any questions about possible merger were quickly set aside. In 1876 the Seventh Day Baptists voted a resolution that they should continue to exchange delegates, but that there should be no “consolidation of two bodies holding such opposite views concerning important doctrines.”⁵² Such conversations represent a high water mark in terms of developing a positive relationship.

Yet any warm feelings soon dissipated over the next year. In 1877 significant tensions developed between them. While not all of the details are clear, it appears that from both sides some “rash efforts” were made by some Seventh-day Adventists in Minnesota, western New York, and Pennsylvania—areas with high concentrations of Seventh Day Baptists. One source of tension came from the Seventh-day Adventist, Nathan Fuller, who apparently aggressively tried to convert Seventh Day Baptists. He apostatized after news of an affair and financial problems came to light.⁵³ Similarly, other “rash efforts” according to James White were done by individuals in Minnesota.⁵⁴

In response Seventh Day Baptist church leaders published a resolution condemning such actions. This appears to have troubled James White, who affirmed the earlier 1876 resolution that the two bodies not compete with one another by avoiding starting in a church where the other denomination already had a congregation, and that Seventh Day Baptist church leaders should have contacted Seventh-day Adventist General Conference leaders. Instead, such an action was written to “excite prejudice” against Adventists. Over the previous twenty years, he observed, that Seventh-day Adventists had maintained a respectful posture toward Seventh Day Baptists. The best timber for new church members, suggested White, was “hewn right from the forest.”⁵⁵

A gap exists in 1877 during which time no delegates were exchanged by either denomination. The Seventh-day Adventist minister, J. H. Waggoner, attended the 1878 Seventh Day Baptist General Conference session. At that meeting Varnum Hull read an essay highlighting the differences between the two denominations. Reflecting on this meeting J. N. Andrews opined that he wished that there should be no “strife between these two denominations that are alike loyal to the law of God.”⁵⁶ Despite some doctrinal differences, “[i]n practice they are substantially one.” Such efforts by Andrews and others

appear to have fallen on deaf ears.⁵⁷ The next year the Seventh Day Baptists sent N. Wardner as their final delegate to an Adventist General Conference session. Finally, James White reciprocated in 1879. In this final meeting James White reviewed the relationship that had developed over the previous decade. Both denominations stood in “general agreement” on the “divine law” and other great Christian truths, but their principal differences remained “the immortality question.” He urged that there be “no controversy between the two bodies” and that the exchange of delegates continue. Unfortunately this was the last official exchange of delegates between the two denominations until 1979 when the practice was resumed.⁵⁸

Subsequent reports in church publications indicate that among local church members that in some areas Seventh-day Adventists and Seventh Day Baptists occasionally worshipped together. Ministers of either denomination would conduct funerals. And debates continued between ministers that reinforced their differences over the state of the dead.⁵⁹ In at least one instance a Seventh Day Baptist employed a Seventh-day Adventist who lost his job due to Sabbath observance.⁶⁰ While there was no formal relationship anymore, things returned to much the same way that they existed before the exchange of delegates. The Seventh Day Baptists reverted to their default pattern of treating Seventh-day Adventists as outsiders, and they apparently weren’t willing to go back despite overtures from Seventh-day Adventist leaders.

Despite this distancing the most important link continued to be the role of Seventh Day Baptists about religious liberty. They served as a role model for the religious liberty work. Adventist church leaders reported faithfully on religious liberty cases, especially the role that Seventh Day Baptists played.⁶¹ Although Adventists were reticent to get involved in such cases, during the 1880s and 1890s they embraced their example by actively combatting Sunday legislation and advocating for religious liberty.⁶²

Summary and Conclusions

The relationship between Seventh Day Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists from 1844 to 1884 was indeed complex as each denomination sought to define its relationship to the other. Rachel Oakes Preston is credited by both groups as a primary source for the emergence of Sabbatarian Adventism. Initially Seventh Day Baptists served as a resource through publications as well as a potential source for new members. Defectors from Seventh-day Adventism sometimes left for the comfort of the Seventh Day Baptist fold. Such processes only created friction. Each group was forced to clearly define their boundaries. During the earliest phase such differences centered upon eschatology, most notably the doctrine of the Second Advent. During the 1850s and 1860s the primary point of departure was the doctrine of the state of the dead, which continued on even afterward as the primary division between them. During this first phase the two groups were “insiders” who spoke to the other as “outsiders” despite the common bond of the seventh-day Sabbath.

Such differences should not diminish points of continuity. The observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, including the fact that Adventists viewed themselves as fulfilling the Seventh Day Baptist legacy by keeping the true Sabbath alive, created a strong bond. Early believers used language that was familiar as fellow “insiders.” The continued exchange of periodicals and pamphlets appears to have only increased their curiosity toward one another. A new direction was reached when in 1868 Seventh-day

Adventist church leaders published a resolution to the Seventh Day Baptist church leaders that ultimately led to the exchange of delegates from 1869 to 1879. This exchange of delegates marked a high point in terms of a relationship during which time they generally described the other as part of a common cause. Their relationship is perhaps best represented as “insiders” speaking to fellow “insiders.”

During the whole time some confusion existed between the two groups with regard to the precise parameters of their relationship to one another. Doctrinal differences and defections (primarily from the Seventh Day Baptist ranks) meant that they could not speak strictly as “insiders to insiders.” Instead, they once again viewed the other as “outsiders” but now this experience had changed their relationship. Whereas initially they spoke to one another as “outsiders” speaking to “insiders” now they were “insiders” speaking to “outsiders.” Their posture to one another had changed. Various forces had converged to push them apart once again.

In terms of a tangible legacy perhaps the most specific and lasting contribution of this dialogue process between Seventh-day Adventists and Seventh Day Baptists was that it sparked new discussions within each denomination. Each denomination was challenged, for example, to expand their missionary efforts overseas. Seventh-day Adventists focused their missionary efforts on Europe, Seventh Day Baptists set their sights upon China. Even more significant, perhaps, was the example set by Seventh Day Baptists to advocate for religious liberty, especially against Sunday legislation. Not only did early Sabbatarian Adventists discover the seventh-day Sabbath from a Seventh Day Baptist church member, but their advocacy on behalf of religious freedom was a significant example that Seventh-day Adventists later adopted in the 1880s.

One of the key questions is how to describe the significance of these discussions? Such discussions are certainly unique in Seventh-day Adventist historiography. Among the other Millerite Adventist groups, they served mainly as competition after the May 1845 Albany, Conference, which ostracized those who kept the Sabbath and believed in visions. During this same time period Adventists also reached out to Advent Christian leaders like Miles Grant, only to be sardonically rebuffed. Sabbatarian Adventists found a willing and able conversation partner with the Seventh Day Baptists during the 1870s. Such efforts at dialoguing with other Christians would not happen again, at least for Seventh-day Adventists, until church leaders dialogued with Evangelical leaders, Walter Martin and Donald Grey Barnhouse in the 1950s.

Another significant implication for Seventh-day Adventist historiography is that the contributions of Seventh Day Baptists, beyond their initial point of contact, have largely been overlooked in the contextualization and development of Seventh-day Adventism. Perhaps the most popular denominational historian of the past two decades, George R. Knight, who cites a number of significant formative influences to the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not mention the impact of Seventh Day Baptists beyond the role of Rachel Oakes Preston. He does note however the impact of the Anabaptists in connection with the American Restorationist movement.⁶³ But yet while the Restorationist movement certainly was a significant force, perhaps a more accurate depiction would be to point to the specific role of Seventh Day Baptists, as well as to include the significant role and impact of Baptists in general upon early Adventism. Historians such as David W. Bebbington argue that any influence from the continental Anabaptists was indirect at most upon the Baptists. Perhaps a more accurate rendering, if Knight and others wish to make this link, would be to point instead to a

confluence of forces that included American Restorationist tendencies, but that also included the formative role of Baptists. Seventh Day Baptists were influential in terms of a starting point, but also provided a role model and valuable conversation partner as the Sabbatarian Adventist movement emerged. Thus Adventist historians need to highlight the valuable role of the Seventh Day Baptists, as well as to pay more attention to the role of Baptists in general, in the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

APPENDIX A

Seventh-day Adventist & Seventh Day Baptist Delegates, 1869-1879

Year	Seventh-day Adventist	Seventh Day Baptist
1869	“Address to the Seventh-day [sic] Baptists” ⁶⁴	
1870	No delegate, but John & S. A. H. Lindsay did attend unofficially ⁶⁵	Prof. Jonathan Allen ⁶⁶
1871	J. N. Andrews ⁶⁷	Eld. H. P. Burdick ⁶⁸
1872	Uriah Smith ⁶⁹	Eld. N. Wardner ⁷⁰
1873	J. N. Andrews ⁷¹	Stephen Burdick ⁷² ; No delegate at 2 nd SDA GC Session ⁷³
1874	J. N. Andrews ⁷⁴	L. C. Rogers ⁷⁵
1875	Uriah Smith ⁷⁶ & D. M. Canright ⁷⁷	N. V. Hull ⁷⁸
1876	James White ⁷⁹	C. W. Whitford (president of Milton, Wisconsin, SDB College)
1877		
1878	J. H. Waggoner	N. Wardner ⁸⁰
1879	James White ⁸¹	

¹For a helpful overview of the use of terms in relationship to anthropology and religion, see N. Ross Treat, “Insiders and Outsiders in the Study of Religious Traditions,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, LI/3, 459-476. Tillich approached the issue from a Marxist perspective, the categories of “insiders” versus “outsiders” in terms of how these two denominations related with one another, is a helpful one. See Mary Ann Stenger, Ronald H. Stone, *Dialogues of Paul Tillich* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2002), 175ff.

²The Pulitzer Prize winning historian, David S. Reynolds, provides some helpful background on the “come out” movements of the 1840s in his *Walt Whitman’s America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 238. For Charles Fitch see “*Come Out of Her, My People,*” *A Sermon, By C. Fitch* (Rochester, NY: J. V. Himes, 1843).

³A helpful paper examining the role of Sabbath observance between these two traditions is: Miguel Patino, “Continuity and Change in Sabbath Observance between Seventh Day Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists,” (Term paper, AIIAS, 2013). The most extensive overview of this relationship is Russell J. Thomsen, *Seventh Day Baptists—Their Legacy to Adventists* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1971), which mostly focuses on the historical precursors of Sabbath-keeping, the adoption of the Sabbath through Rachel Oakes Preston, and contains some highlights of the “growing pains” between the two denominations (pgs. 44-55) that brought about cooperation in matters related to religious liberty, but all cooperation came to an end in the early twentieth-century (pg. 54).

⁴George R. Knight, *Joseph Bates: The Real Founder of Seventh-day Adventism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004), 78; Don A. Sanford, *A Choosing People: The History of Seventh Day Baptists* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 162.

⁵For background on Wheeler and Preston, see *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* (2013), pg. 546; *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996), vol. 11, pg. 871; W. A. Spicer, “Our First Minister,” *Review and Herald* (afterward *RH*), Feb. 15, 1940.

⁶*Ibid.*, see also Russell, *Seventh-Day Baptists*, 36-43.

⁷T. M. Preble, *The Hope of Israel*, Feb. 28, 1845; *idem.*, *A Tract Showing that the Seventh Day Should be Observed as the Sabbath, Instead of the First Day; “According to the Commandment.”* (Nashua, NH: Murray & Kimball, 1845), reprinted in G. R. Knight, *1844 and the Rise of Sabbatarian Adventism: Reproductions of Original Historical Documents*, compiled and edited by G. R. Knight (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994), 156-162.

⁸For an overview, see Merlin D. Burt, *Adventist Pioneer Places: New York & New England* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2011), 68, 69.

⁹Bates argues (3-9) that the roots of the Sabbath stem from creation. Second (9-16) that the Bible nowhere indicates that the Sabbath was abolished or transferred to Sunday. Third, he examines purported texts that state the Sabbath was abolished (16-27), and finally, (27-47) he covers a smattering of topics, most important of which is the idea that the change of the Sabbath by the Pope fulfilled Daniel 7:25 as the one who changed times and laws.

¹⁰See Knight, pg. 110

¹¹Knight observes that Bates always had a tendency toward legalism. See his discussion on 113-114, 144.

¹²For the best concise summary of the development of Seventh-day Adventist missions, see G. R. Knight, “Historical Introduction,” in *Historical Sketches of Foreign Missions*, Adventist Classic Library (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2005 [1886]), v-xxxv.

¹³Joseph Bates, “The Holy Sabbath,” *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, April 7, 1851, 57-58 (quote from pg. 58).

¹⁴See “The Lord’s Sabbath,” in *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, Jan. 13, 1852, 77-79.

¹⁵See the note “The Sabbath Recorder,” *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, July 22, 1852, 48.

¹⁶Joseph Bates, “Letters: From Bro. Bates. Alden, Ill., Conference,” *RH*, Sept. 2, 1852, 69.

¹⁷Apparently the Sabbatarian Adventist minister, J. N. Loughborough, was quite fond of reaching out to Seventh Day Baptists. See, for example, [J. N. Loughborough], “From Bro. Loughborough,” *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, March 17, 1853, 176.

¹⁸This estimate is based upon obituaries in the *Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald* from 1850 to 1884.

¹⁹John M. Mills, “From Bro. Mills,” *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, May 12, 1853, 207.

²⁰“Resolution of the Seventh-day [sic] Baptist Central Association,” *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, Aug. 11, 1853, 52-53.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²S. R. C. Denison, “Proving Too Much,” *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, Sept. 27, 1853, 96.

²³See note on the continuation of a journal exchange in *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, Nov. 22, 1853, 160.

²⁴See how R. J. Lawrence and Hiram Edson continue to hold religious meetings with Seventh Day Baptists who support them. See “From Brn. Edson and Lawrence,” *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, Nov. 8, 1853, 143.

²⁵See Obituary, *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, Nov. 29, 1853, 168.

²⁶Cynthia Coon, “From Sr. Coon,” *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, Dec. 6, 1853, 175.

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- ²⁷“Religious Liberty Endangered by Legislative Enactments,” *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, Oct. 10, 1854, 65-67.
- ²⁸*Ibid.*
- ²⁹The congregations were in Hayfield, Pennsylvania, and Brookfield, New York. See *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, Feb. 20, 1855, 178-180.
- ³⁰*The Sabbath Recorder*, Feb. 8, 1855, reprinted in *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*, April 3, 1855, 204-205.
- ³¹*Ibid.*
- ³²*Ibid.*
- ³³E. Lanpheart, “The Immortality Question,” *Review and Herald*, June 19, 1860, 34-35.
- ³⁴J. F. Hammon, “State of the Dead,” *Review and Herald*, May 15, 1866, 186.
- ³⁵“Nature and Destiny of Man,” *Review and Herald*, Sept. 24, 1867, 227.
- ³⁶See “New Work on the Sabbath,” *RH*, May 11, 1869, 160; see also *RH*, May 18, 1869, 165-168, 168; June 22, 1869, 204.
- ³⁷“Sabbath Agitation,” *RH*, Oct. 29, 1867, 304. It appears that J. N. Andrews, who in 1859 had written a booklet by the same title, was especially encouraged by this parallel work. Even Adventist prophetess, Ellen G. White, had a copy of this book in her library.
- ³⁸[Uriah Smith], “Editorial Correspondence, No. 2,” *RH*, Oct. 1, 1867, 248.
- ³⁹“Book Notices,” *RH*, April 28, 1868, 320.
- ⁴⁰See note on “Sabbath Reform,” April 30, 1867, pg. 252.
- ⁴¹W. C. G[age], “The Seventh-Day [sic] Baptists,” *RH*, July 6, 1869, 16.
- ⁴²“Response from the Seventh-Day [sic] Baptists,” *RH*, Nov. 23, 1869, 176.
- ⁴³*Review and Herald*, May 25, 1869, 173.
- ⁴⁴“Our Annual Meeting,” *Review and Herald*, Feb. 22, 1870, 80.
- ⁴⁵See note on *RH*, Oct. 18, 1870, 144.
- ⁴⁶A helpful description from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective is J. N. A[ndrews], “Visit to the Seventh-day [sic] General Conference,” *Review and Herald*, Sept. 30, 1873, 124.
- ⁴⁷Cf. Stephen Burdick, “Report of Eld. S. Burdick: Delegate from the S. D. Baptists to the Last Gen. Conf. of S. D. Adventists,” *Review and Herald*, Oct. 7, 1873, 133.
- ⁴⁸Bebbington, *Baptists through the Centuries*, 92.
- ⁴⁹For an overview of the development of the Lord’s Supper among Seventh-day Adventists, see Michael W. Campbell, “‘A Holy Spell’: The Development of the Communion Service among Seventh-day Adventists,” Term Paper, Andrews University, 2004.
- ⁵⁰Andrews, “Visit to the Seventh-day Baptist General Conference,” *Review and Herald*, Sept. 30, 1873, 124.
- ⁵¹William M. Jones, “Interesting Letter from London,” *Review and Herald*, Dec. 22, 1874, 206; *idem.*, “Seventh-Day [sic] Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists,” *Review and Herald*, June 9, 1874, 205.
- ⁵²*Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America: A Series of Historical Papers Written in Commemoration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Organization of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference: Celebrated at Ashaway, Rhode Island, August 20-25, 1902*, vol. 1 (Plainfield, NJ: American Sabbath Tract Society, 1910).
- ⁵³D. M. Canright, “Pennsylvania and New York,” *Review and Herald*, April 26, 1877, 134.
- ⁵⁴[ames] W[hite], “The Two Bodies,” *Review and Herald*, Aug. 16, 1877, 60.
- ⁵⁵*Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶J. N. Andrews, “Seventh-Day [sic] Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists,” *Review and Herald*, Oct. 24, 1878, 132.
- ⁵⁷*Ibid.*
- ⁵⁸James White, “Seventh-Day [sic] Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists,” *Review and Herald*, Dec. 4, 1879, 180-181.
- ⁵⁹Cf. the N. Wardner and Uriah Smith debate that occurred during 1880. Rev. N. Wardner, D. D., “Death.—No. 2. Reply to U. Smith,” *Review and Herald*, Nov. 18, 1880, 322-324.
- ⁶⁰Geo. E. Loomis, “How We Found the Truth,” *Review and Herald*, May 13, 1880, 316-317.
- ⁶¹The Daniel C. Waldo case that was closely followed by Adventists from 1879-1880.
- ⁶²“Religious Liberty in Pennsylvania,” *Review and Herald*, Jan. 29, 1880, 75.
- ⁶³See George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 29-37.
- ⁶⁴See *Review and Herald (RH)*, Aug. 10, 1869, 52-53.

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- ⁶⁵ "Report of Meetings," *RH*, Dec. 6, 1870, pg. 198. It does not appear the Lindsays were not official delegates, but it does help to demonstrate the close relationship that two Adventist workers would attend the SDB GC.
- ⁶⁶ "Business Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Session of the General Conference of S. D. Adventists," *RH*, March 22, 1870, 109.
- ⁶⁷ J. N. Andrews, "Visit to the S. D. Baptist General Conference," *RH*, Sept. 19, 1871, 108-109.
- ⁶⁸ "Business Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Session of the General Conference of S. D. Adventists," *RH*, Feb. 14, 1871, 68.
- ⁶⁹ *RH*, Sept. 10, 1872, pg. 104; see full report *RH*, Sept. 24, 1872, 116.
- ⁷⁰ *RH*, Jan. 2, 1872, 20. Although this conference was in late 1871 it appears that the SDB church considered this as a counterpoint to Uriah Smith's earlier 1872 visit.
- ⁷¹ *RH*, Sept. 20, 1873, 124.
- ⁷² See "Report of Eld. S. Burdick," *RH*, Oct. 7, 1873, 133.
- ⁷³ J. N. Andrews noted his disappointment. See *RH*, Sept. 20, 1873, 124.
- ⁷⁴ "The Seventh-Day Baptists," *RH*, Oct. 27, 1874, 141.
- ⁷⁵ *RH*, Aug. 24, 1874, 74-75. This report notes that this was L. C. Roger's last SDA GC Session.
- ⁷⁶ *RH*, Sept. 23, 1875, 96.
- ⁷⁷ Uriah Smith preached a sermon before the SDB delegates. See D. M. Canright, "Faith and Works," *RH*, Jan. 6, 1876, 1-3.
- ⁷⁸ *RH*, Aug. 26, 1875, pg. 59; see also *RH*, Sept. 9, 1875, 77.
- ⁷⁹ James White, "Seventh-day Baptists," *RH*, Oct. 5, 1876, 108.
- ⁸⁰ *RH*, Oct. 17, 1878, 124.
- ⁸¹ *RH*, Sept. 25, 1879, 112.