

A Fantastic New Resource: The New Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists (ESDA)

By Dragoslava Santrac

How did the work of Seventh-day Adventists start in Ghana? Who was the first single female Adventist missionary in Korea? Who were the Adventist martyrs in Europe? Who founded the Seventh-day Adventist church in Myanmar? What is the history of Avondale University College? What is the SDA Medical Cadet Corps? We now have reliable answers to these and many other questions related to the Adventist history at our fingertips.

A new, online *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists (ESDA)* was released online July 1, 2020. This incredibly valuable resource is the Seventh-day Adventist Church's first online reference work. *ESDA* currently contains over 2,200 articles on Adventist history, crucial events and themes, people, organizations, and institutions; over four thousand photographs; and a growing collection of videos. Hundreds of new articles and photographs will be added to the encyclopedia in the upcoming weeks and months, with thousands being added in the following months and years. *ESDA* draws on the expertise of over one thousand authors and editors worldwide, reflecting the many cultures and ethnicities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Visit the *ESDA* website at encyclopedia.adventist.org.

What Is the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-Day Adventists*?

The *ESDA* is a global church project with a goal of completing approximately 8,500 articles with accompanying photographs, media, and original documents. It was officially voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists at the 2015 Spring Meeting and serves the needs of a worldwide, expanding, and united church. The *ESDA* is a great tool—not only for those seeking to learn more about the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, its institutions, organizations, teachings, mission, and the people who were connected with it all, but also for those looking to wit-

ness to others. It provides reliable and well-documented information that can be quoted and used to present our church to the public. This free online resource will be periodically updated and expanded.

Almost twenty-five years after the second revised edition of the *SDA Encyclopedia*, and more than half a century after the publication of the first edition, the Seventh-day Adventist Church needs a new reference work: one that accurately depicts the Adventist Church of the twenty-first century and reflects its tremendous growth of the last fifty years, its shifts in global membership, and the development of Adventist theology and historical scholarship over the last quarter century. The online *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* provides readers with easy access to download articles and the ability to share the content digitally on online platforms like Facebook, Twitter, or email, inviting interactive engagement with readers.

How Is the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* Different From the *Encyclopedia* Produced in 1996?

The new *ESDA* is much larger in scope than the printed edition of the *SDA Encyclopedia* and is revolutionary as a digital reference work. Every article is carefully researched and can be continually updated. Like its predecessor, articles are peer-reviewed by Adventist experts in the field before they are accepted and made available to the public. The articles in the new *ESDA* also include historical data from world regions that could not be included in the print edition of the *Encyclopedia*. While the authors of earlier editions definitely tried to include an international worldwide perspective, many articles were written largely from a North American perspective. The new *ESDA* draws on the expertise of hundreds of Adventist authors worldwide. The editorial team comprises more than thirty-five assistant editors, sub-editors, editorial consultants, and

research assistants, along with fifteen consultant editors from the Adventist Church's thirteen world divisions, the Middle East and North Africa Union, the Ellen G. White Estate, and the Biblical Research Institute.¹ The *ESDA* team is guided by the *ESDA* main office at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, MD, and is composed of the editor, managing editor, editorial assistant, and website developer.

The advantage of having worldwide contributions and a global involvement is that assistant editors in each division of the world church were able to identify authors with local (and expert) knowledge. They have been able to collect materials from local churches, such as letters and diaries. They have also recorded oral traditions and conducted interviews with surviving relatives or people who experienced key historical events. Much of this information would probably not have survived were it not for the *ESDA*'s goal of preserving a memory of these things for future generations.

Goals of the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*

The *ESDA* has several important goals and objectives:

- Supply reliable and authoritative information on Adventist history, crucial events and themes, organizations, entities, institutions, and people.
- Strengthen Adventist identity and unity in a fast-growing worldwide movement, heightening awareness of our distinctive doctrinal framework and prophetic beliefs.
- Provide a reference work for those new to the Adventist faith, as well as for those not of the Adventist faith, to learn about as many aspects of Adventism as possible.
- Illustrate the role of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's organization in fulfilling its mission.
- Highlight the missional challenges still remaining in order to "reach the world" and inspire the reader to learn from the dedication and sacrifice of those who have gone before us.
- Reflect the global nature of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church today, both in subject matter and in the team of writers and editors who contribute to the *ESDA*.

The *ESDA* is already proving to be an invaluable resource—not only for doing research on Adventist history, but also for preparing devotionals, sermons, mission stories, youth and children's programs, and study materials for classes, prayer meetings, and other events. The many pictures and videos help users visualize the people and places explored in the entries, bringing a personal touch to the historical information. The advanced search options on the *ESDA* website allow readers to browse articles by category. Readers can also browse articles by church divisions, article titles, and keywords. All *ESDA* articles are signed and include reference notes and sources.

More Authors Are Needed

Adventist authors from all walks of life who have expertise on a given subject—not only scholars of history and theology—are welcome to contribute to the *ESDA*. Everyone has the potential opportunity to make a significant contribution to the understanding of our church in an honest, open, and thorough way. Readers who are interested in helping may browse the list of unfinished article titles at <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/unfinished-articles> or contact the *ESDA* main office at encyclopedia@gc.adventist.org. They should also consult the author guidelines and other useful materials at <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/author-materials>. The *ESDA* team would be grateful for any help in this immense undertaking to make this resource even better.

Except as We Shall Forget

The end-time prophetic voice for the Seventh-day Adventist Church and an important pioneer of the movement once stated, "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."² This familiar statement by Ellen G. White is the guiding light for the *ESDA*. In order to better understand the Bible's teachings and God's leadings in this movement, we need to know the facts, people, and major events of our history. May God help us fulfill this inspired admonition so that we can remember, record, and rehearse the history of God's church together and move forward fearlessly and full of hope.

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*Encyclopedia of Seventh-day
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¹ Articles that deal with the history of theology and with ethical questions are edited by Frank M. Hasel and Denis Kaiser. On their work for the *ESDA* with these articles see the interview by Dragoslava Santrac and David Trim with Frank M. Hasel and Denis Kaiser, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flxgXo-C2B1k> (accessed August 30, 2020).

² Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1943), 196.