

The Church of Our Dreams: Managing Theological Challenges

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Theological challenges within religious organizations have in most cases been viewed initially as a threat and in many cases subsequently accepted/normalized in these organizations. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, like many other Christian denominations, has had its share of individuals who intermittently, throughout its history, have challenged its theological position(s).

The question may be asked, “Historically, how has our church viewed dissenters, and what can we learn about dissenters and the church itself”? Additionally, what can we learn from this trajectory that can help to inform academic freedom, progressive thinking, and the possible need to maintain orthodoxy? In light of such a trajectory, what kind of tenure/academic freedom can SDA professors be given if any at all?

By surveying the positions and extrapolating from the judicial outcomes of a number of scholars who challenged a particular aspect of the church’s theology, namely, its sanctuary doctrine, this paper seeks to address the above questions. By sanctuary doctrine, I am speaking of the church’s distinctive interpretation of Daniel 8:14 which buttresses the significance of 1844, the investigative judgment¹, and Jesus’ most holy place/phase ministry that began in 1844. I will then recommend a path that may not necessarily include the binary model of dissenters being either saints or heretics but one of a plurality of converging/diverging paths that could better reflect the church of our dreams. For sure, a fifteen minutes paper cannot be exhaustive on this topic but can serve as a catalyst for further research.

While many dissenting individuals will be referenced, the position of three scholars will be reviewed as exemplars and as the primary basis for drawing conclusions. These are Albion F. Ballenger, Raymond F. Cottrell and Desmond Ford, all of whom challenged the sanctuary doctrine and received somewhat similar yet different reactions from the Church. Kindly note, I am not interested in the exegetical accuracy or inaccuracy of the theologies of these individuals, but rather with the response procedures used to deal with their challenge, and what we can learn as an academic community from these reactions.

¹ I use the term investigative judgment because despite the problem with this nomenclature, it is still the term that appears in the official document of the church, namely, the Fundamental Beliefs of the Church. It is belief number 24.

Beginning with Canright in 1887, a slew of scholars and administrators such as O. R. L. Crosier, E. Waggoner, A. F. Ballenger, E. Ballenger, W. W. Fletcher, L. R. Conradi, Harold Snide, R. A. Grieve, Robert Brinsmead, C. J. Tuland, E. Hilgert, et al., challenged the church's position on the sanctuary doctrine. Essentially, their contention was that, the defilement of the sanctuary referenced in Daniel 8:14 was caused by the atrocities of the little horn, not by the sins of the saints, and that at his ascension Christ entered into the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, hence the investigative judgment beginning in 1844 has no exegetical basis. A person's destiny they claimed hinges on his or her relationship with Jesus. While most of these individuals eventually separated from the church their positions remain and simmer under the surface in the Church until this very day.

Albion F. Ballenger (1861-1921)

Albion F. Ballenger served the church as editor, administrator, and evangelist for decades. Ballenger's key challenge to the church's position was that the phrase, "Within the veil," in Hebrews 6:19,20, refers to the most holy place, not the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary and as such Jesus at his ascension in AD 31, entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. The cross, he concludes, was the day of atonement, not 1844.² Contrary to the church's position, he claimed that confessed sins of the believer did not defile the sanctuary,³ rather, it was defiled by the sins of the wicked, which Christ began cleansing in 1844.⁴ The judgment of 1844 was not the atonement but a means of determining whether or not the individual had accepted the atonement already made at

²He writes: "Nothing is clearer than that the day of atonement began with the death of Christ. The Lord's goat, typifying Christ's death, was slain on the day of atonement; consequently Christ, in order to be the antitype, must himself be slain on the day of atonement." Albion F. Ballenger, *Cast Out for the Cross of Christ* (Tropico: CA, 1909), 31.

³ Ballenger avers: "Now that we see that it was the sinning of the sinner that defiled the sanctuary.... This and many other scriptures plainly declare that blood cleanses, and nowhere in the scriptures is the blood of the sinner or the sinner's substitute ever represented as defiling the sanctuary or the land.... But still worse, if the blood sprinkled by the priest upon the altar defiled it, then, inasmuch as the earthly sanctuary and its services were a type of the heavenly sanctuary and its services, it follows that the heavenly sanctuary was free from defilement until Christ ascended and sprinkled his blood and thereby defiled it; and again, that the holy of holies was free from sin until Christ entered that apartment in 1844 and sprinkled his blood upon the mercy seat and thereby defiled it. Who is willing to take the responsibility of declaring that the blood of Christ, which the Holy Scriptures call 'precious blood,' was so defiled with sin after Christ had paid the penalty on Calvary that when he sprinkled that blood, it defiled the sanctuary?" The blood of Christ is represented in the scriptures as cleansing - never defiling. Ballenger, *Cast Out*, 34, 35, 36

⁴ Ibid., 43.

Calvary.⁵ On May 21, 1905, Ballenger set forth his positions on the sanctuary in nine (9) points to a select group at the General Conference session in Washington, D. C. The General Conference appointed a committee of 25 to hear his views. The committee reported that Ballenger entertained views regarding the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary contrary to that of the Church. As a result, he was defrocked and disfellowshipped.

Ballenger acknowledged the possibility that he could have been wrong⁶ and pleaded passionately for someone to show him where he was mistaken. He wrote to Ellen White: “What I am pleading for in this letter is that if there be a thus saith the Lord, to support your statement, that out of compassion for my soul you furnish it”⁷ Neither the Church nor Ellen White answered to the exegetical arguments of Ballenger. Ellen White simply rejected his positions on the grounds that they threaten the foundations of the church that were established for the past 50 years and were contrary to the testimony that was given to her. She was quite stringent in her condemnation of Ballenger. Among her many statements are:

If such application [Ballenger’s] moves one pillar of the foundation that God has sustained these fifty years, it is a great mistake. . . . [MR 760 19.2]. It will be one of the great evils that will come to our people to have the Scriptures taken out of their true place and so interpreted as to substantiate error that contradicts the light and the testimonies that God has been giving us for the past half century.

⁵ “When the cleansing of the sanctuary must begin, when the judgment is set, and the books are opened, when the cases of men are investigated, not to see whether Christ made an atonement for them - for he made reconciliation for the sins of the whole world, (see Rom 5:8-11, 18, 20, II Cor 5:1 9-21; I John 2:2; Lev. 16:33), but to see who have and have not accepted this reconciliation.” Ibid., 43. Ballenger also believed that Christ served as priest in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary for 4,000 years before coming to earth. In addition, he taught that the atonement also meant that Christ bore the physical illnesses of the world upon the cross, as such we can and should be freed from all physical illnesses. He wrote thus: “But if Christ entered into the second apartment at his ascension, when is the ministry conducted in the first apartment? Answer: From the fall of man to the death of Christ. Then you place the first apartment ministry of the heavenly sanctuary, or the ministry ‘before the veil,’ from creation to the cross? Yes, a hundred times, Yes! and here is where a flood of light from the sanctuary falls...” Ballenger, *Cast Out*, 23; See also 31, 32.

⁶ He writes: “Yes, dear reader, it is possible for me to be in error in these things, but it would be feigned humility to appear not to believe them with all my heart; for I do believe them, and have shown my faith by sacrificing for them all that the human heart holds dear, save life itself. Now let the reader follow the noble Bereans in searching the Scriptures to see whether these things are so, and if they are found to be in harmony with the Word, believe them; if not, reject them, and then like one who is his brother's keeper, attempt to show the writer where his convictions of truth contradict the plain ‘thus saith the Lord.’” Ibid., 3.

⁷ Ibid., 60.

Not one pin is to be removed from that which the Lord has established. [MR 760 12.3]. There is no truth in the explanations of Scripture that Elder Ballenger and those associated with him are presenting. The words are right but misapplied to vindicate error. We must not give countenance to his reasoning. He is not led of God. Our work is to bind up the Testimonies God has given and seal the law among His disciples. [MR760 4.2]. The most specious errors lie concealed in these theories and suppositions, which, if received, would leave the people of God in a labyrinth of error. Those who cherish these theories are building upon the sand, and when the storm and tempest shall come the structure will be swept away. [MR760 8.3]⁸ "I testify in the name of the Lord that Elder Ballenger is led by satanic agencies and spiritualistic, invisible leaders." Those who have the guidance of the Holy Spirit will turn away from these seducing spirits.—(MS 59; 20 May 1905).

Twenty-five years after Ballenger was terminated, W.W. Prescott, is said to have commented in a letter to W.A. Spicer, then President of the General conference, "I have waited all these years for someone to make an adequate answer to Ballenger, Fletcher and others on their positions re the sanctuary but I have not seen or heard it."⁹ Commenting on Ellen White's treatment of Ballenger, Ronald Graybill remarks that, "She seems not to have sensed that such arguments contradicted her own rule that no

⁸ She also wrote: Those who seek to remove the old landmarks are not holding fast; they are not remembering how they have received and heard. Those who try to bring in theories that would remove the pillars of our faith concerning the sanctuary or concerning the personality of God or of Christ, are working as blind men. They are seeking to bring in uncertainties and to set the people of God adrift without an anchor. (MR760 9.5) If the theories that Brother Ballenger presents were received, they would lead many to depart from the faith. They would counterwork the truths upon which the people of God have stood for the past fifty years. I am bidden to say in the name of the Lord that Elder Ballenger is following a false light. The Lord has not given him the message that he is bearing regarding the sanctuary service. (MR760 10.2) Those who receive your interpretation of Scripture regarding the sanctuary service are receiving error and following in false paths. The enemy will work the minds of those who are eager for something new, preparing them to receive false theories and false expositions of the Scripture. (MR760 10.4) Not one pin is to be removed from that which the Lord has established. The enemy will bring in false theories such as the doctrine that there is no sanctuary. This is one of the points on which there will be a departing from the faith. Where shall we find safety unless it be in the truths that the Lord has been giving for the last fifty years? (MR760 12.3) It will be one of the great evils that will come to our people to have the Scriptures taken out of their true place and so interpreted as to substantiate error that contradicts the light and the testimonies that God has been giving us for the past half century. (MR760 12.3)

⁹As quoted in Raymond F. Cottrell, *The Sanctuary Doctrine: Asset or Liability*, paper presented to the San Diego Adventist Forum, La Mesa California Feb., 9, 2002; 6.

authority outside of scripture should have weight in deciding what the Bible taught.”¹⁰ Procedurally the church seems to have failed in its approach to address Ballenger’s concerns in that he was simply ignored, denounced, defrocked and disfellowshipped?¹¹

Raymond M. Cottrell (1911-2003)

In my opinion, Raymond Cottrell holds the distinction of critiquing our sanctuary doctrine with the most precise, indepth and penetrating biblical arguments. Furthermore, as is demonstrated below, his words against the church’s presentation of the doctrine are sometimes very caustic. Cottrell first raised questions on the issue in 1955 when he worked as one of the editors of the then newly minted *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4 (1952-1957). He asserts that as editors, they found it “hopelessly impossible” to be faithful to the true intent of scripture, while upholding the traditional SDA understanding of Daniel 8 and 9.¹² It is partly in response to Cottrell’s initiative that GC President Reubin Figuhr appointed a secret committee on problems in the book of Daniel, of which Cottrell was also a member. This committee met from 1961-1966 then dissolved *sine die*

¹⁰ Ronald D. Graybrill, *The Power of Prophecy: Ellen White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century*. (Doctoral Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University; Baltimore 1983), 128.

¹¹In his book, *Cast Out for The Cross of Christ* he lamented, “Four years have passed since my separation from the denomination, and not a single soul in the church has come to me, Bible in hand, desiring to show me from that Word where I am wrong.” Ballenger, *Cast Out*, 59. He outlines the reaction of some of the leaders thus: “Before publishing my ms, I sent it to several ministers holding official positions, whose loyalty to the denomination is unquestioned, and asked them out of love for the truth and my soul, to show me from the Scriptures, where I was in error. I promised that should they do this I would never publish the ms... Not one of these brethren attempted to show me my error from the Word. One wrote thus: ‘Candor compels me to say that I can find no fault with it from a Bible standpoint. The argument seems to be unassailable.’ Another said: ‘I have always felt that it was safer to take the interpretation placed upon the Scriptures by the Spirit of Prophecy as manifested through Sister E.G. White rather than to rely upon my own judgment or interpretation.’” *Ibid.*, 6.

¹² Raymond F. Cottrell, *The Sanctuary Doctrine*, 11,12. The other members of the committee were H. W. Lowe (Chairman), R.A. Anderson, Richard Hammill, Edward Heppenstall, W.G.C. Murdoch, D.F. Neufeld, Leo Odom and W.E. Reid. Others later invited to meet with the committee included Earle Hilgert, S. H. Horn, Alger Johns, Graham Maxwell, and M.R. Thurber. Desmond Ford, *Daniel 8:14*; 62.

because they could not come to a consensus as to how to resolve the problems associated with Daniel 8:14.¹³

Still believing that there were many problems with our traditional interpretation, Cottrell continued to write and voice the problem. In his Glacier View paper “A Hermeneutic for Daniel 8:14”¹⁴ and a subsequent booklet, “The Sanctuary Doctrine: Asset or Liability?” Cottrell claimed that our current understanding of Daniel 8:14 was all derived from “The flawed principles of the proof-text method,” and has absolutely no exegetical foundation in scripture.¹⁵ “Today,” he continues, “anyone who makes exegetical blunders such as these is automatically dismissed as an unreliable Bible student.”¹⁶ More significantly, Cottrell boldly asserted that only the first five lines of Fundamental Belief number 24 is biblical.¹⁷ According to him, the rest, which affirms 1844 and the investigative judgment, has “No basis in scripture whatsoever” and “should be deleted from the Fundamental Beliefs resume of Adventist beliefs...” For him, it’s an “ephemeral umbilical cord which was essential to life prior to the birth.” [i.e. the SDA Church] , but is totally irrelevant thereafter.”¹⁸

With regard to the Church’s efforts to address the questions raised by such individuals as Canright, Ballenger, Fletcher, Conradi, Desmond Ford and others, Cottrell charged that the GC’s actions represent “the ultimate exercise in Obscurantism,” as they offer presumed reasons for believing the sanctuary doctrine, but left the flaws to which these men called attention completely unanswered.¹⁹ Additionally, Cottrell calls into question the composition, methodology and organization of the Daniel and Revelation Committee

¹³ In wrestling with the problems associated with Daniel 8:14, Cottrell surveyed 27 Bible teachers across the US, as to whether or not there was any support for the traditional SDA position of Daniel 8:14. All 27 replied that there was no linguistic or contextual basis for the traditional Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14. As a result, Elder Reubin Figuhr GC president appointed the highly confidential committee on the problem of the book of Daniel. Raymond Cottrell, *Asset or Liability*, 12.

¹⁴Raymond Cottrell, “A Hermeneutic For Daniel 8:14,” paper presented at the Glacier View Sanctuary Review Committee, Denver, Colorado, Aug 1980.

¹⁵ Cottrell *Asset or Liability*, 17, 25.

¹⁶ Ibid, 26.

¹⁷ That is, the following lines: “There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord sets up and not man. In it, Christ ministers in our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of his atoning sacrifice offered once and for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our high priest and began his intercessory ministry at the time of his ascension.” Ibid., 27.

¹⁸ Ibid., 27, 28.

¹⁹ Ibid., 31, 38, 40.

Series (DRCS) and its resultant five volumes on the sanctuary issue.²⁰ According to Cottrell, this committee whose work is the GC's definitive answer to the sanctuary questions post-Glacier View, is for the most part flawed, "without consensus or synthesis, making presupposition and then reasoning in a circle to offer its presuppositions as proof." They do not address the anomalies in our interpretation," he asserts, but simply represent the church's obscurantism on the subject.²¹

Cottrell goes so far as to ask that whereas the SDA interpretation of Dan 8:14 is not tenable, "What basis is there for concluding that Adventism is an authentic witness to the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ?²² With regards to our unique contribution in the sanctuary doctrine Cottrell avers, "Whether or not we have unique emphasis in terms of preaching the gospel is not our business or concern."²³ It [the sanctuary doctrine] is a "significant liability and deterrent to the faith," It is not present truth in the year of our Lord 2002."²⁴

One would want to believe that one whose name appears, for at least five decades prior to his death, as editor for the church's official Bible Commentary (The SDA Bible Commentary) would have at some time been called to trial for such a deviant stance. Interestingly, unlike all the other leaders in SDA history who voiced strong opposition to the traditional interpretation of our sanctuary doctrine, Raymond Cottrell *was never brought to trial and never lost his employment status with the church*. For sure, he was seen as a "dangerous liberal²⁵" but he never had cause to leave the organization. A few

²⁰ Namely, William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation* (Biblical Research Institute: Silver Spring, 1992); Frank B. Holbrook, ed. *Symposium on Revelation-Bks 1 & 2* (Biblical Research Institute: Silver Spring, 1992); idem, *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy* (Biblical Research Institute: Silver Spring, 1986); idem., *Issues in the Book of Hebrews* (Biblical Research Institute: Silver Spring, 1989).

²¹ Cottrell, *Assets*, 38, 39, 41.

²² Ibid., 42.

²³ Ibid. This statement is particularly strong, bearing in mind that the sanctuary doctrine is considered the Church's unique contribution to Christianity and considered its *raison d'être*.

²⁴ His full statement is worth quoting here: "In the years following Oct 22, 1844, the traditional sanctuary doctrine was an important asset for stabilizing the faith of disappointed Adventists. Today, it is an equally significant liability and deterrent to the faith, confidence and salvation of biblically literate Adventists and non-Adventists alike. It was present truth following the great disappointment on Oct 22, 1844. It is not present truth in the year of our Lord 2002." *Assets*, 43. A few years before his death, Cottrell was still agitating against the church's position. On Nov. 15, 2000 he sent a major paper on Dan 8:14 to some eighty Bible scholars and administrators including the president of the General Conference. He described the response from the GC president as 'evasive' and another example of "obscurantism." Cottrell, *Assets*, 37.

²⁵ Raymond Cottrell, "Our Present Crisis: Reaction to a Decade of Obscurantism," 12.

years before his death (in 2003) at the age of ninety two (92), Cottrell was still being very vocal against the traditional SDA position.

Desmond Ford

On October 27, 1979 at a theological symposium hosted by the Association of Adventist Forum at Pacific Union College, Desmond Ford advanced that there were serious problems with the presentation of our sanctuary doctrine. His views which were later comprehensively outlined in a 991 page document²⁶ affirmed among other things that: 1) Our interpretation of Daniel 8:14 is flawed on many exegetical counts, 2) The year 1844 does not hold the exact significance we now ascribe to it,²⁷ as the antitypical day of atonement inaugurated at the cross (not 1844) spans the whole Christian era, 3) According to the book of Hebrews, at his ascension, Jesus entered the most holy place, not the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, 4) Christ's heavenly ministry as presented in Hebrews, consists of one, not two phases, 5) The year-day principle of interpreting time prophecy is not a biblically based dictum; and, 6) Ellen White's writing is not for "our doctrinal authority"²⁸ but rather is for pastoral admonition and spiritual insight.²⁹

Additionally, Ford proposed an apotelesmatic (dual or multiple fulfillment) hermeneutic as a solution to our challenges that he found in our Sanctuary doctrine. According to this principle, the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation have multiple fulfillments beginning from the time of the prophets until the very end of time.³⁰ Thus, 1844 had significance as the birth of the SDA Church and, judgment represents the continued assurance that we now stand saved in Jesus.

²⁶ Subsequent to this presentation, Ford was given six months leave to outline his views in details. This was written in a 991 page document, Desmond Ford, *Daniel 8:14: The Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgment*. Casselberry: Evangelion Press, 1980, which was presented at Glacier View. A convenient summary of his position can be found in Desmond Ford, "Daniel 8:14 and the Day of Atonement" *Spectrum* 11:2 (Nov 1980): 30-36.

²⁷ For Ford, 1844 is "a providential re-interpretation and an *apotelesmatic* fulfillment, rather than the primary intention of the Apocalyptic passage, i.e., Daniel 8:14. Its significance is the birth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Desmond Ford, "Daniel 8:14 and the Day of Atonement" *Spectrum* 11:2 (Nov 1980): 34-35.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, For Ford's elaborate treatment of this subject, see Desmond Ford, "Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement," A170-A262.

³⁰ Ford describes the hermeneutic thus: "The principle affirms that a prophecy fulfilled or fulfilled in part, or unfulfilled at the appointed time, may have a later or recurring, or consummated fulfillment. The ultimate fulfillment is the most comprehensive in scope, though details of the original forecast may be limited to the first fulfillment. Desmond Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, 302; see also 304-307; 485.

In response to Ford's challenges, the General Conference convened a meeting of 115 of the Church's leading scholars, administrators and members at Glacier View in Denver, Colorado.³¹ After six days of deliberations (Aug 10-15, 1980), the delegation voted a consensus document that essentially upheld our traditional position on the sanctuary but also affirmed the following tenets:³²

- 1) The book of Hebrews pictures Christ going "within the veil", i.e., into the Most Holy Place at His ascension to be our intercessor.
- 2) The defilement of the sanctuary in Daniel 8 is not caused by our sins but by the desecrating work of the little horn. There is probably not a strong verbal link between Daniel 8:14 and the day of atonement of Leviticus 16, "although both passages are related in their parallel ideas of rectifying the sanctuary from the effects of sin."³³
- 3) Although the year-day relationship can be biblically supported, it is not explicitly identified as a principle of prophetic interpretation.
- 4) Under inspiration, the New Testament writers looked for the second coming of Christ in their day.
- 5) Our acquittal in the judgment is based solely on the continued decision we make with respect to Jesus. To have accepted his death on our behalf is to have passed already from condemnation to salvation.
- 6) Ongoing study should be done on Daniel 8:14.³⁴

³¹ Raymond Cottrell described this meeting as "The most important event of this nature in Adventist history since the 1888 General Conference in Minneapolis. Raymond Cottrell, "The Sanctuary Review Committee and Its Consensus," *Spectrum* 11:2 (Nov., 1980): 1. The delegation consisted of 56 administrators, 46 bible scholars, five editors, six pastors, six graduate students, six members of the former committee on Problems in the Book of Daniel, and 14 retired persons. Ibid., 3. According to William Johnston "While the church has had large theological conferences in the past, the international and varied nature of the group made it unique in Seventh-day Adventist history." William Johnston, "Overview of a Historic Meeting," *Adventist Review* (Sept 4, 1980): 4.

³² The consensus document is called "Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary" I here referenced it as printed in *The Adventist Review*, Sept 4, 1980. pp. 12-14. See also, *Spectrum* 11:2 (1980): 68-71.

³³ See Section IV of the Consensus Document.

³⁴ Here the document states: "While we believe that our historic interpretation of Daniel 8:14 is valid, we wish to encourage ongoing study of this important prophecy." Ibid., 70 also *Adventist Review*, 15.

7) Ellen White's writings are a continued and authoritative source of truth that makes it clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teachings must be tested. The conclusions of her multiple usages of scripture transcends that of all other non-inspired interpreters.³⁵

Kindly note, that while these points were nuanced so that they did not surrender the traditional interpretation of the sanctuary doctrine, they are for the most part in agreement with those of the dissidents mentioned above, namely, A. F. Ballenger, E. Ballenger, W. W. Fletcher; L.R. Conradi, Harold Snide, R.A. Grieve, and Robert Brinsmead. Of greater significance to note however, is that Desmond Ford agreed with the consensus document and decided to abstain from advocating other aspects of his beliefs that were contrary to the consensus statement.³⁶ One would want to believe that Ford would not have been defrocked since he agreed to the consensus document (although it did not totally reflect his views) and many of his scholarly colleagues at the Glacier View meeting agreed with him in principle.³⁷ In other words, it appeared that some compromise had been reached.³⁸

However, this was not to be as a ten point critique was drafted by an *ad hoc* committee that reiterated Ford's disagreement with the historic understanding of the Sanctuary doctrine and based primarily on that "working document" Ford was eventually relieved

³⁵ "The Role of the G. Ellen White Writings in Doctrinal Matters," as printed *Ministry Magazine*, October 1980, p. 19; also in *Spectrum* 11:2 (1980): 71-72.

³⁶ Ford writes: "I am greatly encouraged by the consensus statement, "Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary," and the honest frank acknowledgement it makes. In harmony with its essence as I understand it, I can gladly teach and preach such to the same extent as the majority of my fellow teachers present at Glacier View. He continues, "I take this opportunity to declare that I have pledged myself to seek and to foster, to defend and to preserve that unity in the church for which Christ prayed so earnestly. I therefore accept the counsel of my brethren and God's messenger (to which counsel I earnestly wish to respond positively) to keep to myself the views that have brought perplexity. As the brethren continue to study, I will refrain from teaching and preaching on the sanctuary in any area that might bring confusion and misunderstanding." Desmond Ford's letter to K.S. Parmenter, dated August 26, 1980 as printed in *Spectrum* 11:2 (1980): 77; also in *Ministry Magazine*, Oct. 1980, p. 11.

³⁷ According to R. Cottrell, "In varying degrees, most contemporary Adventist Bible scholars, including those in attendance at Glacier View, agree with his [Des Ford's] analysis of the exegetical problems, but not with his proposed solutions to them." Raymond Cottrell, "Sanctuary Review Committee," 3.

³⁸ A careful analysis of the consensus document will reveal that it is an amalgamation of the old along with some positions that had not been emphasized up to that point. Cottrell's comments are germane. "All present, including Dr. Ford, found the statement (consensus) viable. Some because it affirmed the traditional interpretation and others because it recognized the problems and need for further study." *Ibid.*, 15.

of his ministerial credentials and teaching responsibilities.³⁹ It is very important to note that this ten point statement was never drafted,⁴⁰ discussed or voted on by the Glacier View Sanctuary Review Committee, neither was the committee aware that it would have been used to determine Ford's fate.⁴¹ Additionally, according to Walter C. Utt, "While discussion was still going on between Ford and the GC after Glacier View, it was published in the Review that it was all over where Ford was concerned.⁴² Thus, even to this day, the average Seventh-day Adventist member throughout the world still believes that the scholars of the church tried Desmond Ford at Glacier View, disagreed with him totally, found him guilty and thus qualified him to be defrocked.⁴³

³⁹ The ten point critique can be found in the Adventist Review, "Statement on Desmond Ford Document," Sept 4 (1980): 8-11. It is interesting to note that the Review refers to the document as a "working document," and the introduction to the document itself refers to it as a "preliminary report regarding the validity of some of the author's [i.e. Ford's] views." Since the ten point document presented Ford's disagreement with the Church's position and the discussion of these disagreements was the intent of the meeting, one wonders why this document was not presented at the beginning of the session instead at the end. The report of the meeting with Des Ford and the small committee that drafted the ten point critique, on the Friday afternoon right after the close of the Glacier View meeting, showed that the decision was made then and there to dismiss Ford unless he complied with the ten point critique. The letter of the K.S. Parmenter to Desmond Ford, dated August 15, 1980, shows this clearly. This letter is printed in Ministry, October 1980, p.10 also in *Spectrum* 11:2 (1980): 76-77. One wonders, was he dismissed on the ground of a "working document" and a "preliminary report?"

⁴⁰ The *ad hoc* committee which drafted the this document included from the General Conference: Neal Wilson (President), Ralph Thompson (secretary), Francis Wernick (general VP), C.E. Bradford (VP, North American Division), J. R. Spangler (Ministerial Association Secretary), Charles Hirsch (Education Dept. Director), Duncan Eva (Retired General VP on special assignment to the president) and from the Australasian Division, Keith Parmenter (president) and A.N. Duffy (ministerial association secretary). Cottrell, "Sanctuary Review Committee," 25, fn. 19.

⁴¹ For example, accord to Cottrell, Dr. Fitz Guy asked if orthodoxy would be determined by the ten point critique. Elder Wilson replied, "No the document would not be used in that way." *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴² Walter C. Utt, "Journalistic Fairness?" *Spectrum* 11: 2 (1980):64.

⁴³ Cottrell implies this same position when he writes: "Informed reader of the RH might suppose that Ford's Peers in Colorado had refuted his points and found him wanting, unaware that the larger group neither discussed or voted the "Ten point critique, which identified Ford's points of difference with Adventist tradition." Cottrell, "Ford Dismissal: Reactions and Response," *Spectrum* 11:2 (Nov.1980):64. In my home country of Jamaica, where Adventism is the largest single religious denomination this is the standard understanding of virtually all the members and pastors who have heard about Desmond Ford and Glacier View. The same can be said of the rest of the Caribbean. I have heard similar sentiments in many places across the United States. Interestingly, the Special Report on the conference published in the Adventist Review, never mention that Ford accepted the consensus document, although Ministry Magazine did. See William Johnson, "Overview of a Historic Meeting," 4-15; and Ministry (Oct 1980):11.

Again, I am not interested in the accuracy or inaccuracy of Ford's position but rather in the judicial procedure used to determine his fate. It would seem that the procedure was not the most pristine, integrity-wise. Reasons being: 1) The delegation that met to consider Ford's position affirmed some of the major tenets of his position and closed without making a decision to end his employment with the church, 2) The ten-point critique was not voted by his peers and hence it became a strictly political tool used to disqualify him, and most importantly, 3) Ford agreed to adhere to the Committee's decision as stipulated in the consensus document,⁴⁴ 4) The consensus statement acknowledged that there were problems with some areas of our sanctuary doctrine which warrant further study, thus it "tacitly admitted that Ford had valid exegetical reasons for the questions he raised."⁴⁵ It therefore seems less than ideal for the committee to arrive at a consensus to which Ford agreed and then for some members of this committee, to turn around and enumerate the points of disagreement and use these said points of disagreement as a means for disqualifying him. No wonder 39 scholars from Andrews University signed an open letter of protest that reads in part:

"Is it right to condemn a man's theology by using a document (the ten point statement) that was not even discussed, let alone approved by the body of delegates appointed to judge his arguments? Is it right to ostracize a worker whose major views, while criticized by some, have nevertheless been largely accepted by the body established to evaluate their merits? Is it right to ask anyone to give up his honest convictions (especially when he offers to table them while study continues and when no scriptural proof have shown them to be wrong)?⁴⁶

According to Cottrell, another protest was voiced by all but two members of the department of theology at Southern Missionary College who signed a letter to the president of the General Conference asking a series of questions that reflected their dismay at steps to discipline Ford.⁴⁷ Additionally, the Atlanta Affirmation—a document

⁴⁴ Additionally, Ford affirmed to the conference and in his Glacier View document that he fully believed in 1844, the year-day principle, that God spoke to Ellen White miraculously and that God raised up the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Granted his beliefs in these constructs are nuanced differently from that of the church. See Desmond Ford, "Daniel 8:14 and the Day of Atonement," *Spectrum* 11: 2 (1980): 35-36.

⁴⁵ As Cottrell rightly asks, "Are we consistent, honest, fair, or responsible if we censure him for raising questions whose validity our own consensus statement acknowledges?" After all, Dr. Ford did not invent these questions. One person after another has been raising them for 75 years." "The critique condemns Ford for the very things the consensus statement... implicitly commends him." In other words, the critique requires him to be positive at the very points at which the consensus statement realizes we cannot be all that positive." Cottrell, "The Sanctuary Review Committee," 20, 23.

⁴⁶ See "An Open Letter to President Wilson," *Spectrum* 11:2 (1980): 62, 63.

⁴⁷ Cottrell, "The Sanctuary Review Committee," *Spectrum* 11:2 (1980): 22.

signed by some 40 Bible Scholars remonstrating with Wilson on the way Ford was treated.⁴⁸ Be that as it may, today the consensus statements (with its affirming and conflicting aspects to our orthodox position) along with other elements not before emphasized, is widely accepted by the church. For example, the church in its publications have repeatedly stated that at his ascension, Jesus entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary.⁴⁹ It is now widely acknowledged that the sanctuary of Dan 8:14 was [also] defiled by the atrocities of the little horn,⁵⁰ and that sacrificial blood does not defile. More importantly, practically all pastors, scholars and informed lay members have ceased preaching and teaching the traditional construct of the sanctuary doctrine. Rather, what is now being emphasized, is salvation by faith and judgment in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It would seem that the traditional sanctuary formulation pre-Desmond Ford is being allowed to die a natural death.

An Assessment and Lessons for the Church of My Dreams

I believe that there are a few lessons that can be learned from the nuanced responses to these individuals who dared to challenge our sanctuary doctrine. In the case of Ford, he was tried and although key essentials of his position were accepted, he was nevertheless defrocked, but not disfellowshipped.

In the case of Ballenger, although he received a hearing, he, unlike Ford, was never given any answer. He was simply ignored, stripped of his ministerial credentials and disfellowshipped. It would appear that in Ballenger's case, because of his association in the holy flesh movement, there were additional reasons other than his interpretation of Daniel 8:14 and Hebrews 9 to oust him. In the case of Cottrell, he was never called to

⁴⁸ Cottrell, *Assets or Liability*, 9.

⁴⁹ See for example, Roy Gane, "Re-Opening *Katapetasmata* ('Veil) in Hebrews 6:19," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 38 (Spring 2000): 5-8. Also, the Review explicitly stated that the year day principle is not strictly taught in Scripture. "Some have felt that Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 establish the year-day principle as needing to be applied to all time prophecies. But a careful examination of these passages shows that the principle is applied only to specific cases and that there is no general statement in these passages suggesting that a universal principle is set forth." See Don F. Neufeld, "This Generation shall not Pass," *Adventist Review* (April 5, 1979), 6.

⁵⁰ In 2008, The Review and Herald published George Knight's book in which in reference to Daniel 8:14, Knight boldly states: "And we should note that here indeed the traditional position has a problem that we should not minimize...But looking as hard as I can at the text, [Daniel 8:14] I find no investigative or pre-Advent judgment of the saints in that passage. What I do find is judgement of the little horn and a restoration, justification, and cleansing of the sanctuary in relation to that power at the end of the 2300 days. George Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism* (Review and Herald, 2008), 67, 68. George Knight's take on issues in this book are certainly not in keeping with the traditional SDA position. Granted, he does a masterful job of blending old, sometimes mutually exclusive and contradictory positions with traditional SDA positions.

judgment but was allowed to speak freely without any personal consequences to his academic career. To this end the following lessons are pertinent:

1. Whereas, in so many instances in our history we have come to finally accept that which we at first consider to be heresy, we need to be more cautious in how we condemn new positions that may not concur with what we already know to be orthodox.

2. The presenters of new ideas need to be patient as their positions, though “correct” may never be accepted during their lifetimes. However, each scholar has a responsibility to present his/her position, so that it will be available to be accepted after his or her physical or academic departure. It also means that unless one is prepared to die academically, you should never venture to think or publish otherwise than what the organization already believes to be orthodox.

3. One should be absolutely careful where one goes public with any new idea within the Adventist Church. It matters not if it is a symposium, a group discussion, a group of lay persons, or a scholarly forum like ASRS. Going public can be detrimental to your academic, economic, and relational health. Ford went public in a forum in which he thought he would have received academic immunity. However, the end result was devastating to his career. Sadly, it appears that we have not yet reached the level of maturity where we can see a divergent view simply as an alternative view. Rather, we are still at the level of development where we see divergent views as “an attack upon our established positions.”⁵¹

4. Watch out for the power-brokers in your audience who can make one telephone call—and you are dead. Ford was probably the most charismatic of the three who dared to go public in the face of powerful persons in the audience who were opponents to his views.⁵² Remember powerful persons can make or break your fate. Truth is not always the authority, sometimes authority ‘is’ the truth.

5. The church in some cases can be kind to dissenters. In fact, some aspects of the proceedings dealing with Ford does demonstrate magnanimity.⁵³ However, if you wish to make a significant theological contribution, like Cottrell, Ford, and others, first ensure

⁵¹ See for example, the language of Spangler in *Ministry*, October 1980, p5. “Whatever the reasons, Des launched a three-pronged attack on the Adventist "landmark" doctrine of the sanctuary by challenging...”

⁵² Cottrell outlines how three retired ministers who were present detected what they perceived to be heresy and reported their version to the Chairman of the College Board which then sparked off an entire saga of trial and defrocking of Desmond Ford. Cottrell, *Assets or Liability*, 8.

⁵³ For example, it was very kind of the church to have given Ford six months of paid leave to write his manuscript and also to have assigned a committee of 14 persons to assist him in this task. *Ministry*, Oct. 1980, p 2.

that you are well connected with the seat of power. At least, you may receive a hearing/trial but this is no guarantee that you will even be treated fairly all the way. The fate of Cottrell *vis-a-vis* Ford and Ballenger, tells us that our judicial procedure is not completely fair and balanced.

6. Administrators tend to place more emphasis on ecclesiastical unity than on scholarly accuracy and sometimes confuse the accuracy or inaccuracy of a theological point based on the point's potential to create unity or disunity in the Church.⁵⁴ Administrators, not scholars have the veto power on scholarly issues.

7. As the case of Ballenger, Ford, and many others reveal, Ellen White is a decisive factor in determining any theological position for the Church. Throughout our history, the Church has not been able to readily embrace a theological position that goes contrary to Ellen White's implicit or explicit teachings on that particular subject, even though non-exegetical. As acknowledged by the ten point critique, "One cannot be a Seventh-day Adventist for very long and not recognize that our theology is shaped to a significant degree by the ministry of Ellen G. White."⁵⁵ However, by virtue of the points acknowledged in the Glacier View consensus document, we have already consented that Ellen White was wrong in her appraisal of some of the views held by the dissenters mentioned above, and as such, maybe she should not have condemned Ballenger as Satanic. As Ronald Graybill asserts, it cannot be shown that her chosen course was always the best.⁵⁶ Furthermore, as George Knight rightly illustrated, "most of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism [Ellen White included] would not be able to join the Church today if they had to subscribe to the denomination's Fundamental Beliefs."⁵⁷ It therefore begs the question, "In what sense should Ellen White be decisive when litigating exegetical positions?"⁵⁸

⁵⁴ See for example Wilson's letter to the Glacier View committee, Neal Wilson's, K.S. Parmenter and W.D. Blehm's comments to the said committee as recorded in *Spectrum* 11:2 (1980): 10, 11, 12.

⁵⁵ Point number 10 of the ten point critique, as printed in the *Adventist Review*, Sept. 4, 1980, p 11. Ronald D. Graybill summarized her influence thus, "Today, while the non-charismatic founders, Catherine Booth and Alma White are nostalgic memories, the charismatic founders, Ellen White and Mary Baker Eddy, are nonnegotiable authorities whose writings are studied in Talmudic detail." Ronald Graybill, *The Power of Prophecy*, 135..

⁵⁶ Ronald Graybill, *The Power of Prophecy*, 163.

⁵⁷ George Knight, "Adventists and Change," *Ministry* (Oct 1993): 10.

⁵⁸ The Glacier View consensus documents, The Adventist Review and Ministry Magazine all reveal that Ellen White was a decisive factor in the trial of Desmond Ford's position. Needless to say, her role was also decisive in the fate of most dissenters prior to Ford.

8. Ballenger spoke of the “anguish of his soul” resulting from his separation from the church.⁵⁹ We should never forget that people do hurt deeply when they are separated, ostracized, denied opportunities based on their ideas. As such, we must take every care that our zeal for correct doctrines and defense of the Church do not outweigh our love for people. It was in their zeal to protect “the Church” that the Jewish leaders “crucified” Jesus. In addition, while the doctrines of the church are very important, we should always remember that the criterion for determining what the Bible teaches cannot be the doctrines of the Church. One is therefore treading on dangerous grounds when the bulk of his or her talk consists of “Well, this is what the Church believes/teaches....” Frankly, too much theological killing is going on in the name of the Church. We should be careful lest we are doing the work of Satan believing that we are doing the work of God.

Conclusion and Recommendations

I close with the following recommendations:

1. There is desperate need for a *theological immunity zone* within the church, where scholars can present ideas which are contrary/progressive to what we already believe to be true and have their positions discussed without being tried, labeled, stigmatized, castigated, de-employed, or dismissed. Ideas shared within this *immunity zone*, would be understood only as bases for ensuing discussions and deliberations.

2. There is need for an independent body consisting of a wide cross section of Adventist scholars employed by the Church along with Adventist scholars not employed by the church. Probably a few friendly/well-wishing non-Adventist scholars could also be invited so as to enhance objectivity and illuminate our blind spots. As far as possible, these scholars who serve on this *Immunity Zone Committee (IZC)* should not be paid by the Church, or if paid, it should be a very minimal stipend. This would assist with the objectivity and independence of this committee. Scholars who voice their position in the immunity zone would be required to comply with a mutually agreed upon timeframe in which they would not propagate their position(s) while they are being vetted by this independent body. Such approach would minimize the presenters of “new” ideas from being viewed as dangerous heretics, deserving to be punished.⁶⁰

3. Ideas submitted to the IZC would not be officially accepted or rejected by the IZC rather, they would be categorized on a rubric/graduated scale reflecting the different

⁵⁹ He writes: “No one, who has not experienced it can realize the soul’s anguish that overwhelms one who, in the study of the Word finds truth which does not harmonize with that which he has believed and taught during a whole lifetime to be vital to the salvation of the soul,” *Cast Out... Christ*, pp. i-iv, 1, 4, 11, 82, 106-112.

⁶⁰ Additionally, this mutually agreed time frame would discourage or reduce the likelihood of the IZC delaying a response to scholars beyond a reasonable length of time.

levels of importance attached to their merit for further discussion. The scale could read something like: level one (of publishable quality) level two (very sound) level three (sound but need minor improvements), and level four (partially correct but needs further work).⁶¹

4. The graduated distillations from the IZC would be recommended as *accommodative ideas* within the church which serve as the basis for continued official discussion (COD) by the academic community. Thus, there would exist what SDA's believe (Our Fundamental Beliefs-OFB) and officially, what SDA scholars are discussing (CODs). This approach I believe would greatly minimize the presenters of fresh ideas being viewed in the binary model of either being saint or heretic, orthodox or liberal. This could prevent or at least minimize the practice of rejecting ideas that we then accept at a later date. I am recommending the ASRS as one of the bodies in my Church that could initiate this theological immunity zone (IZC).

5. While SDA biblical scholars in the employ of the Church should teach what the Church holds as its fundamentals, genuine research must allow for the ventilation of alternative ideas to these fundamentals. The ICZ will provide such an avenue. Thus, while there can be no true academic tenure in a closed system like the SDA Church, there can be a "tenure" that allows the professor to teach: 1) *what the church taught historically*, 2) *what the church presently teaches*, 3) *the latest research findings*⁶² and, 4) *how the SDA student should negotiate among these positions and still remain a faithful Adventist*. Sadly, this approach is seen more as a threat to the orthodox position than as a means of honest intellectual discovery and growth.

6. In terms of our theological posture, there is too much information distilled in our academic arena that is not filtering down to our members in the pew. That which dominates the offering in our churches is too greatly influenced by what is popular at the church/church administrative level itself. In fact, sometimes even what is offered in our classrooms is dominated by what is popular at the church level. Probably, the factor that has largely contributed to this intellectual anomaly is our righteous conviction that the members are not yet ready for new ideas. Whereas human beings are for the most part always unprepared for information outside of their specialty (i.e., selective exposure/retention), the more pertinent questions are: Who is getting our members ready for new

⁶¹ It goes without saying, that whereas the IZC's objective is to un-cover new or fresh ideas, its evaluation of ideas must be based on objective scientific principles and not upon already established SDA tenets.

⁶² Here Ellen White's counsel is germane. She wrote: Instructors in our schools should never be bound about by being told that they are to teach only what has been taught hitherto. Away with such restrictions...that which God gives his servants to speak today would not perhaps have been present truth twenty years ago but it is God's message for the time. *EGW, Manuscript 8a, 1888, A Talk to the Ministers Delivered October 21, 8888.*

ideas? How are we getting them ready? What is the schedule/time-table for getting them ready and where can it be found? Is there a curriculum? Frankly, I think, “the not yet ready” posture needs to be re-examined and re-calibrated. It is overemphasized to the extent that it now sets the scholarly agenda hence we end up not sharing enough information with our members and with each other.

7. I love my Church, I have been an active member for virtually all my 55 years on the planet. I think this expressed call is necessary because our church is sliding back into the dark ages of theological sniggering and assassination, intellectual dishonesty, and obscurantism, all in the name of Jesus. There is need for more academic freedom and tolerance and humility in our Church and also in our academic community. The Golden Rule applies to academia as well as to personal relationships. Edward Heppenstall’s words continue to be very germane, “Some demand freedom of thought and speech for their own positions, but deny the same to others because it disagrees with their position.”⁶³

8. From my observation, it appears ASRS and ATS have become venues where some individuals present papers mainly to enhance their CV’s and their status. Too many apologists and too much “tip-toeing” around issues dominate our presentations. We are comfortable with eating, laughing, and having small talk with each other, but frankly, we are desperately afraid of each other in terms of voicing the radical ideas and thoughts that God has placed in our heads, lest we lose friendships, prestige, and status. *It is time for ASRS to have an article within its constitution that guarantees academic freedom to scholars who make presentations at its meetings. It is a complete shame, that scholars who present at ASRS are censored by fellow scholars of the same organization.* Sadly, many others within the organization watch from the sidelines while others are victimized and refuse to speak out in the appropriate context where their voice can make a difference.

9. Probably there needs to be a scholarly effort to re-examine the judicial procedures or lack thereof used in the case of many of our scholars with the intent of repentance and restorative justice where possible. I think specifically of A. F. Ballenger who probably should be recommended for posthumous reinstatement into membership in our Church.

⁶³ Edward Heppenstall, “Academic Freedom and the Quest for Truth,” Spectrum (Winter 1972):

36. Heppenstall continues: “

One of the most curious of all illusions that beset mankind is the tendency to suppose that we are mentally and morally superior to those who differ from us in opinion.” The nature of human heart is such that under the guise of defending the truth, the individual finds it easy to respond with varying degrees of intolerance to those who may differ with him. Men get angry and excommunicative in debate, not because they are defending the truth, but because they attach importance to themselves and to the positions they hold. Ibid., 38.

10. Finally the Church of my dreams is a church where academic freedom is prized. A church where, in the words of Heppenstall, “Scholars are not asked to choose between honesty and faith or where class and professional position determine most of the thinking, and even give some people the right to speak and deny it of others.”⁶⁴ I dream “of a *Church that recognizes that it does not have all truths and that it is dangerous to believe so.*”⁶⁵ *Indeed, the Church of my dreams will continue to cherish the following words of its prophetess, Ellen White :*

There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.⁶⁶ “We have many lessons to learn and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ibid., 35.

⁶⁵ See Ibid., 36.

⁶⁶E G.White, Review and Herald , Dec 20, 1892.

⁶⁷ E.G. White, Review and Herald, July 2, 1892.

