

1 **Seventh-day Adventism, Doctrinal Statements, and Unity**

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9 “All Christians engage in confessional synthesis,” wrote theologian Carl R.

10 Trueman.² Some religious groups adhere to a public confession subject to public scrutiny
11 whereas others are immune to scrutiny. Early Seventh-day Adventists, with strong ties to
12 the Christian Connexion, feared lest the creation of a statement of beliefs be used to
13 exclude them.³ From their perspective, Millerite Adventists remembered when statements
14 of belief were used to exclude them.⁴

15 These fears were aptly expressed during the earliest organizational developments
16 in 1861 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. According to denominational co-founder,
17 James White: “making a creed is setting the stakes, and barring up the way to all future
18 advancement. . . . The Bible is our creed.”⁵ Another Adventist minister, J. N.
19 Loughborough, reiterated their collective fear: “[T]he first step of apostasy is to get up a
20 creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is to make that creed a test of
21 fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth to denounce as heretics
22 those who do not believe that creed. And, fifth, to commence persecution against such.”⁶

23 It is well known that Seventh-day Adventists were fiercely anti-creedal. Their
24 confessional synthesis morphed from a private statement of beliefs (1872) that gradually
25 became somewhat more visible (1931) until it finally becoming an official and public
26 statement of belief (1980). Like most evangelical Christians, Seventh-day Adventists
27 adhered to the antebellum mantra of “the Bible and the Bible alone.” The theological

Campbell, “Seventh-day Adventism, Doctrinal Statements, and Unity.”

1 crisis that resulted from the American Civil War (1861-1865) made it especially clear
2 that this dictum was not sufficient because some of the brightest religious minds on both
3 sides of the conflict claimed “the Bible and the Bible alone” both for and against slavery.
4 Thus within Seventh-day Adventism there was internal as well as external factors that
5 contributed to the milieu within which Seventh-day Adventists birthed their statements of
6 belief.⁷

7 The fact that each of the Seventh-day Adventist statements of belief (1872, 1931,
8 1980) affirmed the “Bible and the Bible alone” as their only “creed” demonstrates a
9 commitment to progressive revelation. They recognized their need to have a flexible
10 confession of faith. At the same time, all of these statements of belief, as they morphed
11 from private to public, indicate some form of exclusion. Who were they meant to
12 exclude? Why was each written? How did each contribute to the development of
13 Seventh-day Adventist theology? And finally, how does this process in itself inform our
14 understanding of unity within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

15

16 **The 1872 Fundamental Principles**

17 According to Uriah Smith, the author of the 1872 *Fundamental Principles Taught*
18 *and Practiced by Seventh-day Adventists*,⁸ early Seventh-day Adventists needed to
19 explain their beliefs to others, especially in light of recent criticisms:

20 Our only object is to meet this necessity [criticisms]. As Seventh-day Adventists
21 we desire simply that our position shall be understood; and we are the more
22 solicitous for this because there are many who call themselves Adventists who
23 hold views with which we can have no sympathy, some of which, we think, are
24 subversive of the plainest and most important principles set forth in the word of
25 God. As compared with other Adventists, Seventh-day Adventists differ from one
26 class in believing in the unconscious state of the dead, and the final destruction of
27 the unrepentant wicked; from another, in believing in the perpetuity of the law of

Campbell, “Seventh-day Adventism, Doctrinal Statements, and Unity.”

1 God as summarily contained in the ten commandments, in the operation of the
2 Holy Spirit in the church, and in setting no times for the advent to occur; from all,
3 in the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord, and
4 in many applications of the prophetic scriptures.⁹

5
6 For Uriah Smith, who commented regularly on publications received from various other
7 Adventists entities, he recognized that Seventh-day Adventists were all too often
8 confused with these other Adventist groups. Smith regularly used his editorial pen to try
9 to set the record straight. Thus this statement was intended to provide greater clarity to
10 distinguish themselves from other Adventist denominations, and in turn, provide
11 additional clarity for outsiders.

12 This statement furthermore implies tension between early Seventh-day Adventists
13 and other Adventist groups. This is not surprising since other Adventist groups developed
14 their own statements of belief. The Albany Conference, on May 1, 1845, developed a
15 statement for the majority of Millerite Adventists after the Millerite disappointment. This
16 statement was afterward affirmed at least twice. A second major statement, adopted by
17 the Evangelical Adventists in 1869, indicates their own theological and organizational
18 maturity. Denis Fortin has analyzed these two statements with the first Seventh-day
19 Adventist statement of belief in 1872.¹⁰ He argues that together they demonstrate “similar
20 religious roots and theological heritage, and some divergent theological frames of
21 reference.” These two latter statements of beliefs (1869, 1872) show both an evangelical
22 heritage with “a different understanding of anthropology. Seventh-day Adventists were
23 the most theologically removed from evangelicalism in emphasizing their doctrine of the
24 sanctuary as the center of their theological articulation.”¹¹

25 Seventh-day Adventist minister J. N. Andrews acknowledged the 1869
26 Evangelical Adventists Statement of Beliefs.¹² Any apparent warmth belies increased

Campbell, “Seventh-day Adventism, Doctrinal Statements, and Unity.”

1 tensions with these other affiliated Adventist traditions.¹³ James and Ellen G. White met,
2 Miles Grant, the leader of the Advent Christian Church on a train in 1868.¹⁴ In the
3 conversation Grant stated: “I can worship with you, but your views will not let you [to]
4 worship with me.” James White mistook this as a gesture of good will and followed it up
5 the next year by bringing a small delegation to attend one of their camp meetings in
6 Illinois. They were kicked off the campground.¹⁵ Joshua V. Himes tried to intervene, but
7 Grant and Himes were already in a power struggle that culminated with the expulsion of
8 Himes in 1876. This humiliation on the part of the Whites was met with an additional
9 “testimony” by Ellen G. White titled “Opposing Adventists” (3T 36-39) in which she
10 described “our most bitter opponents are found among the first-day Adventists.” Seventh-
11 day Adventists, she admonished, should never engage with them in such “unjust
12 warfare.” Instead “silent contempt” was the “best approach.”¹⁶ For his part Miles Grant
13 held a personal vendetta against the Whites as well as Seventh-day Adventists in general
14 going out of his way to attack both Ellen G. White and the Seventh-day Adventist
15 Church.

16 Early exchanges between Seventh-day Adventists and other Adventist traditions
17 contributed to the formulation of early statements of beliefs from 1869 to 1872. Each
18 sought to define their own identity and to exclude others. James White desired to develop
19 a warm relationship between Seventh-day Adventists and what they broadly described as
20 “first-day Adventists” that could be similar to the cordial relationship they had with the
21 Seventh Day Baptist Church. His plans backfired. In the process it culminated with a
22 confession of faith written by *Review and Herald* editor Uriah Smith that defined the
23 boundaries of belief between the two denominations. At the heart of the 1872

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1 Fundamental Principles was the doctrine of the sanctuary. This more than anything else
2 defined the unique theology of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

3

4 **The 1931 Statement of Beliefs**

5 The General Conference Executive Committee noted on Dec. 29, 1930, a request
6 from missionaries in Africa for a Statement of Beliefs. The 1920s was the “golden age”
7 of Adventist missions as new mission stations, schools, and clinics blossomed around the
8 globe. The growth of missions appears to have been a catalyst but not necessarily the
9 primary motivation for the 1931 Statement of Beliefs.¹⁷ The official request came
10 through H. Edson Rogers who desired to place a statement of beliefs in the *Seventh-day*
11 *Adventist Yearbook*. General Conference president Charles H. Watson noted that he along
12 with three others (M. E. Kern, F. M. Wilcox, and E. R. Palmer) formed a committee of
13 four to review this statement of Fundamental Beliefs.¹⁸ According to Watson, the real
14 impetus for this “Statement of Beliefs” was the aggressive charges made by dissident E.
15 S. Ballenger in *The Gathering Call*, which prompted church leaders for a “true statement
16 of essential points of faith.” He additionally noted that no formal approval was given to
17 the statement so that it would not be considered a “fixed creed.” Adventist authors R. F.
18 Cottrell and Lowell Tarling both document the strain that Ballenger’s challenges to the
19 sanctuary doctrine had on this time period.¹⁹ If this was not enough, two other rather
20 prominent Adventists, W. W. Fletcher and L. R. Conradi, both defected and cited the
21 sanctuary doctrine shortly before the 1931 “Statement of Beliefs.”

22 F. M. Wilcox, editor of the *Review and Herald*, wrote the primary draft of the
23 document that was published in the 1931 *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* and the 1932

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1 *Church Manual*. Although the initial purpose was to avoid a “fixed creed,” the 1946
 2 General Conference session voted “that no revision of this Statement of Fundamental
 3 Beliefs, as it now appears in the *Manual*, shall be made at any time except at a General
 4 Conference session.”²⁰

5 Of the 25 Beliefs listed in 1872, the list was condensed down to 22 beliefs (1931).

6 A comparison of the two:

7

Exhibit 1: Comparison of 1872 and 1931 Statements of Beliefs	
1872	1931
	“The Godhead, or Trinity” (2).
“That there is one God, a personal, spiritual being, the creator of all things.” (1)	
“That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom God created all things.” (2)	“That Jesus Christ is very God, being of the same nature and essence as the Eternal Father.” (3)
The Holy Scriptures. (3)	The Holy Scriptures. (1)
Baptism is an ordinance. (4)	Baptism is an ordinance. (5)
The New Birth. (5)	The New Birth. (4)
Prophecy is a part of God’s revelation to man. (6)	
World history fulfills Bible prophecy. (7)	
The Millennium. (8)	
The 2300 day prophecy of Daniel 8:14. (9)	Prophetic period of Daniel 8:14 terminated in 1844. (13)
Sanctuary of the New Covenant is the Tabernacle of God in Heaven. (10)	True sanctuary in heaven was a type. (14)
The Ten Commandments. (11)	The Ten Commandments. (6)
The seventh-day Sabbath. (12)	The seventh-day Sabbath. (7)
The Papacy Changed the Sabbath. (13)	
Repentance and Conversion. (14)	The ten commandments points out sin, the penalty of which is death, which can only be kept through the “enabling power of the indwelling Christ.” (8)
Grace to Keep God’s Law. (15)	
Perpetuity of Spiritual Gifts. (16)	Perpetuity of spiritual gifts. (19)
Three Angels of Revelation 14. (17)	Work of threefold message of Revelation 14. (15)
Cleansing of the Sanctuary coincides with the Investigative Judgment. (18)	True sanctuary corresponds with judgment phase of Christ’s ministry in heaven. (14)
	The time of the threefold message corresponds with the investigative

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	judgment. (16)
The Grave is a Place of Darkness. (19)	“Condition of man in death is one of unconsciousness.” (10)
Human beings are reduced to a state of unconsciousness. (20)	Humans are mortal. Only God is immortal. (9)
Bodily resurrection at Second Advent of Christ. (21)	“Resurrection both of the just and of the unjust” at Second Coming of Christ. (11)
At the Second Coming the Living Righteous are “changed in a moment.” (22)	
These immortalized ones are taken to heaven for millennium. (23)	Millennial reign of Christ. (21)
Final Destruction of wicked at end of millennium. (24)	“Impenitent . . . reduced to a state of nonexistence” (12)
New heavens and new earth. (25)	Restoration of earth at end of Millennium. (22)
	“Body is the temple of God and therefore should “abstain from all intoxicating drinks, tobacco, and other narcotics, and to avoid every body and soul-defiling habit and practice.” (17)
	“Divine principle of tithes and offerings for the support of the gospel.” (18)
	“The Second Coming of Christ is the great hope of the church” (20)

1
2 A comparison of the two statements (1871, 1931) demonstrates a shifting emphasis
3 within Adventist theology. Clearly the 1931 “Statement of Beliefs” was informed by the
4 earlier 1872 “Statement of Beliefs.” At the same time theological priorities had definitely
5 changed by 1931.

6 The 1931 list of beliefs was less concerned than the earlier 1872 focus on Bible
7 prophecy (note the exclusion of 1872 beliefs #6, 7, 8). The 1931 statement also
8 demonstrates an increased interest in defining the sanctuary doctrine and confirmed
9 Watson’s recollection of challenges to the sanctuary doctrine by Ballenger (and others) as
10 the primary cause for the new statement of beliefs. The renewed interest and affirmation
11 of the sanctuary doctrine is showcased by how much attention was given to it. The earlier

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1 statement (belief #18 in 1872) was expanded into two separate beliefs (#14 & 16). These
2 two beliefs formed the largest portion of the 1931 “Statement of Beliefs.”

3 Other notable theological observations include a trend toward consolidation. The
4 beliefs of repentance and conversion (#14) and keeping God’s law (#15) in 1872 were
5 combined into a single belief (#8). Furthermore, the “bodily resurrection” (#21) at the
6 Second Coming (#22) in 1872 were combined in 1931 into a single belief (#11). These
7 helped to shorten the overall list.

8 Also of note were new doctrinal additions in 1931 that included the doctrine of
9 the “Trinity, or Godhead” (#2), the body as the temple of God as the basis for healthful
10 living (#17), and tithes and offerings (#18). While the Second Coming was listed
11 separately, it was largely implied collectively in the other beliefs in the 1872 “Statement
12 of Beliefs. Merlin D. Burt, director of the Center for Adventist Research, has done a
13 careful analysis of the development of the Adventist understanding of the Trinity
14 doctrine, which he argues was largely confirmed with the 1931 *Fundamental Beliefs* even
15 if some dissonance occurred afterward.²¹ And finally, the new focus on Adventist
16 lifestyle along with tithes and offerings (a focus on outward behaviors) corresponded
17 somewhat with the rise of the historical Fundamentalist movement and a new
18 preoccupation with Adventist lifestyle in the 1920s and 1930s.

19 Early efforts to distinguish theological beliefs between Adventist denominations
20 from 1869 to 1872 gave way eventually to a new set of challenges from within the
21 Seventh-day Adventist Church in the late 1920s and early 1930s. This led to the adoption
22 of a new belief (the Trinity), and more significantly, greater clarification about the
23 sanctuary doctrine. Clearly Seventh-day Adventists were concerned about Ballenger and

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1 others when they wrote the 1931 “Statement of Beliefs.” The new confession was
2 composed by four people instead of just one. While the editor of the *Review and Herald*,
3 as in 1872, wrote the primary draft, the process indicates a subtle shift from a private to a
4 more visible and therefore public confession. Now, not only the margins, but the
5 theological center of Adventist beliefs was clearly the sanctuary doctrine, which was
6 clarified and affirmed.

7

8 **The 1980 Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists**

9 A significant change from the previous two statements of belief (1872, 1931) was
10 the public adoption of the 1980 “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists”²²
11 during the 1980 General Conference session in Dallas, Texas.²³ The 1946 resolution by
12 the General Conference in session that no changes to the “Statement of Fundamental
13 Beliefs” as published in the *Church Manual* created this more public venue. Just like both
14 previous statements of beliefs, the preamble affirmed that “Seventh-day Adventists
15 accept the Bible as their only creed, and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the
16 teaching of the Holy Scriptures.” The way was left open for possible future revisions.²⁴

17 New challenges arose from an Australian Bible teacher at Pacific Union College,
18 Desmond Ford. In October 1979, during a Friday evening vespers, he questioned whether
19 Hebrews 9 represented a literal sanctuary, and therefore he questioned the Adventist
20 understanding of the sanctuary including the investigative judgment. Ford produced over
21 the next year a 991-page manuscript, *Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement, and the*
22 *Investigative Judgment*. Church leaders gathered 114 individuals in August 1980 at
23 Glacier View Ranch. Ford was ultimately dismissed as a minister and religion professor.

Campbell, “Seventh-day Adventism, Doctrinal Statements, and Unity.”

1 It was during the tension leading up to this pivotal meeting that the 1980 “Fundamental
2 Beliefs” was voted on April 25, 1980.²⁵

3 Other challenges centered on the nature of revelation and inspiration, especially as
4 it pertained to the prophetic life and ministry of Ellen G. White. A series of criticisms,
5 most notably by Ronald L. Numbers in his 1976 *Prophetess of Health* alleged that since
6 divine revelation was not possible, therefore, Ellen G. White must have plagiarized her
7 writings from other health reformers. Others, such as Walter Rea, were especially
8 vociferous in their response as they discovered that Ellen G. White borrowed other
9 authors. For Rea this deconstructed his inerrant understanding of the inspiration of Ellen
10 G. White’s writings. This also contributed much to the dialogue from delegates who were
11 concerned about the implications that the 1980 “Fundamental Beliefs” had for an
12 Adventist understanding of revelation/inspiration.

13 A contrast of the 1931 and 1980 confessions furthermore showcases Adventist
14 theological priorities:

15

Exhibit 2. Comparison of 1931 and 1980 Statements of Beliefs	
The Holy Scriptures. (1)	The Holy Scriptures. (1)
“The Godhead, or Trinity” (2).	The Trinity. (2)
	God the Father. (3)
“That Jesus Christ is very God, being of the same nature and essence as the Eternal Father.” (3)	God the Son. (4)
	God the Holy Spirit. (5)
	Creation. (6)
The New Birth. (4)	
Baptism is an ordinance. (5)	Baptism and (13a)
	The Lord’s Supper (13b)
The Ten Commandments. (6)	The Ten Commandments. (18)
The seventh-day Sabbath. (7)	The Sabbath. (19)
The ten commandments points out sin, the penalty of which is death, which can only be kept through the “enabling power of the	The Experience of Salvation. (10)

Campbell, “Seventh-day Adventism, Doctrinal Statements, and Unity.”

indwelling Christ.” (8)	
Humans are mortal. Only God is immortal. (9)	The Nature of Man. (7)
“Condition of man in death is one of unconsciousness.” (10)	Death and Resurrection. (23)
“Resurrection both of the just and of the unjust” at Second Coming of Christ. (11)	
“Impenitent . . . reduced to a state of nonexistence” (12)	
Prophetic period of Daniel 8:14 terminated in 1844. (13)	The Heavenly Sanctuary and the Judgment. (24)
True sanctuary in heaven was a type and corresponds with judgment phase of Christ’s ministry in heaven. (14)	
Work of threefold message of Revelation 14. (15)	(included in 16)
The time of the threefold message corresponds with the investigative judgment. (16)	(included in 24)
“Body is the temple of God and therefore should “abstain from all intoxicating drinks, tobacco, and other narcotics, and to avoid every body and soul-defiling habit and practice.” (17)	Style of Life. (21)
“Divine principle of tithes and offerings for the support of the gospel.” (18)	Stewardship. (20) [Broadening of belief]
Perpetuity of spiritual gifts. (19)	Spiritual Gifts. (14)
	The Spirit of Prophecy. (15)
“The Second Coming of Christ is the great hope of the church” (20)	The Second Advent of Christ. (25)
Millennial reign of Christ. (21)	The Millennium and the End of Sin. (26)
Restoration of earth at end of Millennium. (22)	The New Earth. (27)
	The Great Controversy. (8)
	The Death of Christ. (9)
	The Church. (11)
	Unity in the Body of Christ. (12)
	Mission of the Remnant Church. (16) [Similar to point 20 but with different emphasis.]
	The Ministries of the Church. (17)
	Marriage and the Family. (22)

1
2 The 1980 “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists” was an affirmation of much
3 of the 1931, and by extension 1872, statements of beliefs. Similar to the 1931 “Statement

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1 of Beliefs” the 1980 “Statement of Fundamental Beliefs” strongly affirmed the doctrine
2 of the sanctuary. In fact, it synthesized points 13, 14, and 16 into a single doctrinal belief
3 (#24). The mission of the “threefold message” of Revelation 14 (#20 in 1931) was
4 broadened to use “Remnant Church” language (1980 belief #16). Other changes include
5 nuances such as the expansion of the doctrine on baptism (#5) in 1931 to couple it with
6 the addition of the Lord’s Supper in 1980 (#13). Adventist eschatology was re-
7 emphasized, similar to the 1872 Statement, by providing a new doctrinal statement on
8 The Great Controversy (#8). Similarly, Adventist lifestyle concerns were expanded to
9 include a new and separate doctrine on “Marriage and the Family” (#22).

10 A significant change in the 1980 statement has largely been observed by Rolf J.
11 Pöhler in his *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching* (2000) about the development
12 of a distinctive Adventist ecclesiology.²⁶ This corresponded, as Malcolm Bull and Keith
13 Lockhart have astutely noted, with an emphasis on ecclesiology within other religious
14 traditions. “Adventists were not entirely alone in this since there was a late-twentieth-
15 century rediscovery of the doctrine of the church on the part of other evangelicals.”²⁷ For
16 the 1980 “Fundamental Beliefs” this development corresponded with beliefs in “The
17 Church” (#11) that defined Christ as the head, “Unity in the Body of Christ” (#12), and
18 “The Ministries of the Church” (#17). Clearly a new theological priority for Seventh-day
19 Adventists was ecclesiology. Each of the statements was furthermore written in a much
20 more relational way as drafters worked to become more intentional to relate doctrines to
21 actual practice. At the same time the boundaries of orthodoxy were being spelled out.
22 Soon afterward, Bull and Lockhart observed, this took on tangible form when church
23 leaders trademarked the name “Seventh-day Adventist” (1981). Denominational leaders

Campbell, “Seventh-day Adventism, Doctrinal Statements, and Unity.”

1 clarified who could or could not use, and therefore benefit, from the official identity of
2 the church.

3 Another significant addition to the 1980 statement was a doctrinal statement on
4 “Creation” (#6) that highlighted new interest into defining origins. The earliest statement
5 (1872) this was largely assumed as evolution was promptly rejected. The 1931 statement,
6 following the heyday of the Fundamentalist movement during the 1920s, this was again
7 simply assumed. Yet by 1980 there were new challenges as thought leaders wrestled
8 between issues related to science and religion, and questions about the origins of the
9 earth.

10 These additions should be juxtaposed against one significant deletion: the anti-
11 creedal statement that Seventh-day Adventists believed in the “Bible and the Bible alone”
12 was modified to state that they believed in the “Bible.” The Bible remained the only
13 creed for Seventh-day Adventists, but Adventists recognized that there different
14 hermeneutical approaches based upon different presuppositions. This resulted in
15 differences of beliefs despite being anchored epistemologically in Scripture.

16 Taken together the 1980 “Fundamental Beliefs” was a strong affirmation of the
17 1931 “Statement of Beliefs.” Both strongly emphasized the sanctuary doctrine in
18 response to theological challenges. Both strongly emphasized the Trinity doctrine. And
19 while not as explicit at first, the 1980 “Fundamental Beliefs” appeared to answer
20 challenges at the time toward revelation/inspiration. Theological priorities had both
21 remained the same as well as shifted. Now, not only were the margins more clearly
22 defined, but the new emphasis on ecclesiology gave more substance to what was within

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1 the boundaries of Adventist theology. Earlier private confessions now received full public
2 scrutiny.

3 Finally, what are some of the larger patterns in the development of Adventist
4 theology? How do these contribute to unity?

5

6 **Theological Development and Unity**

7 Seventh-day Adventists have consistently affirmed the Bible as their only creed.
8 This openness toward change, in large part a response to the theological milieu in which
9 Sabbatarian Adventism was born, created a fear of a public creed. The 1872 statement of
10 beliefs by Uriah Smith morphed into a subtly more visible statement of beliefs by a small
11 committee instead of a single individual. This changed after 1946 when the General
12 Conference voted that any future changes must be done in General Conference session,
13 which forced a private declaration to undergo full public scrutiny in 1980. “Perhaps the
14 most astounding and important thing about the 1980 statement of fundamental beliefs is
15 the preamble,” observes Adventist historian George R. Knight, “The preamble not only
16 begins with the historic Adventist statement that ‘Seventh-day Adventists accept the
17 Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the
18 Holy Scriptures,’ but also leaves the way open for further revision.”²⁸ One thing that did
19 not change between the three Seventh-day Adventist confessions was a commitment to
20 progressive truth even if the “alone” part was dropped in 1980. Seventh-day Adventists
21 recognized that there were different approaches to the sacred Scriptures, and even
22 recognized that there was more than one way to interpret Scripture, yet at the very heart
23 of Adventist theology was a commitment to the Bible and progressive truth.

Campbell, “Seventh-day Adventism, Doctrinal Statements, and Unity.”

1 All three statements furthermore appear to have been generated in response to
2 theological challenges to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The first was in response to
3 other Adventist groups, in particular, Miles Grant. The 1931 and 1980 Statements of
4 Beliefs were strong affirmations of the sanctuary doctrine. In a sense the sanctuary
5 doctrine played a unifying role by being the theological focus of these statements of
6 beliefs. Similarly, new challenges from science brought up questions about the origins of
7 the earth. This was resolved by restricting the 1980 statement to biblical language. Both
8 literal Creationists, who adhered to a short time chronology, as well as those who adhered
9 to a much longer time span, discovered that they could live with this language. Thus,
10 these challenges, that began at first from without, later came much more forcefully from
11 within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

12 One notable reversal in Adventist theology between 1872 and 1980, as Bull and
13 Lockhart have observed, is the atonement. In 1872 Smith argued that the atonement
14 began on October 22, 1844, but by 1980, there was a strong emphasis on the centrality of
15 the atonement on the cross. This was at least due in large part to the evangelical
16 conferences and publication of *Questions on Doctrine* in 1957. Another notable departure
17 from 1872 to 1980 was the reversal of the Adventist understanding of the Trinity
18 doctrine, especially as it pertained to the full Divinity of Christ and the personhood of the
19 Holy Spirit.

20 The transition from a private to a public confession demonstrates a need to define
21 the boundaries of Seventh-day Adventist theology. Although denominational pioneers
22 were excluded during the Millerite revival, as the Sabbatarian Adventist movement
23 matured, they were through their interactions with other Adventist groups forced to

Campbell, “Seventh-day Adventism, Doctrinal Statements, and Unity.”

1 exclude others. The exchange between Miles Grant and James White demonstrates a
2 reluctant embrace of confessionalism. Such a statement “inevitably excludes those who
3 disagree with its content.”²⁹

4 Later boundaries were defined not from without, but from within. The genesis of
5 the 1931 and 1980 confessions furthermore demonstrates that later confessions were in
6 large part due to internal theological challenges. While Seventh-day Adventists clung to
7 the notion of progressive truth, they increasingly defined the boundaries of orthodoxy.
8 This orthodoxy centered in an affirmation of the core doctrine of the sanctuary. This did
9 not change even as the articulation of beliefs grew from a private declaration (1872) to a
10 full public and voted statement of Fundamental Beliefs (1980). Unity did not require
11 complete uniformity as each statement showcases various theological priorities, but the
12 sanctuary doctrine was a non-negotiable that defined orthodoxy versus heresy.

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²Carl R. Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), pg. 21.

³Bert B. Haloviak, “Heritage of Freedom,” unpublished manuscript, pg. 2.

⁴George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), pg. 21-24.

⁵“Doings of the Battle Creek Conference, Oct. 5 & 6, 1861,” *Review and Herald*, Oct. 8, 1861, pg. 148.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷For a survey, see Mark A. Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁸[Uriah Smith], *Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1872).

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Denis Fortin, “Nineteenth-Century Evangelicalism and Early Adventist Statements of Beliefs,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Spring 1998): 51-67.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pg. 66-67.

¹²J. N. Andrews, “The Creed of the Evangelical Adventists,” *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 6, 1869, pg. 12-13.

¹³It should be noted that the Evangelical Adventists were led by Josiah Litch, whereas Joshua V. Himes and Miles Grant were leaders of the Advent Christian Church. Although initially united together, they separated from each other in 1860 over the immortality versus non-immortality of the soul.

¹⁴James White, “Eastern Tour,” *Review and Herald*, Nov. 17, 1868, pg. 244-245.

¹⁵I have only located James White’s version of what occurred so far in my research. His version of what transpired was then published by Uriah Smith. See: [Uriah Smith], “Springfield Camp-meeting,” *Review and Herald Extra*, April 14, 1874, pg. 2.

Campbell, “Seventh-day Adventism, Doctrinal Statements, and Unity.”

¹⁶Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), vol. 3, pg. 36, 37.

¹⁷General Conference Committee Minutes, Dec. 29, 1930, pg. 195.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹Raymond Cottrell, “The ‘Sanctuary Doctrine,’—Asset or Liability,” unpublished paper, 2002; Lowell Tarling, *The Edges of Seventh-day Adventism: A Study of Separatist Groups Emerging from the Seventh-day Adventist Church (1844-1980)* (Barragga Bay, Australia: Galilee Publications, 1981).

²⁰*Review and Herald*, June 14, 1946, pg. 197.

²¹Merlin D. Burt, “History of Seventh-day Adventist Views on the Trinity,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring 2006): 125-139.

²²Referred subsequently as “1980 Fundamental Beliefs.”

²³For an overview, see Lawrence T. Geray, “A New Statement of Fundamental Beliefs,” *Spectrum*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1980): 2-13.

²⁴Knight, *A Search for Identity*, pg. 23-24.

²⁵“Fourteenth Business Meeting, Fifty-third General Conference Session, April 25, 1980, 9:30 AM,” *Adventist Review*, May 1, 1980, pg. 215-218.

²⁶Rolf J. Pöhler, *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching: A Case Study in Doctrinal Development* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2000), pg. 257-276.

²⁷Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), pg. 49.

²⁸Knight, *A Search for Identity*, pg. 23-24.

²⁹Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative*, pg. 44.