

Our New Doctrinal Statement

A couple months ago, a casual announcement was made by leadership at world headquarters, that an additional “belief” was planned for inclusion with our 27 Fundamental Beliefs.

You will recall that, at the 1980 General Conference Session at Dallas, a battle was fought over the plan to modify our Statement of Beliefs. The one which was presented (and ultimately adopted) at Dallas had been written by new theology Bible teachers at Andrews University.

It was carefully worded, so that both historic Seventh-day Adventists and liberals can find it somewhat acceptable. However, the primary reason for pushing it through the 1980 Session was to protect liberal pastors and teachers, so they could not be fired for their teachings. In the years that followed, new theology workers would repeatedly declare, in defense of their position, “I stand by the Statement of Beliefs.”

That same summer in 1980, the Glacier View Meeting met for a week, to examine the teachings of Desmond Ford. It was discovered that many of the attending Bible teachers and some of the administrators were secret liberals. However, at the urging of top leadership, Desmond Ford’s ministerial credentials were removed.

On Friday afternoon, President Neal C. Wilson was speaking with Desmond Ford; and he was astonished when Ford told him, “I accept the [new] Statement of Beliefs.” It was not until then that Wilson began to realize why there had been such a strong push to get the Statement revised that summer.

However, when I recently heard that a “28th Statement” was planned for addition to our official Statement, I gave it little thought; since the announcement said it would only be about “prayer to God and praising Him.”

Well, I now have a copy of the proposed 28th Statement—and new theology concepts have been subtly interwoven with the truth! It consists of a

Doctrinal Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—Part 1-4 [DH-21-24]. This is an analysis of our 27 Doctrinal Beliefs, as approved at the Dallas General Conference Session in the summer of 1980.

For additional information, see our *Doctrine Tractbook*, 214 pp., 8½ x 11, \$16.50 + \$2.50.

single, lengthy paragraph, to which I am going to add sentence numbers within brackets. *Here it is:*

“GROWING IN CHRIST

[1] “By His cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. [2] Jesus’ victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. [3] Instead of evil forces, the Holy Spirit now dwells within us and empowers us. [4] Committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of past deeds and our former life with its darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness. [5] In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, as we commune with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the church. [6] As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us sanctifies every moment and every task (Ps. 1:1-2; 23:4; Col. 1:13-14; 2:6, 14-15; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Phil. 3:7-14; 1 Thess. 5:16-18; Matt. 20:25-28; John 20:21; Gal. 5:22-25; 1 John 4:4).”

[1] In spite of its brevity, this first sentence is essentially correct; for it is only speaking about Christ’s victory over the forces of evil. The sentence parallels the “It is Finished” chapter in *Desire of Ages*.

[2-6] But the remainder of the proposed Statement is about us today; and here is where we run into trouble: Notice that it is only “the cross” which accomplishes everything in sentences 2-6.

Here are the four key phrases in the paragraph; each of which only contains a half-truth:

[2] “Jesus’ victory [at the cross] gives us victory . . . as we walk with Him.”

[3] “The Holy Spirit now dwells within us and empowers us.”

[4] “Committed to Jesus . . . we are set free.”

[5] “In this new freedom in Jesus we are called to grow.”

[6] “His constant presence . . . sanctifies every moment and every task.”

Now carefully notice all that is left out:

1 - The ministry of Christ in the heavenly Sanctuary is not mentioned anywhere; yet this “Statement” is supposed to be about how we are to live our lives in Christ. It is only “the cross” (not even Christ’s death on the cross, but only “the cross”) which is said to accomplish everything mentioned in this lengthy paragraph. We have here a major omission. Christ only *provided* the atonement on the cross. It is in heaven that He individually applies it to us as we come to him (Great Controversy, chapters 23-24). Our entire Sanctuary Message is omitted from our experience in the Christian life.

2 - The sin problem is entirely omitted! There is no mention of repentance. There is nothing that we forsake. We do not have to work with God to put sin out of our lives. There is nothing about resisting temptation. It matters not how deeply we go into sin; “the cross” took care of it all.

3 - There is no mention about obeying God, His law, or His commandments. The words, “overcome” and “overcomers,” are not mentioned because it is sin that Christians overcome; and our liberals do not want to talk about sin.

4 - The name of this new Statement is “Growing in Christ.” Do you know what that is? That is sanctification. But you will not find the word in this new Statement. This is because the new theology does not believe in it. All they want is justification 2,000 years ago “at the cross.”

5 - There is nothing in this Statement about following the example of Christ. Yet how can we walk with Jesus, day by day, if we do not follow His example and live like Him? The new theology does not believe that Christ gave us an example to follow; for they declare that He took the unfallen nature of Adam and was unable to be tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.

Now let us examine each of these key half-truth phrases more closely:

[2] “*Jesus’ victory [at the cross] gives us victory . . . as we walk with Him.*” Victory over what? Not over temptation and sin; for they are not named.

“ . . . as we walk with Him.” Nothing about coming to Him, repenting, and asking forgiveness. Throughout this Statement, it is assumed that, throughout our Christian life, we live in a state of *once saved, always saved*. In contrast, normal Christians keep crying to Jesus for help. But the liberal view, as given in this Statement, is radically different. It teaches that Christians live in a state of continually assured salvation because of the cross. This is modern Protestant theology.

[3] “*The Holy Spirit now dwells within us and empowers us.*” Empowers us to do what? No men-

tion of obeying anything in the Inspired Writings; no hint of power to resist and overcome sin. There are only two words in the new paragraph: “victory” and “empowers,” which are as close to historic-conquest-of-sin Adventism as this Statement gets. The two words are inserted, to appease historic believers. But neither one teaches the truth as it is in Jesus. By the way, what is “the truth as it is in Jesus”? It is the truth as written in the Word of God, demonstrated in the life and teachings of Jesus, and lived out in the lives of His followers.

[4] “*Committed to Jesus . . . we are set free.*” How is it that we got committed to Jesus? The Statement is silent on this, as it is on all other causal factors producing genuine Christianity.

In reality, we have to be connected to Christ as the stem to the vine—crying to Him, pleading for help, trusting in Him, and enabled by Him to resist sin and obey His Word. This new Statement eliminates the main trunk of the vine (Christ) and makes us disconnected branches.

“ . . . *we are set free.*” What are we set free from? We are not told. Set free to do what? We are not told. The truth is that we come to Jesus; and, in His strength, we put away our sins. We are set free from sin and enabled to obey God’s commandments and His holy Word. But only because, daily and hourly, we choose to keep clinging to Him and, by His enabling grace, obeying His commandments.

[5] “*In this new freedom in Jesus we are called to grow.*” The preceding sentence spoke of a meaningless “free”; this one is about “freedom.” Freedom from what? How does the growth occur? While liberals do not like to talk about sin, *they love to talk about “freedom”!* Not freedom to avoid sin, but freedom to do as they wish. The liberal view is that resisting temptation and the putting away of sin has nothing to do with the Christian life. Sentence 5 says that all you need do is pray, read the Bible, meditate, sing praises, worship, and do “the mission of the church.”

[6] “*His constant presence . . . sanctifies every moment and every task.*” It is assumed that, while you remain in your sins, you will have the constant presence of Christ. Sentence 6 only speaks about helping others; it says nothing about putting away sin, *so we can* live to help and bless others.

We have found that this entire Statement is one long half-truth. It states half the truth and omits the other half. Therefore it teaches error about the true nature of the Christian life and “Growing in Christ.”

Oh, how much we need to return to God’s Word and earnestly study and obey It! What a change it

would make in our lives! Creeds can never do what God can, if we will daily submit our lives to Him!

**STATEMENT 10
OF THE DALLAS STATEMENT OF BELIEFS**

At this juncture, someone may reply, “This new statement is only about daily living *after* initially coming to Christ and being converted; it is not discussing initial conversion.”

First, read the new Statement again. It is a sweeping comment on all that occurs because of “the cross”; thus it includes all aspects of Christian living, including initial conversion.

Second, conversion begins anew each day. Like Paul, we must die daily. Every day we must come to Jesus and begin anew our walk with Him. Renewed justification continues throughout life.

It is true that there is another Statement among the 27, which is the closest we can find about conversion (although it does not mention the word). That is Statement 10, which is titled, “The Experience of Salvation.”

Here is Statement 10:

“10. THE EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

“In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example. This faith which receives salvation comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God’s grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God’s sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God’s law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment (2 Cor. 5:17-21; John 3:16; Gal. 1:4; 4:4-7; Titus 3:3-7; John 16:8; Gal. 3:13-14; 1 Peter 2:21-22; Rom. 10:17; Luke 17:5; Mark 9:23-24; Eph. 2:5-10; Rom. 3:21-26; Col. 1:13-14; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26; John 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 8:7-12; Eze. 36:25-27; 2 Peter 1:3-4; Rom. 8:1-4; 5:6-10).”

Here are several interesting aspects about Statement 10:

“*We acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith . . .*” There is nothing here about putting away sin, or deciding to obey God. Merely a statement that we sin and we are sorry that we sin.

“*Through Christ . . . we are justified . . . and de-*

livered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified. The Spirit renews our minds, writes God’s law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life.” Much of this improved wording came as a result of vigorous protests from the delegates during the 1980 Session at Dallas. Yet you will notice that the above three sentences do not mention resisting or putting away sin. One gets the impression, from Statement 10, that sin is automatically under control after we are “born again” for the first time.

“*Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified.*” Notice that, at the time of initially being born again, there is an indication that we are sanctified. At least, the wording clearly allows for instantaneous sanctification—which is something else the new theology likes. In reality, sanctification is the work of a lifetime.

“*We . . . have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment.*” Assurance is something that new theology advocates are very concerned about. Because their followers have not abandoned their cherished sins, their consciences disturb them. They have no peace in Christ; and they sense that they are not prepared to die. So new theology books and articles try to give them “assurance of salvation” in spite of their ongoing sins. An example is in the above sentence: “*We [now] have . . . assurance of salvation . . . in the judgment.*” Only a once-saved-always-saved theology could provide such total assurance of ultimate salvation. Only a theology of Calvinistic predestination or salvation regardless of how much you may sin or leave God—could provide it. But notice the earlier part: “*We . . . have the assurance of salvation now.*” That is not true either. We now have the assurance that we are accepted by Jesus. But we cannot have certainty of final salvation today; for we may choose to forever forsake Christ later on.

According to the *Church Manual*, modifications to our *Statement of Doctrinal Beliefs* can only be ratified at a General Conference Session.

This proposed new Statement will be presented to the Annual Council, meeting in October of this year. They will then approve it for presentation to the next Session.

It will then be presented to the delegates in assembly during the summer 2005 General Conference Session, to be held in St. Louis, for their approval. It will then become Statement 28 of our so-called “Doctrinal Beliefs.”

What really are our “doctrinal beliefs”? They consist of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy! No set

of man-made beliefs, or creedal statement, can or should replace God's Inspired Writings as the basis of our faith and practice!

Did Ellen White tell us that we should have a creedal statement? Far from it. She repeatedly told us to go to the Word of God in order to find what we are to believe, teach, and practice. What is wrong with creedal statements?

First, they are too brief to accurately state a doctrine. Second, they were written by uninspired men. Only God's Word is able to provide a correct statement about what we need to know in order to walk in the right path to heaven.

Here are several Spirit of Prophecy statements about creedal statements (which is what our "Statement of Beliefs" really is):

Men use creeds to teach error—"In the professedly Christian world many turn away from the plain teachings of the Bible and build up a creed from human speculations and pleasing fables, and they point to their tower as a way to climb up to heaven. Men hang with admiration upon the lips of eloquence while it teaches that the transgressor shall not die, that salvation may be secured without obedience to the law of God. If the professed followers of Christ would accept God's standard, it would bring them into unity; but so long as human wisdom is exalted above His Holy Word, there will be divisions and dissension."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 124.

Christianity is not a creed, but a living experience with Jesus Christ—"Christianity has a much broader meaning than many have hitherto given it. It is not a creed. It is the word of Him who liveth and abideth forever. It is a living, animating principle that takes possession of mind, heart, motives, and the entire man. Christianity—oh, that we might experience its operations! It is a vital, personal experience that elevates and ennobles the whole man."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, 421-422.

God's Word, if received, would shiver the creeds into atoms—"If God's professed people would receive the light as it shines upon them from His Word, they would reach that unity for which Christ prayed."—*Great Controversy*, 379.

Creeds can block the way to an understanding of Heaven's truth—"Oh, how Christ longed to open to Israel the precious treasures of the truth! But such was their spiritual blindness that it was impossible to reveal to them the truths relating to

His kingdom. They clung to their creed and their useless ceremonies when the truth of Heaven awaited their acceptance. They spent their money for chaff and husks, when the bread of life was within their reach. Why did they not go to the Word of God, and search diligently to know whether they were in error?"—*Desire of Ages*, 241-242.

The men God can use—"God works through those who hear and obey His voice, those who will, if need be, speak unpalatable truths, those who do not fear to reprove popular sins. The reason why He does not oftener choose men of learning and high position to lead out in reform movements is that they trust to their creeds, theories, and theological systems, and feel no need to be taught of God. Only those who have a personal connection with the Source of wisdom are able to understand or explain the Scriptures. Men who have little of the learning of the schools are sometimes called to declare the truth, not because they are unlearned, but because they are not too self-sufficient to be taught of God."—*Great Controversy*, 455-456.

Protestants require belief in a creed—"The Protestant evangelical denominations have so tied up one another's hands, and their own, that, between them all, a man cannot become a preacher at all, anywhere, without accepting some book besides the Bible . . . There is nothing imaginary in the statement that the creed power is now beginning to prohibit the Bible as really as Rome did, though in a subtler way."—*Great Controversy*, 388-389.

"The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support . . .

"Though the Reformation gave the Scriptures to all, yet the selfsame principle which was maintained by Rome prevents multitudes in Protestant churches from searching the Bible for themselves. They are taught to accept its teachings as interpreted by the church; and there are thousands who dare receive nothing, however plainly revealed in Scripture, that is contrary to their creed or the established teaching of their church."—*Great Controversy*, 595-596 (read all of 596).