

# **The *Questions on Doctrine* Event: Contrasting Perceptions, Their Impact and Potential<sup>1</sup>**

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*If men could learn from history, what lessons it might teach us! But passion and party blind our eyes, and the light which experience gives is a lantern on the stern, which shines only on the waves behind us! Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1831.*

*We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history. Ellen G. White, 1880.*

## **Abstract**

***Questions on Doctrine* is the most important of the Adventist publications that developed from a constructive though flawed attempt to explain Seventh-day Adventist faith to Fundamentalist/Evangelical Christians in North America.<sup>2</sup> Both Fundamentalist/Evangelical and Adventist enthusiasts who participated in written and oral dialogue or reflection between 1949 and 1977 were confronted by cautioners who posed substantive questions. Crucial primary sources that illumine the era and the historical process are now widely available; the issues, problems, and outcomes are explored and contextualised by a score of doctoral dissertations and a plethora of other studies. Therefore, the impact and potential of the book can now be assessed more coherently than was possible during the foundational years. In hindsight, the *QoD* event sheds light on a cluster of related issues such as Adventism's self-understanding, identity, administrative procedures, pastoral care, and mission.**

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was written for presentation on Thursday, 25 October 2007, at the *Questions on Doctrine* 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference, Andrews University, 24-27 October 2007. The conference brochure is available in printed form and on the Internet (Andrews University, [god.andrews.edu](http://god.andrews.edu); Loma Linda University, Julius Nam; and elsewhere). The text of the paper uses Australian spelling. While the script (7,188 words) aims to be intelligible apart from the footnotes (5,981 words), the footnotes cite sources and offer comments that may assist those requiring further information. The Internet includes ephemeral comment and misinformation relating to Adventist Studies in general and *Questions on Doctrine* in particular, but it also offers sources and interpretations that can reduce the necessity of visits to an institutional library or a centre for Adventist research.

<sup>2</sup> "Prepared by a Representative Group of Seventh-day Adventist leaders, Bible Teachers, and Editors," *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine: An Explanation of Certain Major Aspects of Seventh-day Adventist Belief* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1957), abbreviated in this paper as *QoD*. Although *QoD* entered Adventist language as a 720-page book, its shortened title was soon used to signify an event that began with T.E. Unruh's letter of 28 November 1949 and concluded with Unruh's reflective article, "The Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences of 1955-1956," *Adventist Heritage: A Journal of Adventist History* 4, no. 2 (Winter 1977), 35-46. The event included the sustained conversations that gave rise to *QoD* (1957), *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism* (1960), *The Ministry* articles (1960-61) collected in *Doctrinal Discussions* (undated, circa 1962), *Movement of Destiny* (1971), and uncounted other treatments in magazines, journals, pamphlets, and books.

## Introduction

The impact of *QoD* derives from the nature of Seventh-day Adventism (abbreviated herein as SDA, Adventism), the mid-twentieth-century context that birthed the *QoD* initiative in North America, and the various perceptions of the process and the book that have been developed and promulgated in various parts of the world during the past half-century. This paper does not attempt to repeat acknowledged data, the principal historical facts about *QoD*.<sup>3</sup> Rather, it seeks for an interpretive framework that may facilitate constructive answers to an elusive question: In view of the variety of perceptions of *QoD* and their profound and continuing impact, how can the Seventh-day Adventist Church move constructively beyond this long-continuing controversy? There is a need to hear actively the voices that derive from differing convictions, including the enthusiastic participants and affirmative supporters in Fundamentalist/Evangelical and (in particular) Adventist circles. Others voices are also crucial, especially those of the ardent cautioners within each of these communions who express concerns, formulate critiques, and lay charges. However, the quest to understand will be helped most of all by the analysts who offer historical, biblical, theological, sociological, and other interpretations that point beyond the partisanship of apologetics and the rhetoric of controversy toward comprehensive understanding and constructive action. To transcend fifty years of conflict with reference to the *QoD* event, one of Adventism's "thorniest"<sup>4</sup> problems, will facilitate clearer perceptions of the movement's identity and fuller participation in its mission.

### I. *QoD*: Sketching the Big Picture

Adventism began as a trans-denominational, Protestant movement, nourished by apocalyptic thought, cast in a pre-millennialist mould, and infused with a passion for doctrinal reconstruction. Its history includes extended interaction between the influences of imminence and permanence, charisma and institutionalisation, an America-centred focus versus a vision embracing "every nation, tribe, language and people" (Revelation 14:6, NIV). After health, educational, and other reforms were incorporated into its mission, the movement's identity exhibited a richness that made its relationships with culture complex and at times gave rise to internal conflict.

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<sup>3</sup> The basic facts are available in R.W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant: Denominational History Textbook for Seventh-day Adventist College Classes* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1979), 543-6; Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2000), 454-457; Keld J. Reynolds, "The Church Under Stress 1931-1960," in Gary Land (editor), *Adventism in America: A History* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1986), 185-88. See the 24 pages that discuss *QoD* in Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, Second Edition, 2007), in particular Chapter 5, 83-98.

<sup>4</sup> I adopt the term from George Knight; the concept might be explored usefully in terms of the impact of the *QoD* event on the church's finances, unity, morale, and mission. A minister assures me that, according to his specific knowledge, one of his church members donated significant sums of money to an initiative based on the concept that Adventism apostatised with *QoD*. The minister knows that one such gift was 1.5 million dollars but he does not know the amounts of other gifts. While the global investment by Adventists in such initiatives is large, it is difficult to quantify with any degree of accuracy.

During the 1950s, the movement was recovering from the crisis of World War II, confronting daunting challenges, and experiencing exciting opportunities. Rival solutions to multiple issues (in particular, biblical, historical, theological, and sociological) were epitomised by various impulses such as the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement,<sup>5</sup> the True and Free Seventh-day Adventists, the Sanctuary Awakening Fellowship, and other stirrings.<sup>6</sup> Competing options did not lack eloquent advocates: Taylor G. Bunch, Louis F. Were, Carlyle B. Haynes, Melvin K. Eckenroth, Robert J. Wieland, Donald K. Short, Edward Heppenstall, and E.B. Jones are a few examples of many urgent voices from the era.<sup>7</sup>

Official initiatives of the mid-century sought to offer a centrist stance in explicating and defending the church's faith. Noteworthy are six volumes on prophetic and conditionalist faith by LeRoy Edwin Froom (1946-1966), the *Our Firm Foundation* conference presentations (1952) subsequently published in two books,<sup>8</sup> apologetic volumes such as Francis D. Nichol's *Ellen G. White and Her Critics* (1951), and Nichol's revised edition of *Answers to Objections* (1952). Promising progress in biblical exegesis occurred with the first seven volumes of the *Commentary Reference Series* (1953-1957) and *Problems in Bible Translation* (1954). Towering issues of the time were as complex as first and last things (origins and eschatology), the hermeneutics of biblical apocalyptic and prophetic literature, righteousness by faith and perfectionism, the relationship of Fundamentalism to Evangelicalism, biblical inerrancy and the authority of other inspired writings. Always at the centre of the effervescence were concerns about Adventist identity and mission.

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<sup>5</sup> The roots of the Reform were in World War I but the plant flourished anew during and after World War II; Pastor Dumitru Nicolici nurtured its Australian expression. Note such treatments as A[l]fons Balbach, *The History of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement* (Roanoke, VA: Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement, 1999) in the context of interpretive writings including Sergei I. Zhuk, *Russia's Lost Reformation: Peasants, Millennialism, and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine, 1830-1917*, as reviewed in William B. Husband, "Looking Backward, Looking Forward: The Study of Religion in Russia after the Fall," *Journal of Religious History* 31, no. 2 (June 2007), 195-202.

<sup>6</sup> No authoritative guide to these diverse impulses is available but Lowell Tarling introduces some of them effectively in *The Edges of Seventh-day Adventism* (Bermagui South, NSW: Galilee, 1981). While certain movements were ephemeral, others developed structures that persist in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Note the content of Document Files (for example, DF 938 and 961a) in the Ellen G. White/SDA Research Centre at Avondale College that relate to the following: The Independent Non-Conformist Seventh-day Adventist Church, The Victory Church, the True Medical Missionary Association, the International Health Institute, Gems of Truth, Prophetic Research International, Ministry of Healing Health Centres, and more.

<sup>7</sup> During 1972, Adventist world leaders decided that enhanced General Conference archives, Ellen G. White Estate branch offices, plus Ellen G. White/Seventh-day Adventist Research Centres in the major geographical areas of the world, would be beneficial. As founding director (1976-1983) of the Ellen G. White/SDA Research Centre serving the South Pacific Division, my writing is heavily dependent upon the treasures housed therein, on the campus of Avondale College, and augmented by the Adventist Heritage Centre that adjoins the Research Centre. The resources of the Research Centre, including its Document Files (abbreviated as DF), house most of the resources cited in this paper.

<sup>8</sup> *Our Firm Foundation* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1953).

Even before *QoD* was published, it was hailed by a conference president in North New Zealand as a foretaste of a renewed and renewable Adventism. While this sentiment appeared to affirm elements of the official stance of Adventist leaders like LeRoy Edwin Froom (1890-1974), Walter E. Read (1883-1976), Reuben R. Figuhr (1896-1983), Roy Allan Anderson (1895-1985), and Harry W. Lowe (1893-1990),<sup>9</sup> perceived radicalism and reaction to it soon caused conflict that resulted in the loss of ministers and members. Within Australasia, the haemorrhaging was most apparent in the North New Zealand Conference where the president, a group of ministers, and many members were dismissed when a long-continuing war erupted in a fresh battle over *QoD*. The aspirations of Barnhouse, Martin and their colleagues resonated with those of mainstream Adventism but failed to win immediate approval from many *Eternity* magazine subscribers as well as prominent Fundamentalists/Evangelicals. Committed Adventists like Milian Lauritz Andreasen (1876-1962), Al Hudson and Robert Brinsmead viewed *QoD* as a serious deviation from authentic Adventism that demanded the firing of warning shots across the bows of Remnant Church entities. In hindsight, painful and positive outcomes can be identified within many such arenas.<sup>10</sup>

These early, rival perceptions of *QoD* have persisted into the twenty-first century and characterise opposing currents within contemporary Adventism. It is noteworthy that a minority of committed members, even today, experience intense emotion at the mere mention of *QoD*.<sup>11</sup> For at least some of these earnest believers, the entire event began as an inexplicable mystery and for fifty years has seemed to be an escalating tragedy.<sup>12</sup> Such

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<sup>9</sup> Biographical data on some of these leaders is given in the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopaedia*; cf. obituaries in *Adventist Review*: 4 April 1974, 30; 17 June 1976, 23; 20 March 1986, 21; 16 May 1991, 22; 10 November 1983, 31. More comprehensive biographies of all participants in the *QoD* event would assist with the interpretive process.

<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere I have explored the passion of Adventists for “the ground-hog method of doing theology.” The ground hog (or woodchuck) is a small, burrowing, North American animal that digs downward and tunnels along before surfacing, taking a deep breath of fresh air and exclaiming, “Aha! Pure air here.” Hence, the ground-hog method of doing theology tunnels under the experience of the church to an idealised era (1888, early Adventism, the Reformation, “Primitive” Christianity), surfaces, and exclaims, “Aha! Pure theological air here.” The method has a great strength in its quest to understand and re-experience the faith of the past; it has a great weakness in that it tends to ignore God’s ongoing guidance. A principal Adventist concern with the Reformation is that the followers of the reformers wrote up creeds and declined to move beyond them. Since the 1931 publication in an official yearbook of a statement of their fundamental beliefs, Adventists have been increasingly tempted to adopt creedal definitions of their faith. See, for instance, my article entitled “Glacier View and the Australasian Ministers,” *Spectrum* 34, issue 2 (Spring 2006), 68-71; cf. Chris Blake, “Are We Guardians or Seekers of Truth?” *Spectrum* 34, issue 1 (Winter 2006), 28-29. History illustrates the struggle of our movement in this regard; note the books and articles written by Gilbert Valentine, including “A slice of history: The difficulties of imposing orthodoxy,” and “Developing truth and changing perspectives,” *Ministry*, February, 2003, 5-9; April 2003, 24-26.

<sup>11</sup> A minister recalls (e-mail, Eaton to Patrick, 27 September 2007) a woman who raced around his house “waving the book *QOD* and shouting ‘The work of Satan.’”

<sup>12</sup> I thank many faithful Adventists for helping me understand some of these perceptions, not least Arlie Heckendorf (a personal testimony), Rick Ferret (a sociological reflection), and Arnold Reye (an historian’s view) in e-mails to Patrick, 23 September 2007.

observers are informed by literature that is substantive in quantity and ongoing; for instance, one strand alone includes more than twenty of the many volumes written by the Standish brothers.<sup>13</sup> The continuing controversy thrives independently of a large body of agreed facts: it is about the meaning of the *QoD* event as seen by observers located on purpose-built watchtowers.

Conflict about *QoD* has persisted for many decades, in part because some of the important primary sources have been unknown or little known until recent years, enabling serious misconceptions to be repeated without effective correction. Should the personal papers of Walter Martin remain unavailable for research, it needs to be asked whether these documents are critical for those who want to understand the Adventist engagement with the issues.<sup>14</sup> It seems reasonable to expect that, by the end of the conference at Andrews University, all the documentation that is crucial for Adventism will be in the public arena and discussed in the interpretive papers that will be presented.<sup>15</sup> This reality, plus the comparative completeness and evident maturity of recent studies relating to the historical context of *QoD*, its process, ideas, and outcomes, indicates that a more effective consensus may be achieved in the near future.

## II. Confession and Thesis

This paper will be misunderstood unless it acknowledges the geographical and personal limitations of the perspectives that it offers. Late in 1949, I was baptised at the North New South Wales camp meeting and shortly thereafter heard the moving presentations of Francis D. Nichol, Adventist apologist *par excellence* and soon-to-be the editor of the seven-volume *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. During the next eight years on the campus of the Australasian Missionary College (now Avondale College) as a belated secondary and then tertiary and graduate student, I was likewise captivated by the

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<sup>13</sup> See Russell R. and Colin D. Standish, *The Greatest Of All The Prophets* (Narbethong: Highwood Books, 2004), 408-411, for a listing of 38 volumes advertised by Remnant Herald/Hartland Publications. Cf. the volume by the Standish brothers from the same publishers, *Half a Century of Apostasy: The New Theology's Grim Harvest 1956-2006*, for a listing of 55 volumes, about half of which deal with what the brothers term "the ills of God's Church." The latter book updates the interpretation already formed when the Standish brothers presented their "Bangkok Tapes" (17 March 1979), later printed as an undated, 34-page pamphlet (probably by Pastor George Burnside, or at least on his press), entitled "The Crisis in the Adventist Church."

<sup>14</sup> Martin appears to have expressed his mind rather fully in magazine and journal articles during the early years, in various books (including *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism*), and later oral reflections.

<sup>15</sup> Guides who offer help are many. They include Kenneth Wood, Raymond Cottrell, J.R. Zurcher, A.V. Olson, Herbert E. Douglass, Ralph Larson, William H. Grotheer, Leroy Moore, Eric C. Webster, Jerry Moon, Woodrow W. Whidden, Paul McGraw, Julius Nam, Richard Ferret, Ronald Lawson, George Knight, and many others. See especially *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1988), 45-52; Woodrow W. Whidden, "Why should Jesus be both divine and human?" and "Questions on Doctrine: Then and Now," *Ministry*, March 2003, 24-26; August 2003, 14-18. Cf. George R. Knight's "Annotated Edition" of *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2003) that includes "Notes with Historical and Theological Introduction."

Adventist vision of other presenters from North America. Memorable in this regard was the evangelistic preaching of George Vandeman, the historical/prophetical discourse of LeRoy Edwin Froom (“diamonds from Daniel, pearls from Paul and rubies from the Revelation”), the revivalist spirituality of E.L. Minchin, and the pastoral-evangelistic passion of R.A. Anderson (author of *The Shepherd Evangelist*, 1950). Some of the most influential input into Australasian Adventism of the era was offered by Melvin K. Eckenroth’s focus on the content of Ellen White’s *Evangelism* (“Christ-centred Preaching”), the biblical exegesis of Edward Heppenstall (“Law Grace and the Covenants,” “Doctrine of the Sanctuary”), and the “Prophetic Guidance” lectures by Arthur L. White, at the first-ever Seminary Extension School held in Australasia, during December 1957 and January 1958.<sup>16</sup> These experiences indicated to me that Adventism was in an era of dynamic renewal and growth in its understanding and application of Scripture.

By February 1958, I was beginning a ministerial internship in New Zealand with a deep hunger for more of what the SDA Theological Seminary might offer. It would take until 1970 to save funds for full-time attendance at the seminary and the impressive on-campus classes of Horn and Oosterwal, Dederen and LaRondelle, Maxwell and Hasel, and others. Before and after seminary the issues in Adventism were, for me, included in the daily diet of parishes and classrooms in New Zealand, the United States, and Australia.

Therefore, my perspectives in this paper are those of an evangelist/minister/teacher who lived in only three of many countries where the *QoD* event exerted a profound influence. More than that, my viewpoint is that of a believer inside Adventism; such is at once suspect because of its potential bias, but potentially useful because of its first-person experiences. While I acknowledge the inherent peril, I also pray for the constructive outcome.<sup>17</sup> My engagement with twenty centuries of Christian history is limited; but reflection on it causes me to acknowledge another latent prejudice: the conviction that the teachings of Scripture meet the exigencies of every human situation. While human attempts at the interpretation and application of Scripture frequently issue in crises, even those experiences may facilitate growth in understanding.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, flaws that

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<sup>16</sup> Note the presentations given by such thought-leaders in the *Our Firm Foundation* conference and volumes during 1952 and 1953.

<sup>17</sup> The *QoD* event was of interest to Adventists throughout my teaching career that began at Andrews University (part time) during 1971 and continued at Avondale College (from 1973), and La Sierra University (1996-1998). During 2003, in a graduate seminar at La Sierra University, I suggested that 1957 might rank with 1844, 1888, and 1980 as a crucial Adventist date. Cf. my book review, “Moore’s Light on an Adventist Trouble,” *Adventist Today* 14, issue 3 (May/June 2006), 22, 23, 20.

<sup>18</sup> A luminous expression of this notion occurs in the epilogue of Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 515-6: “Moreover, Christianity contained its self-correcting mechanisms. The insights provided by Christ’s teaching are capable of almost infinite elaborations and explorations. The Christian matrices form a code to be translated afresh in each new situation, so that Christian history is a constant process of struggle and rebirth—a succession of crises, often accompanied by horror, bloodshed, bigotry and unreason, but evidence too of growth, vitality and increased understanding.” My article, “Contextualising Tensions in Seventh-day Adventism: ‘a constant process of struggle and rebirth?’” seeks to interpret “the struggle of recent decades between continuity and change in

illustrate the humanity of the participants and their critics marred the *QoD* event; perceptions of it (including my own) are constrained by the same impediments. However, the event is latent with promise because of the way it illumines Adventist identity, practice, and mission.

Seventh-day Adventism is essentially a quest to understand and share the message of Scripture in an eschatological setting.<sup>19</sup> From the daunting mid-point of the twentieth century onward, Adventism could never achieve sustainable maturity in its self-understanding and witness without building coherently on the type of exegetical understandings fostered by its *Bible Commentary*.<sup>20</sup> The process that lay behind the book *QoD* gave the church an unparalleled challenge to express its faith coherently so that it would be better understood, most specifically by a significant segment of North American Christianity. Although this endeavour was partially successful and bore important fruit within and beyond Adventism, the process was marred by serious misunderstandings that constrained or damaged the potential outcomes.

It is ever the responsibility of the church and the individual member to monitor information and assess its reliability. The relevant questions are as exacting as they are unavoidable. Does the information have a valid basis in biblical exegesis? Is it historically accurate? Is its theological content informed by God's leading throughout the history of His people in Bible times, during twenty centuries of Christianity, as well as within Adventism? What of its viability for building sustainable faith and facilitating effective mission?<sup>21</sup> In the providence of God, Adventists in 2007 still have an

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Adventist teaching, suggesting that a score of doctoral dissertations as well as other studies offer a coherence that is not yet satisfying for all believers.”

<sup>19</sup> While Seventh-day Adventism is one of a plethora of nineteenth-century utopian impulses that arose in North America, its relation to Scripture both compares and contrasts with that of other well-known movements from the same historical period. One leader (Joseph Smith) offered new scriptures; another (Mary Baker Eddy) produced a “key” to the Christian Scriptures; the Jehovah’s Witnesses developed a “teaching magisterium.” Ellen White simply proffered “a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light,” “An Open Letter From Mrs. E.G. White to All Who Love the Blessed Hope,” *Review and Herald*, 20 January 1903, 14-15. Note this “Open Letter” was available “free from all our publishing houses and tract societies.” It was an enormous risk for our pioneers to define landmark ideas and have a co-founder of Adventism subject these concepts to Bible study over a long period of time. While these teachings have been subject to constant development, they persist in clearly-recognisable form.

<sup>20</sup> I believe that the Ellen White who embraced books by perhaps 28 authors when writing fifteen selected chapters of her classic on the Life of Christ (1898) would be deeply pained that her spiritual descendants employed her literary corpus to limit the biblical exegesis of their *Commentary Series*. Note the writings of Raymond Cottrell on this theme (for instance, consult the online SDA Periodical Index for the Cottrell articles, including those in *Spectrum* and *Adventist Heritage*) in the context of the Life of Christ Research Project, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/documents>.

<sup>21</sup> Adventism of the 1950s could be described as being at the stage of development characterised by Morris West, *A View from the Ridge: The Testimony of a Pilgrim* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 1996), 61; like West when he was “a man without a shadow,” Adventism “carried a heavy load of unexamined certainties.” Coming to terms with the demands of mature faith would be traumatic but inescapable.

opportunity to embrace the awesome potential of the *QoD* event, experienced only in part a half-century ago.

### III. Hearing the Initial Testimony

To understand the *QoD* event, it is essential to identify and hear all the potential witnesses whose testimony might be expected to illumine the historical process and its variant interpretations. By daring to speak to “the other side”<sup>22</sup> in 1949, T.E. Unruh initiated the possibility of the discussions that eventuated and in which he was a participant. Unruh also reflected usefully on both the process and its outcomes from the vantage point of the 1970s. Amongst all the participants, Froom invested the most energy. Froom’s contribution to Adventist apologetics needs to be interpreted in the wider context of the decades he spent leading the Ministerial Association, as well as exploring and explicating the historical antecedents of Adventism’s “Prophetic Faith” and “Conditionalist Faith.” Froom’s *Movement of Destiny*, published in 1971, locates *QoD* within the broad sweep of Adventist theological development and constitutes his major reflection on the event as seen through the eyes of an Adventist thought-leader who, as an apologist of the era, has few peers.<sup>23</sup> Anderson, Figuhr, Lowe, and Read also offer believer-participant insights that, in general, accord with those of Froom. On the other hand, Cannon, Barnhouse, and Martin are participants from “the other side” with the most to lose if they are seen to be letting down the Fundamentalists/Evangelicals.<sup>24</sup> The participants named in this paragraph offer the primary evidence that grounds the *QoD* event in historical reality. Their testimony has all the strengths and limitations expected of eyewitnesses and enthusiasts who have motives that they state clearly, as well as objectives that may not be articulated in any overt manner.<sup>25</sup>

The enthusiasts from both Adventist and Fundamentalist/Evangelical ranks represent the two principal groupings whose envisioning and risk-taking facilitated the *QoD* event and the constructive aspects of its outcomes. However, cautioners<sup>26</sup> and loyalists advocating a

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<sup>22</sup> I adopt the term as defined by an Old Testament specialist who has strayed fruitfully into Adventist Studies, agreeing with his estimate of the benefit we receive from hearing those who oppose our point of view. See the extensive content of Alden Thompson’s website at Walla Walla University in terms of his article, “Conversations with the other side,” *Spectrum* 31, issue 4 (Fall 2003), 54-9.

<sup>23</sup> Froom’s Chapter 31, entitled “Significant Part Played by *Questions on Doctrine*,” *Movement of Destiny*, 476-492, is especially valuable.

<sup>24</sup> The event is often characterised as Adventist conversations with Evangelicals. More correctly, “the other side” were Fundamentalists, as defined in numerous topical and biographical articles in such works as Daniel G. Reid (editor), *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990). Cf. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (editors), *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991). A fresh expression of evangelicalism was emerging at the time.

<sup>25</sup> Graeme Bradford and David Hay illumine this comment in e-mails: Bradford to Patrick, 13 August 2007; Hay to Patrick, 26 August 2007.

<sup>26</sup> With Norman Young (in an hour-long conversation on 26 September 2007), I wish for a more appropriate descriptor than “cautioners.” I use the term as less pejorative than other options.

particular point of view soon pressed both these sets of individuals. Instead of immediate, positive results from an effective dialogue and dialectic, destructive conflict developed. On the side of the Fundamentalists/Evangelicals, impressive voices offered strident opposition to the process: Louis T. Talbot, M.E. DeHaan, and Harold Lindsell typify a chorus of voices.<sup>27</sup> On the Adventist side, one standard-bearer excelled above the others in the fervency and plainness of his critiques: between 1957 and his death in 1962, Andreasen was the outstanding Adventist cautioner and his writings continue in that role to this day.

Andreasen was not a participant in the conversations that created the book; indeed, his forthright campaign began in part because he was not included, even amongst perhaps 250 readers of the *QoD* manuscript. Was this exclusion because key Adventist participants deemed he was a potential source of opposition, or was it simply due to such factors as his advancing age? Once debate flared, Andreasen had no opportunity to review the extensive documentation that later investigators have combed through so carefully. Such researchers as Leroy Moore offer conclusive evidence that Andreasen's major charges are, in the main, without factual foundation.<sup>28</sup> Is it, therefore, fair to the "Great Dane" of Adventism to continue to cite him as an authority on the *QoD* event?<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Four doctoral dissertations, read together, provide a framework and detailed evidence that enable the event to be interpreted coherently. See Rolf J. Pöhler's dissertation (Andrews University, 1995) that is available in articles and books such as *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching: A Case Study in Doctrinal Development* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2001); Richard B. Ferret, "Charisma and Institutionalisation: Identity Issues in Seventh-day Adventism" (PhD diss., Sydney College of Divinity, 2006), publication forthcoming in the United Kingdom (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press); Paul Ernest McGraw, "Born in Zion: The Margins of Fundamentalism and the Definition of Seventh-day Adventism" (PhD diss., The George Washington University, 2004); Juhyeok (Julius) Nam, "Reactions to Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences and *Questions on Doctrine* 1955-1971" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2005). McGraw's Chapter 4, pages 186-235, aptly describes some of the opposition to *QoD*. It is useful to trace expressions by opponents of the concept that Adventists are Christian from the 1950s through such publications as Gordon R. Lewis, *The Bible, the Christian, and Seventh-day Adventists* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 27; see also the writings of D.A. Carson and Dale Ratzlaff. It is of interest that in a volume edited by Carson, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), there are references to Seventh-day Adventism on eight pages, to L.E. Froom on two pages, and to Samuele Bacchiocchi on 58 pages. While Adventists in the 1950s attempted to offer scholarly integrity in *Questions on Doctrine*, in the longer term much stronger scholarship would be necessary.

<sup>28</sup> Note my review of Moore cited in footnote 17 and observe the context in which Moore makes the following observations: "As Andreasen demonstrates, we are unlikely to understand anyone we don't trust" (141) "Andreasen 'can find no other reason' because a conspiracy obsession enforces the worst possible construction" (141); Andreasen's "belligerent attitude hurt his cause" (148); "But Andreasen's own self-contradictions should warn against echoing his charges" (184); "One thing is certain, all sanctuary charges were totally false" (185). See also Chapter XII, "Andreasen's Self-Incriminating Charge," 115-123. Observe the spirited support of M.L. Andreasen over many years by William Grotheer in his newsletter, "Watchman, what of the night?" See especially issues for the second half of 2006; cf [adventistlaymen.com](http://adventistlaymen.com).

<sup>29</sup> I address some of the biographical and related data in a paper entitled "Resisting Change: M.L. Andreasen and the Development of Adventist Theology," 30 June 1993, available on a CD from the Ellen G. White/SDA Research Centre at Avondale College ([egwrc@avondale.edu.au](mailto:egwrc@avondale.edu.au)). Andreasen's famous *Letters to the Churches* are available in various forms on the Internet; his biography, by Virginia Steinweg,

#### IV. Understanding the Australasian Experience

This paper presupposes that to understand Adventism, it must be examined within its founding homeland (North America) and in its multiple geographical expressions (even the so-called Antipodes). Therefore, this section will offer a fleeting glimpse of the profound impact of *QoD* within the territory of earth now known as the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, most specifically Australia and New Zealand.<sup>30</sup>

If to effervesce is “to exhibit fervour, excitement, liveliness” (*Macquarie*), the third quarter of the twentieth century was an era of effervescence within South Pacific Adventism. This was a time of profound disappointment for many believers. They interpreted World War II, even more than World War I, as the war that would end all wars by ushering in “the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Revelation 16:14, KJV). A city (Darwin) on the island continent was bombed repeatedly; enemy submarines and an airplane actually reached Australia’s first city (Sydney); surely “the kings of the east” were about to leap from the bridging islands and overrun the vast, thinly-populated territory of our agricultural nation. Banner headlines announced Adventist certainties: Hitler was marching to his doom (Daniel 2 said so) and the “time of trouble such as never was” was here (the Bible seemed to say that, too!).

When hostilities ended, Adventists asked why they were still on this rebellious planet.<sup>31</sup> Of course, they were certain this would be only “a little time of peace.” New interpretations of startling prophecies flourished: during 1958 in Christchurch (New Zealand), the crowds came to hear about the drying up of the Euphrates and the imminent *oil* war of Armageddon. A medley of convincing voices offered definitive solutions. Adventism could learn from the Exodus movement and end the delay of its entry into the promised land (see Taylor G. Bunch);<sup>32</sup> Adventist evangelistic outreach could be transformed by “Christ-centred preaching” (Haynes, Eckenroth); narrow Adventist horizons on law and sanctuary could be pushed back convincingly (Heppenstall;

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is on-line at <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/books/andreasen>. Note that most of Andreasen’s letters pre-date the comprehensive reflections in *Doctrinal Discussions*.

<sup>30</sup> The (then) Australasian Division mission territories were, in the 1950s, led by expatriates. As a would-be historian I cringe at the inadequacy of this section and the problem of fairly representing all the people who tried so valiantly to guide the Adventist ship through such troubled waters. Indeed, this section needs at least a book to clarify its history and implications. Relevant literature is available in the Research Centre’s Document Files but it is too vast to cite in such a short treatment as this paper.

<sup>31</sup> Howard Weeks, in a doctoral dissertation and a subsequent book (1969), unpacks this dilemma effectively.

<sup>32</sup> Bunch mimeographed “The Exodus and Advent Movements in Type and Antitype,” undated, 36 of his vesper sermons at the Battle Creek Tabernacle.

Justesen);<sup>33</sup> Adventists could embrace more effective evangelism, aided by better shepherding (Vandeman, Anderson). Adventists are “continuators and consummators of the uncompleted Reformation, in the direct line of such spiritual dissentients as the Waldenses, Wycliffites, Hussites, Lutherans, Baptists and Wesleyans,” and this “Movement of Destiny” was about to fulfil Revelation 18 (Froom, interpreted).<sup>34</sup> However, these confident voices from the Northern Hemisphere were often out-shouted by the John-the-Baptist fervency of earnest locals.

Even during the crisis years of World War II, Louis Were<sup>35</sup> was galvanizing hope with a “spiritual Armageddon” far bigger than anything that could be fought in the Valley of Megiddo. The Brinsmead family in Queensland had been doubly disappointed: Christ had not come and the hope offered by the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement was (it seemed to them) merely yet another deception. Fortunately, Raymond Cottrell had drawn together everything that the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy said on “Crisis and Victory,” putting the Latter Rain in the *right* place according according to the Brinsmead schema. Likewise, Herbert Douglass, at Atlantic Union College, was giving *the true order of last-day events*. Wieland and Short were warning the church of the *peril* of “anti-Christ centred preaching.” Also, Robert Brinsmead “discovered” incomplete but gripping fragments of the writings of Jones and Waggoner. Obviously, 1888, re-examined, was *the answer*. Jones had it right in *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection* (1905). Daniells, that great pioneer of “The Australian [and New Zealand] Mission” put Ellen White’s convictions about 1888 into sharp, authentic focus (*Christ Our Righteousness*, 1926). The ingredients for the only true Adventism seemed ready for the ultimate integration and proclamation. The church was poised for its final, glorious witness, “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners” (Song of Solomon 6:10). The little remnant could almost hear the trumpet sounding.

Years of war between the Brinsmead family and their Queensland conference president only escalated on a wider front when Robert Greive was transferred across the Tasman Sea to North New Zealand. In his struggle to understand Adventism and combat the Brinsmead teachings on salvation and sanctuary, Greive grasped Anderson’s encouragement eagerly. Instead of preserving confidentiality as Anderson requested, he mimeographed some of Anderson’s letters and sent them to his ministers. Opposition soon became as uncontrolled as wildfire. For some leaders, the problem was guerrilla warfare that called on their authority to discipline dissenters. Disfellowshipped members were often understood not only as lost souls, but also as bodies that must no longer darken church doors. To some it seemed like divine vindication when Greive and a group of his most trusted ministers were de-credentialed and dismissed from ministry.

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<sup>33</sup> I recall my astonishment and appreciation in Heppenstall’s lectures (1957-8) and my later gratitude for Jerome P. Justesen’s article, “On the Meaning of *sadaq*,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* II (1964), 53-61. After four years as a Theology student I had almost no understanding of the relationship between the narratives and the prophecies in Daniel, the context of Daniel 8:14, the significance of Daniel 8:14 for Daniel’s theme, the meaning of the word translated “cleansed” (KJV), and a cluster of related issues.

<sup>34</sup> Note Froom’s description of Seventh-day Adventists in *Collier’s Encyclopedia* (1965).

<sup>35</sup> Milton Hook has told the Were story discerningly; see DF 2074.

Nevertheless, the same fate was suffered by those opposed to what *QoD* was attempting to achieve. The official Church was confident that it alone offered an ark of safety: members should refuse to listen to *any* voices of dissent, they should read *nothing* produced by “offshoots,” congregations could rightly *dismiss* those on the right or the left who were causing trouble. Indeed, to convene or attend an unauthorised meeting, to publish a pamphlet or a book other than by an Adventist press was, more or less, to give a valid and just reason for questioning a member’s loyalty or even erasing their membership and banning them from church attendance.

The ethos of the time can be illustrated by the experience of the Timaru, Dunedin, and Invercargill churches (South New Zealand) from 1960-1963. For instance, a disfellowshipped member from North New Zealand who came to stay with relatives in Timaru was reincorporated into the life and witness of the local congregation and deemed ready for membership, again. But the loyalists “knew” Michael Marsh had had a connection with Robert Brinsmead. Might this be a continuing peril, leading to the loss of precious souls? The solution seemed obvious by 1961: the minister-under-question must say six words, clearly, without equivocation: “Robert Brinsmead is of the devil.” When he could only say that (like himself), Robert Brinsmead may have done some devilish things, it took ten months leave-of-absence to resolve the issue of his “loyalty.” By 1963, in one congregation, “we” could no longer even talk to “them.” If one of “us” did talk to one of “them,” that person was no longer one of “us.” This sequence of events is cited simply to indicate the profound dilemma faced by leaders and pastors who cherished unity, and the need for the Church to foster effective dialogue in the light of all the available evidence.

Such was the conflicted context in which startling news of Adventist conversations with other Christians broke and was interpreted within Australasia from 1956 onward. The “reformers” asked a bevy of related questions. Might this be the ultimate compromise? What of Revelation 14:8 and 18:5? In addition, what of “the miraculous, punctiliar, moral cleansing” (the “final atonement”)<sup>36</sup> that occurred in the Investigative Judgment, facilitating the going forth of a sinless remnant to announce, worldwide, “all things are ready: come unto the marriage” (Matthew 22:4)? Are all Greive’s “errors” entering the church, unchecked? Is the king of the north entering “the glorious land” (Adventism) to “overthrow many”? Is the papacy now planting “the tabernacles of his palace ... in the glorious holy mountain” (Daniel 11:40-45), “the Church of the Living God”? Is the substance of Wieland and Short’s warning meeting dramatic confirmation? Is M.L.

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<sup>36</sup> A discerning reader questions whether the word “punctiliar” is in the dictionary; it is rare, but Webster does define it. I quote the phrase simply as the most apt description of Brinsmead’s 1958-circa-1970 position. He emphasised “the blotting out of sin” as the removal of the “scars” of sin from the believer’s soul at a particular point in time: the moment the individual entered by faith into the judgment of the living. Brinsmead’s volume entitled *God’s Eternal Purpose* (Brisbane: Jackson & O’Sullivan, 1959), Part 3, 92-217, elaborates his view adequately. While Brinsmead’s concept was based on the thought of Edson and Crosier, it needed to recognise Crosier’s main contribution as pointing Adventists to “the minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched” *in heaven* (Hebrew 8:1-2, KJV). This “true light” (Ellen White’s descriptor) needs to be understood over against the various Millerite definitions of the sanctuary.

Andreasen courageously exposing God's Remnant Church as rapidly descending into apostasy? Are dire prophecies (including those of "the shaking") in the process of being fulfilled, right now?

Thence two streams were sourced in Australasian Adventism and given volume during the crisis years from the 1940s to the 1970s. There was a great need to understand the perplexity of those honest souls who would later call themselves "Concerned Brethren" and to offer them accurate information as well as effective pastoral care and nurture. There was a crying need to define Adventist identity, rather than crush people under the overwhelming weight of unexamined certainties. There was a great need to rethink the relationship between corporate authority and individual responsibility. There was a pervasive need to relate Scripture and Ellen White's writings effectively. Adventism was in a dynamic period of adolescence marked by the kind of turmoil that the wider society experienced during the turbulent 1960s.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, rightly or wrongly, *QoD* was interpreted as a beacon of hope or a source of despair. With the end of all things at hand, there was little time for anyone to ask whether "the other side" might have anything to offer, except damnable heresy.

### V. Assessing the Evidence: The Analysts

Some strategists contend that when conflict arises within a community, it is likely that a majority (perhaps between sixty and eighty per cent) of the membership do not "own" the issues with any degree of intensity.<sup>38</sup> For some Adventists of the late 1950s and 1960s it seemed the immediate problem was explicable as a dispute between Church leadership and a handful of reactionaries (not all churches were like that in Invercargill). The most fundamental mistake of appointed leaders of the time may not have been theological in any significant way. Was it, in fact, administrative/pastoral? Adventist leaders did help to marginalise contrary voices and allow them to be negatively categorised; they also failed to recognise the potential strengths of more friendly critiques (by Cottrell, Thurber,

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<sup>37</sup> Somebody has said that there are lies, damnable lies, and autobiography. We do well to question our perceptions of the past and especially our role within it. In hindsight, it seems to me that Greive and Brinsmead, together, asked many of the questions that were crucial for the 1950s and that both of them honestly sought for effective answers. Adventism itself could not give adequate answers immediately, nor did it allow the time required for the answers to develop. (A passage from Ellen White's writings that was quoted frequently during the crisis years has an uncanny relevance; see *Testimonies* 5, 707.) Brinsmead took twelve years, from the publication of "The Vision by the Hiddekel" (mimeographed, 1958) to "discover" the awesome significance of the Protestant Reformation for the Adventist understanding of salvation. Greive's career was terminated before *QoD* was published. I thank Colin Standish for sharing his perceptions of Greive with me, email to Patrick, 26 September 2007.

<sup>38</sup> See David Brubacher, "Church Fights and the 'third voice' middle," *Ministry*. November 2001, 20-21. The limited surveys that I have been able to conduct indicate the *QoD* event is a known entity for many older Adventists but only a tiny minority of them currently view it with some degree of concern. The quality of the dialogue might be enhanced if we listen more fully to the seventy per cent of members who are women and include intentionally those members (women and men) who are trained in the listening skills of Clinical Pastoral Education.

Heppenstall, *et al.*) that had at least some potential to moderate the escalating debate. Both the right and the more centrist groupings provided opinions that were potentially important within the ongoing discussion. However, Adventist leaders in North America failed to hear such voices effectively.<sup>39</sup> Some key leaders in Australasia seriously misunderstood the complexity of the crisis, to the extent that their earnest attempts to resolve it may have exacerbated it.

A second issue derived from the Adventist expectation of Scripture. The biblical authors wrote within contexts that did not necessarily include or address in detail all the questions that would be raised in later ages.<sup>40</sup> For instance, the Christian church's understanding of Christ's nature during the incarnation was impacted profoundly by centuries of discussion. Adventists of the 1950s were reluctant to explore, learn from and apply the outcomes of that discussion, in particular because of their eagerness to have the Bible offer immediate, definitive answers to all of their very specific questions. In hindsight, the church's greater need was to hear fully all the Scripture said, faithfully apply the principles it emphasised, and learn to live with a measure of ambiguity on some matters. Biblical evidence should never be forced to support conclusions that belong to a different time and place.

A third problem was almost inevitable, given the mindset of the time. Most Adventists had long forgotten crucial lessons about Ellen White's role and the consequent appropriate use of her inspired writings. A previous generation of administrators reflected during 1919 on what they had learned from their personal experiences with Ellen White, but all those leaders were now resting in hope of the first resurrection.<sup>41</sup> A long dalliance

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<sup>39</sup> An effective survey of the impact made by the *QoD* event might be informed by the extant literature but embrace in a judicious way the perceptions of people who remember the 1950s. For instance, anecdotal evidence suggests that a majority of ministers/teachers still believe the book was a worthy publication in terms of the clarity of its language, its wide distribution, its expression of landmark ideas (Second Advent, Sanctuary, Sabbath, State of the Dead, Spiritual Gifts), and its role in the theological development of Adventism. After reading a draft of this paper, in an interview on 17 September 2007, Chris Akroyd emphasised how a person's perception may change substantially during a half-century. Akroyd was an employee in South New Zealand during some of the effervescent years reviewed in this paper; currently his family keep him aware of ongoing discussions that relate to such matters.

<sup>40</sup> The period 1946-1966 shows Adventists benefiting enormously from a better understanding of church history with reference to prophetic interpretation and conditional immortality. Adventists also benefited from a fuller understanding of the relevance of Christian history for understanding the divinity of Christ. However, in the same era they often disregarded the experience of Christianity in understanding the humanity of Christ. Neither the official Church nor its critics did well in the quest to understand even Adventist history in this regard. Note the writings of Ralph Larson over against the editorials by F.D. Nichol, "Four Charges Against Seventh-day Adventists," 5 March 1931, 1-4, and 12 March 1931, 1-4, in which Nichol responds to articles in the *Moody Bible Institute Monthly*. On 11 September 2007, S. Ross Goldstone drew my attention to the Nichol editorials and to a relevant letter by A.W. Anderson, cited in a paper by Goldstone written during 1986 and preserved in DF 476, C. This particular Document File is about three inches thick and includes a wealth of data and opinion on the Nature of Christ.

<sup>41</sup> Intimations of the content of Dr. Michael Campbell's research on this topic lead me to believe that his dissertation, successfully defended during July 2007, will offer reliable guidance on this issue.

within Fundamentalism<sup>42</sup> had enabled Adventist apologists like Francis D. Nichol to deny crucial evidence that would be unmistakable in its substance and implications within two more decades. Therefore, the *QoD* debate was fuelled in part by a serious misconception that Ellen White's writings provided the encyclopedic, authoritative (even infallible), definition of Adventist doctrine.<sup>43</sup>

## VI. Estimating the Impact and Potential of *QoD*

While a great many of fifteen million baptised Adventists may at this point know little or nothing about the *QoD* debate, a significant minority of members live in societies where this issue is one of those that require thorough assessment in the light of all the available data. Such believers face insistent demands to be thorough in assessing all the extant information that bears upon their faith, to the extent that they need to be also reminded it is the Lord's money that is being used by all the participants in the ongoing discussion. In other words, fiscal balance and responsibility require consideration. Decisions are fraught, not least because such concerns as those raised by the *QoD* event are embracing the peoples of developing nations slowly but acutely as the Information Age develops ever-better Internet access.<sup>44</sup> Hence, wise leadership is essential lest the potential lessons of the *QoD* event are not well applied.

Fortunately, a cluster of dissertations, not least those by Paul McGraw and Julius Nam, offer evidence that the church received important wake-up calls in the protestations of such dissidents as Dudley M. Canright, Louis R. Conradi, E.B. Jones, the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement, and other such stirrings that took place on both its right and its left.<sup>45</sup> Adventist founders including James and Ellen White had emphasised the

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<sup>42</sup> I have been privileged to read in draft form a thesis by Mark Pearce presented at the University of Queensland that has since been awarded (November 2007) a High Distinction. Pearce's study unpacks effectively some of the Adventist engagement with Fundamentalism.

<sup>43</sup> I have written a hundred papers, articles, and book chapters, as well as a thesis and a dissertation, attempting to reflect on this and related issues within the context of Adventist history; some of these writings are available in *Ministry*, *Adventist Review*, *Record*, or on CDs and the Internet. Note, for instance, the context in which I cite Ellen White's statement in *Testimonies*, vol 1, page 262, in "Ellen White, Yesterday and Today," 14 September 2002: <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/white/Patrick/egw-affirm.htm>. Cf. Ellen G. White's morning talk at Battle Creek on 6 February 1890, "Open the Heart to Light," *Review and Herald*, 25 March 1890. Also, see my article "Does our past embarrass us?" *Ministry*, April 1991, 7-10.

<sup>44</sup> On 20 September 2007, I received an email from a reader (in part) as follows: "Please, raise your voice at the Conference for all of us pastors' sake. We deserve to have the best scholarship at our fingertips. Otherwise millions will be spent to remedy crises that could be managed wisely and frugally."

<sup>45</sup> This comment needs explication in view of research relating to orthodoxy and heresy. Often heresy helps a community clarify and better defend its faith, as in the case of the "heresiarch" Arius (c. 250-c. 336). After reading a draft of this paper, Norman Young suggested to me (in conversation, 26 September 2007) that heresy may, at times, be understood as "an unbalanced statement of what is true"; that a heretic may be a well-meaning person who has difficulty living with paradox and who attempts to simplify a problem.

concept of “present truth” but many of the Whites’ most dedicated children struggled to embrace and apply such a dynamic understanding.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, despite an explicit affirmation during 1980 of the value of sociological enquiry, the church has a continuing need to listen effectively to its growing body of sociologists. It was because Adventism was entering an era when new information would become available rapidly that the advocates of reversion have appealed effectively to so many loyal believers since the 1950s.<sup>47</sup>

The advocacy of a reversionist stance tends to create or intensify the cognitive dissonance that, in turn, stimulates an opposite, extreme response, that is, the entire rejection of Adventist faith. From the *QoD* event and its aftermath, historians can trace with greater clarity the development of various streams within the Seventh-day Adventist communion. On one edge are those who faithfully advocate what they perceive as the only true Adventism, defined by an idealised past, versus those on the opposite edge who advocate few if any historic landmarks for the church’s journey into a radically different future. Rather often, when new information at last registers with them, reversionists become rejectionists. Rejectionists, with alarming frequency, become alienated completely from the Adventist community and even from Christ. In between the polar-opposite options of reversion (a nostalgic backlash) and rejection (psychological alienation from Adventist distinctives and/or physical alienation from the movement itself) are those who advocate the difficult yet most sustainable option: the transformation of Adventist faith and practice as the past and present are assessed in terms of all the available evidence.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> The analyses of such authors as Rolf J. Pöhler clarify this matter; note my summaries of the evidence in such presentations as “Continuity and Change in Seventh-day Adventist Doctrine and Practice,” 2003. Note Ellen White’s extensive comments on this issue in *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 33-42.

<sup>47</sup> Johnston’s illuminating presentation to the (then) Andrews Society for Religion Studies in 1980 offers a way to understand the cleavages in Adventism between reversion, transformation, and alienation (or rejection). See Robert M. Johnston, “Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Biblical Period: Some Reflections on an Elusive Category,” as interpreted by my [sdanet.org/atissue](http://sdanet.org/atissue) articles. Because Johnston’s paper is not readily available to most readers, a key paragraph from it is quoted here in italics: *T. M. Ludwig has developed “the thesis that religious change is precipitated when the soteric value ... of the transmitted religious reality (the traditum) is experienced as deficient under new circumstances. In such a situation, the meaning and security of the accepted traditum are called into question,” which means “distancing oneself from it, becoming conscious of the gulf between the ‘old’ structures of salvation and the realities of the new situation.” (1980: 25-26). He suggests three typical kinds of response to such a situation: alienation, reversion to the old tradition (as a sort of nostalgic backlash), or transformation of the tradition (ibid.). Only the last option tries to bridge the gulf between the new situation and the religious tradition, to resolve the cognitive dissonance. Normally the third process is continuously happening, but in times of drastic disjunction it cannot keep up with events, and there is danger that one of the other two responses, which are basically destructive, may come into play.* Source: Robert M. Johnston, Andrews University, “Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Biblical Period: Some Reflections on An Elusive Category.” The work Johnston cites in this paragraph is Theodore M. Ludwig, “REMEMBER NOT THE FORMER THINGS’: Disjunction and Transformation in Ancient Israel.” Pp. 25-55 in Frank E. Reynolds and Theodore M. Ludwig (editors), *Transitions and Transformations in the History of Religions: Essays in Honor of Joseph M. Kitagawa* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980).

<sup>48</sup> While there will always be gaps in the available information, the aim should be to evaluate thoroughly all that can be accessed. Such a goal underlines the essentiality of well-resourced centres for Adventist research.

## VII. *QoD* in Perspective: Can a Majority View be Identified?

During the past year I have talked and written to current and former Adventists about the book *Questions on Doctrine*, inviting them to comment on the impacts the book may have made upon them as individuals, SDA entities, or others. My aim has been to listen to the views that are currently held rather than to influence the perspectives of respondents. Various drafts of this paper have been shared with a cross-section of such persons; their comments have been invited and noted. As others read successive drafts of this paper, my file of observations is likely to expand; after 31 December 2007 its core materials will be located in the church's archives so as to be available for ongoing research.<sup>49</sup>

The people contacted in this informal survey include the following: administrative leaders at Division, union, local conference, and institutional levels; teachers from primary school to college/university levels, as well as chairpersons of departments or schools that teach Scripture, religion, and cognate subjects; church pastors; lay leaders, church members, and former members. While individuals in Russia, Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America have been invited to respond, their numbers are too small to facilitate statistical analyses. It has been more realistic to poll respondents who live in selected parts of the South Pacific region. Some of the impressions gained may be summarised along the following lines.

Most college/university students (except those who are training for ministry) are unaware of *QoD*, as are most adult Adventists less than sixty years of age. A retired minister of long experience estimated that about one quarter of the members in a church he pastored during the 1980s were in some way concerned about *QoD*. However, that figure seems to be exceptional, then and now, for other than a few small congregations. Further input may modify such preliminary assessments.

Most retired and serving ministers are aware of conflict relating to *QoD* and many have invested time and energy in order to address the concerns of members and the needs of congregations in this connection. Currently, however, far less than ten per cent of retired and serving ministers appear to have any significant level of personal concern about the book.

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<sup>49</sup> I acknowledge that it is desirable to check oral history thoroughly in terms of written records and that when a community experiences a crisis, it is valuable to consider oral testimony taken during the event, as well as soon and long thereafter. Two recent occurrences confirm this observation in my mind. On 12 September 2007, James Caldwell reminded me of his "America Series," thirteen cassettes (now available in a more accessible digital format from [jamescaldwell@bigpond.com](mailto:jamescaldwell@bigpond.com)) that during 1981 recorded twenty hours of interviews with Adventist thought-leaders, reflecting on the then current, vibrant discussion of Adventist theology and Ellen White's authority. On 16 September 2007, Mrs. Enid Botting, in a two-hour conversation, cogently reviewed events (alluded to above) that occurred in the Invercargill church (South New Zealand) during the 1950s and 1960s.

The majority of ministers are positive about the book. They estimate it was a useful attempt to explain Adventism to other Christians and general readers. They deem Adventist leaders made an honest attempt to express Adventist teachings in unambiguous, accurate, responsible language. They consider it was a constructive idea to make *QoD* available in libraries and other places where it was of easy access. While they believe that the book must be interpreted within its historical context, many ministers and teachers regard it with a considerable degree of approbation. Some describe it as “a breath of fresh air” or even “a tremendous blessing.” The consensus view includes the concept that *QoD* helped to move Adventists from being misunderstood as an anti-Christian or a non-Christian cult to being perceived as genuine students of Scripture and followers of Jesus Christ despite the “problem” (from the viewpoint of other Christians) posed by their distinctive beliefs. Such a shift in perception was of tangible benefit to Adventist evangelism. *QoD* enhanced Adventist self-understanding, Adventist identity was moved toward clarification in terms of both historic Christianity and world religions, and Adventist mission was better equipped for global impact.

This majority view relating to *QoD* may tend to be held by persons who believe the Bible is “the only rule of faith and practice” for Seventh-day Adventists and cherish a dynamic view of “present truth,” expecting “the church’s understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture” to be revised when it is “led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God’s Holy Word.”<sup>50</sup> However, a comprehensive survey would be required in order to clarify or deny such connections.

### Conclusion

The *QoD* event confronted Adventism with twin demands of the twentieth century: the need for its faith to be sustained by *evidence* and the requirement for its faith to offer existential *meaning*.<sup>51</sup> After thirty years sheltering from Modernism in the Fundamentalist camp, mid-century Adventism needed to recognise the strengths of an emergent Evangelicalism that was neither Fundamentalist nor Modernist. Those who believed that the Adventist past must control its future sounded the bugle of retreat passionately; however, from the vantage point of 2007, it is evident that reversionary options could not meet the exigencies of the changing situation. Adventists who were unconvinced of total adequacy in the expressions of the forthright apologists of the time would be confronted with even more alarming evidence that their understandings must grow and even, in some respects, change. Increasingly such believers would face a choice: to reject their heritage altogether or to transform perceptions of their faith, identity, and mission in the light of accumulating evidence and intensifying demands for meaning.

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. extensive documentation from *A Word to the “Little Flock”* (1847), 13, to “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists,” *Yearbook* (2007), 5-8.

<sup>51</sup> We began this paper with a reference to “the big picture” and climax it with the suggestion that any effective conclusions need to be placed within the context described by the historians of Adventism cited in footnote 3.

The writings of Ellen White have been a crucial and constructive sphere of influence throughout this discussion, despite their frequent misuse. A plethora of studies might be examined by Nichol (1951), Linden (1976, 1982), Graham (1977), Pöhler (1995), McMahon (2005), Thompson (2005), and Ferret (2006), to demonstrate that the essential stance of *QoD* relating to Scripture and Ellen White was valid and necessary. Serious inadequacies in the Adventist understanding would soon become painfully apparent, even within such works as Nichol's 1951 apology. Other core issues relating to salvation and sanctuary would become much clearer over time, not least when the Righteousness by Faith Consultation reported to the church on 31 July 1980 and the Sanctuary Review Committee completed its principal consensus document on 15 August 1980.

However, it could be that the most important outcome of this conference on *QoD* may be a better understanding of both the resources and the needs of Adventist congregations and individuals in the diverse world of Century 21. Will contemporary Adventists learn from the *QoD* event? Does the way forward involve assessing biblical, historical, theological, sociological and other evidence *and* developing meaning therefrom, aided by "the dialogue and dialectic of a community" that values every one of its individual members?

#### **Postscript: "What shall we do?"**

When biblical and recent history was placed in a fresh perspective on the day of Pentecost, the hearers were "cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'" Acts 2:37, NIV.

The *QoD* event developed into one of the church's thorniest problems for several reasons, chief of which was inadequate dialogue incorporating the full body of evidence. The enthusiasts on both sides were constrained by concerns and pressures that prevented them from being open with even the moderate cautioners in their respective communions; stentorian voices on both edges of the discussion were not invited to participate in an adequate way and came to see themselves as excluded or at least marginalised. Even if this situation seemed inevitable in the 1950s, it is unthinkable in the Information Age that characterises the early years of Century 21. Currently, research is more adequately democratised. Therefore, it may be fruitful to invite all the parties with interests in the *QoD* event to participate in a process (even if it takes five years!) with objectives such as the following.<sup>52</sup>

***Firstly, to assemble, make more freely available, and evaluate all the primary and secondary sources that inform the current discussion of the *QoD* event in its***

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<sup>52</sup> Ideally, for the process to be effective, a steering committee would be helpful; not to do the work, but to coordinate the process. The committee could include a statesman as chair, an experienced administrator as vice-chair, a historian/pastor as secretary, representatives from major disciplines, pastors from representative local churches, together with members that mirror their congregants.

**historical, biblical, theological, sociological, and other dimensions.**<sup>53</sup> Databases that already exist at the General Conference headquarters (Archives, Ellen G. White Estate) and at Adventist institutions (for example, Andrews University, La Sierra University, Loma Linda University, Pacific Union College,<sup>54</sup> Newbold College, Avondale College). While these already go a long way toward facilitating this primary goal, the sources cited in the papers delivered at the October 2007 conference will enrich the process and enable a comprehensive and thus effective literature review to be completed. It is essential to apply in the interpretive task all the research disciplines that have insights relevant for the process and its potential outcomes.<sup>55</sup>

**Secondly, to identify all the component questions, treat them with respect and attempt to offer and foster adequate responses.**<sup>56</sup> For instance, the issue that has caused the most debate and division, during the past fifty years, is Christ's nature during His incarnation. Why? For some participants this is an intense, existential question that determines their salvation. They ask: How can I be saved *unless* Jesus is just like me? For

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<sup>53</sup> Since Avondale College was accredited during 2006 to offer PhD studies in a range of disciplines, it has attempted to develop and keep up-to-date an annotated guide for those of its higher degree students who wish to focus on Adventist Studies. Such attempts may offer some basic guidance for the process here recommended.

<sup>54</sup> As an example of bibliographic resources, seven pages by Gary Shearer set a useful pattern. See Gary W. Shearer, "Evangelical/SDA Dialogues of the 1950s and the Controversy Over the Book 'Questions on Doctrine,' A Bibliographic Guide to the Sources in the Heritage Room, Pacific Union College Library," 8 May 1992. In an e-mail (Shearer to Patrick, 7 September 2007), Shearer notes he will shortly add 19 new items: three in the book/dissertation category, ten articles and six websites. Recent dissertations offer detailed assistance; note especially the one by Julius Nam. Student papers written at Adventist institutions mirror the state of knowledge in specific eras. See, for instance, sixteen pages by Robert K. McIver, "The Evangelical Conferences of 1955-6," a paper presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for CHIS: Development of SDA Theology, November 1981.

<sup>55</sup> Some of the research disciplines that are relevant for the task in hand are mentioned above and are so obvious they are unlikely to be excluded from the process. However, some researchers who claim to offer definitive answers too often neglect others. As a case in point, when the Biblical Research Institute and the Ellen G. White Estate agreed on a comprehensive research initiative during 1980 (see my paper "[The Inspired and Inspiring Ellen White, Part 1: 1982 in Historical Perspective](http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/white/patrick/egw-inspired.htm)," <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/white/patrick/egw-inspired.htm>), sociology was included but has (up to this point) been little utilised in official studies or (at least) reports. My reading of the articles, books or master-level/doctoral-level dissertations of selected sociologists (William Sims Bainbridge, John Knight, Robert Wolfgramm, Peter Harry Ballis, Ronald Lawson, Gregory Schneider, Michael Chamberlain, Bruce Manners, Rick Ferret) leads me to the conviction that their discipline has profound insights that can be constructive for the task in hand. Note, for instance, the tenor of Wolfgramm's writing since his "Leadership Responses to the Brinsmead Agitation, 1955-1970: A Sociological Perspective," DF 938, and his article "Between Ellen and Hell – Learning to Live With Imperfection," <http://sdanet.org/atissue/white/wolfgramm-egw.htm>. Seventh-day Adventism is essentially a quest for truth (cf. Robert M. Johnston, "A Search for Truth," *Adventist Review: Adventist History Issue*, 15 September 1983, 6-8) and thus it cannot ignore any avenue of understanding that God has given His people.

<sup>56</sup> We need to reassess the changes that have occurred in the style of Christian apologetics during the past half-century; for instance, see John G. Stackhouse, *Humble Apologetics: Defending the Faith Today* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). The tone and content of Adventist apologetics in the 1950s does not in all respects meet the needs of members in 2007.

others, the question is a different one that is just as intense and has comparable existential potency: How can I be saved *if* Jesus is just like me? Such questions are biblical ones that make first call upon the church's Scripture specialists; only when the exegetical task is completed and informed by historical enquiry can theologising hope to achieve sustainable results. The conclusions that are derived from the staged process, however, must be cherished as part of a saving faith that is often required to transcend the paucity of human reason and explanation. In other words, we can believe and benefit from realities that at least some of us cannot understand or explain in purely rational terms; for example, compare computer science with the Christology that affirms Jesus Christ as truly God and truly man. Some of the intense conflict that surrounds the doctrine of Christ's nature during the incarnation derives from earnest attempts to define the indefinable.<sup>57</sup>

**Thirdly, to facilitate dialogue (even if it must include dialectic) centred on the prayerful and thorough evaluation of all the available evidence.**<sup>58</sup> Thus far, for fifty years, the discussion has been seriously impaired because crucial segments of information were unavailable to, or ignored by, key individuals or groups.<sup>59</sup> Lay members are crucial to this process; indeed, the endeavour will fail unless it implements such heritage-informed convictions as that concerning the priesthood of all believers.

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<sup>57</sup> I acknowledge a wide array of potential solutions for this core problem, expressed in the literature (see for instance, F.D. Nichol, A.W. Anderson) or proposed by respondents (including Len Tolhurst, Woodrow Whidden, and others) to drafts of this script. These require detailed consideration, something that is beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>58</sup> Some of the strictures that this process will face are outlined effectively by Eric C. Webster of South Africa and Yaroslav Paliy of Russia; emails, Webster to Patrick, 5 September 2007; Paliy to Patrick, 6 September 2007. Effective dialogue requires active listening and a measure of patience on both sides; compare the history of the Free Presbyterian Church founded 56 years ago by Dr. Ian Paisley with Paisley's 2007 attempts to converse with Martin McGuinness. It would appear that the force used so destructively and the decades of rhetoric (interpreted as "bigoted and unreasonable") did not help the warring parties to achieve the outcomes they pursued. See "Paisley to quit church role," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 September 2007, 11. Can we as Adventists learn from the Irish, the Palestinians/Israelis, experts in conflict management, and Christians who believe Jesus' embodiment of "grace and truth" informs even the "doing" of theology?

<sup>59</sup> One of the educators who has fostered "the dialogue and dialectic of a community" effectively is Fritz Guy of La Sierra University. Note his perceptive papers from as far back at 1980, gathered and interpreted in his volume *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1999). Guy's succinct description of constructive change, enunciated during 1980 in his paper "The Future of Adventist Theology: A Personal View," suggests the importance of five processes: "(1) reformulation, as eternal truth is understood in the language of each different culture and each new generation; (2) clarification and specification, as new questions arise and require a more careful investigation and more precise answers; (3) elaboration, as the church enlarges its thinking by probing deeper and thinking farther; (4) application, as the ongoing course of human history produces new situations; (5) reinterpretation, as further study and the witness of the Holy Spirit indicate that the Biblical revelation means something slightly different from what it has been understood to mean." Cf. *Thinking Theologically*, 83-93 and elsewhere. Rex Moe suggests if papers presented at the *QoD* conference "are to be put into the hands of people in the pew, that the theological terminology is in terms the laity can understand," Moe to Patrick, 21 September 2007.

Every participant needs to be valued and encouraged to assess the full range of evidence and the entire scope of the interpretive options. This process will call for suitable procedural models to be developed and evaluated. For instance, a family model may be instructive: where the physical illness of a member is under consideration by a family, no relevant medical speciality that is available to them should be excluded, but finally the tough decisions must be made with the participation of non-specialists. It could be something like that for the Adventist family as it addresses this issue. Church leaders may be tempted to be judges and dictators when the circumstances may require a complex combination of roles, including those of facilitators, educators, and umpires.<sup>60</sup> The *QoD* event can well supply Adventism with an effective case study that informs crucial aspects of its administrative planning, pastoral care, and mission.

**Fourthly, to apply the findings derived over time to the understanding of the Church's identity<sup>61</sup> and the implementation of its mission.** The process of finding, making available, evaluating, and applying evidence will erase much of the distrust, lay to rest many of the vindictive charges, and clarify most of the controversial issues that have been in evidence since 1957. Even so, there will be matters that are still seen from different vantage points.<sup>62</sup> But, if the process has been open, thorough, honest, and respectful, for the majority there will be a great deal of common ground and thus an enhanced, reciprocal appreciation for the convictions of other participants.<sup>63</sup> Dedicated

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<sup>60</sup> Some leaders of the 1950s and beyond saw themselves as sole participants in the process of determining truth, as responsible for the judging process, or as required to dictate outcomes. The balancing of administrative and other roles was a concern of both Consultation I (1980) and Consultation II (1981). Cf. the insights presented in a Distinguished Faculty Lecture by Roland Blaich, available on the Walla Walla University website.

<sup>61</sup> During recent years there have been concerted attempts to better understand SDA identity. Cf. the South Pacific Division Bible Congress 2006, reported in *Record*, *Spectrum*, and *Adventist Today*. For perspectives of other Christians, see Kenneth R. Samples, "The Recent Truth About Seventh-day Adventism," *Christianity Today*, 5 February 1990, 18-21; William J. Whalen, "Is the end near? A look at Seventh-day Adventists," *US Catholic*, April 1994, 14-19. The Samples article concludes: "May it not be said that Seventh-day Adventism is more sure of its denominational distinctives than it is of the gospel." Graeme Tretheway, Associate Librarian, Avondale College, secured the Samples and Whalen articles for me.

<sup>62</sup> Note the perceptive comments by Lowell Cooper, "Disagreeing Faithfully: How to understand and appreciate the difference between unity and uniformity," *Adventist Review*, 28 July 2007; cf. subsequent letters, as in *Adventist Review*, 23 August 2007.

<sup>63</sup> Observe the criticism evoked by the idea of dialogue between Adventists and other Christians during the 1950s, over against the irenic participation in Evangelical conferences by current members of the Adventist Theological Society. Cf. the fruitfulness of a 22-year relationship between an Australian Evangelical (Dr. Stuart Piggin) and Adventism as indicated by Brenton Stacey, "Christians encouraged to embrace state," and Arthur Patrick, "Time to play politics again?" *Record*, 25 August 2007, 7. See also Arthur Patrick, "Christianity and a 'good society' in Australia: A first response to Stuart Piggin's Murdoch Lecture," *TEACH: A Journal of Christian Education* 1, no. 1, 45-49, also accessible from [www.ministryofteaching.edu.au](http://www.ministryofteaching.edu.au). Re Adventists as Evangelicals, note Piggin's Murdoch Lecture (2007) and the evidence and its evaluation presented earlier by Hilary M. Carey, "Ellen G. White and Female Prophetic Authority in the Adventist tradition in Australia," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies* 5, no. 1 (June 2000), 3-19. Also note "Adventists, World Evangelical Alliance Anticipate Statements," *Adventist Review*, 13 September 2007, 21; Bill Knott, "Just Waiting to Be Asked," *Adventist Review*, 23

servants of God for whom Adventist identity is precious will be thus drawn together in an effective process of revival and reformation. One outcome will be an enhanced morale: active, generous, selfless cooperation in bringing the everlasting gospel “to every nation, tribe, language, and people.”<sup>64</sup>

### **After ten months: a reflection on 1 October 2007**

A principal weakness of this paper is its inability to incorporate adequately all the insights and suggestions shared with me by respondents who live in various parts of the world. One of many potential examples must suffice at this point. The extensive writings of Eric C. Webster are merely acknowledged by the mention of his name in footnote fifteen. Dr. Webster’s extensive writings such as *Crosscurrents in Adventist Christology* (available for reading on-line at <http://sdanet.org/atissue/books/webster>) offer a coherent context within which to interpret his e-mail message received on 16 September 2007, which (in part) reads as follows:

*Once the Conference is over, I would appreciate a brief word from you as to your opinion of its procedure and outcome. We will think of all of you and pray for the Conference.*

*I know your paper is a historical overview rather than a vigorous defense or a strident note of opposition but could I just make this comment. Don't you think you could make a statement in gratitude for the appendices placed at the back of the book giving Ellen White's statements on Christ and the Atonement?*

*Those statements on the Atonement show clearly that it was Ellen White who was responsible for shifting the emphasis of the Atonement from 1844 in the sanctuary (our earlier position) to a complete Atonement on the cross. If we have an argument about this it should be with Ellen White and not with Questions on Doctrine.*

I have noted a large number of such relevant topics or suggestions that this paper cannot incorporate adequately. Twenty other presentations and the discussion at the conference may well cover these matters effectively. Therefore, this note merely records my appreciation for the scope and quality of the comments submitted to me by e-mail, orally, or by telephone. I intend to include better recognition of matters of substance in the file that I will give to the church’s archives at the end of 2007.<sup>65</sup>

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August 2007, 5.

<sup>64</sup> The preparation of articles for South Pacific and North American *Signs of the Times* (2007) on such individuals as Wycliffe, Huss, Tyndale, and Luther has caused me to reflect again on the qualities and the potential of reformers/martyrs. How can our Church value such individuals and effectively include them in its life and witness, despite their diversity? Have we been more effective in honouring such people within the past experience of Christianity than in appreciating them within our own community of faith?

<sup>65</sup> This draft, dated 1 October 2007 and edited slightly thereafter (up to 29 November 2007), is that submitted to the conference organisers at their requested deadline; the organisers made all the papers available to attendees at the conference. My postal address, telephone number, and e-mail address are given above so that anyone who desires to do so can offer me input before the abovementioned file is archived at the end of 2007. Further, if readers of this paper wish to request specific documentation beyond that given in the footnotes, I will do my best to respond to requests received by snail-mail, e-mail, or telephone.

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