

Evangelical Adventism—*Questions on Doctrine's* Legacy

Larry Christoffel

David VanDenburgh, senior pastor of the Seventh-day Adventists Campus Hill Church in Loma Linda, California, and I, an associate pastor of the same church, visited Walter Martin in 1987. At the same time we met him, we were introduced to Kenneth R. Samples, on the staff of Martin's organization, The Christian Research Institute. We learned that they were planning to do an article on Seventh-day Adventism, and we were happy to talk with them.

Samples' article, "From Controversy to Crisis, An Updated Assessment of Seventh-day Adventism," appeared in the Summer, 1988 *Christian Research Journal*.¹ According to Samples, the "controversy" which the Evangelical/SDA Dialogues (1955,1956) and the publication of *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*² (hereafter, *QOD*) stirred up continued through the 1960s and 70s. Samples questioned whether the church would continue in the same direction as *QOD* or return to a "more traditional understanding of the faith"³

He identified two groups within Adventism aligning themselves with the polarization mentioned above. The one, continuing in basic agreement with *QOD*, he labeled, "Evangelical Adventism," and the other, opposing *QOD*, he called, "Traditional Adventism". Differences of opinion on Righteousness by Faith (Was Righteousness Justification only or both Justification and Sanctification?), the human nature of Jesus Christ (Did Jesus inherit Adam's sinless pre-fall or his sinful post-fall nature), the sanctuary (Was the Atonement complete at Calvary, or not?), assurance of salvation (Could a Christian have it our not?) and the authority of Ellen White (Was Scripture its own interpreter or were Mrs. White's writings an infallible interpreter of Scripture?) characterized the two groups.⁴

Samples reasoned that the conflict moved to "crisis" level when an Australian theologian Desmond Ford, challenged the traditional understanding of the Adventist sanctuary doctrine. "He [Ford] argued that the literalistic and perfectionistic understanding of these doctrines promoted by traditional Adventism had no biblical warrant, and were accepted primarily because of Mrs. White's vision, which confirmed them."⁵ Ford had been given the opportunity to prepare a defense he did in a 990-page book, *Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgment*⁶. After the August, 1980 Glacier View Sanctuary Review Committee, called to review Ford's views, met, Ford was fired and his ministerial credentials were removed. Hundreds who agreed with him have been affected, many losing their positions with the church.⁷

¹ Kenneth R. Samples, "From Controversy to Crisis, an Updated Assessment of Seventh-day Adventism," *Christian Research Journal*, Summer 1988, 9-14.

² Prepared by a Representative Group of Seventh-day Adventist Leaders, Bible Teachers, and Editors, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C., 1957.

³ Kenneth R. Samples, op cit, 12.

⁴ Kenneth R. Samples, op cit, 12,13..

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Desmond Ford, *Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgment*, Evangelion Press, Casselberry, Florida, 1980.

⁷ Kenneth R. Samples, op cit, 14. (For further documentation see Peter H. Ballis, "A Study of the Process of Leaving the Adventist Ministry," Praeger Publishers, Westport, Connecticut, London, 1999. This thesis deals with those leaving the Adventist ministry in Australia and New Zealand in the years after the Ford crisis.)

VanDenburgh and Christoffel arranged for Samples and Martin to meet with a select group of pastors of the Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists on the morning of January 26, 1989 and with the faculty of the School of Religion of Loma Linda University, both the Loma Linda and La Sierra Campuses, in the afternoon of the same day to discuss Samples' article.

During the morning meeting with the pastors Martin shared his convictions: "Now we are faced with a crisis, and one that has to be met. In *QOD* they quite correctly stated that Mrs. White was not canonical, and that her writings were not the supreme authority for the interpretation of Holy Scripture. . . . Now, as Ken has pointed out in his articles, and as I have, we have evolved to the place where at jeopardy is all the hard work that that committee put in, all the hard work that was done in the mission field and in the educational institutions, and schools and colleges and seminaries and churches all over the world. And what is the controversy about? Not just the investigative judgment, but about Mrs. White, in the light of what we now know—far more extensive than we knew before. Was she a non-Christian cultist? No! Was she a false prophet? No! She was a lady that the Holy Spirit used in a specific context to meet a very real need for a group of people who desperately needed it and who were believers at the time, and God used her, I believe, in that conjunction. Now Mrs. White has emerged as the final arbiter of all Bible doctrine. Now she has emerged as the sole interpreter of Holy Scripture, so that if anybody disagrees with Mrs. White, your credentials, your churches, your teaching positions are in jeopardy, and people say, 'But that's not true.' Do not tell me it's not true. I have talked with so many Adventists who say that it is true that I could line them up from here to Los Angeles.

"The problem we're facing is, will we sacrifice all the gains of the past, all the fellowship, and risk all the nasty, miserable cultic arguments that have gone before us, over just one thing, essentially which is, 'Is the Holy Spirit the infallible interpreter? Is Scripture itself the supreme authority? Or is it necessary for us, when we have doubts, to go to Mrs. White or anybody else for the final word?' We're at that juncture. Now we can crawl comfortably back into our shells, and protect ourselves, [and assume] that time will take care of it, or we can pray for repentance rather than revenues, and trust the Holy Spirit to meet the need of the Adventist denomination because it is not based upon EGW, her writings, the Spirit of Prophecy or anything else. It is based upon the Word of God and what Jesus Christ said. That's the core, that's the foundation. That's the main thing that we have to stand for."⁸

Martin shared a vivid memory he had meeting with Adventist scholars who had been brought into the discussions on the Book of Hebrews: "I recall the day it happened, when Dr. Murdock and Dr. Heppenstall were present, and the question came up. They had brought the men because we were exegeting on the sanctuary doctrine, the holy place, the most holy place, and so forth, in the Hebrews. And George Cannon accompanied me on these. He's professor of Greek at Bethel Seminary. He was then professor of Greek and Theology at Nyack Missionary College and has a doctorate from Union Seminary in Greek, and a brilliant scholar. And George, I remember, went head to head with Dr. Heppenstall and Dr. Murdock with the Greek New Testament there, and they went line upon line through the text, and as they got to the crucial point there, everybody was listening carefully to what they said. Cannon looked at them and said, 'There is just no sense debating the issue any further. The text is clear. At His resurrection, Jesus Christ entered into the second apartment of the sanctuary, into the holiest of all, with His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us. This could not, did not, take place in 1844.' And the gentlemen looked very long and hard, and Cannon said, 'The text says He went into the second apartment, didn't He?'"

⁸ Walter Martin and Ken Samples Meeting with Ministers, Loma Linda Campus Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church (1/26/89). Manuscript available at the Library of Loma Linda University., 18,19.

And Dr. Heppenstall looked up and Roy Anderson said, ‘Well?’ And Heppenstall said, ‘Yes, into the second apartment, into the holiest of all, with his own blood at the resurrection. The text says so.’ Murdock said the same thing. Now, you can read Desmond Ford on this in great detail. He’s probably one of your most articulate, and surely one of your most brilliant men I’ve met on Adventism and on general theology. I think you’ll find that he’s gone a very commendable job of exegeting this as well, but that was admitted at that time, and it was also admitted at that time that Mrs. White had taught the first apartment doctrine along with the others, but that it would not stand the test of exegesis in Hebrews. Now if you read *QOD* on this, they went very clearly and in depth to explain what Jesus did from their perspective of clarification. Now, I don’t really care whether you say, ‘clarify’ or ‘reverse field,’ the important thing is, you get back to what the text says. The ultimate point of contention is, ‘What does the text say?’ Not what somebody says the text says. I had enough of that in Romanism. I had enough of it in my upbringing of the church. I don’t care what somebody says the text says. That’s why I learned the language to find out what the text says. And I know what it says. And it says it didn’t happen in 1844. No way, Jose! You can believe it if you want to, but it ain’t there. Now that’s clarification, or reversal, but it sure is truth. I can tell you that!’⁹

Martin repeated essentially the same thing when he and Samples met with the Faculty of the School of Religion that afternoon. Ray Cottrell, who was present, had stated that the main problem was that denominational leaders were saying the church had “clarified,” not “changed,” its doctrinal position, but Martin and Barnhouse were saying it had “changed”. Note Martin’s response: “Ken has dealt with some of the reasons why *QOD* wasn’t reprinted. Anderson told me himself before his death that part of the reasons were in that there were a powerful group of individuals who did not agree with some of the things which were written in *QOD* and also that they (some of the brethren) felt that they had clarified a great many issues, but they did not like the word, ‘change,’ That’s exactly how you looked to us. On one side, it was, ‘We’ve never changed,’ and on the other side, we were getting statements which looked to be the direct opposite of what had been previously affirmed, notably in the area of the sanctuary doctrine. And I can never forget when Ted Heppenstall and brother Murdock were called in from the seminary when we were in session in our conference to exegete with George Cannon, the eighth and ninth chapters of the epistle to the Hebrews in Greek. Greek was Cannon’s forte, so he handled that. And they went over it, line upon line, precept upon precept, because I had said the previous day that Jesus entered the holiest of all with His own blood at the resurrection, and not in 1844. And that this, unfortunately, had been interpreted literally by early Adventists including Mrs. White and it was not consistent with the proper exegesis of these passages. So they brought in two Greek scholars to discuss it with us. And we discussed it. As the thing continued, verse by verse, going through the passages, Cannon got to the place where he and Heppenstall read together, ‘He entered once into the holiest of all with his own blood,’ and Cannon said, ‘This was written before 1844, and therefore He entered at the resurrection.’ And Roy Anderson said, ‘Is that what the text says?’ And Heppenstall said, ‘Yes.’ And Murdock said, ‘Yes’. And then they all looked at us and said, Yes, that’s true. Once for all at the resurrection.’

“Now, we left to them how they reconciled and clarified early Adventist statements on the literal sanctuary. That was not our province. Our province was to try to communicate an essentially orthodox Adventism affirming basic Biblical doctrines, so that evangelicals could see, that despite differences of opinion and perhaps even interpretation, we were dealing with brothers and that we could not go around calling each other ‘cultists’ or ‘mark of the beast’ or all the rest of it. That was

⁹ *Ibid.*, 31-33.

the basis idea. So, what you call ‘clarification,’ in a number of publications after *QOD* and at the time of *QOD*, we refer to as ‘changes,’ because to us, they appear to be ‘changes’.”¹⁰

For Martin, and for Samples, who stated so in his article which we were reviewing, the issue was whether Seventh-day Adventists were taking their understanding of the Sanctuary doctrine from the Bible only or from Mrs. White’s interpretation. Ford, Martin believed, had been unjustly fired because he was found agreeing with what Heppenstall and Murdoch had conceded to him and Barnhouse during the 1950s. He believed that opposition to Ford was coming from those who wanted to impose Mrs. White’s interpretation of Scripture upon Adventism.¹¹

At this same meeting, Martin stated that he was revising the book *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism* in the light of what had happened since it was published in 1960. He and Samples were also carefully going over the new volume, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe 27 Fundamental Beliefs* (Review and Herald Publishing, 1988), which had just come out. Unfortunately, Martin did not live long enough to carry out his plan; he died before the end of the year.

Kenneth Samples, who had already represented Martin’s and the Christian Research Institute’s views on Seventh-day Adventism, published a second article on Adventism in the February 5, 1990 issue of *Christianity Today*, “The Recent Truth About Seventh-day Adventism”¹² By the time this article was written, Samples had had the benefit of talking with quite a few pastors, administrators, and scholars around the Riverside, Loma Linda area. In addition to identifying “Evangelical Adventism” and “Traditional Adventism,” Samples mentioned a “Liberal” strand he had observed which “minimize the concept of forensic justification, the legal metaphor of God acting as a judge who acquits us of our sins because of the doing and dying of Christ. In addition, the typical Liberal Adventist avoids describing the Atonement as Jesus’ suffering the wrath of God against sin as our substitute. In essence, Liberal Adventism denies the view of the Atonement at the heart of the Reformation.”¹³ Samples also noticed influence of the “Third Wave” now “lapping at Adventism’s shores”¹⁴

¹⁰ Meeting Between Walter Martin, Ken Samples and the Faculty of the School of Religion, Loma Linda University (Loma Linda and La Sierra Compasses), at Linda Hall of the Campus Hill SDA Church on Thursday, January 26, 1989 from 1 to 3 p.m., 26-28. (See also “Who Is Telling the Truth About Seventh Day Adventism?,” (transcripts of a series of televised programs produced by The John Ankerberg Show, P.O. Box 8977, Chattanooga, Tn, Guests Dr. William Johnsson and Dr. Walter Martin, page 9. Martin tells essentially the same story regarding Cannon, Heppenstall and Murdoch regarding Hebrews 9.)

¹¹For an recent evaluation of the relation of *Questions on Doctrine* and Ford’s views of the Investigative Judgment, see Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary, Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1989, revised 2007: “Although the various twists in this debate could hardly have been predicted, the latter developments can all be seen to have stemmed from the [1980] Twenty-Seven Fundamental Beliefs. Once this declaration reaffirmed the Sanctuary doctrine, the other components that went with it, the sinful nature of Christ and the perfectibility of humans, started to fit back into place. The events between the adoption of the new statement of beliefs in 1980 and the publication of the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* in 2000 can also be viewed as the mirror image of those that took place between the publication of *Questions on Doctrine* and the rejection of Christ’s heavenly ministry by Desmond Ford. Just as *Questions on Doctrine* eventually unraveled the Sanctuary doctrine, so the reaffirmation of the Sanctuary doctrine gradually undermined *Questions on Doctrine*.” (97)

¹² Kenneth R. Samples, “The Recent Truth About Seventh-day Adventists,” *Christianity Today*, February 5, 1990, 18-21. C. Raymond Holmes responded to Samples and “Evangelical Adventism” in “Adventist Identity and Evangelical Criticism,” *Ministry*, February, 1993, 22-24,27. Michelle Rader, in turn, reacted to Raymond Holme’s article in her “Adventists and Evangelicals: another Viewpoint,” *Ministry*, June, 1993, 18,19.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 20,21.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

VanDenburgh and Christoffel contacted Southeastern California Conference and set up meeting between Samples and conference pastors in three locations: Loma Linda, Garden Grove, and San Diego. All pastors of the conference were invited to these meetings and to participate in a survey to determine to what extent the pastors of the conference would identify with kinds of Adventism Samples had labeled (i.e., “evangelical” “traditional” and “liberal”). We also wanted to know how the pastors would respond to specific theological issues raised in the article.

68 ministers of Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (approximately 1/3 of the pastors in the conference) responded to the survey. The following is the response to the question, “Which type of Adventism, as Samples has described them, would you most identify with personally?” (Some identified with a combination of two types): Traditional (14 or 20.6%); Traditional, Evangelical (4 or 5.9%); Traditional Liberal (1 or 1.5%); Evangelical (38 or 55.9%); Evangelical Liberal (3 or 4.4%); Liberal (3 or 4.4%); Neutral Liberal (1 or 1.5%); Neutral 3 or 4.4%; None (1 or 1.5%)

Based on this finding, we concluded that there was a significant number of pastors within our conference who would identify themselves with the label, “Evangelical”. 38 (55.9%) chose the category “Evangelical” with another 7 (10.3%) choosing a combination of “Evangelical” and either “Traditional” or “Liberal”. In order of numbers, the next highest preference was “Traditional” 14 (20.6%) plus combinations of “Evangelical” and “Liberal” (another 5 or about 7.4%) The category, “Liberal” was picked by 3 (4.4%) with another 5 (7.4%) blending “Traditional,” “Evangelical,” or “Neutral” with “Liberal”. 3 (4.4%) indicated they were “Neutral” with an addition 1 (1.5%) calling himself/herself “Neutral-Liberal”. Finally, 1 (1.5%) selected “None”. Based on these survey results, Samples was basically correct in identifying the main types of pastors, though there was some overlap in the categories. The numbers of pastors from greatest to smallest of those completing the survey is Evangelical, Traditional, Liberal, and Neutral. However, it must be remembered that 2/3 of the pastors in the Conference did not complete the survey. Given the tendency of Liberals and Neutrals to ignore issues such as the ones raised in Samples’ article, it is possible that there could be a sizable Liberal and Neutral pastors who did not weigh in.

Our survey also asked the pastors to respond to selected statements from Samples’ article. We attempted to match the responses to the various theological camps.

- “...Jesus Christ had taken a sinful nature at his Incarnation” 48 (71%) of the 68 disagreed (an “Evangelical” response), 12 (17%) agreed (a “Traditional” response); the rest were blank (2), “?”, (1), and Neutral (5). This indicates a higher percentage of Evangelical responses.
- “...righteousness by faith: It was justification only; sanctification was but the accompanying fruit...justification is distinct from, and logically prior to, sanctification. Nevertheless, the two were not to be separated.” 49 (73%) agree (an “Evangelical” response); 11 (16%) disagree (a “Traditional” response); 2 were blank; 1 (1%) wrote, “JbyF only=RbyF”; 5 (7%), “Neutral”.
- Would you “minimize the concept of forensic justification, the legal metaphor of God acting as a judge who acquits us of our sins because of the doing and dying of Christ?” 46 (68%) disagreed (probably both “Evangelical” and “Traditional”), 9 (13%) agreed (“Liberal” response), 10 (15%) were Neutral; 2 (3%) “Blank”; 1 (1%) put, “Too Broad”.
- Would you “avoid describing the Atonement as Jesus’ suffering the wrath of God against sin as our Substitute?” 47 (69%) said, “no” (an Evangelical and Traditionalist response); 11 (16%) agree (Liberal response). 9 responded “Neutral”; and 1 left the answer blank.
- Are you “comfortable with diversity of practice and pluralism of thought” within Adventism: 46% (68%) Agree; 13 (19%) Disagree; 6 Neutral, 1 Maybe; 2 Blank

- "...that the doctrine [the Adventist sanctuary doctrine] had no biblical warrant, and was only accepted because of Ellen G. White." 37 (54%) disagree; 15 (22%) agree; 12 (18%) Neutral; 1 "Qualified"; 1 "?"; 2 Blank. Only 54% disagree with the statement with the rest either agreeing (and this was Ford's contention) or remaining neutral or non-responsive.

Response to this statement could indicate that the points Ford made are widely accepted. Results from a survey taken before and after the Glacier View Sanctuary Review Committee meeting indicate that between a fourth and a third of the participants, including administrators, scholars and other religious leaders, agreed with Ford's views.¹⁵

- "...Adventism's identity should not be tied to a doctrine that was indefensible from Scripture, but in its acceptance of the eternal gospel, justification by faith." 48 (71%) agree; 11 (16%) disagree; 4, Neutral; 1, "Not Sure"; 1, "Not like Question"; 3 Blank.

There is a preference by most pastors to concentrate on the gospel, to establishing our identity rather than in basing it on something indefensible. Many the Traditionalists would probably argue that the Investigative Judgment doctrine is based on Scripture rather than on Mrs. White's interpretation. A substantial percentage of Seventh-day Adventist ministers in the Southeastern California Conference taking the survey identify with Samples' "Evangelical Adventists".

The responses might be compared with another survey by the "Survey Research Service" taken September 25, 1989 of pastors, administrators, teachers, and others within the Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.¹⁶ A response rate of 273 of 400 possible addresses was 68%, an above average response rate. Only pastors responses are indicated.

- 24. "Some of the recently-expressed objections to the traditional Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14 ("then shall the sanctuary be cleansed") are valid": Strongly Agree (18%); Agree (26%); Neutral (22%); Disagree (18%); Strongly Disagree (16%). Notice that only 34% disagree with the statement. This means that 66% of the pastors don't affirm our traditional position on Daniel 8:14, or parts of it.
- 28. "Some of the 27 Fundamental Beliefs are based primarily on the writings of Ellen White.": Strongly Agree (14%); Agree (23%); Neutral (10%); Disagree (30%); Strongly Disagree (23%). Notice that only 53% of the pastors felt strongly enough to disagree with the statement. And at least 37% agree with it!
- 45. "Ellen White is infallible interpreter of the Bible": Strongly Agree (6%); Agree (10%); Neutral (13%); Disagree (36%); Strongly Disagree (34%). Notice that Only 16% agree with the statement, and 70% do not, with 13% neutral!
- "A loyal Adventist has no reason to doubt the accuracy of Ellen White statements." Strongly Agree (11%); Agree (25%); Neutral (14%); Disagree (33%); Strongly Disagree (18%). Notice that only 36% agree with the statement, and 64% don't say they agree!
- "52. A person should accept the prophetic role of Ellen White before being baptized as a Seventh-day Adventist." Strongly Agree (11%); Agree (20%); Neutral (11%); Disagree

¹⁵ See Raymond F. Cottrell, "The Sanctuary Review Committee and its New Consensus," *Spectrum*, Volume 11, Number 2,4, 18,19, 25,26; Also, Raymond F. Cottrell, "A Post Mortem on Glacier View," [undated paper] pages 16,17.) Cottrell writes regarding the question of whether the time prophecies of Daniel were unconditional and could have been fulfilled in the first century: "Was it fair to deprive him of his credentials for believing as at least a third of the conferees did?" Significantly, Raymond F. Cottrell, in "An Evaluation of Certain Aspects of the Martin Articles," [a paper prepared for the authors of *QOD*], wrote, "Martin declares that none of our doctrinal beliefs or practices 'can be ascribed to Ellen G. White.' What about the investigative judgment, for instance? This teaching is certainly neither explicit nor clearly implicit in Scripture." page 7

¹⁶ "Survey of Attitudes and Opinions," September 25, 1989, Survey Research Service, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California"

(33%); Strongly Disagree (25%). Notice that only 31% agree with the statement, and 55% disagree with 11% neutral!

Apparently, most ministers surveyed do not believe that a person should have to accept Mrs. White's prophetic role before becoming a Seventh-day Adventist. Prior to 1950 none of our "Fundamental Principles" or "Fundamental Beliefs" statements mentioned Mrs. White by name. At the General Conference of that year, we added the following to the "Fundamental Belief" statement: "That the gift of the Spirit of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church. (1 Cor. 1:5-7; 1 Cor. 12:1-28; Rev. 12:17; Rev. 19:10; Amos 3:7; Hosea 12:10,13.) They recognize that this gift was manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White." We added the following Baptismal Vow: "Do you accept the doctrine of spiritual gifts, and do you believe that the Spirit of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church?"¹⁷ This was in spite of Mrs. White's own testimony (*Testimonies*, Volume 1, page 328) to the effect that no one should be barred from church membership just because they had not yet accepted her writings. These survey results show that most of the ministers surveyed in Southeastern California Conference do not agree with making a belief in Mrs. White or her writings a requirement for baptism and church membership. This is, typically, an Evangelical Adventist response.

In December, 1992 *Ministry* I published my "Viewpoint" article, "I, if I be lifted up"—a response," identifying four types of Seventh-day Adventists: (1) Evangelical, (2) an unnamed group which would correspond with Samples' "Traditional Adventists," (3) an unnamed group corresponding with Samples' "Liberal Adventists," and (4) a group I labeled, "A-theologicals".¹⁸ According to my article, Evangelical Adventism, in theory, goes back to the epical 1888 discussion of Righteousness by Faith. At issue were Justification by Faith and the relation of the authority of Scripture to the writings of Ellen G. White. The one group involved in the debate then opted for a view of Justification like that of the 16th Century Protestant Reformation, basing it on Scripture, rather than Mrs. White's former interpretation of Scripture. In the 1888 debate, another group preferred an understanding of Justification like the Roman Catholics and were ready to let the issue be decided on the basis of Mrs. White's earlier interpretation. Mrs. White herself readily accepted the Reformation Gospel. [The issue at the 1888 General Conference was whether one the "works of the law" in Galatians are the works of the ceremonial law only or the works of the entire law including the 10 commandment moral law. If the works are only those of the "ceremonial law" as Uriah Smith and G. I. Butler proposed and as Mrs. White had earlier indicated, the door is opened for the statement that one is justified by faith apart from the works of the law to be interpreted to mean that while the ceremonial law is excluded from justification, obedience to the 10 commandments is not. Thus, justification would be by both faith in Jesus and in our obedience to the moral law. Jones and Waggoner, and Mrs. White later, advocated that the "law" in Galatians 3:24 was the whole law, including the moral law!] The following excerpt from my article defines Evangelical Adventism as I understand it:

¹⁷ Compare "Article 19" of the 'Fundamental Beliefs' of the 1951 *Church Manual*, page 34, with the 1942 *Church Manual*, page 19; Also the Baptismal Vow" of the 1951 *Church Manual* on pages 56 and 57 with the 1942 *Church Manual*, page 86,87). Also "tithes" [Article 10 modified] and the health message [Article 7] were added to the 1951 Baptismal Vow, now increased from 11 points to 13.

¹⁸Larry Christoffel, "I, if I be lifted up"—a response," *Ministry*, December 1992, 12,13. This article was responding to two articles written by David L. Newman. Editor of *Ministry*: "Global Mission, My Mission," *Ministry*, April, 1992, and "I, If I Be Lifted up From the Earth," *Ministry*, October, 1992). Newman in an open letter to the General Conference president called for him to facilitate making the Gospel central to the Fundamental Belief statement and to show how other articles of faith relate to the Gospel.

“Evangelical Adventism would have the church focus on Christ’s vicarious, substitutionary work, including His life of obedience, and especially climaxing with His death on Calvary. For evangelical Adventists, ‘justification’ means the satisfaction of all the law’s claims in the final judgment through the doing and dying of the God-Man Jesus Christ in behalf of believing sinners. We, as sinners, deserve death, yet He took our sin and guilt upon Himself, dying in our place. The law demands perfect obedience from the one who would be justified, but we have none to provide. The obedience of Jesus and the character He developed living on earth is placed to the account of the believer (imputed) covering his or her inadequacies. God accepted the life and death of Jesus in our behalf and raised Him from the dead. Seated at God’s right hand in heaven, Jesus Christ is our righteousness, presenting us as righteous in His person to the Father. For evangelical Adventists this is the gospel.”

The article called for Seventh-day Adventists to come into consensus on the “Gospel,” of the first angel’s message of Revelation 14:6. We must do this if we are to fulfill our divine commission of preparing the world for Christ’s return. I made three suggestions toward accomplishing this goal: 1. Read and discuss the “Dynamics of Salvation” published in *Ministry* in February 1988. [first published in the *Adventist Review*, July 31, 1980 just before the Glacier View Sanctuary Review Committee met in August of 1980.] This document was prepared by a study committee on righteousness by faith and comes as close as possible to expressing an evangelical Adventist point of view. 2. Evangelical Adventists should form an official association of those who understand the gospel as justification (which always results in sanctification). 3. Have an open forum for discussion on gospel issues. Perhaps the *Review* could be used for this purpose.¹⁹

David VanDenburgh and I sent out a descriptive statement of Evangelical Adventism to about 50 individuals we thought might be interested in forming what we were wanting to call the “Society of Evangelical Adventists” (S.E.A. for short). With our description of “Evangelical Adventism,” we included my December, 1992 *Ministry* article, a letter from David VanDenburgh to David Newman commending him for the Christ-centered stand he had taken in *Ministry*, and the two Newman’s articles mentioned above.

We got back a variety of responses. Some were ready to sign up immediately. One person liked the idea of the Society, but thought the name should refer to “Gospel Adventists” since the word “evangelical” no longer was meaningful because of all the baggage attached to it. Some said they agreed with our theology but did not want to join because they believed the denomination was evangelical and they didn’t think we needed a special lobby group to contend with. One person said we would include the idea of sanctification by faith alone along with justification by faith alone.

The 1994 article, “Evangelical Adventism: Clinging to the Old Rugged Cross,” by Michelle Rader, a free lance writer from Damascus, Maryland, and pastors David VanDenburgh and Larry Christoffel of the Loma Linda Campus Hill Seventh-day Adventist church, linked *QOD* and Evangelical Adventism:²⁰ “In 1957, with the publication of *Questions on Doctrine*, denominational leaders clarified which theological stream represented official Seventh-day Adventism. Among the theological positions taken in *Questions on Doctrine* are the following: Scripture, not the writings of Ellen G. White, is the basis of Christian faith and practice; Jesus Christ is eternally God and sinless in his human nature; the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ or the salvation of sinners was finished at the cross, though he continues a mediatorial work in heaven; justification is through faith on account of Christ’s accomplishments and is not in any way based on our obedience to the

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Michelle Rader, David VanDenburgh, Larry Christoffel, “Evangelical Adventism: Clinging to the Old Rugged Cross,” *Adventist Today*, January/February, 1994.

law; Jesus Christ and him crucified is to be the center of Seventh-day Adventist belief and practice; and there are genuine, spiritually mature Christians outside of Seventh-day Adventism. Evangelical Adventists consider the positions taken in *Questions on Doctrine* to be an expression of both authentic and evangelical Adventism.”²¹

My 1996 article “What Evangelicals Say About Seventh-day Adventists,”²² described the meeting between Martin and Samples and Adventists and the articles by Kenneth Samples. It reviewed a book Samples’ co-authored, *Prophets of the Apocalypse*²³, (Baker, 1994) and mentions Samples writing the forward to Dale Ratzlaff’s *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*.²⁴ It also acknowledges the book, *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (edited by Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, 1991) in which Russell L. Staples, an Adventist scholar, provides a chapter, “Adventism,” among chapters by a variety of Christians with links to Evangelicalism.²⁵

Evangelical Adventism—*Questions on Doctrines*’s Legacy?

Evangelical Adventism was already an organization five years before Sabbatarian Adventists chose the name “Seventh-day Adventists” for their group.²⁶ They retained Miller’s

²¹ *Ibid.* J. David Newman’s reviewed the *Adventist Today* articles on Adventism, including the one on Evangelical Adventism in his, “How much diversity can we stand?” *Ministry*/April 1994, 5,26. Also, Robert S. Folkenberg, “Will the Real Evangelical Adventist Please Stand Up?” *Adventist Review*, April, 1997, 16-19.

²² Larry Christoffel, “What Evangelicals Say About Seventh-day Adventists,” *Adventist Today*, September/October 1996.

²³ Kenneth Samples, Erwin de Castro, Richard Abanes, & Robert Lyle, *Prophets of the Apocalypse*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1994, See especially the statement about Mrs. White on pages 112, 113: “It should be mentioned here that, unlike other religious figureheads of the nineteenth century, Ellen G. White’s doctrinal guidance served to bring the Adventist church closer to rather than away, from orthodoxy.” (112) Again: “Furthermore, if it had not been for White, Seventh-day Adventism may never have embraced the orthodox Christian doctrine of salvation (justification by faith alone through grace alone.” (113).

²⁴ Dale Ratzlaff, Foreward by Kenneth Samples, *The Cutlic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*, Life Assurance Ministries, Sedona, Arizona, 1996. Samples’ Foreward from pages 7-9.

²⁵ Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnson (editors), *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1991. See “Adventism” by Russell L. Staples, page 57 ff. Staples refers to “the movement’s Arminian base,” (page 62) Also, “The cluster of doctrines relating to the Fall and sin and salvation constitute a thoroughgoing evangelical Arminianism.” (63). “As in Wesleyan theology, salvation is thought of in two consecutive moments. Primary is the divine conferral of grace in justification; there follows the lifelong process of sanctification, which is thought of ontologically as healing and making righteous. Sanctification is regarded as being as much a work of grace as is justification.” (63) states that “...Adventism is akin more to American Arminianism than to the Wesleyan doctrine. There lies in this tendency an invitation to legalism—not in formal doctrine, for there salvation by grace alone is clearly defined, but in Christian experience. It is recognized that in the practical life, the temptation in this direction is strengthened by the emphasis on Sabbath-keeping, law, and judgment.” (64). “There is a breadth that goes beyond a *declaring* righteous to a *making* righteous; but, as always, there is a price to pay. The clarity of the Lutheran concept of salvation, as being God’s work from beginning to end, gives way to a Wesleyan synthesis of divine sovereignty and human responsibility.” (64). Of Mrs. White, he write, “Her subsequent experience of life work were thoroughly grounded in an underlying Arminian evangelicalism” (page 65) The footnote says, “Almost all of Ellen White’s writings betray this Arminian orientation; it is overtly evident in *The Desire of Ages* (*Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1989*) and *Steps to Christ* (New York: Revell, 1892). The latter, as the title suggests, is thoroughly Arminian and borders on the literature of the Holiness movement.” (page 71) It should be noted that Donald W. Dayton does not believe the expression “evangelical” is helpful, while Robert K. Johnston considers it useful (See Chapter 14, “Some Doubts about the Usefulness of the Category “evangelical” by Donald W. Dayton, pages 245-251, and the Chapter, “American Evangelicalism: An Extended Family” by Robert K. Johnston, pages 252-272.

²⁶ David T. Arthur, “Evangelical Adventists 1855-1914,” December 10, 1963 in the Loma Linda University Library (Her. BX 6133 A7 1963). Note that The “Evangelical Alliance” was established in 1846 and this was incorporated in 1912 as the World’s Evangelical Alliance, a British organization until 1951. (<http://www.worldevangelicalalliance.com/wea/history.htm>). See page 118 for SDA connection with this agency.

expectation of Christ's soon return but abandoned assigning a significance to October 22, 1844. They promoted beliefs common to most Protestant groups, and rejected 7th-day Sabbatarianism, prophetic visions, conditional immortality, and the anti-organization attitude of some of the other post-disappointment Millerite groups. Seventh-day Adventism chose its name in 1860, making prominent its distinctive features, Christ's soon coming and the 7th-day Sabbath. The Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventist was organized in 1861 and the General Conference of SDAs in 1863. R. W. Schwarz, writes, "After carefully spelling out that the churches were to have no creed but the Bible, the conference participants recommended that in each congregation members sign a covenant that they were associating together, 'as a church, taking the name Seventh-day Adventists, covenanting to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ.'"²⁷

An evangelical type of Adventism began to surface in connection with the 1870s and 1880s with a greater emphasis on Christ, the Cross, and on the emphasis on Justification by faith, which Mrs. White said was the "third angel's message in verity."²⁸ Mrs. White was pioneering the idea that his life was imputed to the believer, just as his death was, and that his human nature was sinless. "He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness... Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned."²⁹ The church, if we were to judge it by the "Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists" which were originally published in 1872 and from 1889 to 1914 appeared intermittently in the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, maintained a pre-1888 Soteriology during Mrs. White's lifetime. Only with the 1980 revision of the "Fundamental Beliefs" did we drop the idea of our being justified for the "sins of the past" and described Jesus' life as having more significance than it being an Example only.³⁰

²⁷ R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant*, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Boise, Idaho, 1976, 96.

²⁸ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Volume I, 372 (Statement written in 1890).

²⁹ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, 1892, 62.

³⁰ The 1872 *Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists* (See P. Gerard Damsteeg's *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977, pages 304,305) states that Jesus "lived our example" (Article II, page 301) and uses the expression, "justification from our past offenses" (Article 15, page 304). and Compare the 1931 "Fundamental Beliefs" statements on "Justification" and the meaning of Christ's "Life" with the 1976 statements. These did not changed between 1872 and 1979. In the 1976 *Church Manual* Jesus "exemplified in His life as our example the principles of righteousness," (Article 3, page 32) and one is "justified by the blood of Christ for the sins of the past, and saved from the power of sin by His indwelling life." (Article 8, page 34). Whereas in the 1980 Fundamental Beliefs Statement, Jesus still "perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God," (Article 4), it also makes this statement: "In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator." (Article 9, page 35). In 1980, the possibility was opened up for Christ's life to be *more than* Example. His life is now a part of the "means of atonement for human sin" We also note that the 1980 statement on Justification states, "Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin." See: Geoffrey Paxton's critique in *The Shaking of Adventism*, Baker, 1977, pages 39, 40 56; "The Dynamics of "Salvation," *Adventist Review*, July 31, 1980, pages 3-8; the Palmdale Statement, "Christ Our Righteousness," *Review and Herald*, May 27, 1976, 4-7. Note also the discussion at the 53rd General Conference session, April 22, 1980, 3:15 P.M. regarding "Section 4, "The Son" of the proposed "Fundamental Beliefs". Louis Venden stated, "The phrase "as our Example" concerns me. I feel that 'as our Saviour' would be preferable. He is our Example, but I believe He is more than that." (*Adventist Review*, April 24, 1980, page 18). Boston L. Raith commented, "I am concerned about the line that reads, 'He perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God.' But He did more than that. He is the Lord our Righteousness. The Bible says we are reconciled to God by His death and saved by His life. I think this statement should be clear that He was more than our example. He was our Righteousness. He did not just exemplify that righteousness, but He made it possible for it to be imputed and imparted to us." (page 19 of same source).

In 1895 Ellen White wrote that Seventh-day Adventists should not make the Sabbath and the State of the Dead prominent until others had gotten to know us as Christians and for the things we had in common.³¹ Mrs. White later wrote, “In laboring in a new field, do not think it your duty to say at once to the people, we are Seventh-day Adventists; we believe that the seventh day is the Sabbath; we believe in the non-immortality of the soul. This would often erect a formidable barrier between you and those you wish to reach.”³²

In October, 1980, two months after the Glacier View meetings considering Ford’s views, Alan Crandall and fellow seminarians at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, claiming to be loyal Seventh-day Adventists, published the first issue of *Evangelica—a Publication for Evangelical Adventists*. The editors wrote in their “Introduction,” “What is an evangelical Adventist? ‘Evangelical’ means ‘to emphasize salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ.’ . . . ‘Adventist,’ of course, denotes the belief that Christ’s second coming is near. It also points to a providential religious movement, raised up by God to proclaim the hour of God’s judgment and call men to repent before Jesus returns.” “We believe the authentic Adventist is the one who places Christ and the Bible above human tradition.”³³

In the May, 1982 edition of *Evangelica*, Crandall stated, “The seeds of this movement [Evangelical Adventism] were sown within the denomination via the book *Questions on Doctrine* in 1957, and the seed-plot was watered by the public ministries of such men as R. A. Anderson, H.M.S. Richards Sr., Edward Heppenstall, Robert Brinsmead, Desmond Ford, Smuts van Rooyen, and others. . . . Finally, in the late 1970s, the new movement came to life when Desmond Ford began touring widely in North America and Geoffrey Paxton wrote *The Shaking of Adventism*.” Crandall queried where evangelical Adventism was headed. “Probably nowhere,” was his surprising answer. He viewed the denomination’s treatment of evangelical Adventists as destructive and did not believe hybrid gospel fellowships, an amalgam of traditional and evangelical Adventism, could survive. He virtually pronounced the coming extinction of the movement!³⁴

Though Crandall did not believe Evangelical Adventism would survive, Kenneth Samples identified “Evangelical Adventists” as one of the groups he observed in 1989 when he wrote the above-mentioned article. Samples, in fact, had cited Crandall’s linkage of Evangelical Adventism with *Questions on Doctrine* (Kenneth Samples, “From Controversy to Crisis,” *Christian Research Journal*, Summer, 1988, page 12). Then, as we have documented, some Seventh-day Adventists stepped forward claiming to be Evangelical Adventists, showing the movement was not dead. And those Evangelical Adventists, like Crandall group, felt a debt of gratitude to *Questions on Doctrine* and the men outside and inside the church involved with it for the clarification they brought to the church in an Evangelical direction.

³¹ See Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* citing: *General Conference Bulletin*, Feb. 25, 1895, page 201; *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 58 (1900), page 231; and *Gospel Workers*, pp. 119,120 (1915), page 200.

³² Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, citing *Gospel Workers*, p. 119,120 (1915), page 200

³³ *Evangelica*, October, 1980. In the December, 1980 edition of *Evangelica* appears the following statement: “We also wish to encourage the community of believers to assert themselves in accordance with the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and uplift the Holy Scriptures as the only rule of faith and practice.” In a October 23, 1980 letter to church leaders including presidents of colleges and universities, conference and union and division presidents, General Conference officers, General Conference President Neal C. Wilson wrote, “I do not think that Dr. Ford’s basic view of justification necessarily leads to divergent doctrine.” (2).

³⁴ Alan Crandall, “Whither Evangelical Adventism?” *Evangelica*, May, 1982.

Questions on Doctrine—from an Evangelical Adventist Perspective

1. *Questions on Doctrine* supported the position that Seventh-day Adventists take the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice for the Christian (*sola Scriptura*). Mrs. White's name never appeared in either the Fundamental Principles (1872-1914) or the Fundamental Beliefs (from 1931 on) until the 1950 General Conference added her name to the Fundamental Beliefs statement. Significantly, *QOD* cited Mrs. White's writings to confirm our official positions including the sinless human nature of Jesus Christ, the atonement completed at the Cross, and *sola Scriptura*. Did Seventh-day Adventist church leadership make her writings authoritative in 1950 in order to promote her vision of a more Christ-centered kind of Adventism, expressed seven years later in *Questions on Doctrine*? The 1952 Bible Conference, the first since the 1919 Conference, made effective use of Mrs. White's writings to promote a Christ-centered kind of Adventism.

According to the 1976 *Church Manual*, "the Holy Scriptures...are the *only* unerring rule of faith and practice." (page 32), but in the 1981 version, the exclusive word, "only" is not found in the statement about "the Holy Scripture" (page 31). As an Evangelical Adventist, I regarded the 1981 Fundamental Belief statement a step backward. The 1981 "Fundamental Beliefs" statement makes Mrs. White's writings "authoritative" and useful for "correction." (page 40). Curiously, the church's position, from 1950 on, which requires those joining the Seventh-day Adventist church to accept Mrs. White's prophetic gift, goes contrary to her personal wishes that a belief in her writings not be made a condition for church membership (See *Testimonies*, Volume I, page 328). (See discussion on page 106 of this paper of how ministers regard this idea.)

Evangelical Adventists believe that the conflict between the church's maintaining *sola Scriptura* and at the same time insisting on the authority of Mrs. White's writings is at the heart of many controversies and crises in the church. For instance, if the "investigative judgment" and "sanctuary" doctrines are based on Mrs. White's interpretation rather than on the exegesis of Scripture, then can one committed to *sola Scriptura* support these doctrines. Walter Martin identified this issue as "the" crucial one (See page 102-104 of this document, and also, Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, 1985 edition, 410.)

2. Prior to the 1931 Fundamental Belief statement the Trinity was not affirmed, including the eternal deity of Jesus Christ and the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit. Some pioneers of the Adventist church such as co-founders James White and Joseph Bates, pastors of the Christian Connection denomination, were Arian (or semi-Arian) and anti-Trinitarian. Mrs. White, of the Methodist faith, would have a Trinitarian heritage. She did not oppose the statements which did not affirm the Trinity. However, her writings, such as *Desire of Ages*, presented Jesus Christ as eternally co-existent with God. She wrote that in Jesus was "life, original, un-derived and unborrowed."³⁵ By presenting the Trinity as part of the Fundamental Beliefs in 1931 we moved toward an evangelical-kind of Adventism. In spite of Mrs. White's affirmation of the eternal deity of Jesus Christ in 1898, the church continued to print the "Fundamental Principles" statement which did not reflect her perspective. In other words, one could disagree with Mrs. White on this point and still be considered a good Seventh-day Adventist. All parties would probably agree that *QOD*'s affirming that Seventh-day Adventists are Trinitarian was a "change" in the sense that prior to *QOD*, though the Fundamental Beliefs affirmed the Trinity, individual Seventh-day Adventists who were Arian and anti-Trinitarian were considered to be in good standing. The 1872 Fundamental Principles (the non-official consensus statement of Adventist belief) would have been understood in an Arian sense. Yet some, such as Mrs. White, were Trinitarian. The authors of *QOD*, therefore,

³⁵ Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, (1898), page 530.

were not wrong to say that Arianism had not previously been regarded as “official”. They were also correct to say that by the time *QOD* was published most Seventh-day Adventists had come to embrace the Trinitarian position. Mrs. White’s influence drove the church to its present position.

3. The official statements always presented Jesus in his human nature as sinless, and never as having or taking a sinful nature. The *Questions on Doctrine* appendix of Mrs. White’s writings make it clear that she believed his human nature to be sinless. Also, her first book after the 1888 Conference was *Steps to Christ*, and probably represented her understanding of the Gospel at that time. In this work, she says nothing about Christ having a sinful nature. Those who want to impose the view that Jesus had or took a sinful human nature (based on a selective use of Mrs. White’s writings) do so because it is part of a cluster of positions which promote perfectionism, a final generation of saints who live sinlessly during the time of trouble. This is not the kind of thinking *Questions on Doctrine* and evangelical Adventists see as authentic Adventism. Evangelical Adventists believe Jesus took upon himself the result of Adam’s sinfulness (weakened human nature, physically debilitated, subject to death) but deny that there was anything within Him which should be referred to as “sinful”. They also believe that He was subject to temptation in His sinless nature, just as Adam was in his prior to the fall. The question can rightfully be raised whether any Bible writer had a burden to prove that Jesus had or took a sinful nature. If any did, why did they not express themselves explicitly on this point. Texts in Philippians 2, Hebrews 2 and Romans 8:3 show that Jesus was human and subject to temptation, but do not address the issue of Jesus possessing a sinful human nature. The clarification of *QOD* in regard to the “sinlessness” of Jesus Christ in deed and nature was necessary on account of certain statements found in Adventist publications. Significantly, the authors of *QOD* chose to make their case through the citation of Mrs. White on this subject in the special Appendix.

4. The Atonement completed at the Cross – is at the heart of the Gospel itself. It is the object of justifying and saving faith. It is what creates a priesthood of believers. Church leaders when they authorized *Questions on Doctrine* took a bold step in bringing out Mrs. White’s statements of an Atonement finished at the Cross, because it flew in the face of the idea that the Day of Atonement began in 1844. A balanced look at Mrs. White’s writings shows that she applied the Day of Atonement to the Incarnation, to the Cross, to the application of the benefits of the Atoning Sacrifice, to Christ’s 2nd Coming, to the end of the Millennium (See *Desire of Ages*, 24, 757; *Acts of the Apostles*, 33; *Signs of the Times*, April 19, 1905; Letter 230, 1907. Quoted in *SDABC*, 5;1109; *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 386; *Youth’s Instructor*, June 21, 1900. Quoted in *SDABC*, 5:1109. *Testimonies*; Volume 4, 122; cited in Desmond Ford, *Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment*, Euangelion Press, Casselberry, Fl., 1980, 347-350, 415,416.); . The problem of our traditional understanding and trying to reconcile it with *Questions on Doctrine* is that if the Atonement was complete at the Cross, and Jesus ministry in heaven is an application of the finished Atonement, where does this leave 1844? The application of the benefits would have begun immediately upon Jesus’ entrance into heaven.

There are indications that although the church rejected Ford’s overall challenge to the Investigative Judgment, it is gradually recognizing that the Day of Atonement began with our High Priest serving as both Priest and the Sacrifice. As the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement, so Jesus Christ entered heaven itself to apply the benefits of his finished Atonement. As the High Priest came out of the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement, so Jesus Christ will return to earth at His 2nd Coming to receive His waiting saints. (See Hebrews 9:26-28) The 1980 Fundamental Beliefs statement declared the Atonement complete at the Cross and also included in it the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus, all 1st Century happenings. We observe

that the 1980 statement of Fundamental Beliefs moved the church in the same direction as *Questions on Doctrine* on the teaching of an Atonement completed at the Cross.³⁶ As in the case of the sinless human nature of Jesus Christ, *QOD*'s authors evoked an extensive list of Mrs. White's writings to support their contention that the Atonement was complete at the Cross and that upon His ascension Jesus began applying the benefits of that finished Atonement.

5. Justification by Faith apart from the works of the law was the Material Principle of the Protestant Reformation, just as *sola fidei* was the Reformation's Formal Principle. *QOD* declares that Seventh-day Adventism advocates them both. There were a couple of problems with the Fundamental Beliefs statement as it had come down to us from 1872 (a pre-1888 position). First, justification is for the sins of the past, and secondly, Jesus' life is presented only as an Example.

The "Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists" first appearing as a pamphlet in 1872, and appearing in modified form from 1889 (significantly, the year after the 1888 General Conference) intermittently through 1914 in the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*. In 1883 the church decided not to have a *Church Manual* for fear it would bind the conscience of church members and especially young preachers. Yet incorporating the "Fundamental Principles" into the official *Yearbook* in 1889 had the same effect. Ironically, it was George I. Butler who in 1883 was the one whose opinion on this decision was recorded in the *Review and Herald*. He was one of the contenders for the "law" of Galatians 3:24 being only the "ceremonial law".

The theology which he promoted in 1888 was in full harmony with the existing pre-1888 statement on Justification, one which prevailed during the time of the evangelical-Seventh-day Adventist dialogues, and was not changed until 1980. In the 1980 "Fundamental Beliefs" we dropped, "justified for the sins of the past," and added that the finished Atonement consisted of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Though the significance of Jesus' life is not explained there, as part of the Atonement, it is more than Example!³⁷

Questions on Doctrine did not deal with the substantive issues relating to the doctrine of Justification by Faith because the Seventh-day Adventist had not begun to grips with them. Geoffrey Paxton, in *The Shaking of Adventism*, states that in *QOD* "definite advancement took place on the subjects of the *incarnation* and the *atonement*," (page 89) but that "there is no significant advance in the volume on *soteriology* (the doctrine of salvation)..." (page 90).

³⁶See also the Glacier Review Committee document, "Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary" (reproduced in *Spectrum*, November, 1980, Volume 11, Number 2, page 70) where it is admitted that Day of Atonement language of the High Priest entering the Most Holy Place is used in the Book of Hebrews to describe Jesus' entrance into heaven at the Ascension. The document also affirms that the Adventist view that the anti-typical Day of Atonement met its type on October 22, 1844 in the commencement of the Investigative Judgment. See also the debate on the floor of the 1980 General Conference. To the words already in place in our sanctuary doctrine, "In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and the last phase of His atoning ministry," Herald E. Metcalf proposed should be added, "typified by the work of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement in the Most Holy Place of the earthly sanctuary." The suggestion was rejected, in part, because of Richard Hammill's remarks including: "But great care must be taken in this wording, because Ellen White does say very clearly that when Christ ascended to heaven He did go also into the Most Holy Place, as well as the holy place. A careful study of these concepts, and particularly of Hebrews 9, reveals that it is talking there about the dedication, among other things of the heavenly sanctuary. I wish we could keep the wording that we have here." (See Harold E. Metcalf's proposal and Richard Hammill's response in the 53rd 50th Business Meeting of the 53rd General Conference session, April 25, 1980, 1:30 p.m., *Adventist Review*, May 1, 1980, page 20.) A study of the dedication of Solomon's temple reveals that its dedication began on the Day of Atonement!

³⁷Geoffrey Paxton, *The Shaking of Adventism*, Baker, 1977 for a discussion on "sins of the past" and the importance of imputed righteousness including Christ's life reckoned to believers.

After the publication of *QOD*, Hans K. LaRondelle and Edward Heppenstall and Des Ford made progress in the areas of clarifying Perfection and Original Sin. However, in 1957, not only were Seventh-day Adventists working off of a pre-1888 definition of Justification and a view of Jesus' life which understood it as only Example, but also, Walter Martin, a Southern Baptist, had a view closer to the Adventists' official view of "Justification". He did not have Christ's life as substitutionary, but as a necessary preparation for offering the Atonement. Donald Barnhouse, a Presbyterian, would have had a Reformed approach to Justification which would have included the Active obedience of Jesus Christ, meaning that His life as well as His death were substitutionary. Probably, this was an area Martin and Barnhouse chose not to press, since they may have disagreed among themselves.³⁸ Wrote Martin: "About vicarious death Scripture leaves no doubt. However, there is little, if any, evidence that Christ lived a vicarious life on our behalf. Rather, the Scripture teaches us that God imputes to us the righteousness of Christ, though there is a singular absence of any vicarious relation to His human life."³⁹

Woodrow Whidden has demonstrated in his book on the development of Mrs. White's Soteriology that she agreed with the Lutheran/Reformed view of Christ's substitutionary life. Note well his conclusions:

"In the years after 1888 she would explicitly develop the theme implicit in the thought that the merits of Christ, offered in His high priestly intercession, make the best efforts of believers (defective and feeble though they be) acceptable to God. The central thought in this theme is that Christ's obedient life is accounted to sinners, not just His death.

"Let us be very clear about this one. Ellen White taught that our acceptance with Christ is based totally on the merits of His life and death, which are legally, judicially accounted to us. It is not based on His death accounted to us for forgiveness and His life imparted to us so that we can make our own contribution to justification. It is *both* His life and death that justify the penitent believer.

"Ellen White's doctrinal independence is here dramatically illustrated in comparison with John Wesley. He was always reluctant to declare Christ's life as accounted to believers, fearful that such a legal accounting might endanger his doctrine of sanctification. He feared that this would open the gates to presumptuous sinning. But this was not the case with Ellen White."⁴⁰

³⁸ See Lightner on differences between Evangelicals over the Active Obedience of Jesus. Robert P. Lightner, *Evangelical Theology, a Survey and Review*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1986. See "Major Areas of Difference Among Evangelicals—The Meaning of Christ's Life Sufferings" in the Chapter, "God the Son". Pages 91-94. "There are two basic views regarding the meaning of Christ's life sufferings. Evangelicals who embrace dispensational theology usually hold to one view and nondispensational evangelicals to the other. It appears that one's view of the value of Christ's life sufferings and obedience to the law of Moses is directly related to one's acceptance or rejection of covenant theology. The view normally held by covenant, or Reformed, theology will here be designated the vicarious atoning view, and that held by dispensational theology the non-atoning view." 91,92. Lightner prefers the latter view. He cites Berkhof, Charles Hodge, and John Murray as supporting the vicarious atoning view. (pages 92,93). It appears that this was Mrs. White's view, and that from 1872 through 1979, the official Beliefs statements of Seventh-day Adventists supported the other view. With the 1980 "Fundamental Beliefs" statement, the possibility of the vicarious atoning view opens up.

³⁹ Walter Martin, *Essential Christianity*, Regal Books, Ventura, California, 1962, reprinted 1980, page 59.

⁴⁰ Woodrow W. Whidden II, *Ellen White on Salvation*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, MD, 1995, 76,77. Regarding Whidden's position, we should note that he supports an effective Justification, like the position of Hans K. LaRondelle. Apparently, he sees Christ's Active Obedience as supplementing the believers' works, so that both are included in the article of Justification. He regards Dr. Ford (and Geoffrey Paxton and Robert Brinsmead's) position as advocating "sterile forensic Justification" and as an "unfortunate" one. (See Woodrow W. Whidden, "Questions on Doctrine: What Should be the Enduring theological Legacy?" presented at the Questions on Doctrine 50th Anniversary Conference, pages 263, 264); Note that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Apparently this was known by church leaders, but because they preferred a different way of explaining His life, they never modified the statement on Justification to incorporate her insights. If *Questions on Doctrine* were being written today, knowing what we now know from the advances in Soteriology and Christology of the 1970s, we may well include an appendix of Mrs. White's writings on Justification and Imputation and the Active Obedience of Jesus Christ.

6. The "Priesthood of Believers" for those living in Reformation times meant that they did not have to go through a priest or some sacraments to reach God for Salvation. They could go directly to the Mediator, Jesus Christ. The Priesthood of the Believer has implications for the doctrine of the Church. Martin and Barnhouse wanted to know whether Seventh-day Adventists would recognize Christians outside their denomination as fellow saved individuals. *Questions on Doctrine* stated emphatically that Seventh-day Adventists do acknowledge an invisible church consisting of all who accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The church's "Remnant Church" doctrine, when coupled with our ideas on "Babylon" and the "Mark of the Beast" and "Seal of God" give the impression that we think we have exclusive rights on salvation. The 1980 Fundamental Beliefs statement for the first time acknowledges the "universal church" "composed of all who truly believe in Christ," but also upholds Seventh-day Adventists message and mission as valid.⁴¹

7. Seventh-day Adventists have always claimed their *raison d'être* to be to prepare the world for the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14. For us, this has meant seeing the prophecy through "historicist" eyes, understanding the Papacy as the Biblical Antichrist and interpreting a day as a year in the time prophecies. We have placed our own interpretations and definitions on the key terms found in this passage.

My vision for the future of Seventh-day Adventism as an Evangelical Adventist, is found in "The Prophetic Task of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Next Millennium," an article I wrote for *Adventist Today* published in the last issue of the old millennium.⁴² The Evangelical Adventism which I believe will triumph will be one which proclaims the three angel's messages of Revelation 14, highlighting "an everlasting gospel" (Revelation 14:6). It proposes Seventh-day Adventists present the messages of the three angels exegetically, as they were understood by late first century readers, and not as we pass them through the filter of "historicism" as we have done. I am not against "historicism," when it means that Bible prophets describe events between their day and the 2nd coming of Christ. I believe that "Historicism," as we have maintained it, confines the 3 ½ times, the 42 months and the 1260 days to the period between A.D. 538 and A.D. 1798, when a good case can be maintained that these periods span the period from Christ's death/resurrection/ascension to the end of the Gospel dispensation, unfulfilled until the Gospel has gone to the entire

(2nd Ed.) Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Citta del Vaticano, Latin text copyright 1994, 1997, English translation for the USA copyright 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc. states in point 1989, page 482—"The first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is *conversion*, effecting justification in accordance with Jesus' proclamation at the beginning of the Gospel: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' (MT 4:17). Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high. 'Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.' (Council of Trent (1947): DS 1528)"; See also Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei, A history of the Christian doctrine of Justification from 1500 to the present day*, Cambridge, England, First published 1986, Reprinted 1991. "In his sermon *A Blow at the Root, or Christ stabbed in the House of his Friends*, Wesley described the teaching 'that Christ had done as well as suffered all; that his righteousness being imputed to us, we need none of our own' as 'a blow at the root of all holiness, all true religion...for wherever this doctrine is cordially received, it leaves no place for holiness'. (See Wesley, *Words*, 10.366.), page 52.

⁴¹ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, revised 1981, page 37.

⁴² Larry Christoffel, "The Prophetic Task of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the next Millennium," *Adventist Today*, November/December, 1999, 16,17.

world.⁴³ “The Gospel,” “The Hour of His Judgment Has Come,” “Babylon and the Remnant,” “The Mark of the Beast and the Seal of God,” “The Testimony of Jesus” all have definite Biblical meanings the recovery of which would bring vitality to our work of reaching the world to prepare it for Christ’s return. Our traditional “historicist understandings should not be allowed to eclipse the exegetical meaning of these important words and concepts.

I would mention a few other resources on Evangelical Adventism. Check out the Campus Hill Church website, “campushillchurch.org,” for our “Gospel Confession,” which attempts to set forth the essence of the Christian faith in a Seventh-day Adventist setting. Also explore the website, “jesusinstituteforum.org,” for papers by Evangelical Adventists on Eschatological and Soteriological and Ecclesiological dimensions of the Gospel. The Jesus Institute Forum has sponsored five symposia featuring outstanding speakers addressing Gospel issues.

“Evangelical” as a Legitimate Biblical Expression

“Evangelical,” from the Greek, *euangelion*, means “good news.” The Old Testament uses the verb form (“to proclaim good news”) in connection with the hoped-for coming Messianic Kingdom (Isaiah 61:1,2) and Jesus applied the fulfillment of this text to the arrival of His ministry (Luke 4:18,19). In the Synoptic Gospels, “gospel” or “proclaim the gospel” is associated with Jesus’ birth (Luke 2:10,11). The “Gospel of the Kingdom” (Matthew 24:14) refers to the rule of God inaugurated with Jesus’ first coming, proceeding in the present through the priestly kingdom of the Christ’s followers who fulfill the Gospel Commission (Matthew 28:13, 18-20), and consummated when the Son of Man returns to gather His own (Matthew 24:30-31).

Paul applies the “Gospel” to Jesus Christ’s death for our sins according to the Scripture, his burial, and God’s raising him from the dead according to the Scripture. (1 Corinthians 15:1-3). He also explains the “Gospel” as the “Righteousness of God” when God set forth Jesus Christ as an Atoning Sacrifice for our Redemption and our Justification (Romans 3:21-26). Jesus’ saving work included His atoning death and His atoning life (See Romans 5:19; Philippians 2:8; Galatians 4:4). According to Romans 4:25 God raised Jesus from the dead *because of* our justification!

The writer of the Book of Hebrews emphasizes the place of Jesus’ life in our salvation (Hebrews 2:9,18; 4:14,15; 7:25,26; 10:5-10) and also how the Atoning Sacrifice was accomplished once and for all, guaranteeing believer’s access to God in the Holy of Holies. (Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:17,18; 4:2,3, 14-16; 6:19; 7:26-28; 9:11-14, 23-28; 10:5-25).

The Apostle Paul, in the Books of Galatians and Romans, described the Gospel as Justification through faith in the Atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ as a substitute for our sins. Good works are excluded from the process except as a necessary fruit, never a sufficient root, for our acceptance with God. (See Romans 1:16,27; 3:21-28; Chapter 4; Galatians 1:8,9; 2:14,15; Ephesians 2:8-10)

The Disciple John’s use of the verb for “proclaim the gospel” in Revelation 10:7 and 14:7 and his use of the noun for “gospel” in Revelation 14:6 is no different from the meaning to these words by Paul and other New Testament writers (See Galatians 1:8,9; The “Lamb” of Revelation corresponds with Jesus who offers the the Atoning Sacrifice of Paul’s epistles.

Seventh-day Adventists see themselves in continuity with the 16th Century Protestant Reformation with its formal principle of *sola Scriptura* (the Bible is its own interpreter) its material principle of *sola fidi* (Justification through Faith in Jesus and His sacrifice apart from all good works), and “priesthood of the believers” (believers in Jesus Christ constitute a community

⁴³ See Kenneth E. H. Richards’ article, “Thoughts on the 1,260 Days of Daniel and Revelation,” 2003 on the web at, jesusinstituteforum.org/1260days.html

kingdom apart from any human intervention). Believing God raised them up to prepare the world for Christ's 2nd coming through the proclamation of the 3 angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12, their ancestry extends through the Millerite movement, the 7th-day Sabbatarian phase and into early Seventh-day Adventism where the emphasis had been on the "commandments of God" and from 1888 the emphasis shifted to the "faith of Jesus" of Revelation 14:12.⁴⁴ The shift is illustrated by the two lithographs produced of "The Way of Life, From Eden Lost to Eden Restored," the 1876 version focusing on the Tree of Life with the Ten Commandments hanging from its branches and the 1883 version, "Christ, The Way of Life," commissioned by Mrs. White and her sons after James' death in 1881, with the Cross now the prominent feature, central to the picture.⁴⁵

Evangelical Adventists also affirm the believer's commitment to the "Commandments of God" of Revelation 14:12, and that the relation between the "commandments of God" and the "faith of Jesus" must be clarified. They do not, in any sense, hold that believers knowingly disregard God's will as expressed in the Commandments. Nor do they believe that one's standing (justification) in the final judgment is based in any sense on the merit of works righteousness.

Prior to the evangelical-Seventh-day Adventist dialogues of the 1950s Seventh-day Adventism had not differentiated itself from many cultic features attributed to it. After *Questions on Doctrine*, many in the Christian world affirmed the denomination's basic evangelical orientation.

The recent discussions in Berrien Springs, Michigan between Seventh-day Adventists and representatives of the 420-million member World Evangelical Alliance from August 5-10, 2007 confirm that the church as a whole is not opposed to being considered "Evangelical". A joint statement was issued. Under "Our Common Faith," appeared the following: "2. The participants were pleased to be able to ascertain an extensive commonality of belief and spirituality. Adventists can subscribe to the WEA Statement of Faith. (Document attached below). They fully accept the authority and supremacy of the Word of God, the Trinity, the divine and human natures of Christ, salvation by faith in Christ Jesus alone, the importance of prayer, personal conversion, and sanctification, and hold dear the blessed hope in the imminent Second Coming of Christ and the final judgment. There was agreement that there should never be any date-setting regarding the Second Advent."⁴⁶ Though there were also "Points of disagreement" (the 7th-day is the Sabbath, the 1844 pre-Advent Judgment, the authoritative role of Ellen G. White), the common beliefs qualify Adventists as "evangelical" in the eyes of both the WEA and the SDAs.

In conclusion, *Questions on Doctrine* and the evangelical-Seventh-day Adventist dialogues and the men who participated in and who supported them deserve our profoundest gratitude for moving us toward our God-ordained purpose for being. We are grateful also to Godly Christians from other communities of Christian faith who hold our feet to the fire in our claims to be Biblical and Gospel oriented. Evangelical Adventism, whether it is viewed as a group of Seventh-day Adventists who are passionate about making the Gospel central, or whether it should mean that the denomination as a whole is evangelical would probably not be what it is today had *Questions on Doctrine* declared its version of authentic Adventism. I am grateful for my legacy as an evangelical Adventist which was passed down to me from the Gospel champions who hammered out these issues. And as a church reformed and ever reforming, we move into the increasing light that shines from Calvary's Cross.

⁴⁴ LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, Review and Herald, Washington, D.C., 1971. 144.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 184,185, See also Woodrow Whidden, "The *Way of Life* Engravings: Harbingers of Minneapolis?" in *Ministry*, October, 1992.

⁴⁶ "Joint Statement of the World Evangelical Alliance and the Seventh-day Adventist Church," (See <http://www.worldevangelicalalliance.org> and <http://www.adventist.org>)