

# **KEY DOCTRINAL COMPARISONS**

**STATEMENTS of BELIEF  
1872 - 1980**

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In this brochure and on the Cassette tape which accompanies it, we share a comparative analysis of key doctrines as presented in Statements of Belief from 1872 to the present, 1980.

In the first section we note how we have viewed and presently view the Holy Scriptures; and then placed immediately after in the second section the statements regarding the Spirit of Prophecy. How the statements relative to the Bible read, govern what can be said about the writings of Ellen G. White. However much we profess to adhere to the ringing challenge of William Chillingworth - "The Bible, I say, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants!" - the credal statement voted at the 1980 General Conference Session declares the writings of Ellen G. White to be "a continuing and authoritative source of truth." (GC Bulletin, #9, p. 25) No previous statement ever assigned such authority to the writings of Ellen G. White.

A serious study of the comparison of the other key doctrines as given on the following pages will also be thought provoking. For example, in the voted Dallas Statement, we read concerning the Incarnation - "God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ." How do we harmonize this with the concepts in all previous statements that Jesus Christ "while retaining His divine nature, . . . took upon Himself the nature of the human family."?

We should write a word about our sources. For past "Statements of Belief," we have relied heavily on the Yearbook. The first Yearbook resulted from an action of the General Conference Committee in December, 1882, and when published, contained "the statistics of our denomination, the proceedings of our General Conference, T. and M. [Tract and Missionary] Society, and other associations, the financial condition of our institutions, our General and State Conference constitutions, a good calender, and full directories of all Conferences and various societies throughout the country." (Quoted in SDA Encyclopedia, Rev. Edition, p. 1336) Such made the Yearbook an authoritative voice of the Church's position and standing. A break occurred in the publication of the Yearbook from 1895-1903. During these years it was replaced by the General Conference Bulletins. In 1889, 1905, 1907-1914, the Yearbook contained a section devoted to "Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists." This statement of beliefs was prefaced by the comment:

Seventh-day Adventists have no creed but the Bible; but they hold to certain well-defined points of faith, for which they feel prepared to give a reason 'to every man that asketh' them. The following propositions may be taken as a summary of the principle features of their religious faith, upon which there is, so far as is known, entire unanimity throughout the body." (1889 Yearbook, p. 147)

The next Statement of Beliefs to appear in the Yearbook was in 1931, but this was a new statement and revised.

It is interesting to observe that the first Yearbook to contain a Statement of Beliefs was for the year following the 1888 General Conference. It is also noteworthy that no statement appeared again till the time of the Alpha apostasy (circa, 1905) and Special Testimonies, Series B, #2 & 7, were published. It was during this period - 1890-1904 - that a divergent statement was printed in the Membership Directory of the headquarters church at Battle Creek; and the Holy Flesh Movement, which also espoused divergent doctrines, engulfed the Indiana Conference. Then

when the Statement again appeared in the 1905 Yearbook, it was continued only up to the death of Ellen G. White. In other words, we never even exemplified the experience of ancient Israel who "served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that over lived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that He had done for Israel." (Joshua 24:31)

#### Section 1 - THE BIBLE

1872 Tract; 1874 Signs of the Times (ST) Editorial; 1889, 1905, 1907-1914 Yearbooks: (Beginning with the 1908 Yearbook, a notation was included which read - "By the late Uriah Smith.")

"III. That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, contain a full revelation of His will to man, and are the only infallible rule of faith and practice."

1894 - Membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Battle Creek:

"That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and contain a revelation of His will to man, and are an infallible rule of faith and practice."

1931 Yearbook:

"1. That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, contain an all-sufficient revelation of His will to man, and are the only unerring rule of faith and practice."

1979 - Annual Council Recommended Statements:

"That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through 'holy men of God' who spake and wrote as they were 'moved by the Holy Spirit.' These Scriptures are the all-sufficient, authoritative, and effective revelation of His gracious purpose and will. They are the source of all true doctrine and the only unerring standard of faith and practice." 1

1980 - Statement given to Delegates, 1980, Dallas, Texas, GC Session.

"The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. These Scriptures are the living, all-sufficient, trustworthy and authoritative revelation of God's gracious purpose and will. They are the source of all true doctrine and the only infallible standard of faith and practice."

1980 - Voted "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists":

"The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history." 2

Section 2 - THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

1872 Tract; 1874 ST Editorial; 1889, 1905, 1907-1914 Yearbooks:

"That the Spirit of God was promised to manifest itself in the church through certain gifts, enumerated in I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4; that these gifts are not designated to supercede, or to take the place of the Bible, which is sufficient to make us wise unto salvation, any more than the Bible can take the place of the Holy Spirit; that in specifying the various channels of its operation, that Spirit has simply made provision for its own existence and presence with the people of God to the end of time, to lead to an understanding of that word which it had inspired, to convince of sin, and work a transformation in the heart and life; and that those who deny to the Spirit its place and operation do plainly deny that part of the Bible which assigns to it this work and position."

1894 - Battle Creek Church Statement

"That the subject of spiritual gifts is a doctrine clearly taught in the Scriptures, being repeatedly set forth in various books of the Old and New Testaments; and we learn from history that the gifts have continued all along the gospel dispensation; and there is the strongest evidence that the spirit of prophecy has been manifested among those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus during the last half century."

1931 Yearbook:

"That God has placed in His church the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as enumerated in I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. These gifts operate in harmony with the divine principles of the Bible, and are given for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ."

1950 - General Conference Session added the following two sentences to the Statement as found in the 1931 Yearbook:

"That the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church. The remnant church recognizes that this gift was manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White."

1979 - Annual Council Recommended Statements:

"14. That God has placed in His church spiritual gifts, which are 'inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills.' These gifts will continue in the Church to equip the saints for ministry, to build up the body of Christ, and to develop the unity of the faith.

"15. That the presence of the spiritual gift of prophecy is an identifying mark of the remnant Church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger she provided guidance to the Church, instruction in the Scriptures, and counsel for spiritual growth. Her writings uplift the Scriptures as the standard of faith and practice, and function as a continuing source of divine counsel."<sup>1</sup>

1980 - Given to Delegates, Dallas Session:

"17. The presence of the gift of prophecy, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, is an identifying mark of the remnant Church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger she provided guidance to the Church, instruction in the Scriptures, and counsel for spiritual growth. Her writings, which uplift the Scriptures as the ultimate standard of faith and practice, provide a continuing source of truth and divine counsel."

1980 - Voted

"One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift in an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth and provide of the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested."<sup>2</sup>

### Section 3 - THE GODHEAD

1872 Tract; 1874 ST Editorial; 1889, 1905, 1907-1914 Yearbooks; 1894 Battle Creek Church Statement:

"That there is one God, a personal, spiritual Being, the Creator of all things, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal, infinite in wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and mercy; unchangeable, and everywhere present by His representative, the Holy Spirit.

"That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the One by whom He created all things, and by whom they do consist. . ."

1931 Yearbook:

"That the Godhead, or Trinity, consists of the Eternal Father, a personal, spiritual Being, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, infinite in wisdom and love; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, through whom all things were created and through whom the salvation of the redeemed hosts will be accomplished; the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, the great regenerating power in the work of redemption.

"That Jesus Christ is very God, being of the same nature and essence as the Eternal Father."

1979 - Annual Council Recommended Statement:

"2. THE TRINITY - That there is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a self-existing Unity in Trinity. God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, transcendent and immanent, the absolute Reality whose infinite and personal being is a mystery forever beyond human comprehension.

"3. GOD THE FATHER - That God the eternal Father is the Creator, the ultimate Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all that is. He is infinite and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

"4. GOD THE SON - That God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. . .

"5. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT - That God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in creation, incarnation, and redemption. He inspired the writers of Scripture and filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts us, renews and transforms us into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with us, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and leads into all truth."<sup>1</sup>

1980 - Given to Delegates, Dallas Session:

"2. THE GODHEAD OR TRINITY - There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of Three co-eternal Persons, the Godhead or Trinity. God is all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever present, above all, through all and in all. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He acts in and through nature and history. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation.

"3. THE FATHER - God the eternal Father is the Creator, the ultimate Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all Creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and power exhibited in the Son and Holy Spirit are also revelations of the Father.

"4. THE SON - God the eternal Son is He through whom all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world judged. . .

"5. THE HOLY SPIRIT - God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in creation, and the incarnation. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with us, He is active in redemption. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God. He extends spiritual gifts to the Church, empowers her to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with Scripture leads her into all truth."

1980 - Voted

"2. THE TRINITY - There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation.

"3. THE FATHER - God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and power exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also revelations of the Father.

"4. THE SON - God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. . .

"5. THE HOLY SPIRIT - God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in creation, incarnation, and redemption. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God, Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads into all truth." 2

#### Section 4 - THE INCARNATION

1872 Tract; 1874 ST Editorial; 1889, 1905, 1907-1914 Yearbooks:

"That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father. . . that He took on Him the nature of the seed of Abraham for the redemption of our fallen race; that He dwelt among men, full of grace and truth, lived our example. . ."

1894 - Battle Creek Church Statement:

That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, . . . that He took of him the nature of man, for the redemption of our fallen race; that He dwelt among men, full of grace and truth, lived our example. . ."

1931 Yearbook:

"That Jesus Christ is very God, being of the same nature and essence as the Eternal Father. While retaining His divine nature, He took upon Himself the nature of the human family, lived on earth as a man, exemplified in His life as our example the principles of righteousness, . . ."

1979 - Annual Council Recommended Statement:

"4. GOD THE SON - That God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. . . Forever truly God, He became truly man, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a man, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God."<sup>1</sup>

1980 - Given to Delegates, Dallas Session:

"4. THE SON - Forever truly God, He became truly man, the man Jesus, the Christ. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. As our Example, He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, yet without sin. He perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God."

1980 - Voted:

"4. THE SON - God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. . . Forever truly God, He became also truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God."<sup>2</sup>

"Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example." <sup>2</sup>

#### Section 5 - THE ATONEMENT

1872 Tract; 1874 ST Editorial: (Elder James White)

"That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, . . . that He . . . died our sacrifice, was raised for our justification, ascended on high to be our only Mediator in the sanctuary in heaven, where, with His own blood, He makes the atonement for our sins; which atonement, so far from being made on the cross, which was but the offering of the sacrifice, is the very last portion of His work as priest, according to the example of the Levitical priesthood, which foreshadowed and prefigured the ministry of our Lord in heaven."

1889, 1905, 1907-1914 Yearbooks: (All except the 1889 Yearbook, have the word - "persistently" - substituted for "penitently."\* This could be a type-setting error.)

"That there is one Lord Jesus Christ. . . that He . . . died our sacrifice, was raised for our justification, ascended on high to be our only mediator in the sanctuary in heaven, where, through the merits of his shed blood, He secures the

pardon and forgiveness of the sins of all those who penitently\* come to Him; and as the closing portion of His work as priest, before He takes His throne as king, He will make the great atonement for the sins of all such, and their sins will then be blotted out and borne away from the sanctuary, as shown in the service of the Levitical priesthood, which foreshadowed and prefigured the ministry of our Lord in heaven."

1894 - Battle Creek Church Statement:

"That there is one Lord Jesus Christ,... that He... died our sacrifice, was raised for our justification, ascended on high to be our only mediator in the sanctuary in heaven, where, through the atoning merits of His blood, He secures the pardon and forgiveness of all who penitently come to God through Him; and as the closing portion of His work as priest before He comes again as King of kings, He will make the final atonement for the sins of all believers, and blot them out, as foreshadowed and prefigured by the Levitical priesthood."

1931 - Yearbook:

"That Jesus Christ... died for our sins on the cross, was raised from the dead, and ascended to the Father, where He ever lives to make intercession for us."

1979 - Annual Council Recommended Statement:

"9. THE DEATH OF CHRIST - That in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, God Himself provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who accept this atonement by faith have eternal life, and the whole creation understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator. This act of atonement forever established the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sins and forgives it. Thus the death of Christ is a complete and perfect atonement, substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming." 1

1980 - Given to Delegates, Dallas Session:

"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. This act of atonement forever establishes the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness. The death of Christ is substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming. The resurrection of Christ proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, suffering and death, and makes possible personal victory for those who accept the atonement. It declares the Lordship of Jesus Christ, before whom every knee in heaven and earth will bow."

1980 - Voted:

"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. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sins and provides for our forgiveness."