

EVENTS LEADING UP TO IT - WHO WROTE IT - WHAT IT BROUGHT INTO THE CHURCH

# The 1980 Statement of Belief

## A COMPLETE HISTORICAL REPORT

AN ASTOUNDING STORY OF LITTLE-KNOWN EVENTS - AND STARTLING RESULTS

The 1980 Dallas Session had ended in late spring. As a result of a sometimes stormy Session, the newly revised *Statement of Belief* had been adopted.

Not long after the Dallas Session (August 1-15), many of our church leaders, Bible teachers, and editors assembled at our Colorado Conference youth camp, known as Glacier View, for a complete examination of the Desmond Ford case. It was discovered that many who attended were fully in the liberal camp. But, fearing reprisals from leadership, they decided to be cautious. At the end of that turbulent week, on Friday morning, Ford was reluctantly removed from the Adventist ministry.

As a last-ditch attempt to avoid that decision, that afternoon, Ford walked up to President Neal C. Wilson—and broke the news that he was able to accept the newly enacted *Statement of Belief*—so there was no need to fire him! The secret was out. Wilson was stunned.

That same Friday afternoon, as if on schedule, a letter, signed by a large number of faculty members at Andrews University and addressed to Wilson, pled with him not to discharge Ford. —Yet among the signers of that letter were the very Bible teachers who had so carefully arranged the final wording of the *Dallas Statement of Belief*!

How was it that our denomination so reversed itself, that we went from a position, in our early history, that God's Word alone was our rule of faith—to a few watered-down paragraphs which permit liberals to introduce ever-increasing doctrinal errors and lowered standards—without fear of being reproved or discharged?

Here is the story of how our current 27-point *Statement of Beliefs* came into being. We will introduce this research study with an intriguing quotation from the *Adventist Encyclopedia*:

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“Throughout their history, Seventh-day Adventists have affirmed that ‘the Bible and the Bible only’ should be the Christian’s creed and that they have no creed but the Bible.

“However, over the years they have issued various statements of belief—gradually moving toward the 27 fundamental beliefs published in the denominational *Yearbook* since 1981 and in the *Church Manual* (1990).”—*Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, p. 464.

**1853**—In August 1853, James White, editor of the *Review*, published a reply to an inquiry as to what our church believed. **He wrote that, along with the entire Bible, the Sabbath and the commandments provided an all-inclusive statement of what we believed.**

“As a people, we are brought together from divisions of the Advent body and from the various denominations, holding different views on some subjects; yet, thank Heaven, **the Sabbath is a mighty platform on which we can all stand united.**

“And while standing here, **with the aid of no other creed than the Word of God**, and bound together by the bonds of love—love for the truth, love each other, and love for a perishing world—‘which is stronger than death,’ all party feelings are lost. We are united in these great subjects: Christ’s immediate, personal second Advent; and the observance of all the commandments of God, and the faith of His Son Jesus Christ, as necessary to a readiness for His Advent.”—*James White, Review*, August 11, 1853.

In early December of that same year, James suggested that a “Charter” be prepared for the purpose of “gospel order.” But he received numerous complaints from readers who said he was in danger of producing a “creed.”

James was quick to reply:

“Is the church of Christ to be left without a rule of faith? We answer that **she is provided with a creed that is sufficient: ‘All Scripture** is given by inspiration of God.’”—*Ibid.*, December 13, 1853.

“It is the opinion of the mass of professors of religion that human creeds are indispensable to the maintenance of gospel order . . . **But what is the real condition of the churches with all their creeds to aid them? They are in a condition but little less than perfect confusion** . . . It is evident, therefore, that human creeds do fail to accomplish the work for which men plead their necessity.”—*Ibid.*

“We go for order and strict discipline in the church of Christ. And while **we reject all human creeds**, or platforms, which have failed to effect the order set forth in the gospel, **we take the Bible, the perfect rule of faith and practice, given by inspiration of God. This shall be our platform on which to stand, our creed and discipline.**

“This will not fail to accomplish the work ‘whereunto it was sent.’ **It came from above. It has its origin in the councils of heaven.** Its author is the God of ‘peace’ and order; while the strange confusion of man-

made creeds spring from this world, and have their origin in the brains of poor erring mortals. **‘As the heavens are higher than the earth,’ so is our creed, which is the Word of God, higher in perfection and real worth than all human creeds.**”—*Ibid.*

**1854**—From August 15 to December 19, 1954, on the masthead of the *Review* in five successive issues, a list of five ‘leading doctrines taught by the *Review*’ was published. Here is this list:

“The Bible and the Bible alone, the rule of faith and duty. The Law of God, as taught in the Old and New Testaments, unchangeable. The Personal Advent of Christ and the Resurrection of the Just, before the Millennium. The Earth restored to its Eden perfection and glory, the final inheritance of the Saints. Immortality alone through Christ, to be given to the Saints at the resurrection.”

Then the publication of that list ceased.

**1861**—In 1861, when Seventh-day Adventist ministers in the state of Michigan gathered in Battle Creek to consider the prospect of adopting a formal organizational structure, James White introduced the idea of a “church covenant.” It would simply say, **“We, the undersigned, hereby associate ourselves together, as a church, taking the name Seventh-day Adventists, covenanting to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ”** (“*Doings of the Battle Creek Conference, October 5 and 6, 1861, Review, October 8, 1861*”).

Thus the entire content of this “covenant” would consist of the proposed denominational name and the words of a very special verse of Scripture (*Revelation 14:12*).

But some in the group were suspicious that this was the beginning of a “creed,” and thus a step toward “becoming Babylon.”

John Loughborough was blunt in his response. It is one we should never forget:

**“The first step of apostasy is to get up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed.** The fourth is to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And fifth, to commence persecution against such.”—*Ibid.*

Loughborough had a good knowledge of church history—as well as a clear understanding of the trials and persecution experienced by Millerite believers only a few years earlier. He wanted nothing to do with a creed.

It is ironic that, **today, we have a creed that is called a “Statement of Belief.” It sounds safe, yet repeatedly faithful Advent believers have been persecuted and disfellowshipped because they chose to remain with historic beliefs** which, although not clearly stated in the official “Statement,” are very clearly presented in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.

White responded to Loughborough’s ringing comment by explaining that he too was opposed to forming a creed. He stated it this way:

“On the subject of creeds, I agree with Brother Loughborough . . . Now I take the ground that **creeds stand in a direct opposition to the gifts** [“The gifts” was James’ term for the Spirit of Prophecy writings]. Let us suppose a case: We get up a creed, stating just what we shall believe on this point and the other, and just what we shall do in reference to this thing and that, and say that we will believe the gifts, too.

**“But suppose the Lord, through the gifts, should give us some new light that did not harmonize with our creed; then, if we remain true to the gifts, it knocks our creed all over at once.** Making a creed is setting the stakes, and barring up the way to all future advancement. God put the gifts into the church for a good and great object; but men who have got up their churches, have shut up the way or have marked out a course for the Almighty. **They say virtually that the Lord must not do anything further than what has been marked out in the creed.**

**“A creed and the gifts thus stand in direct opposition to each other.** Now what is our position as a people? The Bible is our creed. We reject everything in the form of a human creed. **We take the Bible and the gifts of the Spirit; embracing the faith that thus the Lord will teach us from time to time.** And in this we take a position against the formation of a creed. We are not taking one step, in what we are doing, toward becoming Babylon.”—*Ibid.*

Notice in the above statement that **James very clearly stated that the “new light” will only come from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy!**

What is a creed? Quite obviously, it is a rather brief list of doctrinal statements. Nothing more, nothing less. It can be called many things—but that is what it is: **A creed is a list of doctrinal statements. It is included in the Baptismal Vow which new members must assent belief to.**

**What is it, then, that makes a creed so dangerous? With the passing of time, that list will inevitably be said to represent the sum total of necessary beliefs**—which must be accepted in order to retain membership. Obviously, **no list can be complete enough, and every list will omit many important points. Why? Because only the Inspired Writings list all the points! Therefore, only they—taken as a whole—should represent our “statement of belief”!**

Where did Ellen White stand in this matter? Did she consider creeds—the making of such doctrinal lists—to be a good thing? Here is A.L. White’s comment on this:

**“Thus early in the experience of the emerging church, light new to herself and others, yet in full harmony with the Scriptures, was given by the Lord through His chosen messenger.** The pioneers were conscious of this; a decade and a half later, when organizing the church [in 1863], **they refrained from the adoption of a creed, which could stand in the way of God giving new light through the visions.**”—*A.L. White, in E.G. White Biography, Vol. 1, p. 100.*

This matter of the making of creeds and “creed

power” is important enough that ***we should here pause to learn what the Spirit of Prophecy says on this matter.*** Here are several among many passages which could be quoted:

**“In the professedly Christian world many turn away from the plain teachings of the Bible and build up a creed from human speculations and pleasing fables, and they point to their tower as a way to climb up to heaven.”**—*Conflict and Courage, 42.*

**“Such was their [the Pharisee’s] spiritual blindness that it was impossible to reveal to them the truths relating to His kingdom. They clung to their creed and their useless ceremonies when the truth of Heaven awaited their acceptance.** They spent their money for chaff and husks, when the bread of life was within their reach. **Why did they not go to the Word of God and search diligently to know whether they were in error?”**—*Desire of Ages, 241-242.*

**“To subscribe the name to a church creed is not of the least value to anyone if the heart is not truly changed.”**—*Reflecting Christ, 217.*

**“The question is, ‘What is truth?’ It is not how many years have I believed that makes it the truth. You must bring your creed to the Bible and let the light of the Bible define your creed** and show where it comes short and where the difficulty is. The Bible is to be your standard.”—*Faith and Works, 77.*

**“It was the work of the Reformation to restore to men the Word of God; but is it not too true that in the churches of our time men are taught to rest their faith upon their creed and the teachings of their church rather than on the Scriptures?”**—*Great Controversy, 388.*

**“They claim the name of Lutherans, and point back to Luther, to his work and his testimony, but they have not cherished his spirit. They do not, like Luther, test their doctrines by the Bible, but by their creed, their church customs, the practices of the Fathers.** Their so-called Lutheranism is little better than Catholicism with the name of Luther attached to it.”—*Historical Sketches, 198-199.*

**“In Switzerland, as in Germany, there came dark days for the Reformation. While many cantons accepted the reformed faith, others clung with blind persistence to the creed of Rome.** Their persecution of those who desired to receive the truth finally gave rise to civil war.”—*Great Controversy, 211-212.*

**“There is nothing imaginary in the statement that the creed power is now beginning to prohibit the Bible as really as Rome did, though in a subtler way.”**—*Great Controversy, 389.*

**“To compel men to unite with those of a different creed, he [Roger Williams] regarded as an open violation of their natural rights.”**—*Great Controversy, 294.*

**“Though the Reformation gave the Scriptures to all, yet the self-same principle which was maintained by Rome prevents multitudes in Protestant churches from searching the Bible for themselves. They are taught to accept its teachings as interpreted by the church; and there are thousands who dare receive nothing, however plainly revealed in Scripture, that is**

4 contrary to their creed, or the established teaching of their church.”—*Great Controversy*, 597.

“Was not this the way things went with Rome? Are we not living her life over again? **And what do we see just ahead?**—Another general council! A world’s convention! Evangelical alliance, and **universal creed!**”—*Great Controversy*, 445.

“Has not the same process been repeated in nearly every church calling itself Protestant? As its founders, those who possessed the true spirit of reform, pass away, **their descendants come forward and ‘new-model the cause.’** While blindly clinging to the creed of their fathers and refusing to accept any truth in advance of what they saw, the children of the reformers depart widely from their example of humility, self-denial, and renunciation of the world. Thus ‘the first simplicity disappears.’ **A worldly flood, flowing into the church, ‘carries with it its customs, practices, and idols.’**”—*Great Controversy*, 385.

“**Do not carry your creed to the Bible, and read the Scriptures in the light of that creed.** If you find that your opinions are opposed to a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ or to any command or prohibition He has given, **give heed to the Word of God rather than to the sayings of men. Let every controversy or dispute be settled by ‘It is written.’**”—*Our High Calling*, 207.

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

“**A faultless creed and a carnal life are too often found together in professed believers.** To be a means to a saving end, the Word of God must be intelligently and practically understood and obeyed.”—*Review*, October 1, 1901.

**1864—In August 1864, the General Conference submitted a statement to the U.S. Government, requesting that their members not be inducted into the war effort.** But first, they wrote to the governor of Michigan to gain his support:

“We, the undersigned Executive Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, respectfully beg leave to present for your consideration the following statements:

“The denomination of Christians calling themselves Seventh-day Adventists, taking the Bible as their rule of faith and practice, are unanimous in their views that its teachings are contrary to the spirit and practice of war; hence, they have ever been conscientiously opposed to bearing arms. **If there is any portion of the**

**Bible which we, as a people, can point to more than another as our creed, it is the law of ten commandments, which we regard as the supreme law,** and each precept of which we take in its most obvious and literal import.”—*General Conference Committee, letter dated August 3, 1864, to Austin Blair, governor of Michigan.*

**1872—In 1872, a more lengthy statement, evidently the work of Uriah Smith, was published by the Review, in Battle Creek.** It was entitled “*A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists.*” **This was published unsigned as a pamphlet and contained 25 points.** The introduction read in part:

“In presenting to the public this synopsis of our faith, we wish to have it distinctly understood that **we have no articles of faith, creed, or discipline, aside from the Bible.** We do not put forth this as having any authority with our people; nor is it designed to secure uniformity among them, as a system of faith, but is a brief statement of what is, and has been, with great unanimity, held by them.”

**This statement was reprinted several times**—in *Signs of the Times* (June 4, 1874, and January 28, 1875), in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (November 24, 1874), and as a pamphlet in 1875, 1877-1878, 1884, and 1888.

**In each of these printings, it was always introduced by a statement that 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.”

**1889—In 1889 the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook for the first time published a list of “Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists.”** This list, based on Uriah Smith’s list from 1872, contained 28 articles. After appearing in the 1889 *Yearbook*, it disappeared for fifteen years. But it was reprinted in the *Yearbook* of 1905 and continued to appear through 1914. The statement was not included in the *Yearbooks* for 1890-1904, 1906, and 1915-1930.

**1894—In 1894 the 1,521-member Battle Creek Church issued its own statement of faith.** It had 30 elements.

In the meantime, in 1894 the 1,521-member Battle Creek Church, the most prominent Adventist congregation at the time, published a church directory (entitled “*Membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Battle Creek, Michigan,*” as it stood April 16, 1894) and included a statement entitled “*Some Things Seventh-day Adventists Believe.*” It contained thirty items, preceded by this explanation: “The Seventh-day Adventist people have no creed or discipline

# The 1980 Statement of Belief

**PART TWO  
OF THREE**

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

except the Bible but the following are some of the points of their faith upon which there is quite general agreement.”

This is the only *statement* of which the present writer has no copy. It is probably available, but may not be worth searching for.

**It was not until the early 1930s that the next important event in the history of these statements occurred.**

**1930**—On December 29, 1930, the **General Conference Committee voted that a statement of belief be prepared by a committee of four**, including the General Conference president (C.H. Watson) and the *Review* editor (F.M. Wilcox). The other members of the committee were M.E. Kern, associate secretary of the General Conference, and E.R. Palmer, manager of the *Review* and Herald Publishing Association.

**1931**—In 1931, on behalf of a committee of four authorized by action of the General Conference Committee, **F.M. Wilcox wrote a statement of faith**. It was entitled “*Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists*” and had **22 articles**. Although **it was never formally adopted**, it appeared in the 1931 *Yearbook* and in all subsequent *Yearbooks*. In 1932 it was printed in the *Church Manual*, and also in tract form. **This was the statement that remained in place (with 21 slight changes) up until the new formulation in Dallas in 1980.**

According to the usual version of the story, Wilcox did the actual writing, which was then accepted by the others. But, according to Raymond Cottrell, who worked closely with Nichol at the *Review* for several years, **the initial drafting was done by F.D. Nichol**, the thirty-four-year-old associate editor of the *Review*. It is possible that Nichol prepared an initial draft that was reviewed, and perhaps reworked, by Wilcox and then submitted to the other three members of the committee.

In his paper, “*The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mission: 1919-1979*,” Gottfried Oosterwal wrote: “Realizing that the General Conference Committee—or any other church body—would never accept the document in the form in which it was written, **Elder Wilcox, with full knowledge of the group, handed the statement directly to Edson Rogers, the General Conference statistician, who published it in the 1931 edition of the Yearbook.**” The plan was to initially place this new statement in a publication that most church members never look at, before printing it elsewhere. It succeeded; for there were few complaints that the church was making a creed.

**1932**—This statement began, “Seventh-day Adventists hold certain fundamental beliefs, the principal features of which . . . may be summarized as follows,” was reprinted each year in the *Yearbook*. Beginning in 1932, by vote of the General Conference Executive Committee, it was also printed in the *Church Manual*.

**1941**—The 1941 Annual Council approved a **uniform “Baptismal Vow” and “Baptismal Covenant” based on the 1931 statement.**

**1946**—A major decision was made at the 1946 General Conference Session, which was held in Washington, D.C. **It was voted that the Church Manual could only be revised at a General Conference Session.** The document was considered too important for any other method of change to be made.

So, without being considered a creed, **the 1931 Statement had become “official.”** The 1931 *Statement* contained 22 sections (paragraphs). It was published in both the *Yearbook* and the *Church Manual* until 1980, and was considered to be a summary of the principal features of Adventist beliefs.

**All of these earlier formulations** (James White’s informal statement in 1853, the five items in the *Review* masthead in 1854, the “*church covenant*” of 1861, Uriah Smith’s “*Declaration of Fundamental Principles*” in 1872, the Battle Creek congregation’s “*Points of Faith*” in 1894, and the statement of “*Fundamental Beliefs*” in 1931) **were intended to be descriptions of an existing Adventist consensus of what our people commonly believed, rather than a doctrinal statement that members had to accept—or else. But, after 1980, this situation would begin to change.**

**1976**—In 1976 two concerns were expressed, which provided an incentive for a revision of the 1931 statement. On the one hand, some General Conference officials expressed an interest in revising the paragraph on “the Holy Scriptures” to include an explicit assertion that “they give the authentic history of the origin of the world” (**creationism**, as opposed to evolution).

At the same time, the *Church Manual* Committee **felt a need for the coordination of three different statements** it contained: the *Fundamental Beliefs*, the *Doctrinal Instruction for Baptismal Candidates*, and the *Baptismal Vow*. Each was somewhat different than the others.

**So the Church Manual Committee recommended the appointment of an ad hoc [special purpose] committee to consider both matters: making the three statements read alike and “the preparation of an additional ‘Fundamental Belief’ statement to deal with the Doctrine of Creation.”**

6 (The General Conference president at this time was Robert Pierson. He did not retire until 1979, when he was replaced by Neal C. Wilson.)

According to the Minutes of the President's Administrative Committee (PREXAD), March 18, 1976, and the President's Advisory Council (PRADCO), March 24, 1976, PRADCO appointed the members of the committee.

**The chairman of this committee was W. Duncan Eva and its secretary was Bernard Seton. Its assignment was to prepare a draft copy of a revision of the 1931 Statement of Belief. Both men were very important in the preparation of this preliminary revision and the later adoption of the Andrews' second revision.**

**W. Duncan Eva, as a General Conference Vice-President, was in a key position. He was a close friend of Desmond Ford and fully in accord with his radical beliefs. After the Glacier View meeting in August 1980, which recommended the ouster of Ford, Eva strongly urged N.C. Wilson to not fire Ford—but send him to England to work! Fortunately, that was not done.**

(The above paragraph needs explaining: In the summer of 1981, I went to Andrews University for a week to research into source materials for forthcoming writing projects. While there, I learned that only three men [the Old Testament professor in the Seminary, a religion teacher in the undergraduate divisions, and the dean of the Seminary] were historic in their beliefs. The rest favored Ford. Learning of my presence, the Andrews University assistant graduate dean decided that he must convert this hitherto unknown Adventist research scholar. This was a full year after Ford had been discharged. Yet here was a leader at Andrews University openly trying to make a Fordite out of me! This shows the pressure that teachers place upon students in their classes, to accept their liberal ideas—or not be recommended for placement as pastors upon graduation. **That assistant dean told me that Eva had pled with Wilson to not fire Ford, but to send him to England. The dean said this should have been done.** At one point in our conversations, I asked him if there was a Sanctuary in heaven. He quickly replied with the kind of great certainty designed to impress students, "How do I know; I've never been there!" **Later in this report, we will discover that W. Duncan Eva was a key man in getting the changes made in the document, later approved at Dallas as the new *Statement of Belief*.**)

**Eva, as chairman of this initial revision committee, was in a position to strongly influence all that followed. And, as we will learn below, a remarkable amount of events occurred before the final draft was presented to the delegates at the 1980 General Conference Session.**

Both **Eva** (a General Conference vice president), as chairman, and **Bernard Seton** (a General Conference associate secretary), as secretary, were very influential on this *ad hoc* committee. They shared common

interests and became close friends.

The other members of the *ad hoc* committee were all General Conference personnel: Willis **Hackett**, Richard **Hammill**, and Alf **Lohne** were General Conference vice presidents. In addition, there was Clyde **Franz**, secretary; Charles **Bradford**, associate secretary; Gordon **Hyde**, general field secretary; N.R. **Dower**, Ministerial Association secretary; and Arthur L. **White**, secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate.

(It is doubtful that Elders Lohne, Franz, Hyde, Dower, or White would have approved the changes which were made in our doctrinal statement.)

**Bernard Seton**, who would later figure prominently in preparing the initial draft for the 1980 *Statement of Belief*, **had earlier written in 1965** from Berne, Switzerland, to the General Conference administration, expressing his conviction that our Fundamental Belief needed revision from both a theological and a literary point of view. Vatican II had just ended. And, shortly afterward, several of our leaders had traveled to Geneva, to enter into negotiations for still closer contacts with World Council of Churches headquarters. **Seton clearly recognized that our doctrinal statement needed modifying; so our men, meeting in those ecumenical consultations, would be able to point to the similarities of our beliefs to those of the other churches.** But nothing came of the suggestion at the time.

**But then, in 1970, on becoming an associate secretary of the General Conference**, Seton found that one of his duties was to serve in a key position as secretary of the *Church Manual* Committee.

**In a personal recollection of events, which he later wrote, Seton, who was a close friend of W. Duncan Eva, strongly supported Desmond Ford and told more of the history in the 1970s. Eventually a committee developed, to revise the *Doctrinal Statement*.**

Seton sent the letter, containing much historical background, to Lawrence Geraty at La Sierra University.

**Fritz Guy, La Sierra University president for a time, later included the letter in a lecture he gave to an audience at Avondale College Church in September 2002.** His lecture was entitled "*Uncovering the Origins of the Statement of Twenty-seven Fundamental Beliefs.*"

**It was fitting that Guy would tell the faculty and future ministers, at Avondale, how the 1980 Doctrinal Statement came about.**—For its wording protects the workers in Australia—as well as workers throughout the world field—from being discharged because of their new theology teachings. Looking back on it, from this historical perspective, we can see that it was all part of a plan.

*Here are portions of Bernard Seton's letter:*

**"It became clear that the *Manual* needed revision.** It had additions being made in random fashion by individuals and groups at various times. The 1967 edition revealed the patchwork nature of the volume and cried out for editorial attention. But on page 22 it

was recorded, **'All changes or revisions of policy made in the Manual shall be authorized by a General Conference session' [1946]. This quotation proved to be a roadblock in every effort to revise any part of the Manual.**

"It took several months of interpretive endeavor to convince the committee that editorial, literary revisions in the interest of clarity and consistency were not covered by the above declaration. Then that light dawned. Many pages of editorial emendations were accepted and eventually presented to the 1975 session of the General Conference in Vienna. **Because of the official reluctance to change a jot or tittle of the Manual, I had refrained from including the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs in the initial editorial suggestions.**

"After the 1975 Session [at Vienna, Austria], however, the time seemed ripe for attention to the *Fundamentals*. They seemed surrounded with an aura of untouchability, and **the secretary of the committee [Seton himself] seemed to be the only one convinced of the need for revision. I, therefore, produced a complete but cautious revision** for presentation to the chairman of the committee and at an early date to a subcommittee that was appointed on the chairman's initiative. **With the initial one-man revision as its base, that subcommittee spent many hours producing a revision** for presentation to the full *Church Manual Committee*."

Working closely with W. Duncan Eva on the committee, Seton was anxious to produce changes needed in the Fundamental Beliefs. Continuing with his account of what happened:

"At every step, however, it was dogged by the tradition of untouchability concerning the Fundamental Beliefs. Indeed, **there appeared to be an aura of inspiration that hamstrung most suggestions for refinement and improvement of each statement. If that aura could have been laid to rest, the way would have been open for a much more effective revision.** Under that mighty handicap, the subcommittee revised the original statement presented to the full committee for its reaction.

"**An ad hoc committee was then appointed** with the specific task of preparing a document **that via the Church Manual Committee would prepare a statement for presentation to the 1980 session, and that ad hoc committee was commissioned to work within the framework of minimal revisions,** in deference to the idea of the sacrosanct nature of the *Manual* and the sensitivities of the church membership respecting any change that might appear to touch the doctrinal beliefs of the church. **Once again the brakes were on, and revision had to be carried out on a very limited basis.**

**1979—"The ad hoc committee did not complete its work until August 1979, when a draft was distributed to General Conference officials."**

**W. Duncan Eva was careful to write a cover letter which accompanied the draft, appealing that it be accepted** so changes could be made in the *Funda-*

*mental Beliefs.*

"In a cover letter, Eva 'noted that [both] formal and substantive changes had been made. Formally, **the sequence of topics had been altered and paragraph headings had been inserted.** Substantively, **the sections on the Trinity had been expanded from two paragraphs to four. And sections had been added concerning angels, creation and the fall, the church, unity in the body of Christ, the Lord's Supper, Christian marriage, and the Christian home and education.'**"

**The trinity was a key point.** The other churches believed that, instead of a Godhead consisting of three separate Persons (as repeatedly stated by Ellen White), there was a trinity which consisted of one God, who took the form of three Persons. The 1980 *Statement* would become the first one in our history to have this three-in-one concept.

In his cover letter, W. Duncan Eva stated that it was imperative that the draft copy of the *Fundamental Beliefs* revision be sent to the "theologians" at Andrews University, before it was sent on to the Dallas Session for ratification. Eva explained the procedure as to how this should be done. If Eva had not pushed for this, the liberals at Andrews would never have gotten their hands on it.

"Eva also said that **before the new statement would be submitted to the full Church Manual Committee, it would be presented to 'certain professors at the Seminary with whom we will meet in September.'** After the *Church Manual* committee gave its approval, **the statement would proceed to the [General Conference] officers, the union [conference] presidents, the Annual Council, and finally to the General Conference session in Dallas** [the following summer]."

In order to make certain that the draft be sent to Andrews, Seton added his own urging to that expressed by Eva, that the Andrews' theologians should check over the document, lest they publicly object at the Dallas Session.

"**When that further limited revision was completed I ventured to suggest that it would be wise to submit the document to our professional theologians** on the basis that it would be better to have their reactions before the document went further rather than await their strictures on the session floor. **There was some hesitation, but eventually the suggestion was accepted and the document went to Andrews University with the request that it be studied, that comments and emendations be referred back to the ad hoc committee.** Those terms of reference [only provide a few "comments"] did not register, for **the University prepared its own set of Fundamentals."**

W. Duncan Eva had probably notified his friends at Andrews, that *Ad hoc* had approved sending the draft to them. So they were ready for it when it arrived!

**As soon as the Bible teachers at Andrews received that draft—they went to work on it!** Indeed, their own continued employment depended on it. **As**

**8** their later letter to N.C. Wilson—pleading that Ford not be fired—clearly revealed: If the draft was not watered down sufficiently, they themselves could be called to account for teaching Ford’s views to their students—the future ministers of the church.

When Walter Scragg, at that time a General Conference officer, received back the draft from Andrews, as explained by Seton, he was startled by the fact that it was “not a reworking of the material submitted but a completely rewritten document.

“But in spite of this surprise, the Andrews document “became the basis of the one recommended by the 1979 Annual Council to the 1980 General Conference Session.”

Looking back over the astounding success that the revised 1980 Statement produced, Seton could say:

“To one used to the workings of denominational machinery it is nothing less than staggering that the church could in 1980 meet the challenge of the 1946 action which put a protective mantle over the 1931 statement,—and not only reconsider the statement, but actually act as if it did not exist and create new language, new articles, new scripture references, and then have the new document voted [approved by the 1980 Spring Council for presentation to the Session].”

This Spring Council action (approving the revised draft, so it could be forwarded to the forthcoming Session at Dallas) was reported in the *Review*. (See “*Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists*,” *Adventist Review* 157/8 [21 February 1980].)

“The University’s action accomplished what a timorous interpretation of *Church Manual* procedure had failed to effect. Hindsight suggests that it would have been wise if the *Church Manual* Committee had worked more closely with Andrews’ theologians from an early date, but the traditional reticence to touch the *Manual* would probably have made that a too revolutionary suggestion.”

**Who was on that Andrews committee?** The president of Andrews University appointed the vice president for academic administration, the dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, and eight members of the Seminary faculty. They were appointed by the president to meet with W. Duncan Eva. Two additional faculty members were added later.

—So Eva, the man who would later urge N.C. Wilson to not fire Ford—but send him to England,—managed to have himself sent to Andrews, to help coordinate their revision of the draft statement!

According to Lawrence Geraty, the special revision committee included Richard Schwarz, professor of history and vice president for academic administration; Thomas Blincoe, professor of theology and dean of the Seminary; Ivan Blazen, professor of New Testa-

ment; Raoul Dederen, professor of theology; Lawrence Geraty, professor of Old Testament; Roy Graham, professor of theology and provost of the university; William Johnsson, professor of New Testament and associate dean of the seminary; Hans LaRondelle, professor of theology; Gottfried Oosterwal, professor of mission; and William Shea, professor of Old Testament. Kenneth Strand, professor of church history, and Fritz Guy were subsequently added, making a total of twelve. **Fritz Guy held the important post of secretary of the committee. It was his task to bring all the suggestions into final shape.**

(There may have been a few good men on that committee who were outvoted. William Shea was solid for the right.)

At this point in this historical report, we will turn our attention to Fritz Guy’s lecture (“*Uncovering the Origins of the Statement of Twenty-seven Fundamental Beliefs*,” given at Avondale College Church, September 2002). He was not only on that Andrews’ revision committee. But, he will tell us, as committee secretary, it was his task “to refine the changes” made by the others.

(After 1980, Fritz Guy was the only professor whose teachings were so strongly pro-Ford that he had to go to La Sierra University, where he would be safe.)

“In general the statement prepared by the *ad hoc* committee in Washington was uneven in its organization and style with mixed terminology, a lack of balance with regard to length of individual sections, differences in the way documentation was handled, and a general administrative concern with events and behavior rather than meaning. . . We decided almost immediately that what was needed was not more editing but a complete rewriting.

“So we went to work, deciding what should be included and assigning various sections to different members of the committee. For example, Lawrence Geraty produced the original draft of section 6, ‘Creation’; Ivan Blazen drafted section 23, ‘Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary’; and I [Fritz Guy] drafted sections 2, ‘The Trinity,’ and 3, ‘The Father.’

“Of course, many minor and some major changes were made not only by the faculty group but also by later committees at the General Conference headquarters and at the General Conference session, so the final content and wording cannot properly be attributed to this initial drafting. New materials beyond the 1931 statement included the sections on creation and family life.

“As it finally turned out, the statement had a deliberate structure; it was not just twenty-seven beads on string. Indeed, it reflected a very traditional theological pattern:

“Prolegomena. Preamble. 1 - The Holy Scriptures. 2 - The Trinity. 3 - The Father. 4 - The Son. 5 - The Holy Spirit. 6 - Creation. 7 - The Nature of Man [Salvation].



# The 1980 Statement of Belief

**PART THREE  
OF THREE**

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

8 - The Great Controversy. 9 - The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. 10 - The Experience of Salvation. 11 - The Church. 12 - The Remnant and Its Mission. 13 - Unity in the Body of Christ. 14 - Baptism. 15 - Lord's Supper. 16 - Spiritual Gifts and Ministries. 17 - The Gift of Prophecy. 18 - The Law of God. 19 - The Sabbath. 20 - Stewardship. 21 - Christian Behavior. 22 - Marriage and the Family. 23 - Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary. 24 - The Second Coming of Christ. 25 - Death and Resurrection. 26 - The Millennium and the End of Sin. 27 - The New Earth.

"But this was merely a plausible, traditional structure, certainly not the 'right,' 'holy,' or 'God-given' structure."

As examples of how the *Statement* could be divided into sections, Fritz Guy then refers the reader to how other denominations have done it. **Andrews' professors have been trained to give close attention to the teachings of the other denominations. Indeed, they generally know them better than they know the Spirit of Prophecy.** In their theological articles, they quote extensively from non-Adventist theologians, but almost never from our own Inspired books.

**"The number twenty-seven was a fairly arbitrary initiative of mine.** As secretary of the group, **I was given the task of recording and organizing the results of our deliberations.** Since there was no predetermined number of sections, we could have come out with twenty-six or twenty-eight; but **I preferred twenty-seven.** Twenty-six seemed (to me) to be a dull, uninteresting number; twenty-eight seemed better because it was four times seven, the arithmetical product of two numbers prominent in the Book of Revelation.

**"But twenty-seven seemed more interesting still: it was three to the third power, three times three times three.** Given the importance of the Trinity (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:13 [14]), and the threefold praise of the angels, 'Holy, Holy, Holy' (Isa. 6:3), the other numbers didn't have a chance. Twenty-seven it would be. During the subsequent discussion at the General Conference, the number of sections was increased to twenty-eight, but subsequently reduced again to twenty-seven. So twenty-seven it remained, and the statement is sometimes identified informally as 'the twenty-seven.'

"Some other details may be of interest although they are not significant enough to have been included in the historical record of the project:

**"The group invested the most time and effort on section 23, 'Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary.'** Because exegetical and experiential questions had been publicly raised about the traditional doctrine of the sanctuary in heaven and its 'cleansing,' we tried to construct a cautious statement that would fairly represent what we understood to be a broad consensus of

the church membership.

"The group decided not to include a section on Christian education after all, on the grounds that if we thus highlighted the work of one of the church's major organizational departments, we would in fairness have to highlight others as well (Sabbath School, health care, youth ministry, etc.), and that would make the statement too much like an organizational chart.

"Section 15, 'The Lord's Supper,' evoked considerable debate over the participation of children. In spite of the Adventist tradition of open communion, some members of the group were convinced that only children who had been baptized should be permitted to participate; others were equally convinced that a child who was old enough to know what the symbols meant should be able to participate. We reached an impasse we could not resolve, so this issue was not (and is not) mentioned in the statement.

"But most important was a sense of excitement and an awareness of the importance of the task. We were trying to be both descriptive (expressing beliefs of our community of faith) and instructive (leading the community of faith to greater perception and clarity). Had we been writing our own personal statements of belief, each of us would have written somewhat differently, reflecting our individual backgrounds, perspectives, and understandings.

"Then came the wider discussion. **The proposed revision went back to the General Conference where it was modified slightly by the Church Manual Committee and approved in principle at the Annual Council in October 1979.**

"It was published in the *Review* in February 1980 (*"Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists," Adventist Review 157/8 [21 February 1980]*) with a request for comments from readers around the world. There were many suggestions, ranging from the superficial to the extremely thoughtful; **probably the most thorough examination was given by the religion faculty at Pacific Union College.**"

As we will discover later in this historical report, **both the faculties at Pacific Union College and Andrews University were deeply concerned about what events the summer of 1980 would bring. Two important gatherings were planned.** First was the Dallas Session, April 21-25. The second was the meeting at Glacier View summer camp in Colorado, August 1-15.

**From events which occurred on August 15 and 16, we can know that the Bible teachers at both institutions were not asleep to what W. Duncan Eva and Bernard Seton at world headquarters were trying to do, and what Fritz Guy and his associate Bible teachers at Andrews had been able to accomplish.**

**It is only in hindsight that God's faithful ones**

**10** can begin to grasp the terrific impact which the 1980 *Statement of Belief* had on our denomination. But Jesus warned us that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. **While we were sleeping in the late 1970s, new theology (Fordite) advocates in high places were hard at work to saddle the church with a doctrinal statement which our liberals could use to protect themselves, so they could more openly promote new theology teachings.**

**1980—In 1980, the floodgates were about to open.**

**The heart of modern Evangelical Protestant teachings (*it is safe to sin, obedience to the law of God is not important, and we are saved as soon as we accept Christ*) was about to pour into our local churches and into our camp meetings. By the mid-1980s, it would be appearing in our journals and books.**

**“Finally the statement [was] presented for consideration by the 2000 delegates to the fifty-third session of the General Conference in Dallas in April.**

“For the complete official record of the discussion, which occurred April 21-25, see ‘Session Proceedings’ in General Conference Bulletins 5-9, *Adventist Review* 157/20 (23 Apr. 1980): 8-11, 14; 157/21 (24 Apr. 1980): 18-23, 28-29; 157/22 (25 Apr. 1980): 16-20, 31; 157/23 (27 Apr. 1980): 14-18; 157/24 (1 May 1980): 17-18, 20-22. ‘Seventh Business Meeting, Fifty-third General Conference Session, April 21, 1980, 3:15 p.m.: Session Proceedings,’ *Adventist Review* 157/20 (April 23, 1980).”

**Because many of our people were fearful about this proposed revision, when the discussion on it was about to begin, President Neal C. Wilson gave a rather lengthy introduction, assuring everyone in the audience at Dallas that changing the doctrinal statement was both safe and necessary. Here is part of what he said:**

“For some time we have been considering a refinement of our *Statement on Fundamental Beliefs* . . . No doubt you have done both some studying and some praying . . .

“I can understand how individuals far removed from where some of these things are being studied, and who may not themselves have been asked to participate in a restudy or refinement of wording, might feel that there is something very sinister, mysterious, and secret going on that will suddenly confront us, and that it may contribute to the ultimate detriment and demise of the Seventh-day Adventist Church . . . **I assure you that no one who has been struggling with some of these matters has any such intention . . .**

“I fully recognize, and am very willing to admit, that we do need to use extreme care, including a wholesome variety of minds with training and background, to provide input on this kind of statement. However, **I do not think anyone should become frightened** when the wording of such a document is studied. Perhaps I should go one step further and say that **the Seventh-**

**day Adventist Church does not have a creed as such. Nothing set in concrete in terms of human words.** The time never comes when any human document cannot be improved upon. **We feel that every 20, 30, or 50 years it is a very good thing for us to be sure we are using the right terminology and approach . . . Certain terms mean today what they did not mean 50 years ago. . .** It is extremely important that we should understand what we believe and that **we should express it simply, clearly,** and in the most concise way possible.”—*N.C. Wilson, quoted in “Seventh Business Meeting, Fifty-third General Conference session, April 21, 1980, 3:15 p.m.; Session Proceedings,” Adventist Review* 157/20 (23 Apr. 1980).

**Then the process of going over the document, which had been heavily loaded by the Andrews’ self-styled “theologians,” began.**

(By the way, what is an Adventist “theologian”? He is a man who has obtained a doctrinal degree in an narrowed, obscure, religious topic in an outside university; all of which are either secular (atheistic), Evangelical, or Catholic. He *must* personally accept the beliefs of his doctoral supervisor, or he will not receive his doctorate!)

**What were the problems with this draft revision which was presented to the Session delegates at Dallas?** First and foremost, it contained **watered-down phrasings which, because they did not clearly state the doctrine, could be interpreted as supporting either historic or new theology teachings.** Second, it contained additions and omissions, some of which strengthened liberal positions in the church.

*We will now return to Fritz Guy’s overview of the Dallas Session, which provides us with additional helpful information:*

“Recalling the aphorism that ‘a camel looks like a horse designed by committee,’ anyone can recognize that a committee of nearly two thousand members [at the Dallas Session] is not an ideal group to revise any document.”

Fritz Guy’s point is correct. Given the short amount of time in which to work, and so many people, **it was impossible for the delegates at Dallas to significantly alter the draft statement** from the one which Andrews hammered into shape.

“Perhaps as important as the revisions that were made were the revisions that were not made. These included a number of suggestions for greater specificity regarding **the days of creation week [7 days or long ages],** the beginning of the Sabbath, **the place(s) of Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary [which apartment did He enter in A.D. 31?],** ways of supporting the church financially, and proscribed behaviors such as card-playing, theatergoing, and dancing **[everything dealing with conduct and standards was omitted at Andrews] . . .**

“The discussion at the General Conference session should have included more scholars. Blincoe was there as dean of the Seminary, and Geraty was there as the elected representative of the Seminary faculty; both

were members of the editorial committee and Geraty was actively involved in the discussion . . .

“As statements of belief go, the number twenty-seven is not unusually large: in the Anglican tradition there are the famous ‘*Thirty-nine Articles of Religion*’; and in the Lutheran tradition the *Augsburg Confession* contains twenty-eight articles, some of which are several pages long. (See ‘*Articles of Religion*,’ in *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church* [New York: Seabury, 1979], 867-76; ‘*The Augsburg Confession*,’ in *The Book of Concord; The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959, 27-96]).

**“So is it a ‘creed’ after all? In one way it certainly is: it is a formal, official, and therefore ‘authoritative’ statement of belief.** This is true in spite of the fact that the opening lines insist that ‘Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed,’ and in spite of Wilson’s assurance to the General Conference delegates that ‘the Seventh-day Adventist church does not have a creed as such.’ **So claims that it is not a creed may seem somewhat strained . . .**

“As a community of faith grows, the need for organization becomes increasingly obvious, and so does the need for theological self-definition. **The world in which we live and serve [the other churches], and to which we witness, needs to know who we are and what we believe.** Oncoming generations also need to know who we are and what we believe.”—Fritz Guy, “*Uncovering the Origins of the Statement of Twenty-seven Fundamental Beliefs*.” This lecture was presented at Avondale College Church in September 2002.

**It was fully believed by supporters, at Pacific Union College and Andrews University, that the approval by the Dallas Session of this revised doctrinal statement would guarantee that their friend and mentor, Desmond Ford, would not be discharged** at the special hearing at Glacier View (August 1-15, 1980), which began about three months after the end of the Session.

But when, on Friday morning, the delegates (many of them reluctantly) voted to recommend that Ford be discharged, the news was immediately relayed to Pacific Union College and Andrews. **Ford had been the leading Bible teacher at Pacific Union College since the mid-1970s. Nearly all of its faculty were solidly new theology. Almost all of the religion teachers at Andrews University were new theology.** —It was at Andrews University that the major draft changes had been made.

Totally stunned at the news, **the great majority of the faculty of Andrews University signed and sent a letter to N.C. Wilson, pleading with him not to proceed with the firing of Ford!** This was a daring thing to do, but it was born of desperation. For, **if Ford could be discharged, many of their own jobs were on the line** if they continued teaching their liberal views.

**The next day, during the holy hours of Sabbath**

**afternoon, a large number of Pacific Union College 11 faculty members also sent a telegram, from a town in nearby Napa Valley, to N.C. Wilson—pleading with him not to fire Ford!**

**(When Wilson returned to church headquarters, W. Duncan Eva was also waiting for him. He urged him to not discharge Ford, but send him to England to help our people over there.)**

All this was the height of desperation. **Yet, in the long run, all their fears proved unfounded. The new 27-point Statement of Beliefs was a solid bedrock upon which every liberal could rest.** After April 1980, whenever any question was raised as to someone’s teachings in our schools, or his preaching in our churches, he could reply with assurance, “*I accept the Dallas Statement.*”

**After 1980—**Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, liberal pastors and teachers became so bold in their self-confident teaching of “*it’s okay to sin, there’s no need to keep the law, and we’re already saved,*” that **large numbers of faithful believers—finding it impossible to obtain help from their conference presidents,—simply left. Still others, who kept complaining, were pushed out** by their new theology pastors.

—**So the new Statement of Belief became something of a reverse creed!** It permitted those who introduced variant, and hitherto unacceptable, teachings and standards to gain control, while those who normally would be the most conservative were shoved out of the church.

In this short research study, we have focused attention on the history that led up to our current doctrinal statement. But, just now, let us briefly see how the 1980 *Statement of Belief* fitted into a still larger picture of compromise:

**A number of its phrasings, which appeared to refer to historic beliefs, could be used in support of new theology concepts. Basic teachings seemed to be referred to, but which were actually hardly mentioned or not mentioned at all. In this manner, new theology errors were solidly embedded** into the new *Statement*. Fritz Guy, who led in making these alterations, later wrote:

“We decided almost immediately that **what was needed was not more editing but a complete rewriting**” (Fritz Guy, *Spectrum*, Summer 2004, p. 23).

The timing of all this was exquisite. Everything changed after 1980. **The new “official” document not only helped promote and protect new theology teachings within the church,—it also helped our denomination reach out and make still closer contacts with the other churches,** in order to gain their favor!

The finished *Statement* was a word craftsman’s delight. **It provided our ecumenists with the tools needed to boldly dialogue with theological experts from the other churches.** Here is the background of this:

**12** Since 1967 Bert Beverly Beach had been a member of a special doctrinal committee, set up by the World Council of Churches at its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. Other men, including Earl Hilgirt, had also been sent to work closely with him. **Representatives of most major Protestant denominations were also on that committee.** It was also the only World Council of Churches committee at which the Roman Catholic Church was represented. This was due to the fact that Pope John XXIII (and Pope Paul VI on John's sudden death) at **Vatican II wanted "conversations" to begin with the other Christian churches in order to bring them closer to the "Mother Church."** This special committee (*The Faith and Order Commission*) was started in 1967, only two years after the third and final session of Vatican II ended. **This committee was empowered to consider all aspects of church doctrines in an attempt to figure out how to harmonize them, through special compromises and changes in doctrinal phrasings, so that the churches could be drawn closer together.**

All this, of course, was predicted not only in Revelation 13:8; 14:8-12; and 12:17 but also in *Great Controversy*, 563-581. Rome is steadily working to draw into itself the other churches, without itself actually changing.

**But at the same time, by the end of Vatican II, the Desmond Ford crisis in Australia was presenting an attractive brand of Adventism that let people sin all they wanted to and still go to heaven.** It downgraded every one of our historic doctrines which pointed to the necessity of obeying the **law of God**. In order to accomplish this, it gave Christ a **pre-Fall nature** which could not sin while on earth, so He could not provide us an example of obedience to follow. It placed the **atonement** as totally ending at the cross in A.D. 31, so all who lived afterward could be saved merely by accepting Christ. It eliminated the need for Christ's **Sanctuary** ministry in heaven to empower us to obey God's requirements. It did away with the need of a genuine **investigative judgment** prior to the Second Advent, at which time the sins of men were investigated.

**By 1978, there was an urgent need to find a way to keep pro-Ford liberal pastors and administrators in the ministry! There was also a need to provide Evangelical-acceptable church beliefs, which our representatives could present at ecumenical committees and councils**—as evidence that our denomination was really like the others.

A modified *Statement of Doctrinal Belief* was seen to be the answer. So, to help both our ecumenical contacts and our liberal pastors, the lengthy process was begun to revise our official doctrinal Statement. Every word and phrase was carefully examined and worked over.

**When the Dallas Session convened near the end of June 1980, the delegates found themselves confronted by an assignment to approve sweeping changes to our entire doctrinal Statement!**

**The procedure for doing it was confusing to the minds of the delegates.** Day after day it went on. A sentence would be read to the delegates. Individuals would stand and object. Others would, on que, stand in defense of the change. The sentence would "be sent back to committee for study." The next sentence would be read, objected to, perhaps sent back. **Each sentence sent back would be brought out later—after everyone had forgotten what the original objection had been** and the context in which the passage had been placed.

When people objected, saying that they did not have enough time in which to do such an important work, **the chairman would remind them that "we must hurry along, for the entire document must be finished within the next few days."** Yet, as with all our other five-year Sessions, only a relatively few hours out of each day were allotted to Business Meetings (totaling only about 25 hours).

The rest of the time is occupied with talks by representatives of other churches (appropriately introduced by B.B. Beach), sermons, parades, marching around with banners or flags, plus other entertainment each evening. As each Session's week wears on, many of the weary delegates notice the local attractions mentioned in the official Session papers given them when they arrive. And they slip away to sightsee, leave to visit the exhibits and sales areas, or rest in their hotel rooms.

**The end result was a remarkable compromise document over which both our Fordites and ecumenists could rejoice.**

**Approval of that Statement had a profound effect on our church in the years that followed.**

First, **it enabled liberal pastors to boldly begin preaching new theology errors in our local churches, without fear of reprisal from leadership.** This trend began in the early 1980s and has continued unabated ever since.

Second, **our church "dialogues" with other denominations began in earnest!** Prior to 1980, our leaders only sat in on a few WCC committees. —But, since then, they have had what was needed to go directly to other denominations and push more directly for acceptance. What was needed was an ecumenically worded *Statement of Belief*, and it had been given to them. The Protestant denominations have their official creeds, which they prize above Scripture; we have our *Statement of Belief*, which we present to them as "what we believe."  
—vf

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