The Development of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

by Terry Hill

Index

An Unquestionable Authority

"Messages of every order and kind have been urged upon Seventh-day Adventists, to take the place of the truth which, point by point, has been sought out by prayerful study, and testified to by the miracle-working power of the Lord. But the way-marks which have made us what we are, are to be preserved, and they will be preserved, as God has signified through His word and the testimony of His Spirit. He calls upon us to hold firmly, with the grip of faith, to the fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority." ***(Ellen G. White, Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 2, page 59, 'The Foundation of our Faith', 1904)***

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Email: terry_sda@blueyonder.co.uk

Website: https://www.theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/

The development of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Many Seventh-day Adventists will be surprised to learn that the very first time their Fundamental Beliefs were discussed at any length, and voted in at a General Conference Session, was in 1980. Even then, this did not involve a study of the Bible but was rather the reformulating of these beliefs as being representative of what was then, in 1980, believed by SDAs throughout the world. In fact, the very first time the Fundamental Beliefs of SDAs were voted in at a General Conference Session, in any sense of meaning, was in 1946. We shall return to this point later because it is very important in understanding how our Fundamental Beliefs were established.

As already stated, the foregoing may surprise many SDAs, with some even doubting its veracity, so a detailed explanation of the historical development of these beliefs is necessary. This is the purpose of this article. So where do we begin with this history? We will begin at the beginning.

Beginnings

As most SDAs will already know (so I am not going into this in any detail), after the 'great disappointment' of 1844 when God's remnant people came together to form a single body of believers, they came from various Christian backgrounds and denominations. Quite understandably, they brought with them different doctrines and ideas. This meant that before these people could be united as a denomination, these differences needed to be resolved. To accomplish this, a series of Sabbath conferences and Bible studies were held. In summary of these events, Ellen White had the following to say. This was in an address prior to the commencement of the 1905 General Conference session

> "After the passing of the time in 1844 we searched for the truth as for hidden treasure. I met with the brethren, and we studied and prayed earnestly. Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light and studying the Word. Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power. When they came to the point in their study where they said, "We can do nothing more," the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me. I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to how we were to labor and teach effectively. Thus light was given that helped us to understand the scriptures in regard to Christ, his mission, and his priesthood. A line of truth extending from that time to the time when we shall enter the city of God, was made plain to me, and I gave to others the instruction that the Lord had given me." *(Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, May 25th 1905, 'The work for this time', An Address by Mrs. E. G. White prior to the 1905 Conference)*

She followed this by saying

> "During this whole time I could not understand the reasoning of the brethren. My mind was locked, as it were, and I could not comprehend the meaning of the scriptures we were studying. This was one of the greatest sorrows of my life. I was in this condition of mind until all the principal points of our faith were made clear to our minds, in harmony with the Word of God. The brethren knew that, when not in vision, I could not understand these matters, and they accepted, as light directly from heaven, the revelations given." *(Ibid)*

So through Bible studies and revelation from God through Ellen White, "all the principal points of our faith" were formulated.

Early declarations of the Fundamental Principles of SDAs

At times, as the years progressed, the Fundamental Principles (beliefs) of early SDAs were listed in its denominational publications. This included in their church Yearbook. These beliefs though were not voted in at a General Conference session. Instead, they were held by common consent.

The first 'list' I have found that highlighted the beliefs of God's remnant people (although at that time, we had not yet taken the name Seventh-day Adventist) was in 1854. Published in the *Review and Herald*, this list appears to have been written by James White. It reads on the cover page

> **"Leading Doctrines Taught by the Review.**
> *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." (Review and Herald, August 15th 1854)*

The first published declaration of our Fundamental Beliefs, in any detail, was in leaflet form. This leaflet, published in 1872, had the following as its opening remarks.

> "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. We often find it necessary to meet inquiries on this subject, and sometimes to correct false statements circulated against us, and to remove erroneous impressions which have obtained with those who have not had an opportunity to become acquainted with our faith and practice. Our only object is to meet this necessity.
>
> As Seventh-day Adventists we desire simply that our position shall be understood; and we are the more solicitous for this because there are many who call themselves Adventists who hold views with which we can have no sympathy, some of which, we think, are subversive of the plainest and most important principles set forth in the word of God.
>
> As compared with other Adventists, Seventh-day Adventists differ from one class in believing in the unconscious state of the dead, and the final destruction of the unrepentant wicked; from another, in believing in the perpetuity of the law of God as summarily contained in the ten commandments, in the operation of the Holy Spirit in the church, and in setting no times for the advent to occur; from all, in the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord, and in many applications of the prophetic scriptures. With these remarks, we ask the attention of the reader to the following propositions, which aim to be a concise statement of the more prominent features of our faith." *(Leaflet, A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists, 1872)*

Following on from this preamble, there was listed 25 individual beliefs.

The next published declaration of our beliefs was in the first issue of the *Signs of the Times* (4th June 1874). This was when everything in the above-mentioned leaflet was repeated.

The next list to be published was in the *Review and Herald* the same year (1874). This was cited as being written by Uriah Smith, who, at that time, along with James White and J. N. Andrews, was joint editor of the paper. Under the heading of "FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF S. D. ADVENTISTS", twenty-five beliefs were listed. Preceding this came the following statement.

> "As already stated, S. D. Adventists have no creed but the Bible; but they hold to certain well refined 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 principal features of their religious faith, upon which there is, so far as we know, entire unanimity throughout the body." *(Uriah Smith, Review and Herald, November 24th 1874, The Seventh-Day Adventists, A brief sketch of their origin, progress, and principles. (Concluded))*

This statement, over the years, with slightly modified wording, was repeated. In total I found it published on 16 different occasions. Here is when and where it was quoted.

1874 Review and Herald (24th November)

1875 Signs of the Times (28th January)

1878 Signs of the Times (21st February)

1888 Gospel Sickle (1st April)

1888 Present Truth (UK) (16th August)

1889 Yearbook

1905 Yearbook

1907 Yearbook

1908 Yearbook

1909 Yearbook

1910 Yearbook

1911 Yearbook

1912 Yearbook

1912 Review and Herald (22nd August)

1913 Yearbook

1914 Yearbook

On each of these occasions, the above preamble was followed by a list of Fundamental Principles (beliefs). Initially there were 25 in total but from when they were listed for the first time in the SDA Yearbook (1889), this was increased to 28. After the death of Ellen White (1915), this list of Fundamental Principles was never again published.

Another time the above preamble was quoted was in the *Australian Signs of the Times* of July 24th 1911. This was when explaining the stand that we took regarding the writings of Ellen G. White. It was also part-quoted in the *Australian Signs of the Times of* January 3rd and 10th 1910. This was when promoting a booklet of the *Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists*.

Our Yearbook was highly valued. It not only had an internal function but was also used as an outreach. Note the following from the early 1900's, particularly the reference to fundamental principles.

> "When some one who has but a little time to read asks you what are the fundamental principles of Seventh-day Adventists, loan him your copy of the 1905 " Year-book," and let him read pages 188-192. This brief statement of principles may create a desire to read more on some special point of faith, and then the way will be open for further missionary effort. If you have not a copy of the " Year-book," you ought to have one." *(Review and Herald, October 12th 1905, 'The Seed and the Sowers")*

> "We still have a good supply of the " Year-Book " for 1908. Those who have not already procured one would do well to order at once. Your town library would also appreciate a copy, and it would prove a means of interesting many who could not be reached in other ways. Besides the statistics on the progress of our work, and the directories giving the name and address of all conference workers and institutions, there are new maps prepared especially for this issue. These maps give the territory of each conference and mission field, and also the location of the conference headquarters and institutions. Added to this is a statement of the fundamental principles of Seventh-day Adventists, written by the late Elder Uriah Smith." *(Review and Herald, July 16th 1908, 'The Book Department Mirror')*

The Church Manual

The SDA Church, from its inception through to 1932, did not have a Church Manual. This is even though it was suggested we should have one. The minutes of the General Conference session of 1883 tell the story.

> "At the last annual session of the Conference, it was recommended that a manual of instructions to church officers be prepared, and a committee was appointed to consider the matter and report at this session. W. H. Littlejohn, the chairman of the committee, reported at this meeting that the committee had prepared a series of articles, containing instructions to church officers, which have been printed in the Review under the title, "The Church Manual." It was thought best to print them in the Review first, in order to give opportunity for examination and criticism before the matter should come up for final action at this session." *(General Conference Session minutes, November 9th 1883)*

From the 5th June to October 9th 1883, the "series of articles" mentioned here, 18 in total, had been published in the *Review and Herald*. The 1883 GC minutes of November 9th continued

> "After further remarks upon the subject by Elders S. N. Haskell, George I. Butler, H. A. St. John, and Brother W. C. White, it was—
>
> VOTED, That the chair appoint a committee of ten to act with the General Conference Committee in the examination and consideration of "The Church Manual." This committee was announced as follows: W. C. White, H. Nicola, J. H. Cook, S. H. Lane, O. A. Olsen, M. H. Brown, R. F. Andrews, J. B. Goodrich, A. S. Hutchins, H. W. Decker." *(Ibid)*

Three days later at the November 12th afternoon meeting, it was reported in the minutes that

> "The committee appointed to consider the matter of the Church Manual, made in substance the following report:--

> It is the unanimous judgment of the committee, that it would not be advisable to have a Church Manual. We consider it unnecessary because we have already surmounted the greatest difficulties connected with church organization without one; and perfect harmony exists among us on this subject. It would seem to many like a step toward the formation of a creed, or a discipline, other than the Bible, something we have always been opposed to as a denomination. If we had one, we fear many, especially those commencing to preach, would study it to obtain guidance in religious matters, rather than to seek for it in the Bible, and from the leadings of the Spirit of God, which would tend to their hindrance in genuine religious experience and in knowledge of the mind of the Spirit. It was in taking similar steps that other bodies of Christians first began to lose their simplicity and become formal and spiritually lifeless. Why should we imitate them? The committee feel, in short, that our tendency should be in the direction of simplicity and close conformity to the Bible, rather than in elaborately defining every point in church management and church ordinances." *(Ibid, November 12th 1883, 3 P.M.)*

The minutes then continued

> On motion, this report with reference to the church manual was accepted. It was then also—
>
> VOTED, That the president of the General Conference be requested to write an article for the Review, explaining the action of the Conference on the subject of the manual." *(Ibid)*

So it was that in 1883, the SDA Church officially declined having a Church Manual. Those wishing to read the article written by G. I. Butler can do so here

> https://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/Articles_pdf/No_manual.pdf

The first Church Manual and the 1931 rephrasing of the Fundamental Beliefs of SDAs

From the year Ellen White died (1915), through to 1931, the SDA Church did not publish a list of Fundamental Beliefs. A revised list, differing completely from how they were expressed during her ministry, was published in 1931. This list first appeared in our Yearbook for that year. It also appeared in our very first Church Manual (1932).

So how did this 'new' statement come about? The GC Committee minutes for December 29th 1930 tell us (this was under the heading of "STATEMENT OF FAITH FOR YEAR BOOK")

> "A request was presented from the African Division that a statement of what Seventh-day Adventists believe should be printed in the Year Book, since they feel that such a statement would help government officials and others to a better understanding of our work.
>
> "Voted, That the chair appoint a committee of which he shall be a member, to prepare such a statement for publication in the Year Book.
>
> "Named: M. E. Kern, F. M. Wilcox, E. R. Palmer, C. H. Watson." *(General Conference Committee Minutes, December 29th 1930)*

It was voted that four of the GC Committee would be responsible for preparing this new statement of beliefs. C. H. Watson was then General Conference President. Kern was an associate secretary of the General Conference. Wilcox was the long-time editor of the *Review and Herald*. E. R. Palmer was then manager of the *Review and Herald Publishing Association*.

According to LeRoy Froom (a leading administrator in the SDA Church), it was F. M. Wilcox who composed this new statement. Froom relates that he was informed of what took place by "specific statements" made to him by those of the elected committee of four. Froom explained that Wilcox formulated a 22-point statement and then asked one of the Associate Editors of the *Review*, namely Francis D. Nichol, to read it. After receiving Nichol's approval of it, Wilcox, with the knowledge and approval of the other three, then passed it on to Edson Rogers, who, at that time, was the editor of the Yearbook, also GC statistical secretary. Rogers then included it in the 1931 Yearbook *(see Froom, Movement of Destiny, pages 413- 414)*. It was also requested, by the General Conference Committee, that the *Review and Herald* publish this same list of beliefs in tract form (*See GC Committee Meeting minutes, January 14th 1932, page 561*).

Froom also revealed, again in *Movement of Destiny*, that in 1956, C. H. Watson (who was GC President when this 1931 statement was formulated) had told him that the committee of four had agreed that because this statement reflected what was then believed by SDAs, "no formal or official approval should be sought for the unofficial Wilcox statement of 1931." Froom also says that Watson had told him that another reason why it was not submitted to any official committee (such as the GC Committee) was that it did not want to seem as though it was intended as a creed (see *Froom, MOD page 419*).

So it was that this 1931 statement, prior to being published, was not brought before the GC Committee, nor was it voted at a GC session. In fact, it was not brought before any committee other than the four who had been given the authority to compose it. This is why Froom said it was "unofficial" (*Froom, MOD, page 419*). This unofficial 1931 statement was included in subsequent Yearbooks (up to 1980) and Church Manuals (up to 1976). It was then superseded by the 'newer' set of beliefs that was formulated at the 1980 General Conference session held at Dallas Texas. The latter are basically the beliefs that are listed in our latest Yearbook and Church Manual. We shall see later how this came about.

A bone of contention

Before continuing to review the historical development of our Fundamental Beliefs, it would be enlightening to see just what it was, according to Froom, that was a major difference between the earlier set of Fundamental Beliefs (published during the time of Ellen White's ministry), and the 1931 statement written by Wilcox. It concerned the Godhead, or, it could be said, it concerned 'the trinity'.

In our previously declared Fundamental Principles (declared between 1872 and 1914), our beliefs concerning the Godhead were very simple. They were also strictly 'Bible only'. The final time they were quoted, which was in the 1914 Yearbook, its first two beliefs stated.

> 1. 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. Ps. 139: 7.
>
> 2. 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; 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, 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 persistently 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 (Acts 3: 19) 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. See Leviticus 16; Heb. 8: 4, 5; 9: 6, 7." *(Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists, 1914 SDA Yearbook, page 293)*

Regarding the Holy Spirit, no separate belief was listed, although beliefs No. 17 and 19 did explain its work amongst God's people, also its gifts etc., and as we have just noted, it did say in belief No. 1 that God is "everywhere present by his representative, the Holy Spirit".

The 1931 statement said something entirely different. After saying in Belief No. 1 that the Old and New Testaments were given by the inspiration of God, beliefs No. 2 and 3 read as follows

> "2. 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. Matt. 28:19.
>
> 3. 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 the earth as a man, exemplified in His life as our Example the principles of righteousness, attested His relationship to God by many mighty miracles, 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. John 1:1, 14; Heb. 2:9-18; 8:1, 2; 4:14-16; 7:25." *(Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-Day Adventists, 1931 SDA Yearbook, page 377)*

The problem with this 1931 statement, which does cause a great deal of confusion, is that the word "Godhead', as used in Acts 17:29, Romans 1:20, Colossians 2:9 (KJV), and the word "Trinity", as used in theology (the trinity doctrine), are not equivalents. The word "Godhead" is simply referring to that which pertains to divinity, while the word "Trinity" is usually associated with the trinity doctrine (the belief that God is 'three-in-one'). There are no numerical values attached to the Greek words translated in the KJV as Godhead. This is why to say, as Wilcox phrased it in his 1931 statement, "Godhead or Trinity", is not only confusing but also very misleading. On the other hand, this statement did suit those who, in their thinking, had a leaning toward 'trinitarian theology'. This was as well as suiting those who did not. In other words, this 1931 statement was worded in such a way to be all embracing. This is because the word 'trinity', without referring to the trinity doctrine itself, is often used to refer to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit collectively. This is why this statement, even though it falls far short of expressing the trinity doctrine. could be said to suit both parties (the trinitarian and the non-trinitarian). As it happened though, as we now know, this was one of the first major steps towards the SDA Church eventually embracing the trinity doctrine.

In common with the previous lists of beliefs, this 1931 list did not have a separate belief concerning the Holy Spirit. It was referred to only when speaking of its works and gifts etc., although it was referred to as "the third person of the Godhead", which is a phrase used by Ellen White. The 1931 statement also, when referring to Christ, used the words "very God", whereas the earlier beliefs did not. Important to note though is that the early SDAs did believe that Christ is God, albeit not as depicted in the trinity doctrine.

So this 1931 statement, as long as the word "Trinity" was taken as a collective terminology for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, was acceptable to all those still holding to the earlier set of beliefs, although some, because of its theological connotations and implications, may not have been

happy with Wilcox's use of it. Important to note is that this was the first SDA list of Fundamental Beliefs to include the word "Trinity", although as we shall see later, it would not be the last.

It would be beneficial here to mention what Froom said about this 1931 Godhead belief. In his book *Movement of Destiny,* he wrote the following

> "It would have been well-nigh impossible for a statement of "Fundamental Beliefs," such as was drafted by Wilcox in 1931—and published that year and appearing thereafter annually in the SDA Yearbook, and thenceforth in the official Church Manual—to have been issued a score of years, or even a decade prior to 1931, without strong protest by some.
>
> But by 1931 so much had been published in periodical, tract, and book form—taking similar positions on the "Three Persons" of the Godhead, the eternal pre-existence and complete Deity of Christ, and the personality of the Holy Spirit—together with a galaxy of confirmatory Spirit of Prophecy declarations now on record, that 1931 was clearly the propitious time for such a public Statement." *(LeRoy Froom, Movement of Destiny, New Epoch of Unity And Advance - No. 1, page 418, 1971)*

Even though what is said here by Froom may be true to an extent, all of it together would not constitute a trinity doctrine. To the inexperienced eye though, it could be taken as being such.

No changes except at a GC Session

Earlier in this article, I did say that the very first time the Fundamental Beliefs of SDAs were voted in at a General Conference Session was in 1946. We will now see how this came about and what was involved.

Over the years, the original 1932 Church Manual underwent many changes. This is why, by the early 1940's, it was realised a new version was necessary. Through various GC Committee meetings, it was agreed that a new one should be formulated. Under the heading of "Church Manual Committee", the Conference Committee Minutes of 16th January 1945 tell us

> VOTED, That the officers be asked to appoint a committee to give study to suggested revisions for the Church Manual in anticipation of the publication of a new edition, the present edition being exhausted.
>
> Committee appointed: L. H. Christian, W. E. Read, E. D. Dick, W. H. Branson, M. E. Kern, Roger Altman." *(General Conference Committee Minutes, 16th January 1945, page 1722)*

As time progressed, much was said about this new revised Church Manual. In fact it would be far too much to relate here. Not only that, but if I did relate it, this would detract from the purpose of this article, which is to simply show the progression of how, over the years, our Fundamental Beliefs have developed. For those though who would like to read it, I have put some of the more relevant statements in a document that can be found here.

> https://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/Articles_pdf/GCC_and_GCS_quotes.pdf

As it says in this document, the list of statements it contains is far from being exhaustive. It just shows the progression of events rather than the information the manual would contain.

What did happen, which is extremely important to note, is that at the 1946 General Conference session, the revision of the Church Manual was high on the agenda. In the session held on 12th June, the General Conference bulletin reported (this was under the heading of "Recommendations on Revision of Church Manual")

> "The report from the Plans Committee on Revision of the Church Manual was introduced, motion being made, and seconded, since the delegates had copies in hand, that the report be adopted on one reading, question to be called on each section as read. There being no objection, the chairman stated we would proceed on that basis. The report was under discussion when adjournment was taken." *(Review and Herald, June 13th 1946, Proceedings of the General Conference, June 12th 1946)*

The next day (13th June), under the heading of "Revision of Church Manual", the bulletin reported

> "WHEREAS, There are several points in the present edition of the Church Manual which present problems in the administration of our church work in various lands, We recommend:..." *(Review and Herald, June 14th1946, Proceedings of the General Conference, June 13th 1946)*

Following on from this came the recommendations. Note particularly recommendation No. 4. This is important because it shows how the Fundamental Beliefs of SDAs became established (which is the purpose of this article).

> "1. That the Church Manual be revised, and that all changes or revision of policy that are to be made in the Manual shall be authorized by the General Conference session.
>
> 2. That the General Conference Committee is hereby authorized to appoint a representative committee to edit and rearrange the Church Manual and bring it up to date, and that this committee render its report to an Autumn Council.
>
> 3. That the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs now found in Section XI, be placed at the beginning of the Manual as Section I.
>
> 4. That no revision of this Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, as it now appears in the Manual, shall be made at any time except at a General Conference session.
>
> 5. That a brief statement be inserted before the Summary of Fundamental Beliefs beginning on page 80 explaining that this summary of the fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists has been prepared especially for the instruction of candidates for baptism." *(Ibid)*

So it was, at the 1946 General Conference session, it was recommended that the 'unofficial' 1931 statement of belief, formulated by F. M. Wilcox and inserted in our first Church Manual (1932), was to remain unchanged unless decided otherwise at a General Conference session. In other words, no one, except by a vote at an official General Conference session, could change these beliefs. Notice too, also very importantly, recommendation No. 2. It says that the delegates at this 1946 GC session were not to carry out the final editing of the new Church Manual. This was to be done, by a special committee, elected at a General Conference Committee meeting. This committee would report to an Autumn Council.

At the next Autumn council, under the heading of *Revision of Church Manual*, it was recorded in the minutes

> "In harmony with the recommendation of the General Conference in session, that the General Conference Committee appoint a representative committee to edit and rearrange the Church Manual and bring it up to date, this committee to render its report to an Autumn Council, it was

> VOTED, That the Chair be asked to appoint such a committee.
>
> Committee appointed: A. V .Olson, N. C. Wilson, H. T. Elliott, J. I. Robison, L. E, Froom, J. A, Stevens, G. E. Peters." *(General Conference Committee minutes, December 2nd – 30th 1946, page 324)*

At the 1948 Autumn Council, there appears to have been considerable discussion about the revised Church Manual but as it is not directly applicable to the purpose of this article, I will not be detailing any of it here. Two years later in 1950, after further various discussions about the new Church Manual, a major step was taken towards its finalisation. This came at the General Conference session that year. The bulletin reporting the events of its first day stated

> "Other major items on the agenda include the adoption of the revision of the church manual, the revision of the constitution, the statement on divorce, and the emergencies that arise out of consideration of the world reports. Committees have been working on these things for months, and their reports will be the basis for the conference deliberations." *(H. M. Tippet, Review and Herald, July 11th 1950, 'The Mid-century Session Begins')*

It appears that the intention was, at the 1950 GC session, to adopt the revised Church Manual. In the bulletin though, reporting the events of 18th July, it was stated by A. V. Olson, a GC Vice-president

> "At the time of the General Conference session in Washington, in 1946, an action was passed authorizing the General Conference committee to appoint a committee for the revision of the Church Manual. After the committee had been appointed and started its work, it was found that if the Manual was to give service throughout the world, it would need a more comprehensive revision than that which had been thought necessary. Consequently, at the Autumn Council in Denver this matter was considered, and action was taken to enlarge the committee. This committee is ready to report. The report will be given by W. E. Read, secretary of the committee." *(Review and Herald, July 19th 1950, Proceedings of the General Conference')*

There then followed this remark

> [The report from the committee on revision of the Church Manual explains how the committee worked, how the report has been read carefully by a large representative committee in Washington, and then studied and approved by the home and foreign officers in a meeting just before this session. Because of the length of this report and the shortness of time during this session, it was voted to refer the report to a General Conference committee that is to be held Sunday, July 23, for study and final approval along the lines that have been suggested.]" *(Ibid)*

So the "final approval" of the new revised Church Manual was to be carried out by the General Conference Committee that would meet on July 23rd. This was the day after the 1950 General Conference came to an end.

Here is what was reported in the General Conference Committee Minutes for that day (under the heading of 'Church Manual')

> "After the opening prayer, attention was called to the fact that the members of the Committee had in their hands copies of the suggested revisions of the Church Manual, and that consideration of the revisions had been referred by the Session to this meeting of the General Conference Committee. Copies of the suggested North American Supplement to the Church Manual are also in the hands of the members. It was
>
> VOTED, That all members be urged, after reading their copies, to send to the General Conference Committee in Washington any suggestions they may have, and that the Committee in Washington be authorized to do the final editing in preparation for publication of the Manual and the Supplement." *(General Conference Committee Minutes, 22nd – 24th July 1950, page 20)*

So the final editing of the new Church Manual was not done at this meeting. It was to be carried out by the committee in Washington. Two months later, the GC Committee minutes of September 28th inform us (under the heading of 'Church Manual')

> "The Committee on Revision of the Church Manual submitted a number of suggested revisions growing out of contacts made at the time of the General Conference Session. After some discussion, it was
>
> VOTED, That these suggestions be approved and incorporated in the Church Manual manuscript.
>
> The chairman of the Committee on Revision of the Church Manual reviewed the work done by the committee in carrying out the recommendations of the 1946 General Conference session and the 1948 Autumn Council. A manuscript was prepared, and copies supplied to all division presidents; to the union conference presidents in North America; and to departmental leaders. It was then brought to the home and foreign officers in a meeting prior to the General Conference session, and was approved by them for submission to the session. When brought to the session, the delegates voted to refer the manuscript for final approval to the General Conference Committee.
>
> VOTED, That in view of the careful and painstaking work done by the Committee on Revision of the Church Manual, we approve of the manuscript as submitted, and we hereby authorize its publication as the revised Church Manual." *(General Conference Committee minutes, September 3rd - 28th 1950, page 109)*

So there we have it. That is how the Fundamental Beliefs of the SDA Church, as listed in the Church Manual, were adopted and could not be changed unless by a vote at an official General Conference session.

We now need to take a big leap to 1980. This a very important date in the history of the SDA Church. It marked a very significant step in the development of our Fundamental Beliefs.

The 1980 General Conference Session (part 1)

This was a very notable General Conference session. It was held at Dallas, Texas, and continued from 16th April to 26th April. It was notable because a brand-new set of rephrased Fundamental Beliefs were voted in at this conference, also because for the very first time in the history of the SDA Church, a trinity doctrine was voted as part of those beliefs. It was also, as far as I can tell, the first time these Fundamental Beliefs were discussed at any length and then voted in.

Huge amounts could be written concerning the formulating of these 1980 rewritten Fundamental Beliefs. This is not only regarding the discussions amongst the delegates at the conference itself, but also because of the activities of the seminary and ministry as they sought to provide a draft of the revised beliefs before the conference began.

Lawrence Geraty, a high-profile minister, was very involved in the formulation of the revised wording of these beliefs. Early in 2019, we emailed each other over a period of a couple of months. I had asked him to recall for me some of the events leading up to the discussions – which he did. What he advised me to do though, very sensibly because memories fade and become distorted as time goes by, is to take a look at an article he wrote for *Spectrum* magazine in 2009. It can be found here

https://spectrummagazine.org/news/new-statement-fundamental-beliefs-1980/

For those who would like to read a brief bio of Geraty, they can do so here on *Wikipedia*

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larry_Geraty

I am now going to quote portions of what Geraty wrote in that *Spectrum* article. It will be relatively brief so for further information you can read the article for yourself. As will be seen, the process of reformulating our Fundamental Beliefs was quite a complex procedure, which to a great degree was accomplished prior to the conference itself. First though a comment from Bonnie Dwyer, who for 23 years was *Spectrum's* Executive Editor. Introducing Geraty's article, she wrote

> "Lawrence Geraty, then a member of the Andrews University Seminary faculty, wrote our article about the [1980] statement as one who participated in its writing. He provides details not only for what took place during the Dallas GC session but all the committee actions along the way." *(Spectrum, June 7th 2009, 'A New Statement of Fundamental Beliefs (1980))*

Here now are quotes from Geraty's article. He explained

> "Finally, in late 1978, the officers of the General Conference appointed an *ad hoc* committee referred to as "X-1535 *Church Manual* Revision 'Fundamental Beliefs,'" and less than two years later the church would have a new Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. The members of the *ad hoc* committee were all located at the General Conference headquarters in Washington, D.C., with W. Duncan Eva, a General Conference vice president, as chairman."
>
> On August 10, 1979, Duncan Eva distributed the committee's preliminary draft to the General Conference officers, division presidents and union presidents in North America. In an accompanying letter, Eva noted that formal and substantive changes in the 1931 statement 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. He 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 home and overseas officers, the union presidents, the Annual Council, and finally to the General Conference session in Dallas." *(Ibid)*

This is just a very brief insight as to the complexity, even before the conference began, of the rephrasing of the Fundamental Beliefs. It was a long drawn-out process.

There is so much in Geraty's article that is worthy to note but it is not possible to quote it all here. I will though share the following with you. I believe it is very interesting. Geraty wrote

> "A further problem was procedural. The document came with a covering letter saying that "at this stage this document is confidential and intended only for those to whom it is sent. It may not be copied or duplicated in any way." At first blush, it seemed to be a secret committee hoping to "railroad through" its statement. After that, the rank and file could decide whether or not they wanted to be Seventh-day Adventists.
>
> Although it became apparent as we worked with the brethren from Washington, D.C., that that was not their intent and although I was pleased to be among a group of seminary teachers with whom the General Conference leaders consulted, I could not help but think of my colleagues in institutions around the world who are just as qualified, just as interested, and had just "as large a stake" in the church as I did." *(Ibid)*

Geraty reasoned

> "Why didn't the General Conference set up a representative commission to handle the revisions one to which any interested church member could have access, and one which would be given *time* to do the job right? *(Ibid)*

Why not indeed? As he also said in his article

> "As I reflect on the *process* that led up to the adoption of the Statement on Fundamental Beliefs in Dallas, I'm grateful for the opportunity to be involved. I learned a great deal. I imagine the same can be said for all who were involved. The question naturally arises, then, why weren't there *more* involved in the process? There should have been a procedure initiated early enough that would have allowed for greater participation by all interested members. More time would also have allowed members to seek out and interact with the church's theologians. They understand the theological and historical nuances of words used in such statements of belief and should have a feeling for balance and form in such declarations. It was incredible to me how few trained theologians were delegates to the General Conference session, when one of the session's most important tasks was the formulation of a Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. This was not by design, of course; it's just that the denomination's political system works to disenfranchise the teacher of religion. The lay person is similarly disenfranchised; only one percent of the delegates in Dallas were lay persons. To be selected as a delegate to a General Conference session" one needs to be an administrator or a pastor. I was the only delegate from the Seminary besides the dean. And what about our colleagues in departments of religion around the world? Only a handful were in Dallas as delegates. (Can one imagine the Presbyterians adopting the Westminster Confession of Faith without their theologians present at least as consultants? Even Vatican II had its *periti*.) *(Ibid)*

Interesting thoughts! Eventually, the document, consisting of the newly formulated beliefs, was sent to the delegates of the conference. This was so that before arriving at the conference, they could give it their consideration. Unfortunately, for some, it arrived too late, and even more unfortunately, by the time of the conference itself, the document had once again undergone change. Concerning this problem, Geraty wrote (note that Duncan Eva was a GC vice-president)

> "But more letters from the field continued to flood Eva's desk. For instance, one came from Fred Veltman, chairman of Pacific Union College's Religion Department, who was writing after his faculty had spent two department meetings going through the statement and planned at least one more. His letter of March 11 reflected the concern of many thoughtful Adventists:
>
> It may be that when our church was small it was possible to get an accurate representation from the world field if you mailed the recommended statement to the delegates at least six weeks before the session convenes; but it is doubtful whether these delegates have time to get their input from their local congregations prior to the session given the size of the church today and the problems of getting reactions and submitting such reactions back to headquarters in time to make any changes before the session is held. In order for delegates to function legitimately they must not only be informed by the General Conference leadership on the issues which they will be asked to vote upon, but these same delegates need to be informed by the people they represent so that they will know how to perform as delegates in such a way as to honestly represent the field from which they come." *(Ibid)*

The latter would be the only honest way to get a consensus of beliefs from the church at large. Geraty went on to explain

> "At the first business session at Dallas, delegates expressed shock that the version of the statement to which they had prepared responses had been substantially changed and that, therefore, they were now suddenly unprepared to discuss so crucial a document as a Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. Those who had been involved in formulating the earlier draft felt that the new version was disastrous in form, if not content. Gone was the balance, the beauty and the sensitivity to words. Clumsy rhetoric prevailed. By the time the home and overseas officers had made additional changes during their April 14 meeting in Dallas, just prior to the opening of the General Conference session, three, of the sections had been completely rewritten one to more than twice its original length. Twenty-one other paragraphs were significantly altered, either in meaning or style. For instance, the newer version referred to the Scriptures as "infallible." The paragraph on God was titled "Godhead or Trinity." *(Ibid)*

In his article, Geraty delineated more of these 'late changes', but from the little we have seen, the point he is making is very clear. The final document was far different than the one received earlier by the delegates.

We must now turn our thoughts to the conference itself. It began on 16th April and ended on 26th April 1980.

The 1980 General Conference Session (part 2)

It should go without saying that it would be impossible to write about each of the day's proceedings that took place at this conference, so for those who are interested, they can all be read by going to the following link. There can be found a link to each of the day's bulletins as published in the *Review and Herald*.

> https://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/Articles_pdf/GCSession_bulletins.pdf

On April 21st, which was approximately mid-way through the conference session, our Fundamental Beliefs began to be discussed. Before this took place though, Neal C. Wilson, then the General Conference President, addressed the delegates with these words

> "For some time we have been considering a refinement of our Statement on Fundamental Beliefs. I think you have that document in your hands. No doubt you have done both some studying and some praying." *(Neal C. Wilson, General Conference Bulletin, Review and Herald, April 23rd 1980, 'Seventh Business Meeting', April 21st)*

The president used the word 'refinement'. This implies making a finer distinction of something that is already stated (in this case – that which is already believed). He then explained to the delegates

> "We have heard a variety of interesting rumors. Some, it is said, understand that the church leaders want to destroy completely the foundations of the church and set the church on a course that would be un-Biblical, contrary to the tradition of the past and to historical Adventism. My fellow delegates, there is nothing that is further from the truth." *(Ibid)*

From the president's remarks, it is evident he knew of those who had very serious concerns regarding the purpose behind the rewording (rephrasing) of our Fundamental Beliefs. He knew also of those who feared that our past beliefs were about to undergo change. The president later commented

> "We are not suggesting changing any belief or doctrine that this church has held. We have no interest in tearing up any of the foundations of historical Adventism. This document is not designed to do that, nor to open the way so that it can be done. It should be clear that we are not adding anything nor are we deleting anything in terms of historical Adventist theology. We are trying to express our beliefs in a way that will be understood today." *(Ibid)*

This statement, without doubting the president's sincerity in making it, is certainly not true. We know this because the addition of a trinity doctrine, into these beliefs, is most definitely denying historical Seventh-day Adventism. For the first 100 years or so of our denominational history, the beliefs we held, during that time period, necessitated the rejection of the trinity doctrine. This is irrefutable. A short while later the president remarked

> "Now, you say, are you hoping to get this document voted at this meeting? I would say, Yes. But I also am a realist. If we find ourselves in too much trouble on some rewording, a delay will not create a great problem in this church. We have a statement of beliefs now. Nobody needs to think that we are all up in the air, that we don't know what we believe, that we have nothing to tie to, that the anchors are all pulled up and we are adrift. No one is adrift. We have a clear statement of fundamental beliefs, and we will hold to it until together we decide to refine, reword, and restate it in today's language." *(Ibid)*

Neal Wilson continued

> "I want to make it very clear that the introduction of this Statement does not suggest that we are not really sure what we believe and that there is a great deal of indecisiveness. This is not the case. There are a few little pockets of concern here and there, and there always will be. We can expect a lot more of those in the future. We have seen only the beginnings of questions, attacks, and endeavors to wipe out certain beliefs. There are those who would like to see some things changed or diluted, watered down, or even wiped out." *(Ibid)*

The president then asked Duncan Eva to address the delegates. Here is what Eva explained. This lends itself to another perspective on how the pro forma document, that the delegates were given, came into being.

> "Mr. Chairman and brethren and sisters, the need for restating—not changing, but restating, as Elder Wilson has so clearly indicated—has been felt for several years. About two years ago a committee spent many days studying the beliefs as they are now stated. A number of theologians looked at the Statement prepared by this committee and made suggestions that resulted in a rewording of the Statement. This was brought to the Annual Council in 1979 and was accepted in principle, with the understanding that it would receive wide exposure to the world field and that written suggestions would be welcome. It was sent to members of the division committees immediately after the Annual Council and also to our unions and overseas colleges. The Statement appeared in the ADVENTIST REVIEW and after still further study was sent to all delegates to this General Conference session. Last week the Home and Overseas Officers considered the Statement again, and the suggestions, as far as possible, were included. It was reedited in its present form here." *(W. D. Eva, Ibid)*

Here again can be seen the complexity of how our Fundamental Beliefs, before the document was given to the delegates, came to be restated (rephrased/rewritten).

The beliefs enumerated at the 1979 GC Council (as referred to above by Duncan Eva) can be read on page 334 here.

https://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/Articles_pdf/GCC1979.pdf

As they are published in the *Adventist Review*, they can be read on page 8

https://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/Articles_pdf/FB_RH_1980

In the *Adventist Review*, the preamble to these beliefs reads as follows

> "For a number of years there has been a growing feeling among church members and workers that these beliefs should be restated so that they may be expressed more clearly and that certain points of faith not now covered should be included. For more than a year a group appointed by the General Conference has worked on this matter. Its members have taken wide counsel within the church and have been assisted by a group of scholars at the SDA Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan.
>
> The statement of beliefs drawn up was presented to the 1979 Annual Council, which voted that the rewritten statement be recommended to the General Conference session in Dallas in April, 1980. The statement as adopted by the Annual Council appears below. We urgently invite church members to consider it carefully and to send comments or suggestions, if they have any, to: W. Duncan Eva, 6840 Eastern Avenue NW., Washington, D.C. 20012.
>
> In the meantime, to assure that delegates to the General Conference session at Dallas are informed, copies of the recommended statement incorporating suggestions received from the world field thus far will be mailed to delegates at least six weeks before the session convenes.
>
> In harmony with the accepted practice of the church and as required by the Church Manual, changes in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs must be adopted by the General Conference in session.- EDITORS" *(Review and Herald, February 21st 1980, 'Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists', page 8)*

After Duncan Eva's remarks, President Wilson then said

> "I think we are ready to begin with Section 1, "The Holy Scriptures" *(N. C. Wilson, Ibid)*

Those wishing to read the discussions that ensued concerning these Fundamental Beliefs, can do so by reading the Adventist Review from April 23rd onwards found here

> https://theprophetstillspeaks.co.uk/Articles_pdf/GCSession_bulletins.pdf

I will close this section with what happened as the final business day was drawing to a close. This was when the Fundamental Beliefs were still being discussed. In fact this was at the very moment it was being asked whether the word 'Godhead' or 'Trinity' should be used in belief No. 2. The bulletin reported

> "NEAL C. WILSON: [Requested an expression. No change was indicated.] *(Review and Herald, May 1st 1980, Fifteenth business meeting, April 25th 1980)*

Following this, the president said

> "We should have been out of this hall now. Our brethren will be under extreme pressure to get everything moved to the Grand Hall unless we are out within 15 or 20 minutes." *(Neal C. Wilson, Ibid)*

George Atiga then moved that the revision of our Fundamental Beliefs be accepted and that any further editorial matters be referred to the editorial committee. Neal C. Wilson responded

> "There seems to be quite a number who would like to proceed that way. The chair will be guided by this group. We have tried to give ample opportunity for expression. Our time is gone, but I don't want to force or hurry this if someone feels that what he wishes to suggest will clearly affect the beliefs of this church. I appreciate that motion and will accept it as soon as we have listened to the few individuals who feel they have something greatly important to say." *(Ibid)*

Shortly following this, the president said

> "Now I am going to do something that I dislike to do, but I feel I must in view of the fact some of our brethren have been charged with the responsibility of getting the equipment set up in the Grand Hall for tonight. I will ask whether you feel you want to vote now, or discuss this longer. [The opinion expressed was to vote.]" *(Ibid)*

Wilson then responded to this expression to vote

> "We had a motion, seconded by several, that we accept this as the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. May I suggest that we prayerfully study these great truths so that they will become very much a part of our lives, our homes, and our institutions. I will call for the vote. [The motion carried overwhelmingly.]" *(Ibid)*

So it was that a revised expression of our Fundamental Beliefs was accepted at the 1980 General Conference session held at Dallas Texas. As stated earlier, it was notable that this was the first time in the history of the SDA church, albeit it was a rushed vote, that the trinity doctrine had been voted into our Fundamental Beliefs. Since that time, these beliefs have been slightly modified in wording, also a new one added. Whereas 27 beliefs were voted in at Dallas, we now have 28.

As the years have progressed, and all the rephrasing of our Fundamental Beliefs has taken place, the only belief that has actually changed (not just reworded) has been our belief about God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. That today is what the controversy is all about within the SDA Church. Concerning the Godhead, there is no comparison between what was stated in our published beliefs when Ellen White was alive and what is stated today. That much really is evident.

Here is the statement held during the time of Ellen White's ministry (abbreviated)

> 1. 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. Ps. 139: 7.
>
> 2. 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;…." (see page 7 above)

Here is our present belief concerning God

> "2. The Trinity
>
> There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal 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. God, who is love, is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation. (Gen. 1:26; Deut. 6:4; Isa. 6:8; Matt. 28:19; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 1:21, 22; 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2.) *(The 2015 SDA Church Manual, 'Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists', page 162)*

The difference is so obvious that it needs no explanation. In the early set of beliefs, the "one God" is said to be a "a personal, spiritual being", an individual person distinct from the "one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father" who is another person. In the current set of beliefs held by SDAs, the "one God" is not a single person but a trinity (a composite entity) of three divine persons. There is no comparison between these two sets of beliefs.

Through the spirit of prophecy we have been told

> "There is a personal God, the Father: there is a personal Christ, the Son." *(Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, March 17th 1905, 'The Revelation of God")*

There is no mention here, or anywhere else in the writings of Ellen White, where God is said to be an entity consisting of three divine beings. In her writings, God is spoken of as a person, and Christ a distinct person from God.

It is up to each of us therefore to decide for ourselves as to who and what in this controversy is right, and who and what is wrong. That can only be achieved by personal study. The onus therefore is on each individual SDA to discover the truth for themselves. They are responsible for what they believe – no one else.

Conclusions

There is not very much that can be said in conclusion. We have seen how our Fundamental Beliefs have developed over the years, which was the purpose of this article. We have also seen how they have changed. This is despite some saying that they are still the same as believed by early SDAs, and that how they are phrased today is just a modified wording of what they believed.

There are those who have been honest in their presentations regarding the changeover in beliefs in our history and have noted the change. This is such as George Knight (notable church historian), William Johnsson (long-time Editor of the *Review*), also Angel Manuel Rodriguez (one time Director of our *Biblical Research Institute*).

> "Most of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism would not be able to join the church today if they had to subscribe to the denomination's Fundamental Beliefs. More specifically, most would not be able to agree to belief Number 2, which deals with the doctrine of the Trinity." (*George Knight, Ministry magazine, October 1993, page 10, 'Adventists and Change')*

> "Some Adventists today think, that our beliefs have remained unchanged over the years, or they seek to turn back the clock to some point when we had everything just right. But all attempts to recover such "historic Adventism" fail in view of the facts of our heritage. Adventists beliefs have changed over the years under the impact of present truth. Most startling is the teaching regarding Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord." *(William Johnsson, Adventist Review, January 6th 1994, 'Present Truth - Walking in God's Light')*

> "Some Adventists have discovered that practically all of our pioneers were anti-Trinitarian and have concluded that the church today should reject the doctrine of the Trinity. The truth is that the Lord guided this movement to a more biblical understanding of God. Today, based on the Bible, we affirm the truth of one God in a plurality of Persons." *(Angel Manuel Rodriguez, Article, The Holy Spirit and the Godhead, 11th July 2002, BRI website)*

There can be no doubt that as well as the rephrasing of our Fundamental Beliefs, there has also been a change in them. So where does that leave us? It leaves us contemplating the truth of a statement made by Jerry Moon in the SDA publication 'The Trinity' (2002). After confirming that early SDAs were non-trinitarian, he made this very important observation

> "More recently, a further question has arisen with increasing urgency: was the pioneers' belief about the Godhead right or wrong? As one line of reasoning goes, either the pioneers were wrong and the present church is right, or the pioneers were right and the present Seventh-day Adventist Church has apostatized from biblical truth." *(Jerry Moon Ph.D., The Trinity, page 190, 2002)*

This is the key issue that has come about because of the development and the rephrasing of our Fundamental Beliefs. Either the early SDAs were wrong in their beliefs and the present SDA Church is correct, or the early SDAs were right and the present SDA Church "has apostatized from biblical truth".

As said previously, who is right and who is wrong in this controversy is up to every individual to determine for themselves. I have made my decision.

End of article