

baptized young adults into Jesus and His church, and we have worshipped the God of the Bible. We have also gathered together with Adventists and non-Adventists from around the world to talk about our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, with great joy and celebration in our hearts.

For those that wonder about our ministry, I agree wholeheartedly that you should check the fruit. What fruit is there from our ministries or gatherings like the One project? Countless people I know that were on the verge of leaving the Adventist Church found hope in Jesus and our church again because of our gatherings. People nearly ready to give up on faith found Jesus again. There are more stories than I can include here, but one more. This one, on a very personal note, involves my own daughter, nine years old at the time. Inspired by what was happening at a One project gathering, two years later gave her life to Jesus in baptism because she realized that the most important thing in her life was for “Jesus to increase, while we decrease.” (She wrote those words, quoting John the Baptist in John 3, on a postcard at the gathering and turned it in without my knowledge until I found her card in a stack of other cards with people’s dreams for their church.

The only reason I knew it was hers was because in the top right corner she wrote her name and age). She embraced the words of Ellen White who once wrote that if we only had one passage in Scripture, John 3:16 is all we would need. And today, she is living a life devoted to Jesus. What more could a parent hope and pray and dream of?

So please, if you are to judge what we do, please judge us by our fruits. “For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit...The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of the evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” Luke 6:43-45. And friends, after journeying with my brothers and sisters for seven years in the Way of Jesus, our hearts are full of Jesus. Not perfect, but full. That is all I have to say.

William Johnsson, a frequent speaker at One Project meetings said, “Incredible—you can be a racist or spouse-beater, but you’d better be straight on the little horn!” ■

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.

A Committed and Concerned Church Executive Responds to the General Conference’s New Declaration | BY ANONYMOUS

General Conference President Ted Wilson, along with a select few have, without authorization from any governing committee of the church, and absent of any authority aside from themselves, taken it upon themselves to declare the very first Seventh-day Adventist Creedal Statement in the history of our denomination, titled “An Invitation to Uplift Jesus: A Statement from the General Conference Executive Leadership and Division Presidents.”¹ While premised as a pastoral communication,

it departs boldly into new territory for a Church that up until Wednesday morning, April 11, affirmed, “Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed” (Fundamental Beliefs preamble).¹

This “statement” offers seven points that those who are to be deemed acceptable must publicly affirm and pledge. This replaces the baptismal vows, and the Twenty-Eight Fundamental Beliefs. Now there are seven. If left unchallenged, this further turns Adventism towards creedalism and authoritarianism. This is especially true since this



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“statement” was issued during the closing hours of the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee, yet it appears this primary decision-making body was not even consulted about it.

The historical antipathy in Adventism to creeds is well documented in studies such as “Creeds and Statements of Belief in Early Adventist Thought,”² by S. Joseph Kidder. We have known as Seventh-day Adventists that credal statements have been used to coerce conscience, limit ongoing understanding of Scripture, and centralize power in the hands of clerics. From our earliest days as a movement, we have consistently opposed the development of creeds, especially as a mechanism of enforcement, since many early Adventists themselves experienced persecution and disfellowshipping from their previous churches charged with non-compliance with creeds.

Note in particular this observation by Michael W. Campbell, writing in the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*:

These fears were aptly expressed during the earliest organizational developments in 1861 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Accord-

ing to denominational co-founder, James White: “making a creed is setting the stakes, and barring up the way to all future advancement....The Bible is our creed.” Another Adventist minister, J. N. Loughborough, reiterated their collective fear: “[T]he 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 to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And, fifth, to commence persecution against such.”³

The issuance of this statement without review or even the apparent knowledge of the General Conference Executive Committee in session is deeply troubling. If left unchallenged, this provides the precedent for elected leaders—absent of appropriate governance oversight—to create a form of authoritarian leadership which could be replicated at any level of the church. One can only imagine the chaos created in local congregations when these seven questions are instituted as a litmus test for pastors, teachers, and lay leaders.

The suggestive nature of these seven questions—quite similar to every inquisitive investigation in the history of Christendom—are designed for a single purpose: to divide and purge those who cannot express their Adventist faith in the precise manner as the small group who drafted the questions. This is in complete opposition to a time-honored Adventist process by which beliefs and policies were developed in consultation that led to consensus and a unified perspective.

The Church has always emphasized the ongoing need for dialogue within its walls as well as with the outside culture. The preamble given on the General Conference website⁴ includes the words, “As the church continues to grow in size and influence, its role in society will require increased transparency. Such will continue to be the demands of society, and such will be the need to define Adventism’s relevance, or present truth, to those who are asking questions and seeking answers to their dilemmas and problems.”

The “Statement from the General Conference Executive Leadership and Division Presidents,” drafted in secret and issued without committee approval, is the very antithesis of this purpose.

Signed,

A Committed and Concerned Church
Executive ■

Footnotes:

1. <https://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/>.

2. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3054&context=auss>.

3. Michael W. Campbell, “Seventh-day Adventism, Doctrinal Statements, and Unity,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 27/1-2 (2016): 98–99.

4. <https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/>.

The “Uplifting Jesus” Statement: *A Theological Perspective*

| BY WILLIAM G. JOHANSSON

Like the guy in the TV commercial, I know a thing or two because I’ve seen a thing or two. Beginning with the controversy over the views of Robert Brinsmead in ancient times (anyone remember him?), I’ve had a front-row seat on all the theological developments of the Adventist church during the past fifty years. Against this background I offer my assessment of the recently released document (*see above*).

First, the statement isn’t what it purports to be. It isn’t about uplifting Jesus: it scarcely mentions Jesus and is silent concerning His life and teachings.

What is it really about? Apparently an attack on The One Project, the only ministry it specifically mentions.

What disturbs me most is what the statement says and does not say about Jesus and the Christian life: “What does it mean to accept Jesus Christ? When we say we accept Christ is this a mystical Christ of experience only

or, does it mean an acceptance of the doctrinal truths He taught, or, both? Does such a ministry or initiative uphold the substitutionary atonement of Jesus?”

This statement, which is placed first on the list of seven points that define a genuine ministry, lacks clarity. How is it using “mystical”—pejoratively or positively? Then the statement goes on to seemingly equate accepting Jesus with believing teachings about Him. I protest! This is a perversion of the New Testament. At its essence our faith is not a *what* but *whom*. Theology is important, but Jesus, and only Jesus, saves us.

I am perplexed as to how this loose, confusing paragraph found its way into a release from church headquarters. Someone was asleep at the switch. Leaders should withdraw it immediately.

The remaining six points all focus on doctrine. I have no quarrel with them per se, but with the purpose to which