

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 website<sup>4</sup> 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 ■

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## 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/>.

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

| BY WILLIAM G. JOHANSSON

**L**ike 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

they are being put. The Church in general session voted Twenty-Eight Fundamental Beliefs; do we now have a de facto list of thirty-five? Did someone pull a fast one on us? I would like some answers.

What an opportunity is lost in this document claiming to uplift Jesus! Why doesn't it invite the reader to what lies at the heart of the Scriptures—a personal, living, growing relationship with Jesus as our Savior, Lord, Best Friend? To know Him is life eternal, here and now; to be, like Paul, crucified with Him; to know the ineffable joy and peace of His abiding presence—this is why Christianity lives on and will never die.

Another missing element in the statement troubles me greatly. The statement is all doctrine, doctrine, doctrine. Doctrine is important, but *living* is more important. Jesus calls His followers to lives of probity, to unswerving integrity, to social justice. You wouldn't know that from this statement. Presumably you can be a racist or a spouse-beater, just be sure to have all the doctrines straight.

Recent reports in the secular press cause me consternation. My church is making news again—but for corruption in high places. This is at least the third embarrassing matter in the past few years. The corruption involves church leaders in three large divisions of the world church. All these leaders occupied major posts; one was a division president. And General Conference leaders seemingly were slow to take action when allegations surfaced.

Am I the only Adventist who wonders what is going on? Is there moral rot in our church that reaches to the highest level? Over my many years I have observed the diligence and concern afforded theological matters. Sadly, I have not observed the same level of concern in ethical situations. Too many Adventists, focused on correct doctrine, exhibit blind spots in elemental ethics.

Now, a word about The One Project. I spoke five times at meetings, worked side-by-side with the leaders, noted the nature of their lives, observed their theology. I also saw how The One Project brought men and women to a closer walk with the Lord, how it changed lives, how it led former members to reconnect with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Of this I am convinced: The One Project was a gift from God. It was an answer to many prayers for revival. I praise God for The One Project.

The response of Church leaders baffles me. This was

something to be supported, not attacked. Why—someone please explain to me—why, oh why would leaders seek to shut down a ministry that led people to Jesus? And why would other leaders who knew better choose political expediency and remain silent?

I have asked and asked what was wrong with The One Project. No one can give me a solid answer. The leaders of The One Project were subjected to character assassination—for what purpose? On the other hand, I could, if I chose, point out deviant theology in some other ministries—Robert Brinsmead is still with us! So I ask again: How come leaders singled out The One Project, whose “offence” was simply making Jesus All?

As a king once famously sang, “It’s a puzzlement.” ■

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## Footnotes:

1. <https://amzn.to/2J4T7bH>.

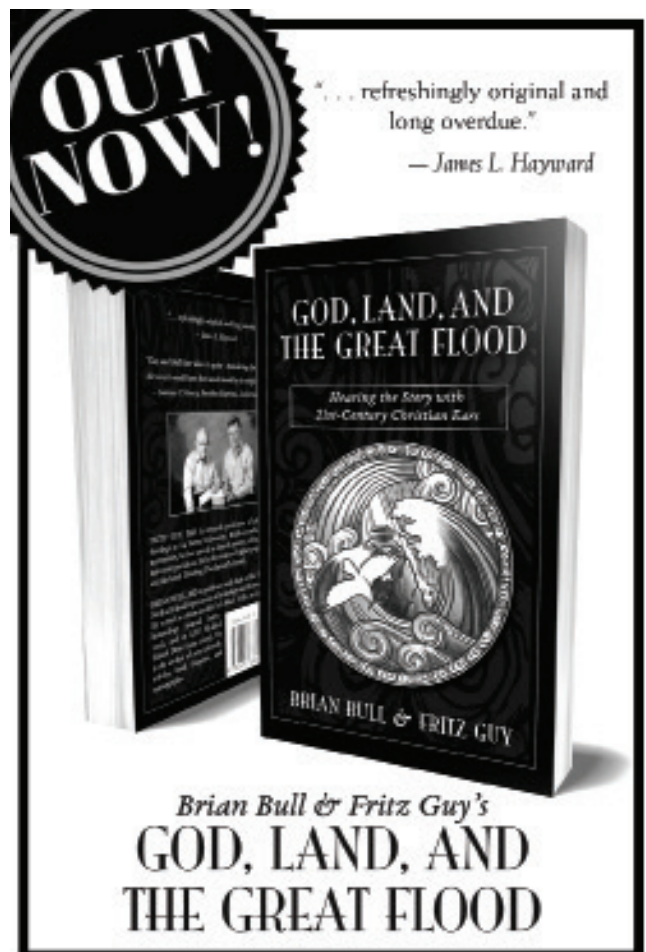


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