Chapter 25
Belief in the *28 Fundamental Beliefs* of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Among Teachers in Adventist Schools in Australia and the Solomon Islands

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In 1860 the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church made a decision to adopt its current name (Schwarz & Greenleaf, 2000, p. 91–95) but it was not until 1980, after another 120 years had passed, that the Church formally adopted *27 Fundamental Beliefs*. It is not hard to find a reason for this delay. Most of the believers who first called themselves Seventh-day Adventists had experienced difficult relationships with the churches to which they had belonged because these churches had resisted the message promulgated by the Millerites predicting the return of Christ in 1844. Many had had their membership of their original churches terminated. The creeds of the church were sometimes invoked in these decisions (Wright, 1977, p. 50). In addition, some in the movement had come from denominations that already were suspicious of creeds (Kidder, 2009, p. 102–3). J. N. Loughborough summarised much of the thinking among early SDAs when he said:

> 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 to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And, fifth, to commence persecution against such. (Smith, 1861, p. 148; also cited Campbell, 2016, p. 99)

Hostility against creeds lasted several generations within Adventism. The slogan of the Christian Connection, "the Bible the

only creed" (Kidder, 2009, p. 102), repeated by James White in his reply to Loughborough (Smith, 1861, p. 148), found a ready home in Adventist thinking. Indeed, the first words of the 2015 version of *Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists* are, "Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed" (*28 Fundamental Beliefs* 2020, p. 2).

Anti-creedalism has led to some highly interesting and convoluted maneuvering as this set of unofficial beliefs of the Church was developed and included in the official documentation of the Church, all without being voted at a General Conference Session of the SDA Church (GC). The GC vote had to be avoided, because to do so was seen to be taking a major step towards setting up a creed.

Even though early Adventists eschewed a creed, there was still a need for a list of the kinds of beliefs that joined them together. If nothing else, there was a need to answer inquiries about what the early SDA Church believed. One of the more elaborate early attempts to produce such a list was a set of "Fundamental Principles" written by Uriah Smith and published by the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association in Battle Creek, Michigan (Olson & Haloviak, 1978, p. 7–10). Uriah Smith was long-standing editor of the *Review and Herald* at the time he wrote his list of Fundamental Principles. The first few articles of Smith's "Principles" reflect the layout and much of the content of similar statements of belief used by contemporaneous Christian groups in the American Midwest (Fortin, 1998, p. 63–64). It follows the sequence, I. God, II. Jesus Christ; III. The Holy Scriptures. The statement about Jesus Christ, "the Son of the Eternal Father", emphasised his high priestly ministry, which is perhaps a particularly Adventist touch, but most of the rest of the content of the first three paragraphs would have been non-controversial to many outside of the SDA Church. The content of the rest of the "Principles" has a particularly Adventist flavour. Principles of prophetic interpretation are laid out (VI & VII), a defense of the Adventist understanding of 1844 is made (IX & X), and the Sabbath is mentioned (XII).

Smith was not the last to author a statement of beliefs in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, but rather than follow all the variations, we can move forward to the next moment of major significance in the development of the *Fundamental Beliefs*: the decision made by the General Conference Committee on December 29, 1930, that a statement of beliefs should appear in the *Yearbook*.

The *Yearbook* was (and is) a publication that listed the various entities of the SDA Church and those who held key responsibilities. It was, therefore, the nearest thing to an official document of the whole Church. The committee minutes noted that the occasion for this decision was a request from the African Division for such a set of beliefs to be made formally available, "since they feel that such a statement would help government officials and others to a better understanding of our work" (Olson, 1978, p. 19). A committee was set up, consisting of M. E. Kern (Associate Secretary of the GC), F. M. Wilcox (editor of the *Review*), E. R. Palmer (Manager of the Review and Herald Publishing Association) and C. H. Watson (GC President) (Whidden, Moon, & Reeve, 2002, p. 199). The statement, largely authored by C. H. Watson, and reviewed by no other group aside from the initial committee of four, appeared in the *Yearbook* without fanfare or challenge. Called the "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists", the statement was expressed in numbered paragraphs. It begins with a statement about God (paragraph 1) and is followed by two statements about Jesus (2 and 3), the second of which is a resounding affirmation of a trinitarian understanding of the nature of Jesus, using some of the technical language of the creeds of the early Christian Church. It starts by proclaiming "That Jesus Christ is very God, being of the same nature and essence as the Eternal Father …" (Olson, 1978, p. 20) and continues in a similar manner.

The statement in the *Yearbook* was gradually edited and modified, but it was never voted at a General Conference session. This was to change in the late 1970s, when there was an administrative push to take a revised set of *Fundamental Beliefs* to the 1980 General Conference session for a vote. A committee was set up in 1978, chaired by W. Duncan Eva, a General Conference Vice President, to work on a revised draft of the *Fundamental Beliefs*. Their revised draft included some changes that they considered to be of significance. Thus, once a document thought worth circulating was available, Eva set up a meeting with nine members of the faculty of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary to gain their approval and input. At a meeting on 12 September 1979, several members of the committee expressed concern about things they considered to be weaknesses in the revised set of *Fundamental Beliefs*. The team at the Seminary asked for others to be added to their number and they took it upon themselves to produce a completely re-written set of *Fundamental Beliefs* (Geraty, 1980, p.

3–6). It was the set of entirely new *Fundamental Beliefs,* developed by the academics at the theological seminary, that was eventually circulated and, after being edited in the light of responses from various parts of the world Church, was presented to the 1980 General Conference session (see also, Trim, Forthcoming). On 25 April 1980, the "27 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church" was accepted by vote. The General Conference Bulletin records that "The motion was carried overwhelmingly" (Wilson, Baasch & Bothe, 1980, p. 22).

Since 1980 there have been one major and several minor revisions to the wording of the *Fundamental Beliefs*. The major revision included adding a whole new "belief". (11. Growing in Christ), so that after 2015 there were 28 *Fundamental Beliefs*, not 27. The rationale for the addition of a new fundamental belief was provided in the document, "The Fundamental Beliefs and 'Growing in Christ,'" which was published in *Ministry* magazine in June 2004. According to this document,

> The proposed new fundamental belief has two main purposes. First, it explicitly addresses Christian growth in order to exclude eastern transcendental meditation as a spiritual exercise that is incompatible with the gospel of salvation through Christ. Second, it proclaims freedom through Christ from demonic powers to demonstrate that seeking help and guidance from them in our spiritual growth is not only unnecessary but totally incompatible with the work of Jesus on our behalf. (p. 25)

In many parts of the world, demonic activity, even possession, is a live issue in some Adventist churches. The Church in AUC is growing by emigration from parts of the world where belief in spirits, etc., is common, and belief in spirits is endemic to the Solomon Islands. So, what might not have been an issue for schools in AUC may well become one. It is certainly an issue in the Thus, teachers' perspectives on the spirits are important. The full text of the new article of belief, number 11, is found later in this chapter, and will receive further commentary there.

Since they were voted in 1980, the *Fundamental Beliefs* of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have been widely accepted. While not formally a creed, they tend to define the boundaries of orthodox Adventism. They have had many uses. For example, they form the structure of books explaining Adventist beliefs, such as *Seventh-day Adventists Believe … A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental*

Doctrines (Ministerial Association, 1988) and *Meaning for the New Millennium: The Christian Faith from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective* (McIver & Roennfeldt, eds., 2000), as well as forming the themes of many articles in official church publications. They are usually mapped to the curriculum of students preparing for ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In other words, the *Fundamental Beliefs* of Seventh-day Adventists have become a touchstone, something by which to measure how closely aligned an individual is with the general tenor of the Church's understanding of Scripture. They are not a creed, though!

The *28 Fundamental Beliefs* and the Survey of Teachers

As the "Employees of Adventist Institutions Survey" was being prepared, the items in it were mapped against the *28 Fundamental Beliefs* of the Church. The result is found in Table 25.1.

Table 25.1
Coverage of Fundamental Beliefs: Explicit [and Implicit]

Heading of Fundamental Belief	Item(s)
1. [Holy Scriptures]	[Q64/Q91: Which statement about the Bible comes closest to your own view? Q65/Q92: The statement that is closest to your understanding of what the Bible is … Q48/Q70/Q88: When it comes to questions of right and wrong, which of the following do you look to …]
2. Trinity	Q62o/Q86g: I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (i.e., I believe in the doctrine of the Trinity)
3. Father	Q62b/Q86a: I believe in a personal God who seeks a relationship with human beings [62, 86]
4. Son	Q62c/Q86b: Jesus Christ is the Son of God
5. [Holy Spirit]	[Q62o/Q86g: I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (i.e., I believe in the doctrine of the Trinity)]
6. Creation	Q62p/Q86h: I believe God created the world Q62q: I believe God created the world in exactly six days of 24 hours each Q62r: I believe God created the world in the recent past (e.g., within the last 6,000 to 15,000 years) [Negative] Q62s: I believe the world is millions of years old [Negative] Q62t: Evolution is the best explanation for the origins of human life on Earth
7. Nature of man	Q76d/Q93d: When a person dies their body remains in the grave and their soul sleeps until the resurrection

Heading of Fundamental Belief	Item(s)
8. Great controversy	Q76a/Q93a: All humanity is involved in a GREAT CONTROVERSY between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His love, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe
[9. Life, death and resurrection of Christ]	[Q62g: I believe that Jesus was born of a virgin]
10. Experience of salvation	Q62f/Q86c: I am saved the moment I believe and accept what Jesus has done for me Q62d: I will make it to heaven only if I have a personal relationship with Jesus Q67: Which of the following is something you would say in answer to the question, "Are you saved?" [Goal of Church] Q5f :Lead people to accept Jesus as their personal Savior [Negative] Q62i: I will not get to heaven unless I obey God's law [Negative] Q62k: I can only be saved through the Church [Negative] Q62a: I should be all right in the end if I am a morally good person
11. Growing in Christ	Q18: Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services? Q56a: Pray outside of attending religious services Q56b: Participate in prayer groups, Scripture study groups or religious education programs Q56c: Read Scripture outside of religious services Q56d:: Meditate Q56e: Share your faith/beliefs with non-believers or people from other religious backgrounds Q49: How important is religion in your life? Q39: The best times in my life have usually been when I have been helping others Q56: f Feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being Q5: 1 Have you ever received a definite answer to a specific prayer request? Q50a: Miracles still occur today as in ancient times C52: Have you ever experienced or witnessed a divine healing of an illness or injury? Q51b: Angels and demons are active in the world [Negative] Q62l: The Devil or Satan is not a living being but is a symbol of evil [Q17: Are you a Seventh-day Adventist?]
13. The remnant and its mission	Q76g/Q83g: The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days a REMNANT has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Q77/Q94: In my thinking, the three angel's message of Revelation 14:6–2 is … [Q69/ Q78/Q89: Do you think there is a natural conflict between being a devout religious person and living in a modern society, or don't you think so?] [Q62n: When you get right down to it, there are only two kinds of people in the world: the righteous, who will be rewarded by God, and the rest, who will not] Q53: Which statement comes closest to your own views even if neither is exactly right? My religion is the one, true faith leading to eternal life OR Many religions can lead to eternal life.
18. The gift of prophecy	Q76h/Q93h: ELLEN G. WHITE is an inspired messenger to the Adventist Church

Heading of Fundamental Belief	Item(s)
19. [The law of God]	[(Goal of School) Q2m: Put into practice the teachings of the Adventist Church] [Q86e: There are clear and absolute standards for what is right and wrong] [(Negative) Q62i: I will not get to heaven unless I obey God's law] [Q48/Q70/Q88: When it comes to questions of right and wrong, which of the following do you look to]
20. The Sabbath	Q76b/Q93b: The seventh day of the week is the SABBATH according to the Bible
21. Stewardship	Q79/Q98: In the last 12 months, as a percentage of my income, I estimate that I have given as tithe Q80: I know that God has blessed me because I return tithe Q43/Q89: If I were to total it all up, between gifts to charities and giving to my church (e.g., tithes and offerings), I donate approximately the following percentage of my income:
22. Christian behavior	Q76c/Q93c: Adventist standards in DIET Q63a/Q87a: Illegal drugs Q63b/Q87b: Eating meat Q63c/Q87c: Dancing Q63d/Q87d: Alcohol (e.g., beer, wine, spirits, etc.) Q63e/Q87e: Caffeinated drinks (e.g., Tea Coffee, Coca Cola, Red Bull, etc.) Q63f/Q87f: Smoking
24. Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary	Q76f/Q93f: The INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT beginning in 1844
25. Second coming of Christ	Q62m/Q86f: Jesus will return to Earth a second time (Goal of Church) Q5h: Prepare people for the soon return of Jesus Q62h: I expect the world as we know it to end in the near future Q76e/Q93e: The Adventist Church's interpretation of END-TIME PROPHECIES Q86d: I expect the world as we know it to end in the near future and, in any case, within the next 20 years or so
26. Death and resurrection	Q76dQ93d: When a person dies their body remains in the grave and their soul sleeps until the resurrection
27. Millennium	Q76i/Q93i: After the millennium, God will restore the Earth as a home for the righteous who were resurrected or who were alive at his coming
28. [New Earth]	[Q62d: I will make it to heaven only if I have a personal relationship with Jesus] [(Negative) Q62i: I will not get to heaven unless I obey God's law]

As may be observed from Table 25.1, all of the *28 Fundamental Beliefs* may be linked to one or more of the items in the survey, although it must be admitted, some are only covered in an indirect or cursory manner. For example, less attention was given to the first three paragraphs—God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—than to matters of personal salvation and spiritual practice. However it is evident from Table 25.1 that there are topics that did receive significant attention.

Topics such as 9. Creation, 10. Experience of Salvation, 11. Growing in Christ, 13. The Remnant and its Mission, 21. Stewardship, 22. Christian Behavior, and 25. Second Coming of Christ are all associated with several survey items. A chapter has already been devoted to seven of these topics:

- Items that relate to *Fundamental Beliefs* 6 (Creation) have been discussed in Chapter 24 ("Beliefs about the Creation of the World …").
- Some items relating to *Fundamental Belief* 11 (Growing in Christ) and 21 (Stewardship) have been considered in Chapter 20 ("Practices of SDA Spirituality"), which included a discussion of tithing practices and total giving patterns.
- Items that relate to *Fundamental Belief* 10 (Experience of Salvation) and 19 (The Law of God) have been discussed in Chapter 21 ("Beliefs about Personal Salvation …").
- Items that relate to Fundamental Belief 1 (Holy Scriptures) have been considered in Chapter 22 ("Teachers' Understanding of Scripture and Authority").
- Items relating to Fundamental Belief 25 (Second Coming of Christ) are reported in Chapter 23 ("NAD Teachers' Perception of Adventist Eschatology").

There are three *Fundamental Beliefs* that have clusters of items associated with them that have not been treated in a full chapter in the book. They are 11. Growing in Christ, 13. The Remnant and its Mission, and 22. Christian Behavior. Attention will now be given to the items relating to these three *Fundamental Beliefs*.

Results Relating to Fundamental Belief 11. Growing in Christ

Given that Fundamental Belief "11. Growing in Christ" was the one entirely new paragraph that has been added to the *Fundamental Beliefs* since 1980, it is worth citing it in full.

> 11. Growing in Christ
>
> By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from

> the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. We are also called to follow Christ's example by compassionately ministering to the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of humanity. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience. (1 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Matt. 20:25–28; 25:31–46; Luke 10:17–20; John 20:21; Rom. 8:38, 39; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Gal. 5:22–25; Eph. 5:19, 20; 6:12–18; Phil. 3:7–4; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; 1 Thess. 5:16-18, 23; Heb. 10:25; James 1:27; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 1 John 4:4.) (*28 Fundamental Beliefs*, 2015)

Fundamental Belief 11 covers a wide variety of matters relating to the Christian life. It touches on daily prayer, meditating on the Bible, church attendance, service to others, and participating in the mission of the Church. These are all matters that have already been covered in Chapter 20, "Practices of SDA Spirituality".

There is another major theme in Fundamental Belief 11, though, that relates to demonic spirits and evil forces, or the action of the miraculous in the life of the believer. These were tested by several items in the survey.

- Q50b: Angels and demons are active in the world.
- [Negative] Q62l The Devil or Satan is not a living being but is a symbol of evil.
- Q50a: Miracles still occur today as in ancient times.
- Q51: Have you ever received a definite answer to a specific prayer request?
- C52: Have you ever experienced or witnessed a divine healing of an illness or injury?

Items 50a and 62l are both associated with a Likert scale that provides the options shown in Table 25.2 (below) and thus two of the responses to these items can be treated in one table (see Table 25.2).

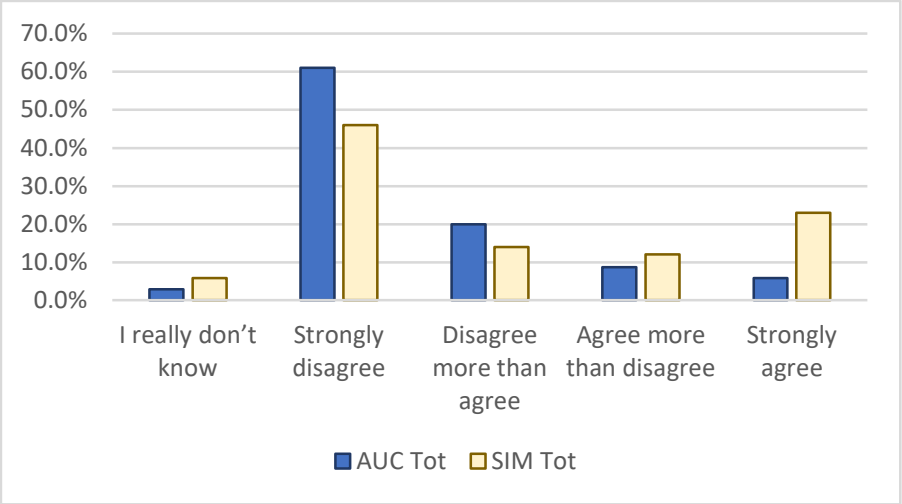
Table 25.2
Items Relevant to Fundamental Belief 11: Demons, Devil, and Miracles

	Angels and Demons				Devil Symbol Only			
	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	SIM Wkly	SIM Tot	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	SIM Wkly	SIM Tot
I really don't know	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%	2.1%	3.1%	5.8%
Strongly disagree	9.8%	8.5%	7.8%	11%	61%	60%	50%	46%
Disagree more than agree	3.3%	0.0%	5.9%	3.6%	20%	21%	9.4%	14%
Agree more than disagree	20%	10%	9.8%	15%	8.7%	10%	13%	12%
Strongly agree	66%	81%	77%	71%	5.8%	4.2%	25%	23%
Number	92	59	51	83	69	48	32	52

Notes on Tables 25.2 to 25.8:
1. AUC = Australian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; SIM = Solomon Islands Mission
2. AUC Tot/SIM Tot= AUC teachers who are over 20 years of age and employed in an Adventist school or Conference or Mission
3. AUC Wkly = AUC teachers who answered "yes" to the question, "Are you a Seventh-day Adventist", and indicated that they attend church at least once a week. See explanation in Chapter 27.

From Table 25.2 one might conclude that teachers in Adventist schools in the SPD have a clear belief in angels and demons (more than 86% agree or strongly agree that they exist). It should be no surprise, then, that the majority disagree or strongly disagree that the devil is but a symbol (81% of AUC Tot; and 50% of SIM tot). However, there is a substantial minority of SIM teachers that strongly agree with the statement, and the differences between the AUC and SIM teachers in their overall response to this item is statistically significant [Mann Whitney statistic: $U(N_{AUC}=69, N_{SIM}=52)=1418.000$, $z=-2.162$, $p<0.031$]. The relationship between the AUC Tot and SIM Tot responses may be discerned in Figure 25.1.

Figure 25.1
Responses to the Statement: The Devil is but a Symbol



Although 7% strongly disagreed, a clear majority of teachers (84%) agreed or strongly agreed that miracles still can occur today as they did in ancient times (see Table 25.3).

Table 25.3
Items Relevant to Fundamental Belief 11: Miracles Occur Today

	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	SIM Wkly	SIM Tot
I really don't know	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Strongly disagree	7.5%	6.7%	3.8%	7.0%
Disagree more than agree	8.6%	1.7%	7.7%	9.3%
Agree more than disagree	39.8%	40.0%	15.4%	22.1%
Strongly agree	44.1%	51.7%	73.1%	61.6%
Total	93	60	52	86

The teachers, then, show evidence of a strong belief in the supernatural and the ability of the supernatural to intervene in everyday life through miracles. Items 51 and 52 tested whether they themselves had experienced the intervention of God in answering their prayers or in divine healing.

- Q51 Have you ever received a definite answer to a specific prayer request?
- C52 Have you ever experienced or witnessed a divine healing of an illness or injury?

Respondents were given the opportunity to choose an answer from the following alternatives, "Yes, No, Do not know".

Table 25.4
Items Relevant to Fundamental Belief 11: Answer to Prayer; Seen a Miracle

	Answered Prayer				Witnessed Healing			
	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	SIM Wkly	SIM Tot	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	SIM Wkly	SIM Tot
Yes	85.9%	95.0%	88.7%	90.6%	27.5%	32.2%	83.0%	81.6%
No	7.6%	1.7%	3.8%	3.5%	53.8%	45.8%	11.3%	12.6%
Do not know	6.5%	3.3%	7.5%	5.9%	18.7%	22.0%	5.7%	5.7%
Total	92	60	53	85	91	59	53	87

Teachers not only believed that miracles were possible, but they had almost all experienced an answer to prayer (more than 86%). Many more SIM teachers than AUC teachers had experience or observed a sick person recover their health and attributed the recovery to divine healing. The difference is significant [Mann Whitney statistic: $U(N_{AUC}=91, N_{SIM}=87)=1844.500$, $z=-6.865$, $p<0.000$].

Teachers not only believe in the existence of supernatural beings such as the devil and good and evil angels, they expect to experience the supernatural intervening in their life for good. They not only expect supernatural intervention, almost all of them state that they have experienced it.

Results Relating to Fundamental Belief 13. Remnant

Fundamental Belief "13. The Remnant and Its Mission", reads as follows:

> The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His

> second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness. (Dan. 7:9–14; Isa. 1:9; 11:11; Jer. 23:3; Mic. 2:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Peter 1:16–19; 4:17; 2 Peter 3:10–14; Jude 3, 14; Rev. 12:17; 14:6–12; 18:1–4.) (*28 Fundamental Beliefs,* 2020, 6)

Item 76 in Branch D, which is repeated in Item 83 in Branch E, was deliberately written to reflect the wording of Fundamental Belief 13. It asked participants whether or not they agreed that "The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days a REMNANT has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus". From earlier discussion in Chapter 23 (see Table 23.5), it is clear that most teachers accept the concept of the Remnant: 64.1% of AUC and 40% of SIM teachers embrace it wholeheartedly and another 22.7% of AUC and 58.2% of SIM teachers assent to it, a combined total of 88.8% of AUC and 80.9% SIM respondents.

Fundamental Belief 13 also explicitly mentions the three angels of Revelation Chapter 14. The three angels' messages were taken as a shorthand for the unique message of Seventh-day Adventists by the pioneers of the SDA Church. It was decided to test whether this concept had persisted into the present day with Item 77 in Branch D (repeated as Item 94 in Branch E):

> Q77/Q94: In my thinking, the three angel's message of Revelation 14:6–12 is (a) The context in which the Adventist Church should proclaim the Gospel; (b) Part of the rhetoric of Church members in a previous generation, but no longer relevant to today's Church; (c) Something about which I have only vague awareness; (d) I really cannot remember hearing or learning about the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6–12; (e) This question is not relevant to me

The responses to this item have already been discussed. From the discussion in Chapter 23 (see Table 23.8), it is clear that a large majority (71.7% AUC and 93.5% SIM) of teachers think that the three angels' messages of Rev 14:6–12 is "the context in which the Adventist Church should proclaim the eternal gospel".

The remaining items in the survey that deal with the concept of remnant test various ways in which the concept is capable of being misunderstood. For example, it is possible to understand the idea of

remnant to imply that those who are not part of the group of believers are lost. Many of the ex-Millerites who were disappointed when Jesus failed to return in 1844 considered that they had done their duty by warning the world that Jesus would soon return, and concluded that there was no further need to try to persuade others to join them as they awaited the soon return of their Lord. Using metaphorically the language of the shut door found in Matthew 25:10, they said to each other that the door of probation had shut (Schwarz & Greenleaf, 2000, p. 53–54, 67). They had little doubt that they consisted of the group who would be saved when Jesus did return, while others would miss out. With the passing of time, further study of Scripture (Trim, 2018, p. 135, 136), and the addition of new converts who sought to join their number, gradually these ex-Millerites were weaned from the "Shut Door Theory". But they illustrate a pitfall which is applicable to the Seventh-day Adventist Church if it identifies itself too closely with the concept that it is the faithful remnant. The conclusion may be, "I can only be saved through the Church", a statement found as Item 62k in Branch C. It should be noted in passing that Fundamental Belief 13 is worded carefully in order to avoid making a clear identification of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as the remnant. It must be admitted, though, that most SDAs would recognise themselves in the language that describes the remnant: "a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent" (*28 Fundamental Beliefs,* 2015, #13). The phrase, "commandments of God" (Rev. 12:17) is understood by Adventists to point particularly to the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, and the judgment hour is related to the understanding of pre-advent judgment that grows out of SDA interpretation of Daniel 8:14 (Schwarz & Greenleaf, 2000, p. 59–61; Stefanovic, 2007, p. 309–12, 323–25). Participants in the survey were near unanimous in rejecting the idea that "I can only be saved through the Church". Of the 144 participants who responded to this item, 78% (112) strongly disagreed and 19% (27) disagreed more than agreed. By way of contrast, only 3.5% (5) respondents strongly agreed with the statement (see Table B.113 in Appendix B).

Table 25.5
Items Relevant to Fundamental Belief 13: Only Saved Through Church; Only Righteous and Unrighteous People

	Saved Through Church				Only Righteous/Unrighteous			
	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	SIM Wkly	SIM Tot	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	SIM Wkly	SIM Tot
I really don't know	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%	5.5%	8.8%	8.3%	6.1%	7.4%
Strongly disagree	60%	54%	44%	46%	10%	13%	3.0%	1.9%
Disagree more than agree	20%	25%	15%	11%	13%	10%	0.0%	1.9%
Agree more than disagree	8.6%	8.3%	20%	16%	22%	21%	18%	17%
Strongly agree	11%	13%	18%	22%	46%	48%	73%	72%
Number	70	48	34	55	68	48	33	54

A similar concept was tested by Item 53, which asked, "Which statement comes closest to your own views even if neither is exactly right?: My religion is the one, true faith leading to eternal life OR Many religions can lead to eternal life". Of the 84 SIM and 90 AUC participants who responded to this item, 89% of SIM and 41% of AUC teachers agreed that "My religion is the one, true faith leading to eternal life". The other 12% SIM and 59% AUC teachers took the option which suggested that "Many religions can lead to eternal life" (see Table B.53 in Appendix B).

Another item (Item 54) tested the flexibility that the participants felt towards various interpretations of the teachings of the Church. It asked, "Which statement comes closer to your own views even if neither is exactly right?: There is only ONE true way to interpret the teachings of my religion OR There is MORE than one true way to interpret the teachings of my religion". Of the 83 SIM and 90 AUC respondents, 64% of SIM and 22% of AUC teachers said there is only ONE way to interpret the teachings of their religion, while the rest (36% SIM and 79% AUC teachers) suggested that there was more than one way (see Table B.54 in Appendix B).

Q62n in Branch C tested for a tendency to divide humankind into good and bad: "When you get right down to it, there are only two kinds of people in the world: the righteous, who will be rewarded by God, and the rest, who will not". Of the 68 AUC and 54 SIM participants who responded to this item, 58% of AUC and 89% of SIM teachers strongly agreed or agreed with this statement (see Table B.62n).

Another item which measured the "them versus us" attitude of teachers was repeated in Branches C, D, and E as Items 69, 78, and 89: "Do you think there is a natural conflict between being a devout religious person and living in a modern society, or don't you think so?" The wording of this item grew out of the differences between a sect and a church as defined by Rodney Stark and Roger Finke: "Definition 26. Churches are religious bodies in relatively lower tension with their surroundings. Definition 27. Sects are religious bodies in relatively higher tension with their surroundings" (Stark & Finke, 2000, p. 143–44). The wording was designed to test whether the participants considered themselves to be in tension with wider society. Of the 223 AUC and 168 SIM respondents who responded to this item, 31% of AUC and 70% of SIM teachers said that "there is a lot of conflict" and an additional 54% AUC and 24% said that "there is some conflict". Only 13% of AUC and 2% of SIM teachers did not think there was any conflict, and 2% did not know how to respond to the item (see Table B.69/78/89 in Appendix B).

How, then, might we answer the question, "How sectarian are the teachers in Adventist schools in the SPD?" Their responses to the items analysed in the previous few paragraphs provide a first-order answer to this question. As a group they are clear that it is not necessary to belong to the SDA Church to be saved. This might indicate a more open attitude than one might expect of a sectarian viewpoint. On the other hand, over two thirds of AUC and over three quarters of SIM teachers considered that there were only two kinds of people in the world, the righteous, and those who are not. Different proportions of the AUC and SIM teachers thought that their religion was the only way to eternal life (41% and 89% respectively), and a similar proportion perceived that there was a high tension between themselves as observant Christians and the society in which they live.

Adventist teachers in the SPD have a clear sense that the church they belong to is significant and important. They perceive that there is a difference between themselves and wider society. They are not exclusive, in that they do not believe only fellow church members can be saved. They do not claim to be the sole way to heaven. But they are comfortable with being part of a special group of believers. Does this make them sectarian? If there was a sliding scale between not sectarian and strongly sectarian, or, to use the definitions of Stark and Finke, between church and sect, they would fit somewhere in the middle.

Results Relating to Fundamental Belief 22. Christian Behavior

Two of the sentences from Statement 22 of the *Fundamental Beliefs* of SDAs read:

> Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures. Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies, we are to abstain from them as well.

Items 63a to 63f (repeated in 87a to 87f) began with the words, "I believe I should abstain from …" and then listed illegal drugs, dancing, alcohol, smoking, eating meat, and caffeinated drinks. Alcohol, smoking, and drugs are mentioned in Fundamental Belief 22. The statement on diet in Belief 22 is tested in a general way by Items 76c and 93c "Adventist standards in diet" (see Table 25.8). Responses to Item 63 fall into two groups: there is near unanimous rejection of illegal drugs, alcohol, and smoking (see Table 25.6), but much less consensus of eating meat, drinking caffeinated drinks, and dancing (see Table 26.7).

Table 25.6

AUC Teachers in Adventist Schools Reject Illegal Drugs, Alcohol, and Smoking

	Drugs		Alcohol		Smoking	
	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly
Strongly disagree	0.6%	0.9%	4.3%	3.1%	2.2%	2.1%
Disagree more than agree	0.6%	0.9%	9.4%	5.2%	2.2%	2.1%
Agree more than disagree	3.8%	1.8%	18.7%	10.4%	1.5%	1.1%
Strongly agree	94.9%	96.3%	67.6%	81.3%	94.1%	94.7%
Number	157	109	139	96	135	94

Note on Tables 25.6 and 25.7: Unfortunately SIM data is not available for Item 63.

Table 25.7
AUC Teachers in Adventist Schools Ambivalent on Dancing, Meat Eating, and Caffeinated Drinks

	Dancing		Meat		Caffeinated drinks	
	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly
I really don't know	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%
Strongly disagree	34.9%	25.2%	25.7%	17.5%	22.3%	16.7%
Disagree more than agree	26.3%	24.3%	30.0%	32.0%	28.1%	24.0%
Agree more than disagree	20.4%	26.2%	31.4%	33.0%	32.4%	39.6%
Strongly agree	18.4%	24.3%	12.9%	17.5%	16.5%	19.8%
Number	152	107	140	97	139	96

Results Relating to the Suite of *28 Fundamental Beliefs*

It is appropriate now to try to gain some perspective on the relationship between the teachers in Adventist schools in the SPD and the *28 Fundamental Beliefs* of the SDA Church. This question has been addressed in detail in several chapters of this book, but it might be of benefit to consider the whole range of the *Fundamental Beliefs* at once. An attempt to do so has been made in Table 25.8. In that table, alongside of the heading for the Fundamental Belief (found in the column with the label, "Heading"), one item has been taken to represent that particular fundamental belief, and a report is made of the percentage of those who assent to the item. Assent was taken to include the responses, "strongly agree", "agree", "embrace it wholeheartedly", "accept it because the church teaches it", and "accept it because I think it is probably correct". These percentages are found in the column in Table 25.8 labelled AUC Tot, AUC Wkly, SIM Wkly, and SIM Tot. The detailed results associated with each item may be found in Appendix B.

Table 25.8
SPD Teachers and the 28 Fundamental Beliefs

Heading of Fundamental Belief	Item(s)	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	SIM Wkly	SIM Tot
1. [Holy Scriptures]	[Q65/Q92: The Bible is … the work of people who were inspired by God and who, though expressing their message in terms of their own time and place[, expressed eternal truths]	89%	90%	89%	83%
2. Trinity	Q62o/Q86g: I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (i.e., I believe in the doctrine of the Trinity)	94%	97%	96%	97%
3. Father	Q62b/Q86a: I believe in a personal God who seeks a relationship with human beings	96%	98%	94%	95%
4. Son	Q62c/Q86b: Jesus Christ is the Son of God	96%	96%	97%	98%
5. [Holy Spirit]	[Q62o/Q86g: I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (i.e., I believe in the doctrine of the Trinity)]	94%	97%	96%	97%
6. Creation	Q62p/Q86h: I believe God created the world	95%	97%	99%	99%
7. Nature of man	Q76d/Q93d: When a person dies their body remains in the grave and their soul sleeps until the resurrection	96%	97%	85%	86%
8. Great controversy	Q76a/Q93a: All humanity is involved in a GREAT CONTROVERSY between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His love, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe	99%	100%	97%	97%
[9. Life, death and resurrection of Christ]	[Q62g: I believe that Jesus was born of a virgin]	94%	92%	97%	94%
10. Experience of salvation	Q62f/Q86c: I am saved the moment I believe and accept what Jesus has done for me	90%	91%	97%	96%
11. Growing in Christ	Q56a: Pray outside of attending religious services ≥ daily	71%	81%	33%	30%
	Q56b Participate in prayer groups, Script:ure study groups, etc ≥ weekly	33%	29%	64%	56%

Heading of Fundamental Belief	Item(s)	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	SIM Wkly	SIM Tot
13. The remnant and its mission	Q76g/Q83g: The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days a REMNANT has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus	89%	90%	97%	98%
18. The gift of prophecy	Q76h/Q93h: ELLEN G. WHITE as an inspired messenger to the Adventist Church	89%	94%	97%	98%
19. [The law of God]	[Q86e: There are clear and absolute standards for what is right and wrong]	85%	85%	91%	90%
20. The Sabbath	Q76b/Q93b: The seventh day of the week is the SABBATH according to the Bible	97%	98%	99%	99%
21. Stewardship	Q79/Q98: In the last 12 months, as a percentage of my income, I estimate that I have given as tithe ≥10% of income	82%	91%	52%	52%
22. Christian behavior	Q76c/Q93c: Adventist standards in DIET	87%	93%	97%	92%
24. Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary	Q76f/Q93f: The INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT beginning in 1844	65%	69%	75%	80%
25. Second coming of Christ	Q62m/Q86f :Jesus will return to earth a second time	94%	96%	99%	99%
26. Death and resurrection	Q76dQ93d: When a person dies their body remains in the grave and their soul sleeps until the resurrection	96%	97%	85%	86%
27. Millennium	Q76i/Q93i: After the millennium, God will restore the earth as a home for the righteous who were resurrected or who were alive at his coming	99%	100%	97%	98%
28. [New Earth]	[Q76e/Q93e: The Adventist Church's interpretation of END-TIME PROPHECIES]	86%	87%	98%	98%

That individuals who live in different parts of Australia and the Solomon Islands, who have different life circumstances, different levels of education, and different levels of responsibility, can agree so widely on a set of beliefs is truly remarkable. Humans will always have differences of opinion, and Australians in particular are well known for their independence. Yet of the 22 *Fundamental Beliefs* tested in the survey, no fewer than 18 are believed by more than 85% of the respondents (more than 90% assented to eleven of them). It is worth noting that in a couple of these instances, the "bar" for measuring agreement with that belief was set high—prayer was to be daily (Fundamental 11), and the proportion of income given as tithe was set at greater than or equal to 10% of income.

On the whole, then, it is plain that teachers in Adventist schools in the SPD believe in the 28 *Fundamental Beliefs* of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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Education as Preparation for Eternity: Teachers in Seventh-day Adventist Schools in Australia and the Solomon Islands, and Their Perceptions of Mission

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