

Lion and Lamb Apologetics



Did Adventist leaders

LIE to Walter Martin?

A look back at the Adventist/Evangelical dialogues in the mid 1950's

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The story has often been told over the last 50 years. Walter Martin, the well-known cult researcher and Christian apologist, went to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1955 to make sure he accurately understood Adventism's doctrinal positions. He had written a chapter about Adventism in *The Rise of the Cults* (Zondervan, 1955), and before he wrote more he wanted to question Adventist leaders directly. After several conferences with Martin and evangelical colleagues including Donald Grey Barnhouse in 1955 and 1956 (one count put the number of meetings at 18), the Adventists published *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine: An Explanation of Certain Major Aspects of Seventh-day Adventist Belief* (often called QOD) in 1957. This book was the Adventists' official answer to Walter Martin and his colleagues.

Numerous accounts of this story focus not primarily on the events of the discussions themselves but on their backlash from both within and without the Adventist Church. As many have stated and re-stated, the publication of QOD resulted in more and



"You know, this stuff that we're seeing now indicates that there never really was any change, and that they have not told you the truth, and that they didn't tell Barnhouse the truth" and that "you were misled and you've got to set the record straight."¹

--- Walter Martin

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longer-lasting controversy within the Adventist Church than has any other issue the Church has faced.^{2, 3, 4}

Raymond Cottrell, associate editor of the *Adventist Review* and also of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, practically prophesied about these 50 years of conflict as QOD was being prepared for publication:

Let us be certain that nothing gets into the proposed book that will take us the next 50 years to live down.⁵

In October of 2007 a QOD 50th anniversary conference was held at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. This event was not so much a celebration as it was a time for various individuals within Adventism (and two non-Adventists) to discuss issues from the QOD controversy which have persisted over the past five decades. Although many Adventists have opposed QOD, many have favored it, though their favor reflects a variety of viewpoints and agendas. Whether for or against the book, all of the conference participants agreed that QOD was a watershed event in Adventist history.

One particularly revealing event in the "QOD saga" occurred in 1984 when Walter Martin and William Johnsson, then editor of the *Adventist Review*, met for discussions on the *John Ankerberg Show*. The resulting five-program television series, "Who Is Telling the Truth About Seventh Day [sic] Adventism?," aired in 1985.

The question now needs to be asked. Did someone lie about Seventh-day Adventism? To answer this question, we will first look at the Adventists and the evangelicals involved in the "Martin conversations"—and then examine various responses to QOD. Juhyeok (Julius) Nam's doctoral dissertation "Reactions to the Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences and *Questions on Doctrine*, 1955–1971," is an excellent resource on this subject, but it only examines work written before 1972. Numerous issues, however, have arisen since 1971, particularly from the *John Ankerberg Show*, which we will address as well.

The Adventists

The Adventist leaders involved in the conferences with Walter Martin and his colleagues were Leroy Edwin Froom, W. E. Read, and Roy Allan Anderson—(a trio nicknamed FREDA inside leadership circles). Froom was a key player who maintained contact with General Conference president Reuben R. Figuhr. In a letter dated August 8, 1955, Froom cryptically wrote to Figuhr about the pending talks:

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The time has come for some things to happen, and I believe that there is opportunity now to go forward with certain things. I know that I am speaking in generalities and parables, but if I get into particulars, it would take too long and I would have to explain the whole thing.⁶

All three Adventist conferees were "highly respected leaders."⁷ Read had received training in biblical languages but was not proficient.⁸ Anderson had dealt with non-Adventists for several years and could understand and use their Christian phraseology. Froom was a researcher and historian who had compiled multi-volume works on prophetic and conditionalist faith throughout Christian history. "But the facts are that our Adventist trio, untrained as theologians, was no match for Martin and Barnhouse, specialists in Calvinistic Evangelicalism."⁹

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The uninvited Adventists—the lunatic fringe

Milian Lauritz Andreasen, Raymond F. Cottrell, and Francis D. Nichol were influential Adventists who were not invited to participate in the Adventist-Evangelical conferences. In fact, Andreasen and Nichol were specifically barred from participation. That these three and many others who had been influential in Adventism were not included is quite telling. These men in "the fringe" were so respected within Adventism that their opinions and possible objections to the QOD project had far-reaching effects, influencing countless laypersons who admired and learned from them.

Nichol was the editor of the *Review and Herald* from 1945 to 1961, and supervising editor of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. Many consider him the leading Ellen White apologist of the twentieth century.

Cottrell was an associate editor of both the *Review and Herald* and the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. A notable scholar proficient in both Hebrew and Greek, he identified five areas of concern about the forthcoming QOD—concerns which were largely ignored. In an unpublished sixteen-page letter to General Conference leaders, he listed the categories of his concern: "(1) change in Adventist theology; (2) Ellen G. White; (3) the remnant church; (4) Adventism in relation to other evangelical churches; and (5) the proposed book on Adventism by Martin."¹⁰

Andreasen was one of Adventism's most influential theologians of the 1930s and 1940s. He was a proponent of "Last Generation Theology" which holds that the generation alive when Christ returns will have to have reached perfection. He strongly opposed the

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publication of QOD and felt that the Adventist Church was being severely compromised. His story is well-known as he made it his last mission in life to warn the Adventist Church of the heresy that was coming into the Church through QOD. Many during those years pointed to his *Letters to the Churches* which articulated the reasons for his disapproval as just cause for assigning him to the lunatic fringe of Adventism—yet those *Letters*, far from being discarded as the work of a lunatic, are still being circulated to this day.

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How did the man who was arguably the foremost theologian in the Adventist Church become consigned to the lunatic fringe? The reason was not Andreason's theology; rather, he was marginalized because he opposed working with evangelicals and making Adventist doctrines palatable to Protestant Christians.

Andreasen's writings were significant within Adventism. For example, some of his works were included in the Christian Home Library (CHL), a collection that epitomizes Adventist writing and which features all the works of Ellen White. The CHL offers works that all Adventists can agree clearly state their positions without resorting to non-Adventist phraseology. In effect, they did not rely on agreements with Babylonish theology to make the case for Adventism.

Though Andreasen's books eventually faded in popularity and were absent from Adventist Book Centers (ABC) for many years, they are again being sold. His book *The Sanctuary Service* is currently available through the ABC.¹¹

Ironically, Leroy Froom, one of the key participants in the Evangelical-Adventist meetings, was a typical Adventist and sounded much like the "lunatic fringe" to which Andreasen had been relegated. Unlike Andreasen, however, Froom reached out to Martin and Barnhouse in the 1950's. This apparent cordiality belied his earlier hostility toward working with those from "Babylon". The Adventist Church has always taught that the Pope is the Antichrist, that the Roman Catholic Church is the Whore of Babylon (Revelation 14:8), and that the Protestant churches are its harlot daughters. In *The Ministry* magazine for April, 1944, Froom endorsed this traditional Adventist belief when he wrote:

How dare a man contemplate, or have the temerity to present, the degree of doctor of divinity, gained in the universities of Babylon, as a credential for teaching or preaching this threefold message, the second stipulation of which is, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen ... Come out of her, My people." How dare we accept such a Babylonian credential in lieu of mastery of the truth? Shall a man go into Babylon to gain strength and wisdom to call men out of Babylon? To ask the question is but to disclose how far some have compromised with Babylon,

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as they have gone back to Babylon to drink from her wells of wisdom. Oh, for the living waters of truth fresh from the Word!

Someone needs to sound an alarm. We need to grip ourselves and halt a growing trend that, if it becomes entrenched, will bring disaster through neutralizing our message... Otherwise we shall go the way of all other religious bodies before us, who started out with a heavenly message, but who have bogged down in the morass of worldly scholarship with its erudite haziness, its loss of spiritual vision, and its blurring of truth, until its virility and its power to witness have virtually disappeared.¹²

What happened between 1944 and the 1950s to cause Froom to make such an apparent about-face?

Apparently avoiding the label "cult" was even more important to Froom than avoiding collaboration with those from Babylon. In the 1940s Froom would have agreed with Andreasen, Cottrell and Nichol. In the 1950s, however, Froom appeared to trample his own convictions, leading out in the conferences designed to convince the evangelicals from "Babylon" that Adventism was truly Christian, while the very men with whom he agreed theologically were cast off to the sidelines to witness the unthinkable.

"A powerful circle" – the non-Adventists

The Evangelicals involved in the conferences were primarily Walter R. Martin, Donald G. Barnhouse and George E. Cannon. Martin, in his mid-20s, was a consulting editor with *Eternity* magazine with specific training in apologetics and cults. Barnhouse, the senior theologian, Martin's mentor, and a world-renowned Bible teacher, pastored the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia for many years and served as editor of *Eternity* magazine. Cannon was a professor of New Testament at Nyack Missionary College in Nyack, New York.

The effects of Martin's work were already known in religious circles. Martin had classified the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Jehovah's Witnesses) as cults. With that label the organizations had a very difficult, if not impossible, time convincing informed individuals of their orthodoxy. The leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was aware both of Martin's conclusions regarding the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses and of his influence, and the Adventists did not want the same stigma being attached to their church.

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Froom knew the power of the individuals with whom he was meeting. In a letter to General Conference president Figuhr, Froom stated:

I do not know where all this will lead, but we do know that we have won friends in a powerful circle—friends who believe that we have been unjustly treated and are set to make a defense of our adherence to sound Biblical positions.¹³

Wordsmiths—why did the Adventists change their language?

Although approving of many positions articulated in QOD by the delegated committee, Raymond Cottrell and others later admitted that there were serious problems in the text. Cottrell believed the book was telling "only part of the truth as to what Adventists believed on [certain] points."¹⁴ Nichol stated:

It seems evident that some statements were clearly made to Martin and some typewritten forms of answers were given to him that many of us, on mature consideration are unable to support.¹⁵

Froom was aware of the new, non-Adventist wording the committee members were using to answer Martin's questions. In a letter to Figuhr dated April 26, 1955, Froom wrote:

It may seem that some of the statements are a bit different from what you might anticipate. If you knew the backgrounds, the attitudes, the setting of it all, you would understand why we stated these things as we have.¹⁶

The annotated edition of QOD, reprinted as part of the Adventist Classic Library, was published in 2003. The annotations were written by George R. Knight, professor (now retired) of church history at Andrews Theological Seminary. In his introduction he notes:

The authors at times push the facts a bit too far on such issues as Adventism's historic understanding of the Trinity and they even present their data in a way that creates a false impression on the human nature of Christ. But given the desire to please and the importance of the answers, the volume overall is a remarkably courageous statement of traditional Adventist doctrinal understanding.¹⁷

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When it comes to wordsmithing, Andreassen, Knight, and a host of others have all agreed in print (at different times in the past 50 years) that the heading on p. 650 of QOD (in Appendix B) was more than just a modification of the words used to state Adventist belief. Referring to Christ, it reads, "Took Sinless Human Nature."¹⁸ It has been amply demonstrated from the writings of Ellen G. White, who is "the final court of appeal"¹⁹ within Seventh-day Adventism, that Jesus took our sinful, fallen human nature, "degraded and defiled by sin." Prior to the writing of QOD, Ellen White's words were the standard Adventist description of Christ's human nature.

Most Adventists are familiar with the following quotes from Ellen White regarding Christ's human nature. These quotes are completely contrary to the frankly deceptive statement in QOD:

Think of Christ's humiliation. He took upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin.²⁰

Clad in the vestments of humanity, the Son of God came down to the level of those He wished to save. In Him was no guile or sinfulness; He was ever pure and undefiled; yet He took upon Him our sinful nature.²¹

Before the publication of the annotated QOD, Knight wrote *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs*. In it he clearly identifies how the Adventists in the 1950s rationalized the rewording of their doctrine of an atonement that was not completed on the cross:

The issue of the complete atonement in many ways was a semantic adjustment made to enable the Adventist leaders in dialogue with Barnhouse and Martin to communicate their belief in the sufficiency of Christ's death. They felt safe in that approach since they could quote Ellen White as essentially saying that the atonement took place on the cross. Thus the authors of Questions on Doctrine could note in agreement with the evangelicals that Jesus had "provided" the sacrificial atonement on the cross while still not yielding the Adventist understanding that the atonement continued in the heavenly sanctuary where Christ "applied" the benefits of His sacrificial atonement.²²

The crafting of phraseology that sounded orthodox to evangelicals while not renouncing historic Adventist positions intentionally obscured the true nature of Adventist beliefs. Martin and Barnhouse were convinced that the Adventist church had changed some of its cultic doctrines to conform to the evangelical understanding. In reality,

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[QOD] represents a total rejection of Barnhouse and Martin's dispensational understanding of the Second Advent and the covenant, while it is a courageous statement of the Adventist position on such controverted topics as the Sabbath, the mark of the beast, Daniel 8, the investigative judgment, the state of the dead, hell, Babylon, the remnant, and other topics that were offensive to the evangelical community.²³

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Since QOD

Following the publication of QOD various storms of controversy broke out both within and outside the Adventist Church. These have been well documented by Juhyeok Nam in his doctoral dissertation as well as by many others over the past 50 years. Reactions outside the Adventist church run the gamut, from claiming that the Adventists had completely deceived Martin and Barnhouse,²⁴ to praise that the Adventists were rightly recognized as part of the Evangelical community.²⁵ Following the publication of QOD, in 1960 Walter Martin authored *The Truth about Seventh-day Adventism*. This was to be a companion volume to QOD, sold in Adventist Book Centers; however, the General Conference reneged on its promise to Martin that it would sell his book as well.

Following the release of QOD and of Martin's book, the Adventist presses published many books and articles defending Adventist beliefs, bolstering the Adventist "pillars" that QOD had camouflaged and which Martin's book did not endorse. The first significant reactions to QOD and Martin's work took place on the ministerial level. The Adventist magazine *The Ministry* published a series of articles from June, 1960 to July, 1961 to counter Martin's new volume. These articles were compiled into a book entitled *Doctrinal Discussions*, to which three of the men involved in the Evangelical-Adventist conferences contributed. W. E. Read wrote articles on the investigative judgment, its biblical basis, and the time for this phase of the judgment. Roy A. Anderson wrote an article arguing for conditional immortality, and Edward Heppenstall contributed two articles on the hour of God's judgment having come.

In his introductory endorsement of *Doctrinal Discussions*, President R. R. Figuhr assured the readers of this new book that "the Bible, we believe, clearly establish[es] the solid scriptural foundation of Seventh-day Adventist doctrines."²⁶ As one reads the articles in *The Ministry* and *Doctrinal Discussions*, however, it becomes clear that the writers could not defend Adventist doctrines from the Bible alone; the articles contain at least 18 references to the writings of Ellen G. White in support of various positions.

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What is actually promulgated in *Doctrinal Discussions*? One telling example of the articles' traditional Adventist tone is this statement by Heppenstall, one of the most evangelical of Adventist leaders:

It is important to notice that the central issue in all these scriptures concerned with the work of judgment is the justification and vindication of God, not of man. The great concern is that God is declared righteous. Only as this becomes true can the saints be proclaimed righteous. It is the vindication of God and His throne that alone guarantees the triumph and vindication of the believer.²⁷

Heppenstall's essay—written specifically to defend traditional Adventist theology against the challenge by Walter Martin—indicates that the believer's triumph and vindication depends not on the cross but on the judgment and vindication of God "alone". Moreover, this belief puts God the Creator on trial before His creatures on whom His vindication ultimately depends. Ironically, Heppenstall has long been championed as one of the most Christ-centered, cross-centered Adventist thinkers within Adventism.

Other endorsements of traditional Adventism since the publication of QOD include *The Atonement* by Edwin Reiner (Southern Publishing, 1971) which includes many theological statements of the kind which Martin and Barnhouse opposed. Reiner indicates that the sins of humanity were laid on Jesus at his baptism, that part of the Atonement was Christ's victory over Satan in the wilderness temptations, and that the Sabbath is included in the Atonement. Some of Reiner's statements, in order, are as follows:

After coming up from the water [of baptism], Jesus bowed in prayer on the banks of the Jordan. Laden with man's sins, He prayed for each person....²⁸

As for Jesus, He now stood in a vastly different position than He had previously. The Sinless One must now [following His baptism] feel the shame of sin.²⁹

Despite His human limitations and with the terrible weight of humanity's sins crushing Him, He withstood the pressures which Satan put upon Him. He did not succumb to the most dangerous temptation man faces....³⁰

Christ stood at His symbolic tree of knowledge of good and evil....³¹

More important, the salvation of man hung in the balance, and the trial of Christ in the wilderness would decide man's eternal fate. Christ won out over

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His appetite, thus pointing to the fact that man had a chance to overcome his sinful nature.³²

Christ's victory was as complete as had been Adam's failure.³³

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Since God has designated the seventh day as a sign of His authority, anyone who spurns His command to honor the Sabbath virtually rejects His leadership. Those who profess to follow Christ cannot enter into the rest of faith (Hebrews 4:9) while willfully breaking the Sabbath, for to reject one is to reject the other.³⁴

Since the beginning in 1844 of the investigative judgment prophesied by Daniel, the Sabbath has truly become a test to the Christian world.³⁵

The statements contradict Jesus' statement that all things—even the Sabbath—have been handed over to Him by the Father (Matt. 11:27-29).

Reiner included 58 pages of quotations from Ellen White to substantiate his view of the Atonement.

In retrospect, it is clear that, although the Adventist church published QOD using words that sounded much more like mainstream Christianity than any of their previous publications, the book did not signify any change of doctrine or belief. Moreover, the church moved quickly to reassure its members that there was no change in Adventist doctrines.

William Johnsson and Walter Martin

Although Walter Martin was aggressive in defending "the faith, once and for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), he was also outspoken on the principle that Christians are not to attack fellow believers. Often during his ministry he defended the Adventist church as an evangelical Christian denomination on the basis of its statements in QOD, insisting that Adventists were not to be treated like the many cults with which he dealt. In keeping with his conviction, when Martin appeared with William Johnsson (then editor of the *Adventist Review*) on the *John Ankerberg Show* in 1985, Martin and Ankerberg often referred to William Johnsson as "brother," encouraging him to continue speaking truthfully about his own convictions as well as about the beliefs of the Adventist Church.

By the time the series with Martin and Johnsson was produced, QOD had been out of print for several years. Martin pressed Johnsson to explain why the book was not being

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reprinted, but he got no answer. Moreover, Johnsson could not clearly answer Martin's questions about whether the atonement was finished at the cross. Nevertheless, despite Johnsson's evasions and growing discomfort with Martin's questioning, Martin continued to acknowledge Johnsson as a brother in Christ.

Johnsson recounts his memories of the *Ankerberg Show* in his 2008 autobiography, *Embrace the Impossible*. Chapter 10, "Contending for the Faith", is dedicated to the events of those programs.

Johnsson states that, in agreement with General Conference president Neal C. Wilson, he was to "appear as the church's representative that Ankerberg had been publicly calling for."³⁶ Nevertheless, Johnsson claims he refused to quote Wilson during the interviews.

I could have embellished my reply. I could have told Martin, "I asked our world leader, Neal C. Wilson, that very same question—whether the church has repudiated *Questions on Doctrine*—and he stated that we have not"... But I chose not to piggyback on anyone else's convictions. I took my stand as an individual Adventist, ready to answer from the heart."³⁷

If he had a direct statement from the General Conference president but refused to share it, Johnsson failed in his role as representative of the Adventist Church.

The second program included a discussion of the investigative judgment and Hebrews 9 during which Johnsson claimed expertise in the exegesis of Hebrews 9 and 10. These two chapters had been the subject of his doctoral dissertation, *Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews*, which he had written under the direction of professor L. E. Keck at Vanderbilt University. He reports the exchange:

Just for a few minutes I found a respite—Martin moved into the book of Hebrews. Soon, however, he realized that I was well versed in that area, so he dropped Hebrews and went to a different subject."³⁸

The transcript, however, reveals a different picture. Following a discussion of the Greek term *ta hagia* and whether it refers to the sanctuary in general or to a specific apartment of the sanctuary, Martin and Johnsson had this exchange:

Martin: And would the person who wrote the article [an older, definitive work on *ta hagia*] admit to the Adventist doctrine of 1844 and the second apartment of the sanctuary and Jesus going in there? Would they say that Hebrews 9 would admit that?

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Johnsson: I don't think you get all that from Hebrews 9.

Martin: Oh, no. Not at all from Hebrews 9.³⁹

Johnsson then redirected the discussion to the judgment seat of Christ. It was not Martin who dropped Hebrews; it was Johnsson who changed the subject and failed in his role as contender for the Adventist faith—in his area of expertise.

Throughout the interviews Johnsson struggled to uphold Adventist beliefs from a biblical standpoint and seemed inadequately prepared. Neal Wilson had told him, "It will be difficult, Bill. You will face a no-win situation. They will try to trap you with the questions they put to you. But if you can just stay calm and sweet and make clear that as an Adventist you believe in righteousness by faith, that will be sufficient, whatever else they try to trick you into saying."⁴⁰

Although Wilson warned him that he would face a difficult situation, Johnsson seems truly perplexed in retrospect and recounts his feelings while on the program:

Inside I was beginning to boil... And this was purportedly a Christian television show? Yes, the name of Jesus was mentioned, along with references to the Bible and various Christian doctrines, but the attitude, the spirit of the show, was overwhelmingly negative, designed to put the Seventh-day Adventist Church in a bad light.⁴¹

The "bad light" that Johnsson felt shone on the Adventist church, however, did not grow out of a predetermined negative attitude. Rather, Walter Martin persisted in asking Johnsson specific questions. For example, Martin asked Johnsson if all his sins were forgiven and fully atoned at the cross, and he asked why QOD was allowed to go out of print if the Adventist church really taught what the book stated. Johnsson could not give definitive answers to Martin's questions.

In fact, throughout all five programs, Johnsson persistently referred to the *Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists* to answer Martin's questions and refused to give straight, personal answers. When Martin was pressing Johnsson regarding the authority of Ellen White in the Adventist Church, Martin—who knew that the public statements of Fundamental Beliefs are carefully worded to conceal the true import of Adventist doctrine—declared:

[The] fundamental beliefs today are essentially worthless, because you can find an equal if not superior number of quotations on the same subject from your own publishing houses which disagree with it.⁴²

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Johnsson continues through this chapter of his book with many statements about the emotions he was experiencing throughout the program, saying that the Adventist Church was under attack and that he was constantly on the defensive. Later in the chapter, he refers to a letter from Edward Fudge, a member of the Church of Christ and the author of *The Fire That Consumes*, a book defending conditional immortality. Johnsson was assured by Fudge that "[I had] comported myself in a truly Christian manner. 'In fact,' he wrote, 'you were the only Christian on the program.'"⁴³

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Finally, Johnsson declares that, if given the opportunity, he would do such a set of interviews again, even if it looked like a setup.

But I would make sure one aspect was different. I would have in the audience someone—at least one person—to whom I could look and know that they were a friend and praying for me. Walter Martin had his cheering section in the audience, and he played up to it. I felt dreadfully on my own.

But I was not on my own. The Lord was there, by my side, right through.⁴⁴

In reality, Johnsson was ill-equipped to go five rounds with Walter Martin. Wilson's advice to Johnsson to stay "calm and sweet" and to reiterate that he believed in "righteousness by faith" would never convince a theologian like Martin that Adventist doctrine is Christian. Martin's concerns about Adventism were not allayed by these interviews, and Johnsson's obfuscation only intensified Martin's legitimate doubts. Even QOD—the original "proof" to Martin that Adventism was evangelical—was out of print, and Johnson could neither explain the church's resistance to reprinting it nor articulate the Christian doctrine of a completed atonement. Furthermore, he could not deny the central role of Ellen G. White but persistently parroted the official *Fundamental Beliefs*.

In reality, Adventism's teachings denigrate the person and work of Jesus Christ by saying the atonement occurs in two or three phases with the cross constituting only the first phase, while the final phase is the believer's appropriation of the benefits of Christ's righteousness to ultimately vindicate God. These are definitely not orthodox Christian teachings.

The Adventist church in practice

Ever since the Adventist church published *Questions on Doctrine* to convince Martin and Barnhouse that it was not a cult, the organization continued publishing materials endorsing traditional Adventism. In other words, QOD did not alter the church's

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doctrines and teachings. A quotation from *The Review* in 1971 shows that even fourteen years after QOD was published, some very un-Protestant positions were held by Adventists and promulgated in the official church magazine:

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When will the people of God cease trusting their own wisdom? When will they come to the place where they will cease to measure, construe, and interpret, by their own reason, what God says to them through His appointed channel?

When we come to the place where we place no trust in man nor in the wisdom of men, but unquestionably accept of and act upon what God says through this gift, then will the spirit of prophecy, as set before us in the Bible and as witnessed in the present manifestations of this gift be confirmed among us and become, in fact, the counselor, guide, and final court of appeal among God's people. Under the leadership of Christ, through this gift, the cause of God will move forward with mighty strides to final victory.⁴⁵

Although this quote was written decades before, it's interesting that the same church that had produced QOD would allow this article to be published in 1971.

Ted Wilson, elected as General Conference President at the General Conference session in Atlanta in 2010, has made some similar claims for the writings of Ellen G. White. In his Sabbath message on July 3rd of this year, he states:

The same spirit that moved the holy men of old has again, in these last days, raised up a messenger for the Lord. My brothers and sisters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Lord has given us one of the greatest gifts possible in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy. Just as the Bible is not outdated or irrelevant, neither is the testimony of God's end-time messenger. God used Ellen G. White as a humble servant to provide inspired insight about Scripture, prophecy, health, education, relationships, mission, families and so many more topics. Let us read the Spirit of Prophecy, follow the Spirit of Prophecy and share the Spirit of Prophecy. ... The Spirit of Prophecy is one of the identifying marks of God's last-day remnant people and is just as applicable today as ever before because it was given to us by heaven itself. As God's faithful remnant, may we never make of none effect the precious light given us in the writings of Ellen G. White.⁴⁶

Later in his presentation, Wilson again refers to the Spirit of Prophecy (Ellen G. White):

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While the Bible is paramount in our estimation as the ultimate authority and final arbiter of truth, the Spirit of Prophecy provides clear, inspired counsel to aid our application of Bible truth. It is a heaven-sent guide to instruct the church in how to carry out its mission. It is a reliable theological expositor of the Scriptures. The Spirit of Prophecy is to be read, believed, applied and promoted. ... Let me repeat a conviction of mine, a personal conviction: there is nothing antiquated or archaic about the Spirit of Prophecy; it is for today and until Christ returns.⁴⁷

Wilson does not say that the Bible alone is paramount. He states that "While the Bible is paramount... the Spirit of Prophecy provides clear, inspired counsel..." The phrasing is ambiguous at best, intentionally misleading at worst. Is Wilson affirming that the Bible is paramount, or is he stating that the Spirit of Prophecy is a "reliable theological expositor of the Scriptures"? Should we go to the Bible alone, or are the writings of Ellen G. White to be "read, believed, applied and promoted"? Is the Bible God's counsel to all Christians for all time, or are we to read the Spirit of Prophecy "today and until Christ returns"?

Wilson, like many in the Church who voted him into office, does believe that the writings of Ellen G. White are inspired counsel. In fact, his endorsement expounds upon the 18th fundamental belief of the Church which states:

18. The Gift of Prophecy: One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen. G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10.)⁴⁸

Ellen White's writings are a "continuing and authoritative source of truth." Although followed by a statement about the Bible being the standard, it is interesting to note that it is the writings of Ellen White—and not the Bible itself—which "make clear that the Bible is the standard." In effect, Ellen White is the standard for Adventist theology, because her writings are not only needed to identify the Bible as the "standard", but they are also "a continuing and authoritative source of truth."

Following the adoption in 1980 of the 17th fundamental belief (renumbered in 2005 as the 18th fundamental belief) affirming the prophetic gift of Ellen G. White, an *ad hoc* committee of the Adventist General Conference met to work out a detailed statement on Ellen White. This statement was published in the July 15, 1982, issue of the *Adventist*

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Review and the August, 1982, issue of *Ministry* magazine. Included with many excellent statements about Ellen White's writings not being on a par with Scripture was an unusual declaration. Following ten affirmations are ten denials. The first of these denials reads:

We do not believe that the quality or degree of inspiration in the writings of Ellen White is different from that of Scripture.⁴⁹

The authors then state:

We conclude, therefore, that a correct understanding of the inspiration and authority of the writings of Ellen White will avoid two extremes: (1) regarding these writings as functioning on a canonical level identical with Scripture, or (2) considering them as ordinary Christian literature.⁵⁰

With statements like these one can easily become confused regarding Adventism's official belief regarding Ellen G. White. Nevertheless, we must conclude that if the "quality" and "degree" of inspiration are no different from that of the Bible, the confusion is meant to obfuscate. Since Adventism regards her inspiration to be equal to that of the Bible writers, we must conclude that no matter what role they assign to her writings, members are to regard her counsel as authoritative in the same way they regard the Bible to be authoritative. In other words, Adventists need Ellen White in order to properly interpret and apply the Bible.

Did Adventist leadership lie to Walter Martin?

The definition of "lie" is to tell an untruth with the intent to deceive. Included in the definition is the act of not telling the whole truth, or telling partial truths with the intent to mislead. Given this definition of "lie," the simple answer to the question must be a clear "Yes, Adventist leadership lied to Walter Martin." We can go to great lengths to discuss the specifics of the wordsmithing they did when explaining their doctrines, comparing the language of QOD to earlier written positions. Unfortunately very few remain who were a part of that experience. Those who were there, such as Herbert Douglass, are clear that *Questions on Doctrine* was not in harmony with historic Adventist positions, and it resulted in a deep and long-lasting controversy within the Adventist Church.

George Knight, an accomplished historian and scholar, has documented well many of the issues that arose from QOD. His book *A Search for Identity* and his detailed annotations in the republished *Questions on Doctrine* provide many important details that indicate the

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Adventists involved in drafting QOD were not fully honest in the ways they articulated Adventism's doctrinal positions.

Finally, in his dissertation, Juhyeok Nam extensively documents the history of QOD from before its publication until 1971. He provides documentation on reactions from outside and inside the Adventist Church. These include private letters, not intended for publication, which have direct and significant bearing on exactly how and why the Adventist participants in the 1950s meetings concealed the truth.

Walter Martin stated the facts himself on the John Ankerberg Show in 1985. It's now time to admit that the Adventists did not tell Martin, Barnhouse, and their evangelical colleagues the truth. It's time to set the record straight.

Will the Adventist leadership repent?

Regarding the direction the Adventist Church was taking in the 1970s and 1980s, Walter Martin said:

I fear that if they continue to progress at this rate, that the classification of a cult can't possibly miss being re-applied to Seventh Day [sic] Adventism." ⁵¹

Following the death of cult leader Herbert W. Armstrong in 1986, his Worldwide Church of God labeled Armstrong's writings heretical, repented of its errors, and joined the greater Christian community.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church had a similar opportunity in the 1950s. When meeting with Martin they had the chance to come clean about their anti-trinitarianism, multi-phase atonement, identification of "Sunday worship" with the mark of the beast, Sabbath requirement, prophetess Ellen White, and many other unbiblical beliefs. They instead chose to rework the wording of their positions to appear acceptable to evangelical Christians.

Seventh-day Adventism has been able to infiltrate the evangelical community because key leaders deceived Walter Martin into believing they were evangelical Christians (albeit with a number of heterodox teachings and practices). Under this facade, however, the church has never renounced or stopped teaching its founding doctrines, and now, with the election of Ted Wilson as General Conference president, there is renewed emphasis on proclaiming and embracing true Adventism.

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Regardless of the church's corporate stance, however, individual Seventh-day Adventists always have the opportunity to admit the truth. Jesus is calling, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your soul" (Mt. 11:28–29).

18

The voice from heaven in Revelation 18 calls all those caught in false religion:

Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities" (Rev. 18:4–5, ESV). †



Stephen Pitcher was raised a non-Christian but met Jesus at the age of 17. Subsequently he studied with Mormon teachers, but Walter Martin's teaching kept him from converting. Later, it was Walter Martin's endorsement of Seventh-day Adventists as evangelical brothers that gave him "permission" to become an Adventist before marrying his Adventist fiancée. Fifteen years later Steve began to learn the truth about the origins of Adventism and the doctrinal issues that remain today. Ten years ago Steve left Adventism and now stands on Jesus alone. He attends Trinity Church in Redlands, California, where he has been active in Former Adventist Fellowship

Endnotes

1. Walter Martin indicating what Evangelicals and some Fundamentalists would say given the current problems and direction of the Adventist church. Transcript from the *John Ankerberg Show*, "Who's Telling the Truth About Seventh Day Adventism?," 1985, p. 26.
2. Knight, George, *Questions on Doctrine*, Annotated Edition, Andrews University Press, 2003, p. xiii.
3. Nam, Juhyeok, "Reactions to the Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences and *Questions on Doctrine*," 1955-1971, doctoral dissertation, 2005, p. ix.
4. Fiedler, Dave, *Hindsight*, Ch. 41, "Adventism and Walter Martin," Academy Enterprises, 1996, pp. 235-263.
5. Cottrell, Raymond F., "Suggestions on This We Believe," as quoted in Nam, p. 255. (*This We Believe* was an earlier working title for *Questions on Doctrine*.)
6. Letter from Froom to Figuhr, August 8, 1955, on General Conference letterhead.
7. Douglass, Herbert Edgar, *A Fork in the Road, Questions on Doctrine: The Historic Adventist Divide of 1957*, Remnant Publications, 2008, p. 26.
8. Nam, p. 240.
9. Douglass, *A Fork in the Road*, p. 27.
10. Nam, p. 240.
11. *The Sanctuary Service*, by M. L. Andreasen is for sale in the Loma Linda, CA, Adventist Book Center as of Aug. 1, 2010.
12. Froom, Leroy Edwin, "The Subtle Inroads of Scholasticism", *The Ministry*, April, 1944, pp. 13, 30.
13. Letter from Froom to Figuhr, April 22, 1955, on General Conference letterhead.

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14. As quoted in Nam, pp. 252-253.
15. As quoted in Nam, p. 253.
16. Letter from Froom to Figuhr, April 22, 1955, on General Conference letterhead.
17. Knight, George R., *Questions on Doctrine*, Annotated Edition, 2003, p. xxx.
18. *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, p. 650, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957.
19. Owen, Roderick S., "The Source of Final Appeal," *The Review*, June 3, 1971, p. 6. (Owen was an educator in the Adventist Church from 1883 until his death in 1927.)
20. White, Ellen G., *Youth's Instructor*, December 20, 1900. Also in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 4, p. 1147.
21. White, Ellen G., *The Review and Herald*, Dec. 15, 1896.
22. Knight, George R., *A Search for Identity, The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000, p. 168.
23. Knight, George R., *Questions on Doctrine*, Annotated Edition, p. xxix, italics in original.
24. Christian leaders such as M. R. DeHaan, Anthony A. Hoekema, Jan Karel van Baalen, Harold Lindsell, and Dr. Louis T. Talbot went on record that the Adventists should not be welcomed into evangelical fellowship. This is well documented in Juhyeok Nam's dissertation and in Herbert Douglass's *A Fork in the Road*.
25. Although fewer in number, noteworthy Christians began to accept Adventists into the Evangelical community. These included E. Schuyler English (general editor of the Scofield Reference Bible and a close associate of H. A. Ironside), Frank S. Mead (editor-in-chief of the Fleming H. Revell Company) and many others.
26. Figuhr, R. R., *Doctrinal Discussions*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, not dated, p. 8.
27. Heppenstall, Edward, "The Hour of God's Judgment Is Come," in *Doctrinal Discussions*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1961, p. 172.
28. Reiner, Edwin, *The Atonement*, Southern Publishing Association, 1971, p. 146.
29. *Ibid*, p. 147.
30. *Ibid*, p. 150.
31. *Ibid*, p. 151.
32. *Ibid*, p. 152.
33. *Ibid*, p. 156.
34. *Ibid*, p. 167.
35. *Ibid*, p. 173.
36. Johnsson, William G., *Embrace the Impossible*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2008, p. 140.
37. *Ibid*, p. 145.
38. *Ibid*.
39. Transcript from the *John Ankerberg Show*, "Who's Telling the Truth About Seventh Day Adventism?," 1985, p. 9.
40. Johnsson, pp. 140-141.
41. *Ibid*, p. 143.
42. Walter Martin, transcript from the *John Ankerberg Show*, "Who's Telling the Truth About Seventh Day Adventism?," 1985, p. 20.
43. Johnsson, p. 147.
44. *Ibid*.

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45. Owen, Roderick S., *The Review*, June 3, 1971, p. 6. Owen worked for the Church from 1883 until his death in 1927. This article was included in *The Review* in 1971 under its editor, Kenneth H. Wood.
46. Wilson, Ted, Sabbath Sermon, "Go Forward", July 3, 2010, delivered at the quinquennial General Conference session in Atlanta, GA, approximately 12:45 into the presentation.
47. *Ibid.* approximately 45:40 into the presentation.
48. Fundamental Belief #18, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 2nd ed., 2005, Pacific Press Publishing Association, p. 247. <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>.
49. *Adventist Review*, July 15, 1982, p. 3; *Ministry*, August 1982, p. 21; "The Inspiration and Authority of the Ellen G. White Writings."
50. *Ibid.*
51. Walter Martin, transcript from the *John Ankerberg Show*, "Who's Telling the Truth About Seventh Day Adventism?," 1985, p. 26.