



*"Watchman,  
what of the night?"*

*The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye wil  
enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12*

# MARTIN VS JOHNSON

## JUDGE (MODERATOR) JOINS PROSECUTION

### JOHNSON UNABLE TO DEFEND FAITH

Old issues and new issues involving the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church blended in a confrontation between Dr. Walter Martin, director of Christian Research Institute, and Dr. William Johnson, editor of the Adventist Review. This exchange formed the basis of a series of telecasts for The John Ankerberg Show, and was seen by millions on the Christian Broadcasting Network, and the PTL Satellite Network during May and June of this year.

Johnson indicated in an editorial that "the various segments were taped at one sitting in December" (1984). He wrote he appeared on the Show "basically, out of concern for the public image of the Seventh-day Adventist Church." He did so "after counseling with the General Conference brethren." (Adventist Review, June 20, 1985, p. 2

In this telecast, the Leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church went on "trial." In fact the whole series was captioned - "Who Is Telling the Truth About Seventh-day Adventism?" At one point in the "trial," Martin declared - "The defense rests." (p. 24) This was a misstatement. He should have said - "The prosecution rests." It was evident from the very start that Johnson

was on the defensive. To add to the pressure on Johnson, John Ankerberg did not maintain a posture of moderator-judge, but joined Martin in the attack on the teachings of the Church. It was simply a two against one court trial with the Church having a very poor "defense lawyer."

A side light on this whole program was provided at the pre-session of the General Conference. In the seminar on "Ellen G. White: Authority and Inspiration," Elder Kenneth Wood, former editor of the Adventist Review, commented that folk viewing the telecast took note of the differences in attitude between the contenders. He indicated Johnson's "christian" attitude was in marked contrast to the viciousness of the "judge" and "prosecuting attorney." Admittedly, Johnson was very mild even to the point of almost breaking down into tears. This, however, is not the attitude for a defender of the faith as revealed in the Bible, certainly not of an Elijah, or a John the Baptist. Even Jesus, while silent when He was on trial, revealed a very polemic and decisive attitude when truth was being misjudged by the religionists of His day. (Mark 3:1-5) A so-called "christian" attitude could not hide the fact that Johnson was unable to defend the position as taken by the leadership of the Adventist Church.

Johnson was in a no-win situation from the very start. He could not defend the neo-Adventist position without alienating a large share of the readers of the Church paper who still feel the Church is holding

to fundamental historic Adventism. They would get a too rude awakening. He could not defend the historic faith without giving Martin a basis for coming out and saying - "Adventism is still a cult." So Johnsson took the only road left open to him, and that was to stand behind the 27 Statements of Belief formulated at the Dallas, Texas, General Conference Session in 1980. By actual count, Johnsson referred to these Statements as his defense 18 times during the "trial." In his 13th reference to these Statements, he said - "No other statements have the authority of the fundamental beliefs. These are our statements of faith. This is what we expect people to affirm to before we accept them into the church." (p. 20) Before the end of the confrontation, Johnsson made the clear assertion that if anyone was "out of harmony with one of the statements of the faith of the church, ... they should not be teaching and being paid by the church members. Until the church changes its statements of faith, a man who cannot support those statements really has no job." (p. 30) At another point, he categorically declared - "The bottom line is the 27 fundamentals of belief." (p. 15)

During the show, Johnsson commented that the Seventh-day Adventist Church had not been fairly represented in the previous telecast involving Ford and Rea, and this was the primary reason he accepted the invitation to appear. This was stated near the end of the confrontation. He also, at the same time, expressed the idea that Martin was "reminding us [the SDA Church] of a real danger" which he appreciated as well as "the work [Martin] did for us back in the 1950's." To this Martin replied:

I'm still working out there trying to help the body of Christ realize that we've got to work together. We can't work together if there's going to be people in Washington talking out of both sides of their mouths to us, and that's what they are doing to us. I didn't believe it at first, until I started compiling the information myself. I have letters from conference presidents. I have letters from people all over the world, letters from the White Estate. . . All of which I consider to be filled with duplicity, evasion, deliberate and willful attempts not to tell the public exactly what Mrs White's role is, ..." (p. 29)

This double mouthing is truly the bottom

line! This is what has been going on since the beginning of the SDA-Evangelical Conferences in 1955-1956. Many are still hoodwinked by the hierarchy as to the true nature of what happened at these conferences. Millions of others do not know the facts of what happened - yes, millions, who have since those years come into the Church accepting a watered-down message. The duplicity reached its zenith in the 1980 Statement of Beliefs, and remained unchanged during the 1985 Session. Still there are those naive folk who think they can turn the church organization around in repentance.

The issues raised during the telecast primarily involved just two things - 1) The status of Questions on Doctrine as a doctrinal norm by which a non-Seventh-day Adventist can evaluate the teachings of the Church; and 2) The place and authority of Ellen G. White in determining the teachings of the Church in relationship to the Bible.

#### The Status of Questions on Doctrine

Johnsson was very clear on the point of the place of Questions on Doctrine in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He stated:

In terms of the denomination's stand on the book, we have not repudiated Questions on Doctrine. The book went into eight printings, 150,000 copies. Now that is a lot of copies. It is still used in college classes. Some people feel it ought to be reprinted. We can get into that. There's another theological volume of Seventh-day Adventist biblical theology in process, and we can discuss that. I think that's a major reason why we are not reprinting Questions on Doctrine. But categorically I can tell you that the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has not repudiated Questions on Doctrine. (p. 2)

This statement on the Church's position on the book revealed the whole objective of why a second series on the Seventh-day Adventist Church was arranged by John Ankerberg. As soon as Johnsson made the above quotes, Ankerberg responded - "Okay. Let's plunge in here, Walter [Martin]. Why don't you start us off with some of the questions that you have already submitted to the denomination, because you are saying that you've heard some things and you are re-assessing what you were told the first time around, as well as

some of the contemporary events that are happening right now. Where would you like to start tonight?" To this Martin replied - "I think that you have to begin with the background we have already [a resume of the events leading up to the publication of Questions on Doctrine had been reviewed by Martin], and also with the fact that the Seventh-day Adventist denomination today, to whom I addressed my questions, responded quite differently than the denomination in 1956." To Ankerberg's question - "How so?" - Martin continued:

In 1956, Reuben Figuhr, who considered Questions on Doctrine and the dialogue, he said, to be the most important single contribution of his entire tenure as President, began in his later life to deplore the fact that there was a strong movement within Seventh-day Adventism to undercut what they had worked so hard to establish in Questions on Doctrine. So I, after a number of ex-Adventist ministers came to me, after I received literally hundreds and hundreds of letters, documents, boxes full of documents from all over the world. . . They were all telling the same story, these ministers and these people all over the world. They were saying, "We believe Questions on Doctrine. We cited Questions on Doctrine. We presented our views in the light of Questions on Doctrine and we were disfellowshipped; we were removed from the church. I'm now painting houses; I was a former teacher. I was doing this and now I am doing such and such. What went wrong?" So, I thought it would be a good idea to ask the question - What went wrong? So, I addressed three questions to Neal Wilson. (p. 2)

Before noting the three questions, and who replied for Wilson, this evaluation of Martin must be assessed. It is doubtful that a single person has been disfellowshipped, or a single minister evicted from the ministry for believing in or teaching from Questions on Doctrine. Such was not the case during Figuhr's administration toward those who opposed Questions on Doctrine. This writer has personally conversed with a teacher in the department of religion at Southern College, who told me that for fourteen years he has taught his classes from that book. He is still teaching there. Further, he informed me that when Dr. Gordon Hyde returned to the College to quiet the troubled waters, he asked him if he was rightly presenting the church's views by teaching from that book. Hyde assured him that he was doing the right thing. What then is the problem

that Martin can't get together?

It is true that many ministers have either voluntarily submitted their credentials, or have been fired for teaching the things as taught by Dr. Desmond Ford. But what is the relationship between Ford's teachings and the book, Questions on Doctrine? To state it bluntly - Fordism is simply the chickens come home to roost as a result of the compromises with Martin and Barnhouse in 1955-1956. Observe carefully this verification. The book, Questions on Doctrine teaches:

How glorious is the thought that the King, who occupies the throne, is also our representative at the court of heaven! This becomes all the more meaningful when we realize that Jesus our surety entered the "holy places," and appeared in the presence of God for us. But it was not with the hope of obtaining something for us at that time, or at some future time. No! He had already obtained it for us on the cross. And now as our High Priest He ministers the virtues of His atoning sacrifice to us. (p. 381)

All the emphasis in this quotation is the emphasis placed there by those who authored the book. If Christ as High Priest obtains nothing for us as a result of His ministry in the sanctuary above - if it was all obtained for us on the cross - then what is the purpose of a "final atonement" and the ministry of Christ since 1844? This is what Ford has deduced from Questions on Doctrine and he had nerve enough to teach his deductions. Further, following the above quotation to its ultimate conclusion - if it be so, then the Seventh-day Adventist Church has no reason for its existence, and in reality is based upon a false perception of Scripture used, as Barnhouse suggested, as "a face-saving device."

[If one wishes to honestly evaluate the truth about this whole disaster, he may obtain from the Adventist Laymen's Foundation a facsimile reproduction of the documents telling what took place at the SDA-Evangelical Conferences in 1955-1956. These were written by Barnhouse and Martin, and the Adventist Chairman of the Conferences. Special price - \$2.50 postpaid.]

Now to the three questions asked by Walter Martin to find out where the Church stands today in relationship to the conferences in 1955-1956. The three questions are,

as revealed on the telecast:

1. Do you still hold to Questions on Doctrine?
2. Do you regard the interpretations of Ellen G. White of the Bible to be infallible?
3. Why was the book, Questions on Doctrine permitted to go out of print?

These questions were sent to Neal C. Wilson who passed the buck to another person who in turn passed the buck to still another. They were finally answered by the now president of Andrews University, Dr. W. R. Leshar. According to Johnsson, referring to Leshar - "He said straight out, 'We have not repudiated Questions on Doctrine.'" (p. 29)

#### The Second Question

The second question asked by Martin, the answer given by Leshar, plus other answers as researched by Martin and Ankerberg as given by other leading Adventist Church leaders formed the basis of most of the "trial" as aired on the Show. Martin claimed that the second question "was conspicuously left unanswered." (p.3) In a further discussion as to whether the question was answered or not, it seems that Martin was given a "statement about the relationship of Ellen White's authority to the Scriptures," while Martin wanted a straight, "Yes," or "NO" answer. Johnsson finally read a part of the statement:

We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are in addition to the canon of sacred Scripture. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White function as the foundation and final authority of Christian faith as does Scripture. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen G. White may be used as a basis of doctrine. We do not believe that the study of the writings of Ellen White may be used to replace the study of Scripture. We do not believe that Scripture can be understood only through the writings of Ellen White. (p. 29)

This is only the beginning of the dilemma. Johnsson kept standing - 18 times - on the 27 Statements of Belief. Ankerberg, in turn, quoted to him from them. In full context, he said:

We're talking about one specific doctrine, and, Dr. Johnsson, I'd like to come to you on this. You were

quoting from the fundamental beliefs last week and I would like to go back to the fundamental beliefs concerning the gift of prophecy and the authority of Ellen G. White. One of the things that is a puzzle, I think, to me, as well as to a lot of folks, is underneath the paragraph concerning the gift of prophecy that you say, "As the Lord's messenger, Ellen White's writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth." What does it mean for her writings to be "a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provides for the church comfort, guidance, instruction and correction"? (p. 7)

The phrase - "a continuing and authoritative source of truth" - is as much neo-Adventism on the right, as the abridgment of the sanctuary doctrine is neo-Adventism on the left. Neither position can be sustained from a review of the Statements of Belief held by the Church in the past. But here we have the "both-sides-of-the-mouth" teaching which has so disturbed Martin. There is no question but that the Writings of Ellen G. White teach that Christ in His High Priestly ministry did obtain, and will obtain something for us in the "final atonement." The book - Questions on Doctrine says NO, He obtained it all on the cross. The Church in its 1980 Statement of Beliefs seeks to confirm the doctrine as contained in the book, and at the same time sustain the authority of Ellen G. White.

Johnsson affirmed that the Church has not repudiated the book, Questions on Doctrine, and he declared that the bottom line is the 27 Statements voted at Dallas, one of which declares the Writings of Ellen G. White to be "a continuing and authoritative source of truth - yet they teach contrary to the book. How did Johnsson try to get off of the horns of that dilemma?

When asked about his understanding of the meaning of the language employed in the Statement of Beliefs, he skirted the real meaning and said - "I think it means we should take them seriously." (p. 7, emphasis mine) However, Martin produced quotes from Dr. Robert Olson of the White Estate (p. 6), Arthur White (p. 6), D. A. Delafield, formerly of the Estate (p.15), Neal C. Wilson (p. 7), and 1976 Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly which coincided with the language used in the Statement of Beliefs. Delafield openly affirmed in regard to Ellen G. White - "She was

canonical insofar as doctrinal interpretational authority is concerned." (p. 15) Arthur White went even further - relegating the Sacred Scriptures to a questionable and secondary level. He is quoted as saying; - "Seventh-day Adventists are uniquely fortunate. We are not left to find our way, drawing conclusions from the writing of 2,000 years, and more, ago that have come down to us through varied transcriptions and translations. With us it is almost a contemporary matter. We have a prophet in our midst." (p. 6) It is such as this that led Martin to charge that Ellen G. White has become to Seventh-day Adventists "a Pope above the Scriptures."

Following closely on the heels of The John Ankerberg Show was the 1985 Session of the General Conference in New Orleans. Nothing was done to remedy the conflict and double-talk within the Statement of Beliefs. Rather there was a tightening of the organizational machinery which makes it resemble Romanism, though supposedly more democratic. Does all of this give a different, but telling meaning to the statement found in Great Controversy?? It reads:

It was apostasy that led the early church to seek the aid of the civil government, and this prepared the way for the development of the papacy - the beast. ... So apostasy in the church will prepare the way for the image to the beast. ...

All that "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" will be left to accept "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." When this state of ungodliness shall be reached, the same results will follow as in the first centuries. (pp. 443-444)

Has the Seventh-day Adventist Church formed its own image to the beast in structure of organization and in the teaching authority assigned to Ellen G. White?

(All page references cited in the above comments on The Ankerberg Show refer to the transcription supplied by the John Ankerberg Evangelistic Association, P. O. Box 8977, Chattanooga, TN 37411. The price - \$5.00)

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SPECIAL - The Document - History of Our Statements of Belief with tape - \$3.00 postpaid. Order from the Adventist Laymen's Foundation.

## "Back to Scripture!"

During the "trial," Johnsson when confronted with specific quotations from the Writings of Ellen G. White, which either he could not answer, or preferred not to answer, responded - "I think we really need to go back and look at Scripture itself." (p. 8) To this Martin responded: "I couldn't agree more... back to Scripture!" Martin then reviewed one of the exchanges at a conference session with SDA theologians sometime during 1955-1956. He said after quoting Ellen G. White's endorsement of the article by Crosier in the Day Star Extra, February 7, 1846 -

"The Lord showed me in vision..." That, according to any good Seventh-day Adventist, means the Spirit of Prophecy is at work. This is coming from the Lord. "Brother Crosier had the right view on the sanctuary." Did he indeed? Brother Crosier's view was repudiated by Questions on Doctrine and Mrs White's view on the subject was Crosier's view. This is very significant because when we met, you [Johnsson] were beginning college, I was meeting with Theodore Heppenstall and Dr. Murdoch and the top theologians of the denomination. [These men are not listed in the Unruh Report as being among the SDA Conferees] We were discussing this very issue. Dr. George Cannon, now professor of New Testament Greek at Bethel Theological Seminary in St. Paul, took his Greek New Testament out. It's as fresh in my mind as if it happened yesterday. He said, "Brethren, I should like to set forth a question. If you'll open your testaments." Heppenstall and Murdoch open their testaments to Hebrews 9, and Cannon read, and I followed with them, that "Jesus Christ entered once into the holiest of all with His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us." And I asked the question and Cannon did too: Did this take place as Crosier said, as Mrs White said, as the early Adventists taught? Did it take place in 1844 or did it take place at the ascension of Jesus Christ? The Greek text says, "at the ascension of Jesus Christ, once into the holiest of all, the most holy place..."

I was in the room when they did it. When they got finished and the discussion pursued from there, the general conclusion was that the text of Hebrews left no doubt whatsoever that at the ascension Jesus Christ entered into the holiest of all with His blood, having obtained that redemption for us. 1844 was not included in Hebrews chapter 9. It was written long before 1844. Crosier said, "No." Mrs White said, "No." James White said, "No." The early Adventists

said, "No." They were wrong. The Greek text is right. It's a question of whether you're going to accept the text of the Scripture or the interpretation of Mrs. White over that text, which brings me back to the basic question I was discussing before. Is Mrs. White the interpreter of Scripture to the denomination? Answer: On the Investigative Judgment of the sanctuary she most certainly is. (p. 9, emphasis his)

When Johnsson responded, he missed the whole point and tried to center his answer around the meaning of ta hagia (Holy Place), instead of dealing with the issue concerning the text. Did Christ enter the Most Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary upon His ascension? Was the atonement completed on the cross, and then Christ entered upon His priestly ministry? Does Hebrews 9:11-12 support these assumptions? Admittedly, the meaning of ta hagia is involved, but what Martin and the Evangelicals are trying to say is that these verses teach that after making a full and complete atonement for us on the Cross - "having obtained eternal redemption for us" - Jesus entered not into a first apartment ministry, but into the Most Holy Place. If ta hagia, means "sanctuary" as Johnsson sought to affirm, and the Heavenly Sanctuary has but one apartment, or is Heaven itself, what really is Johnsson saying differently than Martin?

The Greek text does not say what Martin tried to make it say. The Greek text of Hebrews 9:11-12, literally translated reads:

But Christ having come forth, a high priest of surely coming (alternate reading - having come) good things through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not handmade, (that is, not of this creation) and not through blood of goats and young bullocks, but through (His) own blood, He entered once for all into the holy place, age-long redemption having obtained.

In the KJV, these verses read:

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

There are those who seek to make a great case for the sole use of the KJV, but in the translation of these verses, the KJV

is teaching what Dr. Desmond Ford, the Evangelicals, and Questions on Doctrine teach - a finished work of atonement prior to Jesus entering the High Priestly ministry. However, the RSV on this point gives a more correct translation of the Greek text. It reads:

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

Note carefully the contrast of thought:

KJV - Christ entered the holy place, "having obtained eternal redemption for us."

RSV - Christ entered the Holy Place, "thus securing an eternal redemption."

In the Greek text, Hebrews 9:11-12 constitute one sentence with a single main verb, and two participles introducing subordinate clauses. The main verb is (KJV) "entered in" (eisēlthon). The two participles are (KJV) "being come" (paragenomenos) and (KJV) "having obtained" (heuramenos). The verb and the participles are in the aorist or past tense. Ordinarily this would mean that the actions indicated by the participial clauses preceded the action of the main verb. However, in Greek grammar there is what is called "identical action," where the events of the clauses are at the same time as the main verb. A. T. Robertson, in his Word Pictures of the New Testament, affirms that the participle of "obtain" indicates "simultaneous action" with the verb, entered in. (Vol. 5, p. 399)

There is another participle in an attributive position within the first clause describing "good things." Is it talking relative to things to come (KJV) as a result of Christ's assumption of His High Priestly ministry, or is it speaking about things that have come (RSV)? The problem is that different ancient texts use different words to describe these "good things." The Sinaiticus and Alexandrian texts read - mellontōn agathōn - or "surely coming good things;" while the Vaticanus and Claromontanus texts read - genomenōn agathōn - "good things that have come." Robertson comments - "It is a nice question which is the true text. Both aspects are true, for Christ

To page 7, col. 2 →

### WHY THE DISASTER?

The confrontation between Martin and Johnson on The John Ankerberg Show was nothing short of a disaster for Johnson, and thus the leadership of the Church. Questions were asked; quotations were given from church leaders and publications of the Church, yet Johnson either did not reply, or else ran for cover behind the 27 Statements of Belief voted at Dallas, Texas, in 1980. A key Scripture text was noted by Martin in Hebrews, but Johnson's reply was that he had written his doctoral dissertation involving these chapters in Hebrews - yet he never did answer the challenge raised.

Here is a man who holds a doctorate in New Testament Studies from Vanderbilt University, who taught at Andrews University, serving there as Associate Dean of the Seminary, and who is now Editor in Chief of the Official Organ of the Church, the Adventist Review - yet he could not stand before the adversaries of the Truth! Why?

The God we serve today is the same God who led Israel across the Jordan and broke down the walls of Jericho before them, bringing fear upon the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. Yet at Ai, Israel failed miserably. However, there was one difference between then and now. Joshua recognized the failure and prayed before the Ark of the Lord. We have heard nothing of such a prayer on the part of Wilson because of this disaster. Yet the reason is the same. God told Joshua:

THERE IS AN ACCURSED THING IN THE MIDST OF THEE, O ISRAEL: THOU CANST NOT STAND BEFORE THINE ENEMIES. (Joshua 7:13)

This accursed thing - Questions on Doctrine - representing as it does a betrayal of the truth committed in trust to the Church as a vehicle of God's final movement, al-

though out of print, is still honored by the church's leadership above the truth of God. Therefore, because of this, Johnson was unable to stand before Martin, one of the very individuals with whom past leaders of the Church had an illicit relationship.

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From page 6 - "Back to Scripture!"

is High Priest of good things that have already come as well as of the glorious future hope." (Ibid, p. 398)

However, the phrase - "good things to come" - as found in the Sinaiticus and Alexandrian texts is also used in Hebrews 10:1 when speaking of the foreshadowing of the ceremonial law. Thus the reality of that law, Christ as High Priest, with His own blood obtains a continuous flow of good things. It is a lively hope, a hope pregnant with life. (I Peter 1:3) This includes the final atonement. The hope in Christ does not end at the Cross, it only begins; likewise His ministry.

These verses - Hebrews 9:11-12 - amplified read:

Christ becoming an high priest bestows continuously good things through His ministry in the Heavenly Tabernacle, however, not with the benign efficacy of the blood of goats and young bullocks; but by His own blood, pregnant with life, He entered into the Holy Place, securing for us eternal redemption.

The climax of the thought introduced in Hebrews 9:11-12 is reached in verse 28, when having completed His heavenly ministry, Christ comes the second time without sin unto salvation.

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