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QOD 2003 Annotated Edition Series

The Dark Day of November 18, 2003

***Questions On Doctrine*—Unsuccessful, Heretical, Un-Adventist Book Praised, Republished, and Heralded, to the Shame of the People of God**

Misrepresentation is a serious thing. The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan is all about misrepresentation. God's character has been misrepresented. The universe pays the price, holding its nose while sin's aroma simmers. God is clearing His name, working to vindicate His character. But His program of doing so has been delayed by a people, intent, so it seems, with dilly-dallying around here on earth. His plan to produce at last a group who would show that following Jesus makes a difference has been stymied for the past half-century by Seventh-day Adventists more infatuated with being like the fallen churches around them than being the church “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Ephesians 5:27).

There was a dark day more than two centuries ago as the New England skies turned pale in answer to Bible prophecy. But an announcement was made today darkening Adventism's skies in 2003. Something awful was announced on the main website of the world church. Something tragic had occurred. Now, a small band of persons within the church have managed to do on a small scale, unofficially, on a tiny, university press, what some Adventist revisionists had been hoping they could do on a more formal, denominationally-sustained basis on one of the major denominational presses. Something very damaging has been done to the church. They have republished the tragic volume *Questions On Doctrine* (QOD): a book, the production and promotion of which has been the source of deep division and sorrow in the church since first publication. What heartless, mindless set of new-modelers, at this very time when the church is rent with several challenging problems, would choose to republish this—the most controversial book in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—*now*? There is an answer to this question, which we will give in the days, weeks, and months to come.

Questions On Doctrine seriously misrepresents several of the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The beliefs of this church are not necessarily rightly represented by a few dozen “scholars” or proponents of the new theology, no matter where they dwell or whether they have obtained a present opportunity to publish the unfortunate volume they have unfortunately embraced as their own. What does the broad population of the church hold to? That is, in the end, what Seventh-day Adventism is.

An example of the reality of this principle is the current split in the 77M member Anglican worldwide communion. A handful of wild-eyed liberals in the United States decided they would elect and consecrate a practicing-homosexual man as “bishop.” But the vast bulk of the worldwide Anglican church is rejecting their heresy and saying so. Why? Because the clutch of entrenched Anglican new-modelers in New Hampshire are so greatly out of step with their church that they have walked into their own minefield. Bits and pieces of their church are going up in resounding explosions, legal and otherwise, from their catastrophic misstep. Too late, the ECUSA (Episcopal Church USA) is learning that a room full of hand-wringing experts proclaiming, “We are *too* Anglicans!” does not Anglicans make. No doubt, their in-process, head-spinning denominational meltdown has top ECUSA scholars already madly scribbling out books of a new order, sustaining the idea of practicing-gay bishops. But that won't change what worldwide Anglicanism is. And it definitely isn't—with a few deluded exceptions—a practicing-gay-bishop-consecrating church. This lesson should not be lost upon us. Don't necessarily accept the published views of a few dozen people in positions of substance, locked away in the basement of some ivory-towered enclave somewhere and call it Seventh-day Adventism.

But let's see what the church's news service did with QOD's arrival from the press. Referring to the sad meetings that were held with Evangelicals in 1955-1956, which dialogue formed the foundation for the volume, it was pointed out that those meetings “led to a growing acceptance of Adventists as fellow Christians by many evangelicals.”¹ The book's “answers helped put Adventism squarely within the mainstream of evangelical thought.”² Now let me get this straight. Someone in the Adventist news service thinks that was a *good* thing?

The press-release continues: “*Questions On Doctrine*, said world church president R.R. Figuhr in 1958, ‘endeavors to set forth as clearly as possible a reason for the hope that is ours so that non-Adventist inquirers may understand.’” According to the Adventist news service, “The book apparently accomplished that goal, and then some: Barnhouse and Martin praised Adventism in the pages of ‘Eternity,’ an evangelical magazine which ceased publication in 1988. In 1960, Martin wrote and published *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism*, with evangelical publishers Zondervan; the title enjoyed wide circulation. Martin's acceptance of those Adventists who embrace evangelical thought extended to *Kingdom of the Cults* and remains the policy of the Christian Research Institute to this day.”³

“Praise” is a giddy way of misrepresenting the real outcome: it would be much more accurate to say that—after our own leaders had misrepresented what Adventism truly is—the Evangelicals went from representing us as cultic in nature, to representing us as possibly, just barely Christian, yet thoroughly deluded. And for *this* we sold-out?

The shame of our people should perhaps be greatest when we consider the republication of this destructive volume in the light of this statement from the news release: “Three years before his death in 1989, Walter Martin, in an interview, cautioned Adventist leaders that QOD should return to the shelves: ‘If the Seventh-day Adventist [Church] will not back up its answers with actions and put *Questions on Doctrine* back in print ... then they're in real trouble that I can't help them out of; and nobody else can either,’ he told *Adventist Currents*, a now-defunct magazine published by church members in North America.”⁴ Ooh, we are afraid that you will label us a cult again, please don't! We'll do anything you ask!

Among the most notorious features of the original *Questions On Doctrine* was its lying portrayal of the nature of Christ. Yes, I said *lying* portrayal. But the new volume supposedly will remedy this; that is what we are told. So. What picture of Christ's humanity does the new edition paint? Is it one any sounder than in the original QOD?

The new edition includes pages of additional material clarifying the issue of Christ's human nature, as well as adding context and background to numerous other matters raised in the book. While conceding that previous generations of church leaders sometimes held varying opinions, the revised book makes clear Adventist thought today—and in a line traceable to Ellen White and other pioneers—accurately reflecting general Christian understanding that while Jesus took on the ‘innocent infirmities’ of hunger, pain, weakness, sorrow and death, He did not have the propensity toward sin that humans after the fall possess.⁵

Thus we understand that, like the original book, the ne “Annotated Edition” QOD will press home the idea that Jesus lived in a humanity that was very different from our own and that He did not overcome in a flesh like ours. The very destructive error of the 1957 QOD is again being presented to Adventism. Reclothed, wearing a shiny new Elvis suit, hung with shiny scholarly sequins, the false view is regurgitated again. New-modeling scholars present anew to the church their threadbare teachings. New package, same error, only more subtle because of the apparent candor of the admissions in the new edition concerning untrue representations that had been presented in the original QOD. Jesus, these still say in the reprinted volume, “did not have the propensity toward sin that humans after the fall possess.”

Did QOD successfully tell its readers what Adventism really was ? No. Nor has the church ever, in any official way endorsed its errors concerning the nature of Christ, the final atonement, or its faulty views on salvation, in any General Conference session. This miserable book is still such. It still does not portray Adventism. It was not truthful in the way it represented the Adventist position on the nature of Christ, nor is the new version accurate.

We are not beholden to the churches of Babylon. We have no business pleasing them, or urging them to please accept us as another legitimate church worthy to stand alongside of them. The Bible has warned us since 1844: “Babylon is fallen, is fallen.” (Revelation 14:8). Last time I looked, she was still fallen, only considerably lower. Must we join her in her descent?

The world is a different place today than during the early years of the QOD controversy. The teachers of these errors will be confronted. In detailed fashion, future articles and columns here will address all things-QOD.

Strap yourselves in. The truth will roar...

Endnotes

1. “Questions on Doctrine” Book Annotated, Republished, November 18, 2003 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States [Mark A. Kellner/ANN],

<http://www.adventist.org/news/data/2003/10/1069166562/index.html.en>, accessed November 23, 2003, 3:15pm PST.

2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*



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