

APPENDIX FOUR

CUC Course Outline On The Sanctuary And 1844

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Seminar in Contemporary Theology Course #491

(Section Three: Contemporary Adventist Theology)

Note: Having completed the previous section of contemporary problems in Adventist theology on righteousness by faith, we now turn our attention to a doctrine in the theological arena which is uniquely Seventh-day Adventist, the belief that in 1844 Christ began a phase of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary not previously included in His intercessory work.

- I. The historical basis of the 1844 doctrine has its roots in the Millerite movement of the mid-nineteenth century.
 - A. A quick glance at our already familiar history, places the 1844 doctrine in an awakening climate similar to the times of Jonathan Edwards with the added eschatological dimension that Christ was coming soon.
 1. The centre of this eschatological awakening was William Miller, a layman who had accepted Christ as his personal Saviour from sin after years of scoffing at Scripture and Christianity.
 2. Without much formal education and untrained in the intricacies of theology, Miller devoted himself to the study of Scripture and when inadvertently asked to preach, shared his convictions of Christ's imminent return with his congregations which soon thrust him into religious prominence.
 - a. Miller's convictions of the imminent return of Christ were based on scriptures taken primarily from the books of Daniel and Revelation, particularly the eighth chapter of Daniel.
 - b. With Dan. 8:14 as his basis, Miller interpreted the termination point of the 2300 day-year prophecy to be "about the year 1843" and to be synonymous with the end of the world which would occur between March 1, 1843, and March 21, 1844.
 - c. When the year 1843 and the spring of 1844 passed and Christ did not return as expected, the Millerites restudied the 2300 day-year prophecy and reset its termination date to Oct. 22, 1844, which Miller eventually endorsed.
 - d. When once again Christ did not come as expected, this "great disappointment" led Miller to admit to errors in his prophetic calculations, but with the confidence that Christ would come "today, today, today."
 - B. After having agreed twice to possible dates when Christ would come and after having been disappointed both times, Miller affirmed until his death in 1849 that the 1844 awakening movement was not a fulfilment of the Dan. 8:14 prophecy as some were then teaching, but that the actual fulfilment of termination of the 2300 day-year prophecy would be the literal and soon coming of Christ.**
- II. The Scriptural basis of the modified 2300 day-year prophecy known as the sanctuary doctrine has its roots in the Millerite interpretation of Dan. 8:14 terminating on Oct. 22,

1844, and in the significance given this date by First-day Adventists after the Great Disappointment.

- A. The perimeter of contemporary Adventist theology for this course excludes examination of the Scriptural verification of 1844 as the actual termination date of the 2300 day-year prophecy and of the textual reliability of the numeral translation of Dan. 8:14 for these problem areas are not currently in question within Adventism. (For familiarity with these problems see *SDABC*, 10 under related articles.)
- B. Contemporary debate in the Adventist Church centres on such questions as whether or not the meaning attached to Oct. 22, 1844, immediately after the “disappointment” by First-day Adventists is textually sound and verifiable from Scripture.**
1. The “cleansing of the sanctuary” meaning attached to the 2300 day-year prophecy claiming that the Advent awakening movement with its threefold message is the fulfilment of Dan. 8:14 had its beginning in New England.
 - a. Hiram Edson, who like William Miller was a farmer with little formal education and no training in Biblical theology, while walking across his cornfield on the morning of Oct. 23, 1844, following a night of study and prayer with other disappointed Adventists, was “convicted” that the day before Christ had entered the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary.
 - b. Owen R.L Crosier, wrote out the Scriptural basis for Hiram Edson’s conviction from the results of a small study group and published them first in 1845 and more extensively in the *Day-Star Extra*, Feb. 7, 1846.
 - c. Ellen White confirmed Crosier’s Scriptural basis of the “sanctuary” doctrine in a letter to Eli Curtis, April 21, 1847 and subsequently published in *A Word to the Little Flock*, which is still available.
 2. The sanctuary doctrine as developed from the study of Scripture by the First-day Adventists focused on numerous texts in both the Old and the New Testament by which they substantiated their position.
 - a. The nearly full reprint of Crosier’s article in the *Day-Star Extra* can be found in *The Advent Review*, numbers 3 and 4, published by James White in 1850.
 - b. The confirmation of Crosier’s position by Ellen White in her letter to Curtis is found on pp. 12 of *A Word to the Little Flock*, available in the library.
 - c. A fuller treatment of the Adventist position on the meaning of the sanctuary doctrine can be found in *The Great Controversy*, 409-432, the *SDABC*, 10, and such books as *Christian Beliefs*, by Jemison.
 3. The key texts that serve as the basis of the sanctuary doctrine are: Dan. 8:14; 9:24-27; Num. 14:34 with Eze. 4:6; and Lev. 16:1-34 coupled with Heb. 8:1 - 9:28.
 - a. **The question some contemporary Adventist theologians are raising is whether or not the interpretation given these key texts by First-day Adventists is Biblically sound.**

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- (1) Currently there are two views being discussed on Dan. 8:14, the “traditionalist” view and the “neo-Adventist” view.
- (a) Traditionally Seventh-day Adventists have interpreted Dan. 8:14 to mean that the termination of the 2300 day-year prophecy in 1844, substantiated by the sixty-nine and seventy weeks of Dan. 9:24-27, would signal the beginning of the investigative judgment and the “cleansing” of the sanctuary as Christ enters the Most Holy Place in the heavenly tabernacle.
- (b) The challenge to traditional Adventist teaching on the meaning of Dan. 8:14 and 9:24-27 is that the context of these verses beginning with chapter seven is not concerned with the “cleansing” of the sanctuary to deal with the sin-problem of the saints, but addresses itself to the problem of “vindicating” God’s truth symbolized by the sanctuary over-against the onslaught of evil symbolized by the little horn.**
- (2) There is also a question on the interpretation of Num. 14:34 together with Eze. 4:6 as they are applied by the “traditional” view to Dan. 8:14 and 9:24-27.
- (a) Traditionally Adventists have used Num. 14:34 and Eze. 4:6 as the key to unlock the mystery of the 2300 day-year prophecy, turning prophetic days into literal years.
- (b) Neo-Adventist theology challenges the day-year hermeneutic principle as the key to unlock the meaning of the 2300 day prophecy and points out that neither Num. 14:34 nor Eze. 4:6 have an eschatological context; in Num. 14 Israel is being punished for its disobedience corresponding in years to the days the spies searched the land and in Eze. 4 Jerusalem is being punished with destruction for its special guilt during the previous forty years.
- (3) Furthermore there are dissimilar understandings of the meaning of the “holy place” and the “holiest” as found in Lev. 16:2, 3 and in Heb. 9:3, 4.
- (a) Adventists currently teach that at the termination of the 2300 day-year prophecy Christ entered the Most Holy Place or the holiest of all in the heavenly sanctuary to begin the judgment phase of His ministry in addition to His daily intercessory work typified by the holy place in the earthly sanctuary.
- (b) The challenge to this interpretation by some Adventist scholars centres on the inconsistent use in Scripture of the words “holy place” and “most holy place” which are used interchangeably for either compartment (cf. Lev. 16:2, 3 with Ex. 26:33) and the non-permanency of God’s presence in the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary (cf. Acts 7:55 and Heb. 9:24).
4. **If key texts such as Dan. 8:14 which are used to prove the Adventist position are not contextually sound, what is the basis of the sanctuary doctrine as taught and proclaimed by the Adventist Church!** Is it the non-Biblical face-saving device to cover William Miller’s miscalculations that non-Adventist scholars say it is?

- a. If the authority of a few non-Adventist theologians are invoked to help confirm our sanctuary position, are these sources of authority adequate to stand in opposition to the traditional Christian interpretation of Christ's heavenly ministry begun in 31 AD which excludes the relevancy of 1844 to the end of time?
 - b. If the authority of a non-canonical inspired writer like Ellen White is invoked to help substantiate the Adventist sanctuary position, doesn't this extra-Biblical authority place our revelational theology in question and/or place our interpretation of Ellen White in question?
- III. The authority to interpret Dan. 8:14 and other key texts to substantiate our modification of the Millerite understanding of the 1844 event known as the sanctuary doctrine is not as much a contextual problem as a problem of the use of extra-Biblical sources employed to this end.
- A. The scope of this course is not previous to discuss the problem of Ellen White's spiritual gift as an inspired writer speaking for God. It is assumed that her spiritual gift and authority is accepted.
 - B. The central question of the current theological discussion between Adventist theologians and laymen is whether Ellen White as an inspired writer speaking for God has the authority to take texts such as Dan. 8:14 out of context to help confirm the Adventist position, which raises the whole question of "the Bible and the Bible only" as our guide.**
 1. In order to discuss whether or not inspired writers have the authority to take texts out of context, the New Testament affords the only primary source available to investigate the practice of inspired persons.
 - a. Matt. 1:23 affords one such example of an out-of-context application when he quotes Isa. 7:14 as proof that Christ because of His virgin birth fulfilled the first of many Messianic prophecies. The context rather than being a prophecy of Christ's birth is a sign of Ahaz that Pekah and Rezin to the north would not subdue Jerusalem.
 - b. Berkhof in his *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, 54, says, "New Testament authors, in quoting from the Old Testament, occasionally alter the passages quoted somewhat, or apply them in a sense that is not apparent in the Old Testament. This can hardly be defended, except on the presumption that the Holy Spirit is, in the last analysis the author of the whole Bible, and naturally had the right to quote and apply His own words as He saw fit."
 2. To discuss the question of authority in the light of the oft used phrase , "the Bible and the Bible only," would require more class periods than this section of our course allows. However, there are two viewpoints on this that should be mentioned as contributing to contemporary Adventist theology and is related to our sanctuary doctrine and Ellen White's role as the DNA molecule is to development and growth.
 - a. One position on the meaning of the phrase "the Bible and the Bible only" excludes all extra-Biblical sources as a means of substantiating Bible truth, including Ellen White.

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- b. The other position states that the phrase “the Bible and the Bible only” stands in opposition to those doctrines in Christendom that are based on tradition, but that extra-Biblical sources of authority such as inspired writings due to spiritual gifts are included in the phrase and are needful to properly understand Scripture and to disentangle it from tradition.
 - c. Some related questions to the two above positions on the meaning of the phrase “the Bible and the Bible only” are: If the writings of Ellen White as a product of the spiritual gift of prophecy are not given equal weight with Scripture as a Scripturally derived authority, does this not lead to the acceptance of levels of inspiration? If Ellen White’s writings as God’s instruction for us is given equal weight with Scriptural authority, though derived from Scripture, how then is Scriptural authority unique and normative? Furthermore, is it possible that Adventist theologians are denying Ellen White the right to re-interpret Scripture making it relevant to our day, while assuming that prerogative for themselves? Is there a danger that the Adventist Church can establish a theological hierarchy making their interpretation of Scripture normative? Finally, is there a difference between re-interpreting Scripture and clarifying or disentangling it from false concepts? And whichever needs to be done, who should do it?
- C. If Ellen White is used as an extra-Biblical source to re-interpret Scripture or disentangle it from false concepts, her writings must then be interpreted by the same hermeneutical principles employed in interpreting Scripture.
- 1. As with the Bible so with Ellen White’s writings, the reader must take the plain meaning of what is said unless otherwise indicated by time, place, context, or other Scripture.
 - 2. Uninspired persons have no right to take inspired statements out of context whether in Scripture or in the writings of Ellen White except if previously done so by another inspired person.
 - 3. When studying Biblically quoted statements or statements quoted from Ellen White’s writings substantiating a theological position the reader should research the context of each quoted statement for many times inspired writers will use Biblical phraseology as a homiletical device rather than as a doctrinal statement.
- IV. Concluding this third and last section of the course and bringing this introductory class to a close, having acquainted you with current theological problems and leaving the hard investigation of truth to other times, places, and instructors; permit me to share with you my position in the current theological discussion of the meaning of 1844 as I shared with you my position on righteousness by faith in the first part of this section.
- A. I believe that the phrase “the Bible and the Bible only” means taking a stance over-against tradition, seen as an authority authorizing the observance of Sunday and displacing the seventh-day Sabbath, and that this phrase includes the inspired authority of the spiritual gift of prophecy. As theologically difficult as the problem of this extra-Biblical use of authority is to explain to the intellectual satisfaction of others, I see less of a problem in this position than I do in admitting to “levels of inspiration” which I cannot and will not admit to. (See PP, xiii-xii).

- B. I believe the sanctuary doctrine and the meaning of 1844 as explicitly delineated by direct revelation in several successive chapters in the book *Great Controversy* and as currently taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church rather than in a modified understanding of the meaning of 1844 based on isolated statements from various writings of Ellen White and/or passages from Scripture whose interpretations are open-ended.
- C. I subscribe to a literal heavenly sanctuary rather than a spiritualized truth about it, not because of the mortar and brick importance of it all, but because to do otherwise would be denying the first principle of hermeneutics to take the Scripture as it reads and to accept as literal what the Scripture says unless it is mandatory to symbolize it to retain credibility with the rest of Scripture.

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