

APPENDIX FOURTEEN

Should a Question be Answered? A Study of Dan. 8:14

Article by C.L. Price, brother of George McCready Price, in
"New Light on Old Problems," 1973, p. 8.

Should a Question be Answered?

Yes, I suppose so, if the question is proper and timely.

And should an answer be questioned?

No doubt it should be, if it is not considered a true and correct reply to the question.

No, that's not the thought. Should an answer have a question to it at all?

Now you are getting silly; how can it be an answer if there is no question asked?

Well, that's a good question; so further:

Should an answer to a question be considered and treated and expounded without taking into consideration what the question was which induced the answer? Could we trust well to the correctness of an exposition of an answer given in that way?

"After three days;" "at four o'clock;" "for two weeks, then I went over;" "For five years' then we have a new one." Now, could those answers be properly considered without taking into consideration what the questions were which induced the answers? Take e.g. the last one. My friend asks me a question. I reply, "For five years, then we have a new one." A third man hears us talking and catches my answer, but did not hear the question. He goes to his neighbours and tells them confidently: Mr. P. gets a new car every five years. I heard him telling his friend that he made his old car last for five years and then he got a new one." How much confidence could be given to such a comment given to that answer? For the question asked me was: "How long does your Canadian Parliament last?" You will say, "But that's foolish; nobody is so silly as to treat of an answer without considering the question with it." But wait a minute. Would you believe that one of the best known Seventh-day Adventist writers, in one of the popular books put out by the denomination comments at great length on the answer to a question in just that way — comments just thus on a Biblical answer given to a Biblical question — and comments thus at length on that answer without referring at all to the question which induced the answer?

And would you further believe that one of the chiefest, special doctrines of the Adventist faith is based upon those comments by that writer thus given — the answer to a Biblical question being expounded by that writer, and the doctrine based upon those comments, without the question being considered at all, or referred to in any way, or without letting her readers know, that there was any question to which that answer was a reply?

"Well," you say: "Show us the goods; place your cards upon the table."

Open your *Great Controversy* at page 324 (I have the 1888 edition) and you will note that the writer quotes the Bible passage: "Unto 2300 days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." — Dan. 8:14. Now that text is the answer to the question which was asked in v. 13; and the question was provoked by the scenes given, the conditions portrayed, in vv. 9-12. But is the question referred to on that page in *Great Controversy* along with the answer? I don't find it. The writer does not mention the question at all.

After the first giving of that text, on page 324, the writer goes on through the rest of that chapter (18) — on through the next half dozen chapters, of more than 100 pages, largely

in an exposition of that text, mentioning it and referring to it again and again; but, in it all, I have looked in vain for any mention whatever of the question asked in v. 13, which induced the answer of v. 14. Silly, is it? What's silly, my mentioning the matter, or the fact itself?

You will doubtless say that in this particular case it makes no difference, for Sister White gives a true exposition of that text, in v. 14, anyway. Of course, an Adventist must say so. But does she? Does she make verse 14 answer the question asked in v. 13? Just look at the context. The prophet saw a wicked power, the "little horn" in vv. 9-12 defiling the sanctuary, treading it down, taking away the daily sacrifice, setting up its own abomination, treading down the people of God — and working evil generally. Then in v. 13 the question was asked as to how long that evil work of that evil power was to continue — "to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot;" and the answer to that question was: "Unto 2,300 days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."

Now remember: Sister White does not refer to that question of v. 13 at all, as she expounds the answer given in v. 14; and she makes that answer a reply to something wholly different from the question which is really asked in v. 13, and the context of vv. 9-12; for she makes v. 14 reply to such a question as this: "How long shall the sanctuary be defiled by the sins of God's people, which have been transferred to it by confession and faith in the atoning blood?" In her writings that evil "little horn" had nothing to do with defiling the sanctuary; but that defilement was caused by the confessed sins of the righteous. Just read chapter 23, "What is the Sanctuary?" and you will see most emphatically that this is so. Why, that is the foundation of the doctrine of the Sanctuary as held and taught by SDA's. God's people confess their sins, and by their faith in the atoning blood those sins are, day by day, hour by hour, transferred to the sanctuary, where they accumulated year after year, until at the end of the 2,300 days, in 1844, the atoning blood is again applied in some other way, and the Sanctuary is cleansed from all those sins. You see by Sister White's exposition, the "little horn" had nothing to do with it; nothing whatsoever; it is just as though that evil power had not been brought into the picture at all. The theory doesn't need it; indeed, it gets along far better without it. So, no wonder Sister White doesn't refer to it at all (at least I have not seen it) as she expounds that text of Dan. 8:14.

But certainly, in all that chapter of Daniel 8, there is no mention of the matter contained in Lev. 4 or Lev. 16 at all; no hint of any connection between them; no suggestion that the sins of God's people, or any confessed sins, are referred to whatever. For in that ch. 8 of Daniel, it was the evil machinations of that "little horn" which defiled the sanctuary and made its "cleansing" necessary — not the confessed sins of God's people; those are not referred to at all; that thought is wholly put there by the Adventist writers themselves, just as Sunday is put into Rev. 1:10 by Methodists and Baptists.

Now what shall we do about it? Is a peculiar church doctrine safely based on a sure foundation, based thus as it is on a text separated from its context — on an answer quite divorced from its immediate question and wholly separated from the facts presented in the context which provoked the question? Honestly, what absurd theory could not be worked up by such a method as that?

Permit me to use an illustration. Suppose I am an Universalist. I quote from Rev. 7:14: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and

made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” From this I proceed to argue that “These are they” refers to “the kings of the earth and the great men and the rich men” spoken of in ch. 6:15, which is part of the same vision. All these, no doubt, “come out of great tribulation,” as most men do — and so we prove universal salvation.

You would reply: “Folly! Look at the context. What you quote in verse 14 is an answer to the question asked in verse 13, and the question in verse thirteen was induced by the picture, or vision, given in verses nine to twelve. What hope for finding truth is there, if you divorce an answer from the question asked, and from its entire context in that way?”

And you would be right. But what better than that is the treatment given by Adventist writers to the text of Dan. 8:14?

And please remember that this is only one of three or four almost equally heavy counts against the theory or the doctrine of the sanctuary, as at present held by SDA people.

Now I suppose that many of you who read this will just drop it into the waste basket and say: “Oh well, our Adventist leaders are highly educated men, well versed in all the doctrines of the church, and they will have the right of it — not this old question-maker.” And many others will say: “We are the remnant church and we have the truth in its essence, and no error; so why should we spend time on such a problem.” And still others will say: “The Adventist church is doing a mighty work for God; He is blessing them wonderfully, and they are surely His special people. What they teach is good enough for me.” But a few may be “more noble than those in Thessalonica” and really will search the Scriptures whether these things are so. — C.L.P.