

GREAT HERESY IN THE SABBATH SCHOOL QUARTERLY REGARDING THE DOCTRINE OF THE SANCTUARY

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November 1, 2013

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It has now become evident that this quarter's Sabbath School lessons are attempting to impose Jewish beliefs that originated during the Middle Ages and are at odds with foundational Adventist beliefs regarding the sanctuary. The author of this quarterly is Martin Pröbstle. Of note he studied under the direction of Dr. Jack Doukhan (a French Jew) and Roy Gane (who doctored under the leadership of Jewish interpreter Jacob Milgrom who has controversial and polarizing emphases regarding the defilement and cleansing of the sanctuary that we as Adventists do not share). The director of the Sabbath School lessons, Clifford Goldstein, is also Jewish, and neither studied in our seminars nor pastored any of our churches.

I want to be clear I am not suggesting these Adventist authors believe everything the medieval Jews believed, nor everything the modern Jews believe today. But in some of their lessons we are seeing ideas being introduced that come from both ancient and modern Jewish beliefs and are contrary to the gospel of the sanctuary. For the first time in the history of the Adventist Church and in none other but the Sabbath School quarterly (taken by most to represent the official position of the church), ideas are presented that not only open the door for worldly ridicule, but also confuse and obscure the foundation of our faith. Some of the concepts being introduced are truly heretical from the Adventist perspective, and are unsubstantiated from a biblical standpoint.

This quarterly has many issues. In the first few lessons sanctuaries are being imagined everywhere, when in fact the biblical texts referenced mention neither 'sanctuary' nor 'temple' to support this fantasy. There is also the tendency to spiritualize certain fundamental and physical realities tied to the sanctuary. To all of this we now find the notion that on the Day of Atonement the sanctuary was cleansed from sins that were not forgivable during the year. This latter point is what we should focus on more carefully, because it is a grave misunderstanding of the Israelite ritual and what took place during the year and, more specifically, on the Day of Atonement. I have felt the need to present these counterpoints as it is evident that the same problems I have discovered in Martin Pröbstle's doctoral thesis were overlooked not only during his defense but also now by the committee approving this quarterly. There are many layers to such a critical misunderstanding of the Hebrew ritual that need to be called out and succinctly clarified.

Key problems introduced by this quarterly that are at odds with foundational Adventist beliefs regarding the gospel of the sanctuary

1. There was no new forgiveness of sin on the Day of Atonement: “There was no new forgiveness necessary on this day. God had already forgiven their sins” (November 4, Monday).

Counterpoints: If this is true then it also implies there is no new forgiveness necessary since 1844, which would mean we are all lost

- Was E. G. White wrong when she said that on the Day of Atonement there was still time to repent and obtain forgiveness of sins while the high priest was entering the Most Holy Place?
- Why did E. G. White say that forgiveness of sins would still be possible after 1844, via the ministry of Jesus in the Most Holy? "When in the typical service the high priest left the holy on the Day of Atonement, he went in before God *to present the blood of the sin offering in behalf of all Israel who truly repented of their sins*. So Christ had only completed one part of His work as our intercessor, to enter upon another portion of the work, and *He still pleaded His blood before the Father in behalf of sinners...* But while it was true that that door of hope and mercy by which men had for eighteen hundred years found access to God, was closed, another door was opened, and *forgiveness of sins was offered to men through the intercession of Christ in the most holy*. One part of His ministration had closed, only to give place to another" (GC 428-9).

2. The sacrificed goat did not transfer sins to the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement because there was not a laying on of hands involved. "Because there was neither confession of sin nor laying on of hands involved with the goat for the Lord, its blood was not a carrier of sin. Thus, it did not defile; but rather, it cleansed" (November 3, Sunday).

Counterpoints: Were the sacrifices prescribed in Lev 5-7 not transferred to the sanctuary because no mention of the laying on of hands is made there? Neither is reference made to the laying on of hands in Lev 9, 12, 13, 15, nor in Num 7, 15, 19, 28, and 29, where a he-goat for the sins of the people was offered every month and in every feast. Does this mean there was also no transfer of sin during these times?

- On the Day of Atonement the purpose of the sacrifice was to cleanse both the people and the sanctuary. The same blood which brought the sin of the people into the Most Holy Place during this last opportunity to repent and obtain forgiveness also cleansed the sanctuary. This was the purpose of the usual sacrifice on that particular day. See details in my doctoral dissertation, where I deal with the various reasons that can be deduced as to why a laying on of hands is not mentioned in these passages, including in Lev 16. A. R. Treiyer, *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Sanctuary. From the Pentateuch to Revelation* (p. 188, and the whole chapter 3).

3. "Rebellious" sins were not forgiven during the year because the word "rebellion" is not mentioned. "While an offering was available for these first two categories [unintentional and deliberate sins: Lev 4-5], none is mentioned for rebellious sin, the most heinous kind. Rebellious sin was done 'in the face of God, with a high hand, and the rebel deserved nothing than to be cut off (Num 15:29-31)' (October 27, Sunday).

Counterpoints: If this is true, then why choose Num 15:29-31 as an example of a "rebellious" sin given the fact that the Hebrew word for "rebellion" is not used in these verses? Why also are so many other texts that use the word "rebellion" in the context of forgiveness being ignored?

- Does this then imply that the guilt ('*asham*) found in Lev 5 and forgiven throughout the year was not cleansed on the Day of Atonement because the word '*asham* is not found in Lev 16?

- My brief answer: this classification of sins suggested by the author is inconsistent because Hebrew terms he categorizes as forgivable sins are also used elsewhere in the context of unforgivable sins. In my doctoral dissertation (chapter 3 of which was published by the Biblical Research Institute in the '80s), and more so in my book *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment*, I analyze why we cannot determine the gravity of the sins with these terms or, more

definitively, confirm or deny whether they refer to forgivable or unforgivable sins (p. 157). The context is what determined when a sin became unpardonable, and I show there clearly what those contexts were.

4. On the Day of Atonement the sanctuary was cleansed from sins that were not forgiven during the year. “Rebellion... describes a defiant sin, and only on the Day of Atonement can the sanctuary be cleansed from it” (December 4, Wednesday).

Counterpoints: If this is true then why did God promise in so many texts that He forgives "rebellion" or "transgression"? (Ex 34:7; Num 14:18; Isa 43:25; 44:22; 59:20; Jer 3:13; 33:8; Ezek 18:22,28, etc. Did David and Solomon misinterpret the levitical law when they described how God forgave not only sins and iniquity but also rebellion? (1 Kings 8:50; Psalm 25:7; 32:1; 39:8; 51:1,3; 65:3; 103:12, etc).

- If defiant or "rebellious" sins could only be cleansed on the Day of Atonement, does this mean the sanctuary was cleansed from other types of sins throughout the year? This is what modern Jews believe including rabbi Jacob Milgrom. But this theory is at odds with the Bible and his position was openly rejected by some Jewish venues as well (Levine, Zoar, etc).

- Let's ask the crucial question yet again: On what unique and exclusive day was the sanctuary cleansed? Wasn't it on the Day of Atonement, and only from confessed sins?

- Num 35:34-35: “Atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it. Do not defile the land where you live and where I dwell, for I, the Lord, dwell among the Israelites.” If the land "on which" the sanctuary was located could not be cleansed from the defilement of unforgiven sins, but only "by the blood of" the guilty sinner, would then the sanctuary itself even *need* to be cleansed by sacrifices from these unforgiven sins on the Day of Atonement?

- How then did God's people remove (burn, purge) evil from "the midst of Israel" when unpardonable sins were committed? Via the death penalty. In this way “you must purge the evil from among you” (Deut 17:7,12; 19:13,19; 21:9,21; 22:21-22; 24:7; Judg 20:13). See more details and analyses of other terms regarding the death penalty and its cleansing value in my doctoral thesis: *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment*, p. 150-156.

- My brief answer: no sacrifice could pay for such sins. The guilty party took on themselves the penalty for these sins. God did not take on these sins, they instead fell upon the heads of those who committed them.

5. The cleansing of the sanctuary in Dan 8:14 also involved cleansing from the unpardonable sins of the horn. “The horn acts in ‘rebellion’ (Dan 8:12-13), a term that occurs specifically in Lev 16:16, 21. It describes a defiant sin, and only on the Day of Atonement can the sanctuary be cleansed from it” (December 4, Wednesday).

Counterpoints: If this is true, did the judgment taking place there involve more than just the professed people of God and also include the "horn" or "beast" or those who worshiped the papacy and whose names were not found in the book of life? (Rev 13:8; 17:8).

- Why then did E. G. White write this? “In the typical service *only those who had come before God with confession and repentance, and whose sins, through the blood of the sin offering, were transferred to the sanctuary, had a part in the service of the Day of Atonement.* So in the great day of final atonement and investigative judgment the only cases considered are those of the

professed people of God. The judgment of the wicked is a distinct and separate work, and takes place at a later period” (GC 480).

- My brief answer: If E. G. White was right, the cleansing of the sanctuary by the blood of the sacrifice at the end of the year had to do only with forgivable and forgiven sins, not with sins that were not forgiven nor transferred to the sanctuary even during that last day of opportunity. The only solution to the illegal contamination of the sanctuary by unpardonable sins was the death penalty (Lev 15:31; 20:1-4; Num 19:13,20).

Conclusion

What is happening with some of our theologians and leaders of our church? Have they stopped believing in the Spirit of Prophecy? Are they being distracted with topics that have nothing to do with our foundational faith? Is all the rhetoric regarding the ordination of women to the ministry and all the accusations of discrimination (similar to what Moses and Aaron endured from Korah, Dathan, and Abiram) diverting their focus? Are they being dazzled by “great authorities and scholars” of the theologian world who do not have the same principles of interpretation of the Bible that we have and who in most cases do not even believe in the inspiration of the Bible? Everyone knows that I am not a radical Adventist who wants to criticize and attack the church. But be careful, because with these new theories that are making their way into our beliefs, many combative people may find new reasons to divide and conquer us.