

Ellen G. White Publications  
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Subject: DIFFERENCES IN DOCTRINAL VIEWS HELD BY URIAH SMITH AND  
JAMES WHITE (KING OF THE NORTH)

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Inquiry is made concerning conflicting doctrinal views as they may have been held by Uriah Smith and James White. Really, there were very few such points. James White and Uriah Smith worked very closely through the years and I think on essential points they saw eye to eye.

For a review of Smith's views on certain doctrinal points, I would direct you to "Synopsis of Present Truth," by Elder Uriah Smith, published in 1884. This was an outgrowth of a series of lectures given at Biblical Institutes in various parts of the country. There is another work published, and that is a report of the Biblical Institute held in Oakland in 1878. James White and Uriah Smith were the two leading teachers in this institute, and if you give a little study to this volume (The Biblical Institute: A Synopsis of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists) you will find what the men were presenting. Another work from Uriah Smith's pen which might be of interest to you in this particular connection is The Sanctuary and the 2300 Days, published in 1877.

Concerning differences of opinion on doctrinal views, I think that in the case of James White and Uriah Smith, this occurred primarily on the question of the king of the north. Before we take notice of this we should observe that when the foundations of Seventh-day Adventist doctrine were laid in the late 1840's, the great pillars of the temple of truth stood out very clearly. There was agreement on the essentials as they had to do with the Sabbath, the second advent, the state of the dead, and the sanctuary truths. Sister White makes reference to these pillars in Counsels to Writers and Editors on pages 30 and 31 under the title of "The Landmarks Defined."

In subsequent years Bible study and consideration of matters in conference led to clarifying an understanding of many other points of minor importance. But still there were points of more obscure prophecies which were not clearly defined. They were not considered vital. We will find differences of opinion expressed in the Review and Herald by leading workers on some of these points.

For instance, Uriah Smith, in an editorial in the Review and Herald of May 13, 1862, makes reference to the prophecy having to do with the power that shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain (See RH May 13, 1862, page 192). Two years later there was an unsigned editorial in the Review and Herald of January

5, 1864. We would assume this to be from Uriah Smith. You will read this on page 48. Here reference is made to Daniel 11:45 and it points to the papacy.

When Elder Uriah Smith undertook a verse by verse exposition of the books of Revelation and then Daniel, he entered upon a pathway that none in our ranks had before traveled. The great basic prophecies were clear and there was a unity of opinion on them. When he came to some of these points over which there was no well-defined viewpoint and concerning which the Spirit of Prophecy was silent, Uriah Smith did the best he could, oftentimes dropping back on William Miller or other commentators. Sometimes he would walk into George Amadon's office at the Review and Herald and ask, "George, how would you do this?" Then the two would sit down and discuss some text together. Uriah Smith was a scholar; he did good work; but when it comes to some of these minor points, there have always been differences of opinion among Seventh-day Adventists. And we have endeavored to minimize these differences because they did not have to do with the pillars and the firm platform.

The time when the conflict between James White's views and Uriah Smith's views came before the public was in connection with the great camp meeting of 1878 and the General Conference Session which was held in connection with it. Concerning this experience my father, Elder W. C. White, wrote to Elder L. E. Froom on May 12, 1930. W. C. White was the third son of James and Ellen White.

"Regarding the views of Elder James White on the king of the north, I can only give a brief outline of a very interesting experience. In order to give anything which approaches to a correct view of this experience, you must take into consideration that Elder White was an Adventist preacher for many years before he was a S. D. Adventist, and by study of the literature of the 1844 movement, you will find that prominent writers took the position that Rome was the king of the north, and in this undoubtedly Elder White was to a considerable extent in agreement.

"Another matter you must consider is this,--Elder White was not primarily a theologian. He was a business man, a publisher, and an administrator of Conference affairs, and did not have time to give to theological questions that study which he greatly desired to do.

"From 1872 to 1878 his soul was filled with the burden of helping S. D. Adventists to understand and accept the necessary burdens of the broadening work which was laid before them through revelation. The Battle Creek College was built largely with borrowed money. During 1872 and 1873 Elders Haskell and Butler obtained many pledges for the college, but we did not have at that time such a system as we now have for following up and making collections.

"With the assurance felt by our leading men in these pledges, the college was largely built with borrowed money. Our people were in the habit of depositing their money with the Review and Herald and the Review and Herald lent many thousands to the college and the sanitarium.

"During 1877 and 1878 Elder White carried a tremendous burden of soul over the matter of securing payment of the pledges and clearing the college from debt, and he came up to the General Conference of 1878, held in the Battle Creek fair grounds in a big pavilion standing very near where Dr. Kellogg's mansion now stands (on Wood Street--now gone), with the determination to do everything in his power to help our brethren to get broader views and to make greater sacrifices.

"During the earlier part of this year or possibly the last of 1877, there appeared in the Review an article by Elder Uriah Smith under the title 'Without Excuse.' This you will read with deep interest because it intimates that the existing war between Russia and Turkey was probably the beginning of Armageddon. This might have passed like many other Review editorials without serious results, but at the beginning of the great camp meeting in which was combined the annual session of the General Conference and the Michigan Conference and the annual meetings of the Review and Herald and the sanitarium and the college, with representatives from all parts of the field, Elder Smith in one of his earliest discourses presented in a very thrilling way the same thoughts as were in the editorial.

"To Elder White this was a great shock because if the logic of Elder Smith's discourse was taken seriously the people would naturally conclude that Elder White's burden was too late in the day and entirely out of place.

"The natural result of the full acceptance of Elder Smith's article and sermon would be for our brethren to say that the end is at hand. Take an armful of tracts, go out and distribute them, and then watch for the Son of Man in heaven. The acceptance of this view would undermine all the plans and all the efforts that Elder White was making to clear the debt from our institutions, and to get our people to adopt broader views and make stronger efforts for the promulgation of the truth.

"In response to this, Elder White walked into the pulpit and presented the old, old view regarding the king of the north.

"Both Elder Smith and Elder White were seriously in error in presenting their views without counsel, but Elder White was the most in error because it was his discourse that made it plain to the people that our leaders were not in agreement. The day following or possibly the second day during the season of prayer in their tent, Sister White was taken off in vision and shown very many things which you will find in the published testimony as given at that date, and among other things she was given a severe reproof for Elder White for taking a course that would lead the people to observe differences of opinion and to cherish lack of confidence.

"During the few months preceding this meeting I had read Thoughts on Daniel and Thoughts on Revelation by Elder Uriah Smith. I loved the writer; I admired his style; I loved his teaching; and

I was shocked when Elder White presented another view regarding the king of the north. One day I said to him, 'Father, I have just read Elder Smith's books and his exposition seems clear to me. Do you really believe that Rome is the king of the north?' His answer was, 'I think Elder Smith is going too fast in his exposition, and I thought it was time to present something to check the current of belief that what is transpiring was the beginning of Armageddon.'

"In later years men have argued that Elder White and Elder Wilcox and others holding somewhat similar views were wrong because Elder White was reproved, but I was never able to find any evidence that the vision given at the camp meeting in 1878 threw any light on the doctrinal controversy, but it did through a flood of light upon the way our brethren should treat one another in presenting Bible doctrines."--W. C. White Letter to L. E. Froom, May 12, 1930.

We have one published reference in the writings of Ellen G. White to this experience although it is not named. If you will turn to Counsels to Writers and Editors, pages 76, 77, you will find this material under the side-heading "Differing Views on Minor Points." Please read this carefully because it brings to view points much more important than the rightness or wrongness of the views held by men on these minor points.

But now, in the interests of filling out the story, we go back to the record of 1877 and 1878. Elder James White in the Review and Herald of November 29, 1877, in an editorial on page 172, wrote a column and a half under the heading of "Unfulfilled Prophecy." It opens with these significant words:

"Fulfilled prophecy may be understood by the Bible student. He can compare history with prophecy and find a complete fit as the glove to the hand, it having been made for it. But in exposition of unfulfilled prophecy, where the history is not written, the student should put forth his propositions with not too much positiveness, lest he find himself straying in the field of fancy.

"There are those who think more of future truth than of present truth. They see but little light in the path in which they walk, but think they see great light ahead of them.

"Positions taken upon the Eastern question are based upon prophecies which have not yet their fulfillment. Here we should tread lightly, and take positions carefully, lest we be found removing the landmarks fully established in the advent movement. It may be said that there is a general agreement upon this subject, and that all eyes are turned toward the war now in progress between Turkey and Russia as the fulfillment of that portion of prophecy which will give great confirmation of faith in the soon loud cry and close of our message. But what will be the result of this positiveness in unfulfilled prophecies should things not

come out as very confidently expected, is an anxious question."  
 --James White in Review and Herald, Nov. 29, 1877.

It was a year later that the conference was held at which time there was an open break between James White and Uriah Smith on this question. It was at this meeting on Sabbath, Sept. 28, 1878, that James White spoke for 70 minutes answering the important question, "Where Are We?" Writing of this in the Review and Herald of October 3, 1878, on page 116, James White says: "We traced down the several lines of prophecy in Daniel 2, 7, 8, and 11, showing that all the specifications of these prophetic chains have been fulfilled excepting the crowning event of prophecy, the coming of the Son of Man."

In this report, he summarizes a portion of his presentation as follows:

"Again, the last three of these four universal empires are symbolized in the eighth chapter of Daniel by the ram with two horns, Media and Persia; the goat, Grecia; and the little horn, Rome. This horn was to become exceeding great, stand up against the Prince of princes at his first advent, and be broken without hands at his second advent. We wait the destruction of the man of sin by the brightness of the coming of the King of kings.

"And there is a line of historic prophecy in chapter eleven, where the symbols are thrown off, beginning with the kings of Persia, and reaching down past Grecia and Rome, to the time when that power 'shall come to his end, and none shall help him.' If the feet and ten toes of the metallic image are Roman, if the beast with ten horns that was given to the burning flames of the great day be the Roman beast, if the little horn which stood up against the Prince of princes be Rome, and if the same field and distance are covered by these four prophetic chains, then the last power of the eleventh chapter, which is to 'come to his end and none shall help him,' is Rome. But if this be Turkey, as some teach, then the toes of the image of the second chapter are Turkish, the beast with ten horns of the seventh chapter represents Turkey, and it was Turkey that stood up against the Prince of princes of the eighth chapter of Daniel. True, Turkey is bad enough off; but its waning power and its end is the subject of the prophecy of John and not of Daniel.

"The fulfillment of these lines of prophecy constitutes signs of the approaching end.

"Christ said to those who were rejecting him, 'Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?' Matt. 16:3."--James White in Review and Herald, Oct. 3, 1878.

If you will take the Review and Herald of this date and turn to page 117 you will find that this presentation is: "to be continued." The facts are, no second article appeared. It was between the publication of the first article and the time when the second article would be published that

Ellen White was given the vision calling the attention to the hazards and perils of our leaders standing in a divided position before the people.

If you are fortunate enough to find a copy of the report of the Biblical Institute you will observe that while James White and Uriah Smith led out in these, this particular question was not discussed.

Two documents relating to Uriah Smith are available on request from the White Estate. One has to do with the authorship of Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation, and the other Mrs. White's attitude toward Uriah Smith.

While we study the difference of viewpoints in some doctrines as they were held by leaders of the cause, I think it would be very profitable to study the unity of teaching and the importance of our minimizing the differences on the minor points which Ellen White never considered as essential to salvation and concerning which little or no light was given to her.

Ellen G. White Estate  
General Conference of SDA  
Washington, D.C.  
March 11, 1966.