

Do we need a Creed.

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Dec  
May 12, 1930.

Elder L.E. Froom  
Takoma Park, D.C.

Dear Brother Froom,-

I hold in my hand your letter of Dec. 1, and will endeavor to give you a partial answer.

The two questions you have submitted to me, revive in my mind many memories, and if we were together we might talk about these things profitably and interestedly for some hours.

Considering the pressure of work that is with us just now, I will write only a little hoping that some day we may talk the matter over together. What I shall say is not well studied and would not be very suitable for general reading. It will be bits and fragments from my memory, regarding the two matters under consideration.

As you have studied the early publications of the denomination, you will have observed that the early general meetings which they call Conferences, were devoted very largely to the discussions of Bible doctrines. There were brought to these meetings a great variety of opinions, doctrines and expositions, and with the blessing of God, the result of united study was a large degree of unanimity of opinion.

After the organization of the General Conference in 1863, the time and attention of the delegates was very largely devoted to plans and methods of work to an effort to come into an agreement as to ways and means, and the study of doctrinal questions was handled by the brethren in little groups which took up matters of theology in an informal but profitable way.

From 1870 and onward I was an interested listener at the sessions of the General Conference, and from 1877 I sat with the others as a delegate.

In these Conference sessions, as I have stated above, the time was mostly used in the discussion of ways and means, but in almost every Conference session, some minister without notice introduced questions of doctrine for consideration by the delegates. Those who had great truths which filled their souls with joy and earnestness were usually encouraged to present them in discourses.

But those who were meeting in the fields doctrines which were a perplexity to them, often introduced them in the Conference sessions without notice, and there being no one prepared to answer wisely the questions raised,

there were usually some desultory discussions and then the matter was dropped.

From year to year the men bearing the chief burden for the cause and other delegates were perplexed and annoyed by this introduction of controverted questions,— some of them quite unimportant, and a resolution was introduced into the Conference that a large Committee be appointed to listen to those who were perplexed over conflicting teachings, and also those who had new views to present.

I think you will find in the record of the Conference in the 70's and the 80's as published in the Review the story of when this Committee was created and how many years it served. Finally it became a pit for unprofitable discussions, and by resolution it was discontinued. I think your memory or the memory of your associates will cover the remainder of our experiences ~~in~~ the matter of belief.

My memory testifies that two or three times in the 80's that proposals were made by ministers that we needed a creed. To these proposals our people gave very little serious attention as it was understood that the Bible was our only creed.

At the Minneapolis Conference, <sup>after</sup> ~~before~~ there was developed a wide difference of belief and of sentiment, it was urged quite strongly by half a dozen influential ministers that a creed would be a great blessing to our work. This was vigorously opposed, and Sister White bore her testimony against such a proposition.

It is my conviction, Brother Froom, that Elder G.B. Starr, Elder J.S. Washburn and other men who have keen memories, will be able to corroborate what I have stated and give you much additional information.

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 <sup>not</sup> 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 Haskeel 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, 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 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 out 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 Daniel and Revelation by Elder Uriah Smith. I loved the writer; I admired his style; I loved his teachings; 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 book 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 to fast in his exposition, and I thought it was time to present something to check the current of belief that what was 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 reprov'd, 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 throw a flood of light upon the way our brethren should treat one another in presenting Bible doctrines.

Hoping that this very incomplete presentation of a very interesting bit of history may be of some service to you, I am,

Sincerely your brother,

W. C. White

See Counsel to  
Writers & Editors

pp. 76 - 77  
for CW reference  
to far white vision