

Prophecy Conference Reflections
Bering Springs, Michigan
by John Witcombe

This was my fifth Daniel 11 conference since I began to study this chapter eight years ago. In each conference there has been manifested an excellent Christian spirit and collegiality. After many hours of conversations and hundreds of pages of email correspondence on Daniel 11, I can see that honesty and integrity requires each student of prophecy to maintain the various understandings to which they've come.

It seems that careful study and dialog is unable to bring us into a unity of belief. Take for instance the identity of the "king" of verse 36; is this king the papacy or is it France? Are verses 37-39 referring to the papacy or to the French Revolution? What about the battle in verse 40, is it a two-way or is it a three-way battle? Is the final pronoun "he" in this verse referencing the "him" mentioned earlier in the verse or is it referring to the king of the north? Who are the kings of the north and south in verse 40?

No amount of prayer, dialog or multi-day conferences that have taken place over the past eight years has been able to resolve these questions. And is there is any reason to believe that eight more years of the same would change anything?

Is Daniel 11:40-45 similar to the "daily" issue? Ellen White said that God had not revealed to her any light on the meaning of the "daily". So we are left with two views on the "daily" with no way to arrive at consensus. And because it does not really have a major impact on any major line of prophecy that we are to present to the world, it's okay to embrace either or both views or dismiss them both. It's just not an essential issue and if it was, God could have made it plain to His church through His messenger.

However, I do see the prophecy of Daniel 11:45 in a different light from the "daily" issue in that it is a significant prophecy directly connected with the close of probation. I believe it is essential that we understand this prophecy and present it to the world. And because it is essential, I believe that God provided guidance in our understanding through Ellen White. If He did not provide guidance then Daniel 11:45 is no more important than is the "daily" and we should think twice about spending time and resources on this issue.

I believe that the next step we ought to take is to see if we can come into agreement on whether or not there is any significance to Ellen White's three statements regarding the Eastern Question and her direct statements dealing with Daniel 11. Do these statements provide any guidance for our interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45? I believe that they do and will explain why below.

I spoke to a prominent Adventist television preacher regarding Revelation 9 wanting to know how it was that he did not take the statement from Ellen White in *The Great Controversy*, page 334, where it says that another remarkable fulfillment of prophecy took place on August 11, 1840, as an inspired directive as to how we are to understand Revelation 9. He said he would get back to me. That was over two years ago and still no word. Without that statement (GC 334) anyone's view of Revelation 9 might be right. If it wasn't for that one little statement in the Spirit of Prophecy, it would be very difficult to come into unity on this prophecy.

For many years I had wished that we had something more definitive on Daniel 11 from Ellen White other than her endorsement of Uriah Smith's book. Ellen White's son, Willie White, realized that even her statement regarding the Eastern Question was not proof but only very interesting indications. In the

statement that Willie was reading from, Ellen White was not saying that the lecture on the Eastern Question was truth or that it dealt with events that would be taking place in the near future. She was just saying that the subject was of special interest to the people. Just because people are interested doesn't make the subject truth. People might be interested in the subject of the 2520 teaching but that doesn't make it truth. Here is what Willie White wrote:

“I do not know of any utterance of mother’s that tells us about the King of the North. The two things that most nearly approach to it, are the statement in *Testimonies*, v. 9, p. 14 and *Testimonies*, v. 4, p. 279. Here, in reporting the Danvers campmeeting, she wrote: “Eld. Smith spoke in the morning on the Eastern Question. The subject was of special interest, and the people listened with the most earnest attention.” (1877) These things are not proofs, but they seem to me to be very interesting indications.—[Letter from Willie White to Elder John Vuilleumier, March 6, 1919.](#)

If Willie White had read this statement from its original source, he may have seen that this statement does indeed provide strong evidence as to the identity of the king of the north because in this statement, Ellen White calls the lecture on the Eastern Question in Bible Prophecy truth:

1. “Sunday forenoon Elder Smith spoke upon the **Eastern Question, just the subject the people wished to hear**. The cars and three steamboats were pouring the living freight upon the ground until we thought that there were nearly as many as last year. And indeed there were more attentive listeners than last year. The mammoth tent was well seated, with backs to the seats. **Sunday afternoon** I was not prepared to witness such an immense crowd. Before me was a sea of heads and a living wall of thousands standing, who could find no room under the canvas. The Lord strengthened me to speak upon the **subject of temperance** above one hour with great freedom of spirit and clearness of voice. The audience was quiet and seemed deeply interested. Before I stepped from the stand I was again solicited, as last year, to speak to the temperance club in Haverhill the next Monday night the same words they had heard that day. I was sorry I could not grant the request. My appointment had gone out that I would speak at Danvers. They pled for the appointment to be given out one week from the following Monday, but we expected to attend the Maine camp meeting and were obliged to refuse. Notwithstanding I had held the people some time, they seemed unwilling to leave the tent and the grounds. *Elder Smith improved the hour at five o'clock in addressing the large crowd upon the **mark of the beast**. Brother Haskell spoke in the evening to a large and attentive audience, and the great day of the meeting was over. Many had listened to the truth, and the day of final reckoning will reveal the results of that day's meeting.* We hope and pray that the **good seed** sown may spring up and bear fruit to the glory of God. {Lt10a-1877 }

Ellen White includes the lecture on the Eastern Question as being a message of truth and of being “good seed” that the people had listened to that Sunday.

Elder Loughborough also recognized the significance of Ellen White’s mention of the Eastern Question:

Dear Brother, Your letter of recent date received. Yesterday I mailed to you a copy of the book on the sealing message. And I have sent a dime to the Pacific Press requesting them to mail to you a copy of “Prophetic Gift in the Gospel Church.” As to where you can get information on “the king of the North,” I think you will find it in Bro. Daniells’ book on “The World War.” Brother Uriah Smith laid no claims to “inspiration,” but his view on the king of the North is

well established by Sister White in speaking of one occasion when he spoke on the “Eastern Question.” This you can read in Volume 4 of the Testimonies, page 278-279 where she called the discourse “a subject of special interest.” etc. It would bother those holding another view than what he advocated to find a word from her favoring their views.

One Brother who had intimated in his writing on the subject that the king of the North might be the pope, told me that Sister White told him he “never should have intimated any such thing, and that his idea would only create confusion.” This was not put in print, but it was what he told me in Autumn 1878. . .

Yours in the blessed hope,
J. N. Loughborough.

I haven't spent much time trying to persuade anyone opposing the Islamic view of Revelation 9 because God has spoken on this prophecy. Those who accept what is written in GC 334 will be in unity. And if it is important that God's people have a united view on any major line of prophecy then He will have to help us out by speaking through the Ellen White. We have seen that careful application of the rules of prophetic interpretation alone won't bring the unity that God wants us to have.

Daniel 11 has been carefully studied by many minds and many views have come from this study. How are we to know who has discovered the correct interpretation?

Up until July 16, 2015 the only choice we had was to come up with our own private view or follow the lead of our favorite expositor whether that be Uriah Smith, James White, Louis Were, Walter Veith, Stephen Bohr, Tim Roosenberg, James Rafferty, Ranko Stefanovic, Jon Paulien, etc.

On July 16, 2015 the White Estate released 50,000 pages of previously unpublished material. In those pages were found three significant statements on the Eastern Question that are supportive of the interpretation of Daniel 11:36-45 as published in *Daniel and the Revelation*. If we will accept these three statements as a message from heaven, given to correct our lack of unity, God's people could once again speak with one voice and present before the world a united front on this very important line of prophecy.

The first statement from Lt10a-1877 is quoted above. Here are the remaining two statements that no one was aware existed until now:

2. “Brother Robinson spoke in the morning, at eleven o'clock meeting, to a very good congregation. At three p.m. I spoke to a tent full and crowded, and large numbers were on the outside. All in the tent could hear me well. I spoke one hour upon John 13. The Lord gave me freedom in speaking to the crowd. There was not any misbehavior, but a few of the young people walked out to look around the grounds. But there was as respectful an audience of intelligent, nice looking people as I have ever addressed. God alone can make the impression and give the increase. He alone can water the seed that has been sown. I pray to the Lord that the labor put forth may not be in vain. Many seem to feel deeply. We feel to thank and praise God that this large number could have a chance to hear the truth for themselves. Dr. Caro is now speaking at five o'clock p.m. upon the health question. **Elder Daniells speaks this evening upon the Eastern Question**. May the Lord give His Holy Spirit to inspire the hearts to make the **truth** plain.” Monday, December 26, 1898 —Ms189-1898 (December 25, 1898), emphasis supplied.

Four people spoke that Monday. Ellen White is writing this report while the third presenter, Dr. Caro, is speaking. In the immediate context where the word “hearts” is found we see an emphasis on the listeners. Because of this context, it is most likely that the word “hearts” is referencing the audience rather than the speakers. But whether Ellen White was praying that the hearts of the speakers would be inspired so that they would make the truth plain to the people or rather she was praying that the Holy Spirit would inspire the hearts of the listeners so that the truth that the speakers were presenting would be plain to their understanding, doesn’t change the fact that Ellen White believed that what was taught that day was truth. If the Eastern Question was a Jesuit inspired lecture that taught error, God would not have allowed His messenger to indicate the Eastern Question was a topic of truth that needed to be plainly taught to the crowd that had gathered that day.

The plain reading of this statement is stating that Elder Daniells was going to be teaching *truth* that evening when he presented his Eastern Question lecture. This is the second time she calls the Eastern Question truth, the first being the time Elder Uriah Smith presented this same lecture 21 years earlier in 1877. This lecture was presented at many of the camp meeting evangelistic endeavors from the 1870s through the early 1920s and is included in what Ellen White characterized as truth and that particular truth had power to open the eyes, ears and mouths of outsiders. Which brings us to our third and perhaps most significant statement:

3. “Our important meeting is now over. They estimate we have had from **five to eight thousand people** out, and the very best part of community. I never addressed a more noble appearing people. . . .The evening meeting was largely attended. Elder Smith **spoke with great clearness**, and many listened *with open eyes, ears, and mouths. The outsiders seemed to be intensely interested in the Eastern question.* He closed with a very solemn address to those who had not been preparing for **these great events in the near future.**”— Lt55-1884 (August 24, 1884), emphasis supplied.

What are “these great events in the near future” of which the Eastern Question speaks? We have located over 850 newspaper reports of the Eastern Question lectures that Elders Daniells, Smith and other ministers were presenting across the USA, Canada and Australia over many decades; so we know exactly what was being taught “with great clearness” as truth and it involved the historical recitation of the fulfilled prophecies of Daniel 11:40-44 as presented in Uriah Smith’s book, *Daniel and the Revelation*. It also brought out the great events in the near future that involved the fulfillment of Daniel 11:45-12:1. These great events had to do with the future fulfillment of the last prophetic waymark of Daniel 11 – Turkey planting the tabernacles of its palace in Jerusalem, followed by the close of probation and the great time of trouble.

If she did not say that their lectures on the Eastern Question were clear presentations of truth dealing with great events that were about to take place in the near future, then Daniel 11:40-45 might very well have a different interpretation from what they were presenting.

But because the prophet of God spoke to this prophecy just as she did to the prophecy of Revelation 9 (GC 334), should we not accept her view of these two prophecies even if we think we have a better interpretation?

In a 1904 personal letter to Hiram A. Crow, Ellen White solicited a loan for “one or two thousand dollars” at a low interest rate to invest in the work. In this letter she mentions the eleventh chapter of

Daniel. I believe that what she says about Daniel 11 confirms the correctness of the interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45 that was being taught in the lecture on the Eastern Question in Bible Prophecy.

Let's take a close look at this appeal to Hiram Crow: "We have no time to lose. Troublous times are before us. The world is stirred with the spirit of war. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place. **The prophecy in the eleventh of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfilment.**" Lt103-1904

Ellen White wanted Hiram Crow to have a sense of the shortness of time and so she says, "We have no time to lose." And the prophecy that she knew that best revealed where we were in the stream of time was the prophecy of Daniel 11.

This letter was written to Hiram A. Crow on February 24, 1904. The Adult Sabbath School Lesson for the first quarter of 1904 was on "The Prophecies of Daniel" (tinyurl.com/yby2vqyj). In the months of February and March the world church was studying the Eastern Question in lessons 9 through 11. These lessons covered Daniel 11:1-45 from the perspective of Uriah Smith's book, *Daniel and the Revelation* and *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*. Brother Crow would have known exactly what Ellen White meant by the phrase: "The prophecy in the eleventh of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfilment." By studying his Sabbath School Lesson he would have known that Ellen White was confirming that 44 verses of Daniel 11 had already been fulfilled in history and that only verse 45 was left to be fulfilled in order for the eleventh chapter of Daniel to reach its complete fulfilment. By making this statement in the context of what was believed, taught and published in the Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, Ellen White is supporting the biblical interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45 as found in the official publications of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In the November, 1904 issue of the Review and Herald, Ellen White published this statement that she had sent in a personal letter to Hiram A. Crow regarding the shortness of time.

"The judgments of God are in the land. The wars and rumors of wars, the destruction by fire and flood, say clearly that the time of trouble, which is to increase until the end, is very near at hand. We have no time to lose. **The world is stirred with the spirit of war. The prophecies of the eleventh of Daniel have almost reached their final fulfilment.**" {RH November 24, 1904, Art. B, par. 8}

Again, the fact that there is only one verse left to be fulfilled in the eleventh chapter of Daniel and the prophecies of that last verse are directly connected with the close of human probation; this final waymark fact is the prime evidence that God is using to tell us that the end is very near at hand. Because of the Sabbath School Lesson earlier that year supporting the interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45 as taught in the Eastern Question in Bible Prophecy lecture that was being presented to the public across this nation, Ellen White would have been aware that this statement would have been taken by the readers of her article as her endorsement of the contemporary Seventh-day Adventist view of Daniel 11:40-45.

In 1910 she again repeats this statement, affirming the denomination's view of Daniel 11:40-45:

"The truth is to go to all parts of the world. It is no time now for us to lay off our burden. The message must be kept before our churches: "Present the truth in its high, holy, sanctified character to the people." Read pages thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen in Testimony, Vol. 9. The last crisis is close upon us. **The world is stirred with the spirit of war. The prophecy of the eleventh of Daniel has almost**

reached its complete fulfillment. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place.” {Lt80-1910.3}

Our published position on Daniel 11:40-45 was once again affirmed in volume 9 of the *Testimonies*:

“But who reads the warnings given by the fast-fulfilling signs of the times? What impression is made upon worldlings? What change is seen in their attitude? No more than was seen in the attitude of the inhabitants of the Noachian world. Absorbed in worldly business and pleasure, the antediluvians "knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away." Matthew 24:39. They had heaven-sent warnings, but they refused to listen. And today the world, utterly regardless of the warning voice of God, is hurrying on to eternal ruin. **The world is stirred with the spirit of war. The prophecy of the eleventh chapter of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment.** Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place.” {9T 14}

When these statements about the eleventh chapter of Daniel are coupled with Ellen White’s three statements on the Eastern Question, it becomes evident that the prophet of God endorsed the interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45 as taught by our church for nearly 80 years.

Historians and biblical scholars are invaluable in coming to a clearer understanding Daniel 11. But first they must get on the right path. Ellen White’s three statements regarding the Eastern Question and Daniel 11 and her one statement regarding August 11, 1840 will put them on the right path for Daniel 11:40-45 and on the right path for Revelation 9. Ron de Preez allowed Ellen White’s statement in *The Great Controversy*, page 334 to put him on the right path of discovery for Revelation 9. His recent historical research and his biblical scholarship has brought such clarity to this time prophecy of Revelation 9 that now the Biblical Research Institute is changing their position on Revelation 9 and will publish Dr. de Preez’s research. Now our historians and biblical scholars must get on the Eastern Question path and bring additional biblical and historical evidence to the table that will verify the correctness of Ellen White’s support for the interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45 that her endorsement of the Eastern Question indicates.

We will continue to debate the meaning of Daniel 11:36-45 and Revelation 9 and we will never come into the unity of belief that God is calling for until we accept the role of the Spirit of Prophecy in guiding this church onto the correct path where we will find the right prophetic view.

Will these statements from heaven be sufficient to bring us into unity? Is there a way to interpret these statements that would make them say that the Eastern Question was not dealing with prophetic truth and that the Eastern Question had nothing to do with great events in the near future?

Remember, the Eastern Question is only the worm to attract the fish. It is not our message. Our message is the three angel’s messages. That is the hook. But Ellen White said that the Eastern Question opened up the mouths of the people. Can you imagine what the Eastern Question, properly presented today would do? This is what the fish are interested in today. The enemy knows the power of this fishing lure. He saw it at work for decades in building up this movement. He tried to destroy this lure by the work of Louis Were and Raymond Cottrell. Let’s get this worm back on the hook and use it to attract people to our message.

John Witcombe
pastorjcw@gmail.com

<http://www.jerusalemcaliphate.com/>
<http://www.daniel11prophecy.com/>
<https://www.thirdwoe.com/> (Password: 1844)