

Did Ellen White Endorse the Eastern Question?

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At the twenty-three Sabbath Conferences that the brethren held from 1848-1850 (tinyurl.com/y6q28s5d), where they came into unity in their understanding of the doctrinal pillars of what would become the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Spirit of Prophecy, manifested through Ellen White, was the agent by which the Holy Spirit brought individuals with divergent views into unity. Without this special working of the Holy Spirit, unity on the doctrines of the Bible would have been impossible to achieve.

To achieve unity of prophetic message on this important prophecy of Daniel 11:40-45, I believe that we will need the Holy Spirit to once again use the agency of the Spirit of Prophecy to speak to us. Scholarly input, prophecy symposiums, united prayer, all these agencies have their place, but these agencies alone have proven insufficient to bring us into unity. If God commands that we present a united message on the prophecies, then He has to provide a path for this to be achieved. Perhaps He has given His prophet the necessary written words recorded somewhere in her writings that will enable us to accomplish this task. What follows are some thought-provoking questions on several Ellen White statements. These questions are designed to ascertain whether or not these statements provide those necessary written words that we are looking for that will bring us into unity on the interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45.

To what does the Eastern Question refer? This was a prophetic lecture on Daniel 11:40-45 which was taught in many Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic meetings in the late 19th century and into the early 20th century. This lecture taught an interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45 as found in Uriah Smith's book, *Daniel and the Revelation*; in *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*; in *The Story of Daniel the Prophet* by Stephen Haskell; in *The Eastern Question* by A.T. Jones; in *The World War: Its Relation to the Eastern Question* by A.G. Daniells; and in the 1904 and 1949 Adult Sabbath-School Quarterlies.

To come up with decent answers to the following questions on these statements from Ellen White, it is needful to have a good stock of common sense with the ability to reason from common sense: "God wants us all to have common sense, and He wants us to reason from common sense." (Ms7-1904).

My hope is that after you answer the following questions, you will be better able to answer the question posed by the title of this document: Did Ellen White Endorse the Eastern Question?

1. "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.**" Lt. 103, 1904.

a. If Ellen White had been in confusion over the identity of the king of the north and the king of the south in the final verses of Daniel 11 and had not the foggiest idea as to the meaning of these verses, would she have used these prophecies to indicate the shortness of time; if Ellen White did not know the correct interpretation of the last six verses of this chapter, would she have asserted that **"the eleventh of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfilment"**?

b. Consider carefully the implications of this statement. From this positive, inspired assertion, is it reasonable to conclude that Ellen White understood the true biblical interpretation of the final verses of Daniel 11?

c. The fact that she, as a prophet of God, penned those words, does this not indicate that her understanding of these verses would have been in harmony with the mind of God?

d. Ellen White is writing a personal letter to Hiram A. Crow to solicit a loan to invest in the work. She wanted Mr. 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 believed would best reveal this shortness of time was the prophecy of Daniel 11. She probably knew that Mr. Crow would understand what she meant when she wrote that **“the eleventh of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfilment,”** otherwise she would not have used this prophetic chapter to help him see that time was short. If Mr. Crow believed as the majority of Seventh-day Adventists believed at that time regarding Daniel 11, she would have known that he believed that 44 verses of Daniel 11 had already been fulfilled and that only verse 45 remained to be fulfilled. Consider the context of her statement. She wrote to Mr. Crow on February 24, 1904. The International Sabbath-School Quarterly Senior Lessons for the first quarter of 1904 was on “The Prophecies of Daniel” (tinyurl.com/yby2vqyj). The lessons would cover Daniel 11 from the perspective of Uriah Smith’s book, *Daniel and the Revelation*, and of *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*. The next three Sabbaths (February 27, March 5, and March 12), Ellen White, if she studied her Sabbath School Lesson, would have joined the world church in the study of “The Eastern Question.” With this context, it is easy to guess how church members would have interpreted Ellen White’s statement: **“The prophecy in the eleventh of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfilment.”** By studying his Sabbath School lesson, Mr. Crow would most likely have believed that Ellen White was indeed 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.

What she said about Daniel 11 was too important to only be communicated to Mr. Crow. All Seventh-day Adventists needed to read this important statement regarding Daniel 11 so in the November 1904 issue of the *Review and Herald* (*Review and Herald*, Nov. 24, 1904, Art. B, par. 8), Ellen White published that private letter statement that she had sent earlier that year to Mr. Crow. She would have known that the readers of the *Review and Herald* would know exactly what was meant by this sentence, **“The prophecy in the eleventh of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfilment”** and that is: 44 verses have been fulfilled with only one verse remaining. This important statement went from a private letter to a magazine article and then into book format making it even more readily accessible. In 1910, God had His messenger publish this statement in volume nine of *Testimonies for the Church*: **“The world is stirred with the spirit of war. The prophecy of the eleventh chapter of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment.”** (9T 14).

Also in 1910, Ellen White once again used this Daniel 11 statement in another private letter, this time to an Elder D. A. Parsons. She wrote on September 16, 1910:

“Dear Brother Parsons.... 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 fulfilment.**” (Lt80-1910).

Notice that Ellen White was directing Parsons’ attention to what she wrote in 9T page 14. When she writes, “the **prophecy** of the eleventh of Daniel,” she is speaking of the entire eleventh chapter as one singular prophecy. She is indicating that this chapter that delineates conflict in the Mediterranean world from the time of Daniel right up to an event that signals the close of human probation—she is indicating that this chapter “has almost reached its complete fulfillment.” We can assume that Mr. Crow, back in 1904, would have understood this statement to be supporting the Eastern Question because of what was being taught in the Adult Sabbath School Quarterly in regards to the Eastern Question at the very time he received Ellen White’s letter. But what about Elder Parsons, how would he have understood this statement? First of all, here is a note from Ellen White that lets us know that Elder Parsons was an evangelist in California:

“Dear Brethren: Recently, as we were traveling from San Diego to Loma Linda, our train stopped at Orange, and **Elder D. A. Parsons** came into the car and told us about the **meetings he had been holding nearby**. He reported a good interest and said that **about thirty had taken their stand for the truth.**” (Lt44-1910.1).

Did Elder Parsons use the Eastern Question as one of his presentations in his meetings? From a newspaper report, we can see that this presentation was used in meetings in which he was involved:

“Reverends **Parsons**, Martin and Israel, representing the Seventh Day Advent Church, have been in Quincy the past week, and are now holding evening services in a large tent on the vacant lot opposite the school-house. Interest in the meetings is reported to be increasing. They are able and entertaining speakers.... The subjects to-night (**The Eastern Question, or the Turk in Prophecy**) and to-morrow night (The Nations in Prophecy) promises to be fully as interesting as anything in the past meetings, will continue each evening during the week.” Feather River Bulletin, Thursday, July 10, 1902 (tinyurl.com/y2rto2lf).

Because of Elder Parsons’ use of the Eastern Question lecture, he would have most likely understood Ellen White to be confirming the teaching of the Eastern Question that 44 verses had been fulfilled in history and that only the last verse of the eleventh of Daniel was left to be fulfilled and that is was for this reason she stated, **“the prophecy of the eleventh of Daniel has almost reached its complete fulfilment.”**

By writing this statement regarding Daniel 11 on these **four separate occasions**, in the context of what was believed, taught, and published in the Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, in *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, in *Daniel and the Revelation* in regards to the Eastern Question, and knowing what her readers would have most likely understood this statement to mean—is it reasonable to believe that Ellen White understood the biblical interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45 to be the same as what was recorded in the official publications of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of that time?

e. If verse 40 was unfulfilled in 1904 and if the king of the south was **Islam** and the king of the north was papal-led Protestant America and if the Papacy was going to lead America’s military force to destroy the radicalized Islamic nation of Egypt as is taught in the Islam position, and if nothing like this scenario was even on the horizon in 1904 because none of the players were in place, ready to fulfill this interpretation of verse 40, would she have said that **“the eleventh of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfilment”**? Would she have used an Islamic interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45 as the prime exhibit that time was short?

f. If verse 40 was unfulfilled in 1904 and if the king of the south was **atheism** and the king of the north was papal-led Protestant America and if the Papacy was going to unite with America and bring down an atheistic communist nation as is taught in the atheism position, and if nothing like this scenario was even on the horizon in 1904 because none of the players were in place, ready to fulfill this interpretation of verse 40, would she say that **“the eleventh of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfilment”**? Would she have used an atheism interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45 as the prime exhibit that time was short?

g. If Ellen White believed as the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a whole believed in 1904 that Daniel 11:40-44 had already been fulfilled and that the final verse, verse 45, had all its players in place and verse 45 could be quickly fulfilled the moment God gave the green light, if this was what she knew to be the truth regarding these verses, would it make sense for her to use this prophecy as the prime evidence that we had no time to lose, that the end of all things was at hand?

2. **“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.... **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.” Lt. 10a, 1877.

a. Because Ellen White included the lecture on the Eastern Question as being a message of truth and as being “good seed” for the people that had listened to the lecture that Sunday, does that indicate that she herself believed that the Eastern Question in Bible prophecy lecture was teaching the truth on Daniel 11:40-45?

3. “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.**” Ms. 189 (December 25, 1898). Here is a newspaper report of this very meeting: tinyurl.com/y437vtzs

a. Ellen White wanted what Elder Daniells was about to present to be made plain. Did she know what he was going to say? The plain reading of this statement is that Elder Daniells was going to be teaching *truth* that evening when he presented his lecture on the Eastern Question. This is the second time that Ellen White called the Eastern Question *truth*, the first being 21 years earlier when Elder Uriah Smith presented this same lecture in 1877. This lecture was presented at many of the camp meeting evangelistic endeavors from the 1870s through the early 1920s, and it was included in what Ellen White characterized as “truth.” It was truth that had power to open the eyes, ears, and even mouths of outsiders, as we find in this next statement:

4. “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.**” Lt. 55, 1884.

a. 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—the leader of Turkey planting the tabernacles of his palace in Jerusalem, then coming to his end, followed by the close of probation and the great time of trouble.

b. When Ellen White wrote, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that “Elder Smith **spoke with great clearness**,” she is not commenting on the audio quality or the acoustics of the meeting hall. No, her inspired statement—“**spoke with great clearness**”—is a comment regarding the **great biblical clarity/clearness** of the **spoken content** of Elder Smith’s prophetic presentation on the Eastern Question. Would God have allowed His messenger to give this high-level endorsement—“spoke with great clearness”—if God knew that what Elder Smith presented was a false and misleading interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45? If Elder Smith had presented the “Age to Come” prophetic lecture, God would never have allowed her to pen those words, “Elder Smith spoke with great clearness.” Instead she would have written, “He has been befogged with the Age-to-Come, and as there is not the least harmony between the Age-to-Come theory and the third angel’s message...” (1T 333). Ellen White was not shy about confronting teachers of false prophecy. If the Eastern Question was a false prophetic interpretation, I don’t believe that she would have remained silent. It cannot be said of one who is presenting to the public a false interpretation of prophecy that he is speaking “with great clearness.”

This statement appears to be a resounding endorsement of the Eastern Question. If we believe that God has spoken to His church through His messenger, Ellen White, should not this statement alone settle all debate as to the correct interpretation of the last six verses of Daniel 11? If not, why not?

Questions on Ellen White's Multiple Endorsements of Uriah Smith's book: *Daniel and the Revelation*

Here are the charges that Louis Were leveled against Uriah Smith's book, *Daniel and the Revelation*:

"His presentation that Turkey is the king of the north (Dan 11) and that, Armageddon refers to a military battle in Palestine is a part of the **Jesuit-fostered system of interpretation**—the counterfeit of the Spirit of Prophecy teaching concerning 'the final conflict.'" *The Truth Concerning Mrs. E. G. White, Uriah Smith, and The King of The North*, page 10.

"The most wonderful teaching that our Lord Jesus is preciously near to the Christian in his struggles with the powers of darkness, giving him victory now and in the final conflict, is hidden from those who believe that Turkey is the king of the north and that Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-16) refers to a military war." *The Truth Concerning Mrs. E. G. White, Uriah Smith, and The King of The North*, page 10.

I (John Witcombe) gave a presentation in support of Uriah Smith and his book at the Daniel 11 Prophecy Conference in October 2020 (<https://youtu.be/yM8K4JV1FiU>) and here are two YouTube responses to this presentation that represent the thinking of many:

"Wow that was very moving. I will have to dust off my copy of *Daniel and the Revelation*. **I had dismissed it thinking it was full of error.**"

"Very surprised that the pastor would have allowed this kind of message in his church.... As you wouldn't have allowed an anti-Trinitarian or any other **error** to be taught side by side with your scholars, you should not have allowed this message either. This message was not presented as "one of many" possible interpretations, but rather it was presented as if it were fact and Biblical truth."

Both of these comments were made by church members who have been affected by the influence of Louis Were and were thus led to mistrust the book, *Daniel and the Revelation*.

5. "The interest in *Daniel and the Revelation* is to continue as long as probationary time shall last. God used the author of this book as a channel through which to communicate light to direct minds to the truth. **Shall we not appreciate this light, which points us to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, our King?"** Ms174-1899.

a. It says: God channeled prophetic truth through Uriah Smith. Is God telling us in this statement that He Himself is assuming the responsibility for ensuring that the author of *Daniel and the Revelation* will direct the reader's mind to a true understanding on the prophecies that point us to the coming of Jesus?

b. Does the prophecy of Daniel 11:45 qualify as a prophecy that points us to the coming of Jesus on account of its direct connection with Daniel 12:1, 2?

c. Does God authorize me or any committee of men to select which prophetic commentary in Smith's book is channeled light from God on lines of prophecy that point to the second coming of Jesus and which prophetic commentary received no light from God and is therefore false prophetic commentary?

6. "*Daniel and Revelation*, *Great Controversy*, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, and *Desire of Ages* should now go to the world. The grand instruction contained in *Daniel and Revelation* has been eagerly perused by many in Australia. This book has been the means of bringing many precious souls to a knowledge of the truth. **Everything that can be done should be done to circulate *Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation*. I know of no other book that can take the place of this one. It is God's helping hand." MS 76, 1901.**

"In the *Desire of Ages*, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, and in *Daniel and the Revelation*, there is precious instruction. These books must be regarded as of special importance, and **every effort should be made to get them to the people.**" Letter 229, 1903.

“Especially should the book *Daniel and the Revelation* be brought before people as the very book for this time. This book contains the message which all need to read and understand. Translated into many different languages, it will be a power to enlighten the world.” Ms174-1899.

“The books *Daniel and Revelation* and *The Great Controversy* are the books which above all others should be in circulation now. Give them to the people. Light and truth they must have.” Ms29-1890.

a. What efforts are currently being made by the Seventh-day Adventist Church or by supporting ministries of the church to get Uriah Smith’s book to the people?

7. “Those who are preparing to enter the ministry, who desire to become successful students of the prophecies, will find *Daniel and the Revelation* an invaluable help. They need to understand this book. **It speaks of past, present, and future, laying out the path so plainly that none need err therein.** Those who will diligently study this book will have no relish for the cheap sentiments presented by those who have a burning desire to get out something new and strange to present to the flock of God. **The rebuke of God is upon all such teachers.** They need that one teach them what is meant by godliness and truth. The great, essential questions which God would have presented to the people are found in *Daniel and the Revelation*. There is found solid, eternal truth for this time. Everyone needs the light and information it contains.” Ms174-1899.

a. Louis Were presented to our church a cheap sentiment in his accusation that Uriah Smith’s interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45 was Jesuit-inspired. He offered our members something different for an interpretation of this important prophecy. Might this qualify him for the rebuke of God?

8. “Young men, take up the work of canvassing for *Daniel and the Revelation*. Do all you possibly can to sell this book. Enter upon the work with as much earnestness as if it were a new book. And remember that as you canvass for it, you are to become familiar with the truths it contains. As you ponder these truths, you will receive ideas that will enable you not only to receive light, but to let light shine forth to others in clear, bright rays.” Ms174-1899.

a. We can understand how harmful it would have been for these young men to tell their customers that Smith’s book had it all wrong on a significant prophecy connected with the close of probation. Would this not cast doubt on the correctness of other important prophecies and destroyed their interest in this book?

9. “In some of our **important** books that have been in print for years, and which have brought many to a knowledge of the truth, there may be found matters of **minor** importance that call for careful study and **correction**. Let such matters be considered by those regularly appointed to have the oversight of our publications. Let not these brethren, nor our canvassers, nor our ministers magnify these matters in such a way as to lessen the influence of these good soul-saving books.... Satan and all his hosts are on the battlefield. ***The enemy of our souls* has acted the part of a busy agent in presenting the thought that many of our books now in print are in need of general revision**. He would be glad to have our brethren receive the impression that **many changes** must be made. He would delight to insinuate questioning and doubt into the minds of many of our people.” Ms. 11, July 31, 1910.

a. Could we include the book, *Daniel and the Revelation* as one of the important books of which Ellen White is speaking?

b. If we are saying that verses 36 through 45 in Daniel 11, in Uriah Smith’s book are not presenting the correct interpretation of this prophecy, that would mean that 28 pages (8,748 words) of this important book would need to be torn out and a complete rewrite of these verses be undertaken. Would this constitute a **minor correction** or a **general revision** of these prophecies? If it would represent a general revision, who would be the “busy agent” suggesting this thought that this portion of the book needs to be rewritten?

The Daniel 11 River

Daniel 11 is the longest stream of prophetic events in the Bible. It ends in a prophecy that is directly connected to a most important event in the great controversy—the close of human probation. Did God give to His church an understanding of this last verse, Daniel 11:45, back in the formative years of this remnant movement? I believe the answer can be found in a statement Ellen White wrote in 1899.

“The interest in *Daniel and the Revelation* is to continue as long as probationary time shall last. God used the author of this book as a channel through which to communicate light to direct minds to the truth.”
Ms, 174, 1899.

The reason why interest in *Daniel and the Revelation* is to continue as long as probationary time shall last is because God used the author of this book as a channel through which to communicate light to direct our minds to the true prophetic interpretation of all the major streams of prophecy found in Daniel and in Revelation which he then recorded in his book.

Do you realize what this means to God’s church? It means that we can speak with authority and with one voice on all the major lines of prophecy. Let me illustrate what it means for God to have channeled light in order that our minds might be directed to the truth.

Imagine that Daniel 11:1-45 is a river that flows through the landscape of historical events that are to take place on planet earth. This river is going to end up at a specific event which is brought to view in Daniel 11:45. There is no way that Uriah Smith and his group of “able Bible students” could have, on their own, directed this river to its intended destination. God had to step in and use Uriah Smith as a channel through which to communicate light which divinely directed this prophetic river to its true destination.

God did not write the commentary on this chapter. He channeled light on these prophecies to a human agent who would then write out this commentary so that His church could know for certain where this river of prophetic truth would end up. Because this channeled light passed through a faulty human agent, there may very well be some boulders in the river that will create some white water rapids, thus obscuring a minor prophetic point along this river. But a boulder here and there in a river bed does not change the course of that river. As more light flows from God through His servants as they apply prayerful study to this chapter, increased understanding will come and if any “Smith boulders” are found, they can be blasted out of the river so that it will flow more smoothly. But this new light will not change the course of this river. Removing a boulder from a river does not affect the river’s destination. God set the course of this river of prophetic truth through his servant, Uriah Smith. Because the prophetic truth in this chapter was channeled by God Himself, we can be 100% certain that the river is running in the right course to its appointed destination.

In the mid-20th century, Louis Were decided that it wasn’t God who channeled the prophetic views on Daniel 11 but that it was the Jesuits who influenced Uriah Smith to send this river to a Turkey destination. So Louis Were erected a Were Dam around verse 36 to stop the river’s flow. Then he cut through the bank of the river bed and redirected the river down a different channel that took it to a papal destination. Others have followed his example and have erected dams in a variety of places in this chapter to redirect this river to arrive at a half a dozen different places. In doing this, they have produced a swamp of confusion.

My mission is to dismantle the Were dam with the truth that was originally channeled by God and then watch this river once again flow in the direction that God originally channeled it to go through His servant, Uriah Smith. There might be some folk who won’t be happy with anyone messing with Were Dam, but it’s too late in the day to be building dams on the great prophetic waterways of Daniel and Revelation!

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Questions on the Eastern Question

1. How does one reconcile Ellen White's acceptance of the Eastern Question as an appropriate evangelistic topic with her clear counsel against preaching on the news of the day?

Consider the following counsel:

"The work of keeping before the people the common things transpiring around us, the news of the day, is not the work of present truth." (E. G. White, Manuscript 95, 1898, par. 6)

"The long accounts of the war can be obtained in any political or daily paper. It is not the business of the householder, whom God has appointed, to bring before the people subjects that may be found in the publications of the world." (E. G. White, Manuscript 95, 1898, par. 4)

"The Lord has given to every man his work, and to those whom He has placed in positions of responsibility, either in writing or in speaking, He says, 'Your work is to preach the Word.'" (E. G. White, Manuscript 95, 1898, par. 5)

Just four months after giving that instruction, Ellen White wrote,

"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." (E. G. White, Manuscript 189, 1898, par. 9)

Since the Eastern Question at that time was certainly "the common things transpiring around us, the news of the day", a subject "that may be found in the publications of the world", how can we explain Ellen White's apparent acceptance of Elder Daniells' choice of topics? Had she forgotten in those four months that our ministers were not supposed to be presenting the news of the day? Or was it actually okay for him to speak about that news because it qualified under the following guidelines:

"Let us confine our public efforts to the presentation of the important lines of truth on which we are united, and on which we have clear light." (Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 167)

In that statement are laid out three criteria for determining if a subject is appropriate for the pulpit. First, it must be an "important line of truth." Second, it must be something "on which we are united." And third, it must be a matter "on which we have clear light." If the Eastern Question did not meet each of those criteria, it should have been left out of the evangelistic series altogether.

"There are many questions treated upon that are not necessary for the perfection of the faith. We have no time for their study." (Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 163)

"Matters of vital importance have been plainly revealed in the Word of God. These subjects are worthy of our deepest thought. But we are not to search into matters on which God has been silent." (Selected Messages, Book 1, p. 173)

In that last statement we find the ultimate test to apply to a potential evangelistic topic. Is the subject "plainly revealed in the Word of God", or is it a matter "on which God has been silent"? If today's scholars are right, the Eastern Question cannot be found in Daniel 11. Therefore it is a matter on which God has been silent.

Elder Daniells believed that his topic was plainly revealed in the Word of God. He was presenting Daniel 11:40-45 in the context of the Eastern Question. So if that is not what those verses are talking about, Daniells and his colleagues had no business preaching about it at all. Yet Ellen White spoke only favorably of these presentations. As Elder Smith in 1884 was preparing to present this subject at an evening meeting, Mrs. White was delighted:

“This evening he speaks on the Eastern question. I feel so grateful that Brother Smith is not lost to the cause. He seems fully and thoroughly united with us.” (E. G. White, Letter 55, 1884, par. 6.)

If Elder Smith was as off in his understanding as today’s scholars claim he was, then Ellen White herself was completely caught up in the deception.

The only justification these men could have for preaching on the news of the day would be if that news actually was a part of the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. For the prophet wrote:

“Let all have more to teach, to write, to publish, in regard to those things that are now to be fulfilled.” (Counsels to Writers and Editors, p. 13)

“Let no time be lost in dwelling on those things that are not essential, and that have no bearing upon the present necessities of the people. . . . They need to know that the signs of the times are fulfilling.” (Ibid., p. 14)

“I saw that the last-day signs should be brought out clearly.” (Ibid., p. 15)

“By pen and voice we are to sound the proclamation, showing their [the three angels’ messages] order, and the application of the prophecies that bring us to the third angel’s message. . . . These messages we are to give to the world in publications, in discourses, showing in the line of prophetic history the things that have been, and the things that will be.” (Ibid., p. 27)

The reason the brethren were preaching about the Eastern Question was because they were obeying the counsel to proclaim the important events that are to be found in the line of prophetic history. And Ellen White’s affirmation of the subject as an appropriate evangelistic topic confirms that fact.

2. To what prophecy may we apply Ellen White’s statement in *The Great Controversy*, p. 594?

“In the prophecies the future is opened before us as plainly as it was opened to the disciples by the words of Christ. The events connected with the close of probation and the work of preparation for the time of trouble, are clearly presented. But multitudes have no more understanding of these important truths than if they had never been revealed.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 594.

Where does the Bible clearly present the events connected with the close of probation? There are a number of places where the Bible talks about events that we know precede the close of probation. But how would a person connect those events with the close of probation unless the Bible made that connection? If the connection is not clear, it cannot be said that the events connected are clearly presented. So we’re looking for clear passages that specifically make that connection.

Revelation 22:11 tells us exactly what Jesus will say when probation closes. But it does not present the events connected with that pronouncement.

Revelation chapters 13-15 describe events leading up to the close of probation. But a bit of interpretation is required in order to understand the identity of the beast and his image and his mark. So this passage doesn’t seem to open the future “as plainly as it was opened to the disciples by the words of Christ.” Ellen White explains what she is referring to there:

“Before His crucifixion the Saviour explained to His disciples that He was to be put to death and to rise again from the tomb, and angels were present to impress His words on minds and hearts.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 594.

Notice the clarity of Christ’s words: “The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again.” Matthew 17:22, 23. He couldn’t have said it any clearer than that. He used

no symbols, no figurative language, no typology. He just outright said it in plain language. And according to Ellen White, that is how clearly the prophecies present the events connected with the close of probation. But there is nothing in Revelation that speaks quite so plainly and directly when it comes to events connected with the close of probation.

Matthew 25:10 makes a reference to the close of probation. But this is couched in a parable, and the world events connected with it are not clearly presented (“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.”).

As we search the Bible, there seems to be only one place where Ellen White’s statement can possibly apply. And that is Daniel 11:45 - 12:1. In Daniel 12:1 it says, “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great Prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was.” There can be no misunderstanding as to who the great Prince is which standeth for us, for there is only one Mediator between God and men. This verse can only describe the cessation of His intercessory work. We call that the close of probation.

The words “at that time” make it clear that the immediately preceding verse reveals the events connected with the close of probation. The king of the north (11:40) will plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain (v. 45). Then he will come to his end, and none shall help him. And at that time, probation will close.

There is no other place in scripture that says “at that time” in reference to the close of probation. This is the clearest signpost in the Bible to tell us exactly when probation will close. So the important question then is, Does Daniel 11:45 present the events connected with the close of probation “as plainly as [the future] was opened to the disciples by the words of Christ”? If we believe that the language of verse 45 is symbolic or figurative or typological, the answer to that question has to be No. In that case, there would be no place in the Bible where the events connected with the close of probation are stated as clearly as Jesus outlined the future to His disciples.

But if we believe what Ellen White says, then there has to be some place in the Bible where those events are stated in straightforward language, just as plainly as were the words of Christ to His disciples. And since Daniel 12:1 says, “at that time...,” the best way to resolve this problem is to accept the fact that Daniel 11:45 is straightforward, plain language describing exactly what will happen just before probation closes. No symbols. No figurative language. No need to read anything else into it. When those words are literally fulfilled as written, probation will close. Only in this way can Ellen White’s statement mean exactly what it says.

But the popular figurative interpretations of this scripture have resulted in “multitudes” having “no more understanding of these important truths than if they had never been revealed.”

Pastor Ken LeBrun

Now that you have had a chance to answer for yourself these questions, what do you think—did Ellen White endorse the Eastern Question? If you conclude that she did, is it possible that this conclusion could bring us into unity on Daniel 11:40-45? Our pioneers received help from Ellen White and they came into perfect harmony:

“When they came to the point in their study where they said, ‘We can do nothing more,’ the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me...” *Selected Messages* vol. 1, p. 206.

“On some occasions the Spirit of God would come upon me, and difficult portions were made clear through God’s appointed way, **and then there was perfect harmony.**” *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 25.

“God has, in that Word, promised to give **visions in the ‘last days’**; not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, **and to correct those who err from Bible truth.**” *Early Writings*, p. 78.