

Armageddon
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Did Our Pioneers Believe in a Mystical Spiritual View?
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At my ordination W. A. Spicer read the charge. "Preach the word... for the time will come when they shall not endure sound doctrine." I recall that old Pastor Spicer looked into my eyes as he repeated emphatically "For the time has come when they shall not endure sound doctrine."

Therefore "Preach the Word."

Through the depression years I earned my way through college selling our books, mainly Pr. Spicer's book "Our Day in the Light of Prophecy." in his day Pr. Spicer was probably the most read and best loved pastor in our world field. He was an inspiring pioneer. Born in 1865, into a Seventh-day Baptist home, he early became an S.D.A. At 16 he worked as a call-boy in the original Battle Creek Sanitarium. Later he was secretary to Dr. J. H. Kellogg. Then in England he was secretary to Steven N. Haskell. For years he was secretary of the General Conference and then President from 1922 - 1940. He wrote for the Review and Herald for over 50 years. Pr. Spicer was not only a pioneer, but also he probably knew more about the older pioneers than any other. He worked with Sister White for 44 years. No better could speak for the pioneers?

We should note this because we have the inspired instruction –

"God has given me light regarding our periodicals. What is it? - He has said that the dead are to speak. How? Their works shall follow them. We are to repeat the words of the pioneers in our work, who knew what it cost to search for the truth as for hidden treasure, and who labored to lay the foundation of our work." C.W. p. 28

"One by one these pioneers are passing away. The word given me is, Let that which these men have written in the past be reproduced," C.W. p. 28.

Our SDA Encyclopedia informs us that prior to the 1850s little or nothing appeared in the Review and Herald on the "Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty."

In 1852, in the Review and Herald, G.W. Holt stated that the seven last plagues were "real and literal" after quoting -

REVELATION 16:12 "And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared."

Holt declared "This doubtless will be literal."

Uriah Smith wrote a series in the Review and Herald, from June 3, 1862 to February 3, 1863. These clearly showed a literal and real conflict. Likewise wrote W. A. Spicer before the first World War, also W. H. Branson in the Review and Herald in 1913, and F. M. Wilcox six years before the first World War. S. N. Haskell wrote the same. To all these men Armageddon was very real and literal. Likewise C. M. Snow, then G. B. Starr in 1914 and also A. O. Tait, W. W. Prescott, R. C. Porter, A. G. Daniels and C. B. Haynes. A. T. Jones of 1888 fame taught a literal Armageddon.

Every one of these pioneers certainly believed in a real, literal conflict of Armageddon. The only exception that I know of was James White. He was nervous about unfulfilled prophecy. He died in 1881 at 60 years of age. On Bible Prophecy he wrote little and died before the great fulfillment of this crisis hour.

When F. D. Nichols was Editor of the Review and Herald, and W. A. Spicer was an Associate Editor, Spicer wrote the following editorial. Note it carefully for it reveals what the pioneers thought and taught. This is written by one who certainly knew first hand the pioneers and he writes clearly and convincingly.

Armageddon “The Battle of That Great Day”

FROM earliest times following 1844 the Spirit of prophecy had begun to describe the scenes pictured in the prophecy of Revelation 16. The “battle of that great day” was made a very real event of the future to our pioneer believers.

A striking view of these things was given to this movement by Ellen G. Harmon, of Maine, a young girl only just past seventeen years. Under date of February 15, 1846, Miss Harmon (later Mrs. Ellen G. White) wrote to a little paper that had printed her first vision:

“About four months since [which would be October, 1845], I had a vision of events, all in the future. And I saw the time of trouble such as never was. Jesus told me it was the time of Jacob's trouble, and that we should be delivered out of it by the voice of God. Just before we entered it, we all received the seal of the living God. Then I saw the four angels cease to hold the four winds. And I saw famine, pestilence, and sword, nation rose against nation and the whole world was in confusion.” - Day Star (Cincinnati, Ohio), March 14, 1846.

Well we know that this was no description of any spiritualized mystical conflict. It was an actual clash of last-day nations. Our pioneers wrote of things-in-plain matter-of-fact language for plain matter-of-fact people.

The View that Halted James White

This view of October, 1845 is evidently the view that halted James White in Massachusetts that very October. It changed the current of his life. Having recovered from the bewildering disappointment of October 22, 1844, when the Lord did not appear, young James White was out again in evangelistic work early in 1845. Later that year, apparently, he had joined a group who had concluded that the (late October 22, 1844, set for the ending of the period of Daniel 8:14, should have been October, 1845. In his first published tract, of 1847, he wrote of this:

“It is well known that many were expecting the Lord to come at the seventh month, 1845, [the seventh being our October, by the Jewish calendar]. That Christ would then come we firmly believed. A few days before the time passed, I was at Fairhaven, and Dartmouth, Massachusetts, with a message on this point of time. At this time Ellen [Harmon] was with the band at Carver, Massachusetts, where she saw in vision, that we should be disappointed, and that the saints must pass through the 'time of Jacob's trouble,' which was future. Her view of Jacob's trouble was entirely new to us, as well as herself.” - A Word to the “Little Flock” (1847) page 22.

Thus, at the exact time of need the agent of the gift was given the view that turned James White's thoughts squarely about. Our pioneer leader began to see that a work was to be done before the end. We can easily see also how this view of October, 1845, quoted from the Day Star, influenced James White's pen as he wrote the opening notes for the first page of the Present Truth of July, 1849. The young editor wrote:

“For months I have felt burdened with the duty of writing, and publishing the present truth for the scattered flock; but the way has not been opened for me to commence the work until now. I tremble at the word of the Lord, and the importance of this time. What is done to spread the truth must be done quickly. The four Angels are holding the angry nations in check but a few days, until the saints are sealed; then the nations will rush like the rushing of many waters. Then it will be too late to spread before precious souls, the present saving, living truths of the Holy Bible.”

And after all, the time has not been so long as Heaven measures time for this world of passing empires and dying generations. All who keep in touch with the writings of the Spirit of prophecy will recall that again and again references are made to the preparations among the nations for the battle of the great day described in Revelation 16. The graphic description given us in chapter 39 of The Great Controversy, entitled “The Time of Trouble,” speaks as though written in our own day. How that book stirred us as it first came out in 1884. I got a copy in the evening, and stayed up all night reading it. It never seems old in telling the events before us. William A. Spicer. Review and Herald, January, 1951

In the face of these facts” why do many in recent years maintain our pioneers taught that Armageddon is only a spiritual mystical conflict. Such a claim, to me, appears empty, foolish and untrue. The evidence on the other side is so overwhelming and abundant that I can only give a little of the abundant supply.

In the Review & Herald, March 11, 1954 W. E. Read, Chairman of the Biblical Research Institute wrote – “For many years, in

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fact ever since the beginning of our work, we have taught that the battle of Armageddon, in some way or other, would involve the nations of earth in a last and final clash of arms. This position, we believe is well sustained by the Word of God."

Pastor Robert Hare, the first student at the old Battle Creek College from this Division (and probably the best loved Bible Teacher that Avondale ever had), on hearing a sermon on the idea that "the kings of the east" were Christ and the Angels, wrote -

"I would style it a polished romance that has taken up days and years of time to no purpose. How a man can have spent the days and years that he has over that thing only to produce a piece of moon shine, I do not know."

His reference to Japan and the Eastern powers is interesting, but quite unnecessary so far as our message goes. But his conclusion that the 'Kings of the East' represent Christ and His angels is the most far-fetched and worthless piece of word-painting that I have ever found in literature. I wish you could galvanize the man into a third angel's message man. He has good powers, but in this venture they have all been misapplied.

It cannot be that the Euphrates or any other thing will be a barrier to Christ and His angels when He comes to gather His people."

Sister White in 1900 wrote:

"John writes: 'I beheld and heard the voices of the angels round about the throne.' Angels were united in the work of Him who had broken the seals and taken the book. Four mighty angels hold back the powers of this earth till the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads. The nations of the world are eager for conflict; but they are held in check by the angels. When this restraining power is removed, there will come a time of trouble and anguish. Deadly instruments of warfare will be invented. Vessels, with their living cargo, will be entombed in the great deep. All who have not the spirit of truth will unite under the leadership of Satanic agencies. But they are to be kept under control till the time shall come for the great battle of Armageddon. Angels are belting the world, refusing Satan his claim to supremacy, made because of the vast multitude of his adherents. We hear not the voices, we see not with the natural sight the work of these angels. But their hands are linked about the world, and with sleepless vigilance they are keeping the armies of Satan at bay till the sealing of God's people shall be accomplished." – Ellen G. White letter 79, 1900 (May 10, 1900.)

Testimonies, Volume 1, page 268.

"I was shown the inhabitants of earth in the utmost confusion. War, bloodshed, privation, want, famine, and pestilence were abroad in the land.. Once more the inhabitants of the earth were presented before me; and again everything was in the utmost confusion. Strife, war, and bloodshed, with famine and pestilence raged everywhere. Other nations were engaged in this war and confusion. War caused famine, want and bloodshed caused pestilence. And then men's hearts failed them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth."

Testimonies, Volume 9, page 17

"The spirit of war is stirring the nations from one end of the earth to the other."

Testimonies, Volume 9, page 14

"The world is stirred with the spirit of war."

Testimonies, Volume 9, page 26

"The nations are angry with one another. Widespread preparations are being made for war."

Testimonies, Volume 6, page 408.

"When God shall bid His angels loose the winds, there will be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture."

The Great Controversy, page 642.

"Concerning the cessation of the contest among the nations we read that at the coming of the Lord the derisive jests have ceased. Lying lips are hushed into silence. The clash of arms, the tumult of battle, 'with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood,' is stilled."

In 1946 I had the privilege of associating with the most successful of our evangelists. Every one of them, without exception believed and taught a literal Armageddon. May I mention but a few.

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C. T. Everson. In my thinking Everson was the greatest evangelist this denomination ever produced.

Robert Boothby. I think Brother Boothby moved me in his appeals more than any evangelist. His devotion amazed me.

H.M.S. Richards. He inspired and helped hundreds of young evangelists.

F. Detamore. This tireless servant of Christ inspired me. His devotion made me feel like a worm in comparison.

These, and a hundred more I could name, all believed and taught a literal Armageddon. Not one believed in a mystical, spiritual Armageddon.

I pause at the name of Pastor Detamore, for I want to give you a few statements in his Week-of Prayer Reading. This reading was for Sunday, November 16, 1958, and appeared in the Review and Herald. Here are a few extracts:

“Do we take the prophecies as seriously as we should? Do we accept them as literally as we must if we are to be alerted before it is too late? Is there not a danger that we try to spiritualize away some of the prophetic signs and warnings until our trumpets fail to give a certain sound? Is not our trumpet warning changing to a security lullaby?”

“Habakkuk seemed more concerned how he would answer the conservatives and the critics of his message than he was with the importance of sounding the warning. He was afraid his straight-forward message might not appear to be water-tight with proofs and arguments to satisfy the conservatives and the so-called scholars. 'What shall I answer when I am argued with?' But notice God's reply. Habakkuk, don't worry what you will answer when you are argued with. Your part is to give the prophecy. They may explain it away or spiritualize it out of any specific meaning; they may say that time has failed, but at the end it shall speak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”

“It is high time that we as a people give the prophetic trumpet a certain sound. The world is in chaos and confusion. What an hour to be giving the old fashioned prophetic Advent truths! What a setting in which to be resounding the trumpet alarm of prophecy!”

“Many these days often quote from unpublished testimonies. But I am more concerned about the published testimonies. What a full warning has been given us as a people! Let us re-read some of these solemn warnings, challenges, and appeals as Inspiration speaks: 'Transgression has almost reached its limit. Confusion fills the world, and a great terror is soon to come upon human beings. The end is very near. We who know the truth should be preparing for what is soon to break upon the world as an overwhelming surprise.' - Testimonies, Volume 8, page 28.

“Regarding the terrible danger of liberal and modernistic or fanciful attitudes toward prophecy among us and the danger of wandering from the old paths of Advent prophecies, we hear this almost agonizing appeal from the servant of the Lord:

'Who knows but that the preachers who are faithful, firm, and true may be the last who shall offer the gospel of peace to our unthankful churches? It may be that the destroyers are already training under the hand of Satan and only wait the departure of a few more standard-bearers to take their places, and with the voice of the false prophet cry, Peace, peace, when the Lord hath not spoken peace. I seldom weep, but now I find my eyes blinded with tears; they are falling upon my paper as I write. It may be that ere long all prophesying among us will be at an end, and the voice which has stirred the people may no longer disturb their carnal slumbers.' Testimonies, Volume 5, page 77.

“Really, isn't it about time we quit worrying so much about what others think about us and cease our fanciful prophetic interpretations and get back to the old paths? The world needs yes, and we need a message of prophecy more than a message of psychology at an hour like this. The world needs a Savior more than a psychiatrist.”

“We are standing upon the threshold of great and solemn events. Prophecies are fulfilling. Strange, eventful history is being recorded in the books of heaven. Everything in our world is in agitation. There are wars and rumors of wars. The nations are angry, and the time of the dead has come, that they should be judged: Events are changing to bring about the day of God, which hastens greatly. Only a moment of time, as it were, yet remains. But while already nation is rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, there is not now a general engagement. As yet the four winds are held until the servants of God shall be sealed in their foreheads. Then the powers of earth will marshal their forces for the last great battle.” Testimonies Volume 6, page 14.

“There is to be no change in the general features of our work. It is to stand as clear and distinct as prophecy has made it. We are to enter into no confederacy with the world, supposing that by so doing we could accomplish more. If any stand in the way, to

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hinder the advancement of the work in the lines that God has appointed, they will displease God. No line of truth that has made the Seventh-day Adventist people what they are, is to be weakened. We have the old landmarks of truth, experience, and duty, and we are to stand firmly in defense of our principles, in full view of the world." Testimonies, Volume 6, page 17.

"New meaning now becomes evident in such old statements as this: "The great conflagrations and the disasters by sea and land that have visited our country, were the special providences of God, a warning of what is about to come upon the world. God would show man that He can kindle upon his idols a fire that water cannot quench. The great general conflagration is but just ahead, when all this wasted labor of life will be swept away in a night and day." Testimonies, Volume 4, page 49."

"The restraining Spirit of God is even now being withdrawn from the world. Hurricanes, storms, tempests, fire and flood, disasters by sea and land, follow each other in quick succession. Science seeks to explain all these. The signs thickening around us, telling of the near approach of the Son of God, are attributed to any other than the true cause. Men cannot discern the sentinel angels restraining the four winds that they shall not blow until the servants of God are sealed; but when God shall bid His angels loose the winds, there will be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture."

"At this challenging Week of Prayer in 1959 let these words of inspiration come as a personal challenge: 'Could the curtain be rolled back, could you discern the purpose of God and the judgments that are about to fall upon a doomed world, could you see your own attitude, you would fear and tremble for your own souls and for the souls of your fellow men. Earnest prayers of heart-rending anguish would go up to heaven. You would weep between the porch and the altar, confessing your spiritual blindness and backsliding.' Testimonies, Volume 6, page 408."

The Seven Last Plagues are Real.

"When Christ ceases His intercession in the sanctuary, the unmingled wrath threatened against those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark, will be poured out. The plagues upon Egypt when God was about to deliver Israel, were similar in character to those more terrible and extensive judgments which are to fall upon the world just before the final deliverance of God's people." Great Controversy, page 627, 628.

It is a literal sore that plagues those who have the Mark of the Beast. To talk of spiritual boils is absurd. It is literal blood into which the sea and rivers are turned. What is mystical, spiritual blood, that the lost drink. Literal heat, and literal darkness of the fourth and fifth plagues.

The seventh plague has a literal temple, and a literal throne, literal thunder and lightening, a literal earthquake with literal mountains being leveled. Also literal hail, "every stone about the weight of a talent." This tremendous series of literal events, climaxes with the literal, visible bodily return of our real literal, loving Lord.

We reject the spiritual, secret, invisible, advent of nominal Christendom's futuristic silent, invisible coming of Christ. Mystical, spiritual conflicts, suit lukewarm followers of this "new theology."

We need to return to the "old paths."

JEREMIAH 6:16 "Thus said the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein."

The "old paths," the teachings of the pioneers, "is the good way and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls." May you find that rest for your soul.

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