

Q. + A.

Q. & A. File No. 25-8-6

F. Woudenberg - 2

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*Sabbath funerals*

The same was true of the funeral of Sister White. She was well known and there were many among our believers who wished to attend her funeral. By holding this sacred service of the church on the Sabbath, four thousand of our believers were able to attend. The services were very simple and there was no question raised as to the propriety of the funeral on the Sabbath. I repeat, it is only in more recent years that funerals have become such involved and complicated affairs, and the general counsel has been given that it is well to hold them on another day, but there is no absolute rule in this matter.

February 2, 1959

Mr. F. Woudenberg  
2e. Jan, Steenstraat 15-III  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Dear Pastor Woudenberg:

Several weeks ago we received from you an inquiry concerning Sister White's attitude toward funerals on the Sabbath, and the fact that Elder James White's funeral was held on the Sabbath and that her funeral was held on the Sabbath. You tell us that a knowledge of these facts has led to some concern among some of our believers there in the Netherlands. I am sorry to learn this. I think that this is a matter which our believers will have to study from the standpoint of principles involved. A funeral is a service of the church, and it has never been considered by Seventh-day Adventists to be out of place to conduct such a service on the Sabbath day.

It is only in recent years that funerals have become such involved affairs, calling for many lines of activity and business contacts. It is under these circumstances that the church has been counseling that it is advisable to hold a funeral on some other day than the Sabbath.

Perhaps one of the problems facing our brethren in the Netherlands is a concept of Sabbath observance. The Sabbath is not to be a day of inactivity. You will recall that the Sabbath was the busiest day for the priests. There were duties performed on the Sabbath which from a casual approach would seem could be performed on some other days. For instance, the showbread was made on the Sabbath. You will recall that Christ in His ministry endeavored to keep before men that the Sabbath was a day in which good could be accomplished. The sick could be properly cared for, and so forth.

When we analyze the matter in its fullest breadth, I believe our believers will be able to see that there is no violation of principle in performing such a service of the church on the Sabbath day. Back in the early years there was a death in a very earnest Seventh-day Adventist family. The husband had the funeral on the Sabbath. Some of his brethren criticized him for doing so. Sister White wrote that she was shown in vision that those who criticized this brother for having the funeral on the Sabbath had made a mistake, and that he should not be subjected to such criticism.

Now back to the funeral of James White. Elder James White was a leader of the church who was well known. There were many in the state of Michigan who were not too far from Battle Creek, who had the privilege of attending his funeral because it was held on the Sabbath, at a time when the men were not employed.



The same was true of the funeral of Sister White. She was well known and there were many among our believers who wished to attend her funeral. By holding this sacred service of the church on the Sabbath, four thousand of our believers were able to attend. The services were very simple and there was no question raised as to the propriety of the funerals on the Sabbath. I repeat, it is only in more recent years that funerals have become much more complicated and involved, and the general counsel has been given that it is well to hold them on another day, but there is no absolute rule in this matter.

Elder Nichol tells me that he received a letter of inquiry from you a day or two ago along this same line, referring to your letter to me and mentioning that I had not replied. I am sorry for the delay. I was of the opinion that I had made a reply, but in checking the matter with our records I find that in this I was mistaken. The pressure of work in our office has been large, and it has been impossible for me to keep up with my correspondence during the past few weeks.

If I can help you further, feel free to write to me again. With the best of wishes, I am

Sincerely your brother,

Arthur L. White, Secretary

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