

2015

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Recommended Citation

Hernandez, Abner F. (2015) "Adventist Eschatological Identity and the Interpretations of the Time Periods of Daniel 12:11-12," *Andrews University Seminary Student Journal*: Vol. 1: No. 1, Article 6.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/aussj/vol1/iss1/6>

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ADVENTIST ESCHATOLOGICAL IDENTITY AND THE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE TIME PERIODS OF DANIEL 12:11-12

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Abstract

In recent years some Seventh-day Adventist scholars began applying the time periods in Dan 12:5-13 to the future. Rejecting the traditional historicist Adventist understanding that places the three and a half times, the 1290 and 1335 days, as prophetic periods already fulfilled in the past, they claim that these time periods should be understood as literal days still to come. Likewise, some Adventist scholars interpret the time periods of Dan 12 as merely a literary device that seems to suggest an apparent “delay” of the time of the end. There are others who think it is not possible to state with certainty the manner in which these prophecies were to be fulfilled or that it is possible to approach these periods from a multi-perspective view of prophetic interpretation. This article describes, analyzes, and evaluates the different interpretations throughout the history of Adventist theology and their impact on the eschatological identity of Adventism.

Keywords: Eschatology, Daniel prophecies, Adventist identity, historicism, Adventist futurism.

Introduction

Adventist interpreters have had a history of disagreements in their attempts to explain the meaning behind the prophetic time periods of 1290 and 1335 in Dan 12:11-12. According to Gerhard Pfandl, the proper interpretation of Dan 12:11-12 constitute one of the ten biggest issues that Seventh-day Adventist theologians are presently contending with.¹ The general consensus that characterizes Adventist interpretations of the 1260 days and 2300 days seems to be absent in the interpretation of the time periods of the 1290 and 1335 days.

The purpose of this study is to describe and evaluate the interpretations and hermeneutical principles used in Dan 12:11-12 among Seventh-day Adventist interpreters with special attention given to major thinkers and proponents, and to

¹Gerhard Pfandl. “Ten Big Ones,” *Adventist Review*, 2004. Online: <http://www.adventistreview.org/2004-1536/story2-1.html> (accessed September 3, 2011)

elucidate the impact of each interpretation for the eschatological identity of the church.

While there are some Adventist interpreters and commentaries that prefer to maintain an undefined position regarding the historical fulfillment of these prophecies,² the present study argues that Adventist interpretations of Daniel 12:11-12 may be categorized into three main approaches. The first approach, symbolic times interpretation, (which is the predominant view among Adventist interpreters) argues in favor of symbolic and historicist interpretation of these prophecies. The second approach (literal times interpretation) defends a literal interpretation of these days, whereas the third (idealist interpretation) proposes that these periods can be connected with several historical events, as well as an ahistorical spiritual lesson regarding the meaning of the days.

The Traditional Historicist Interpretation

Since the Reformation, the time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation generated special attention. A significant group of biblical interpreters approached Daniel's prophetic periods using a historicist methodology.³ In the late years of the 18th century, Thomas Newton in his *Dissertations on the Prophecies*⁴ and John Bacon in his work *Conjectures in Prophecies*⁵ dedicated extensive exegetical work to the prophecies

²For instance, the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* states that the proper interpretation of these prophecies widely depends on the interpretation of the "daily," Francis D. Nichol ed., "A thousand two hundred and ninety days," in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976), 880. See also, C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Daniel for You and Your Family* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1981), 299-304; Edwin R. Thiele, *Outline Studies in Daniel* (Berrien Springs, MI: Emmanuel Missionary College, 1947), 148; G. Arthur Keough, *God and Our Destiny*, Adult Sabbath School Lessons, January–March 1987 (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1986), 96. Clifford R. Goldstein, *The Gospel 1844, and Judgment*, Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, July–September 2006 (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2006).

³See for instance Robert Fleming, *Apocalyptic Key: And Extraordinary Discourse on the Rise and the Fall of Papacy* (Edinburg: Johnstone, Hunter, and Company, 1879); Joseph Mede, *The Works of the Pious and Profoundly-Learned Joseph Mede*, 4th edition (London: Roger Norton, 1677), 717-724; 903-923.

⁴Thomas Newton, *Dissertations on the Prophecies which Have Remarkably Been Fulfilled, and at This Time are Fulfilling in the World*, vol.1 (London: W. Baynes, 1803), 373-378. Although Newton published his work in 1754, it was still very influential during the early decades of 19th century. He was also one of the most influential theologians with a historicist approach to Daniel and Revelation's prophecies during the last decades of the 18th Century.

⁵John Bacon, *Conjectures in Prophecies [microform]: Written in the Fore Part of the Year 1799* (Boston: David Carlisle, 1805). What is important in his pamphlet is the use of "days by years" principle, connecting the prophecy of 1290 and 1335 with Papal apostasy. He also connected the time periods of Daniel 12 with the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14. He dated these

of Dan 12. The new interest in Daniel's prophecies reached its climax in the early years of 19th century in the Millerite movement.⁶ William Miller and a group of itinerant preachers presented the most credible premillennial approach to the time prophecies of Daniel.⁷ Miller developed a series of hermeneutical principles of biblical and prophetic interpretation. His twelfth rule which deals directly with prophetic interpretation is especially important for this study.⁸ According to this rule, a biblical interpreter of Daniel and Revelation's prophecies has to discover the "true historical event for the fulfillment of a prophecy."⁹ Essentially the

periods, apparently following Thomas Newton, from A.D. 606. Another important theologian of the 18th century was John Gill, "The sure performance of prophecy." A sermon preached to the society which support the Wednesday's evening lecture in Great East-Cheap, January 1st, 1755. By John Gill, D.D., London, 1755. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale. Andrews University James White Library. <http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=mlc21040&tabID=T001&docId=CW121731766&ctype=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE>>, accessed June 30, 2014.

⁶For expositors of Daniel and Revelation's prophecies of the early decades of the 19th century see LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vols. 3-4 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1950). Some representative interpreters are, George S. Faber, *The Sacred Calendar of Prophecy: Or A Dissertation of the Prophecies, Which Treat of the Grand of Seven Times, And Especially of the Its Second Moiety or the Latter Three Times and Half* (London: W. E. Painter, 1844); Adam Clark, *Bible Commentary, Daniel, Revelation* (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1826); Edward Irving, *Babylon and Infidelity Foredoomed of God* (Glasgow: Chalmers and Collins, 1826).

⁷The Millerite movement was part of the Second Great Awakening in United States. Most of the theologians and preachers of the Second Great Awakening held a postmillennial view of the biblical prophecies. It seems to me, comparing Miller's works with other prophetic interpretations of the time, that Miller presented an appellate, consistent, and biblical premillennial approach to Daniel and Revelation's prophecies. Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe arrived to a similar conclusion: Miller's "interpretative scheme constituted the first convincing premillennialist challenge to American Protestantism's bland postmillennialism," *Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 206. Indeed, Miller's premillennial views impacted former postmillennialist theologians like Walter Scott, Barton W. Stone and others, see E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 301.

⁸William Miller, "Miller's Letters No. 5: The Bible Its Own Interpreter," *Signs of the Times*, May 15, 1840, 25.

⁹William Miller, *Evidences from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ, about the Year 1843, and his Personal Reign of 1000 Years* (Brandon, VT: Vermont Telegraph Office, 1833), 3-6. He stated, "To know whether we have the true historical event for the fulfillment of a prophecy. If you find every word of the prophecy (after the figures are understood) is literally fulfilled, then you may know that your history is the true event. But if one word lacks a fulfillment, then you must look for another event, or wait its future

interpreter has to compare the biblical meaning with the account of world history to determine the historical event that literally, and completely fulfilled every word of the prophecy. This historicist approach to biblical prophecy marked the eschatological identity of the Millerite movement.

Following the historicist method of prophetic interpretation, Miller connected the beginning of the 1290 and 1335 years with the removal of the “daily sacrifice abomination” which he identified with pagan Rome.¹⁰ He believed that the civil power of Rome would enjoy a total of 666 years of supremacy from 158 B.C. to A.D. 508. From this time, A.D. 508, the 1290 years and 1335 years would end in A.D. 1798 and 1843 respectively.¹¹

The “prophetic chart” developed by Charles Fitch and Apollos Hale accurately summarized, unified, and improved the Millerite positions on the prophetic times of Daniel. LeRoy Froom states that this chart “was a distinct advance over all previous diagrams and charts” primarily because it “corrected certain former inaccuracies, and omitted a number of untenable positions previously held.”¹² Perhaps, the most significant omissions were Miller’s connection of Rev 13 with Dan 11 that directly identified the “daily” with paganism.¹³ Interestingly, this omission somewhat weakened the identification of A.D. 508 as the starting point for these prophecies because the chart does not offer a biblical or historical explanation for its conclusions. Nevertheless, Fitch’s prophetic chart maintained two essential points, first, the year of A.D. 508 as the starting point of the 1290 years and 1335 years, and second, the harmony of these periods with all other prophetic periods in the book of Daniel.

development. For God takes care that history and prophecy doth agree, so that the true, believing children of God may never be ashamed. Ps. xxi. 5. Isa xiv. 17-19. 1 Pet. ii. 6. Rev. xvii. 17. Acts iii. 18.” Miller also assumed other features of historicism like the principle “a day for a year.”

¹⁰Miller, *Evidences*, 24, 30.

¹¹It should be noted that Miller calculated the starting point of these periods by connecting Rev13:18 with Dan 11:31. He assumed that the number of the beast refers to the years that the fourth kingdom would have dominion over Jews and Christians. For him, “pagan Rome becoming the fourth kingdom in 158 years before Christ would cease, 508 years after Christ” (Miller, *Evidences*, 25, 30). J. V. Himes and Josiah Litch, “Synopsis of Miller’s Views,” *Signs of the Times*, January 25, 1843, 148, 149, presented a summary of Miller’s ideas stating “The number 1335 days, from the taking away of Rome Pagan, A. D. 508, to set up Papal Rome, and the reign of Papacy, is 1290 days, which was fulfilled in exactly 1290 years, 1798. This proves that the 1335 days were to be considered years, and that Daniel will stand in his lot in A. D. 1843.”¹¹ Therefore, in 1798, Papal Rome will be broken, leaving 45 years to spread the Gospel in preparation for the second coming and eternity. See J. V. Himes, Josiah Litch, and S. Bliss, eds., “Synopsis of Miller’s Views,” *Signs of the Times*, January 25, 1843, 148, 149.

¹²Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4:734.

¹³Froom, 4:737.

Early Seventh-day Adventist Interpretations

Miller and Millerite preachers' interpretation strongly impacted the Sabbatarian Adventist pioneers and Seventh-day Adventist eschatology. James and Ellen G. White, Joseph Bates, Hiram Edson, and other Sabbatarian Adventists continued defending the accuracy of the 1843 "prophetic chart." In November 1850, referring to this chart Ellen G. White stated, "I have seen that the 1843 chart was directed by the hand of the Lord and that it should not be altered; that the figures were as He wanted them."¹⁴ Hiram Edson, like White, defended the same view about the accuracy of the figures and harmony of the dates in the 1843 chart. In the *Review and Herald* of January 10, 1856, he said:

The advent chart of 1843, without doubt, was arranged in the order of God's counsel . . . there was no mistake in the figures given on the chart for the beginning of the 2300 days, there must also of necessity be, and there was, a harmony of the dates of 1260, the 1290, and the 1335 days with that of the 2300 days. These were all correct.¹⁵

Edson's article is significant for two reasons: first, it shows clearly that the Sabbatarian Adventist pioneers still held the same Millerite view about the beginning and the ending of the 1290 and 1335 days. Second, they continued to link closely the prophetic times of Daniel 12 with the rest of the time prophecies in the book of Daniel. Uriah Smith, for instance, stressed this second point emphasizing that "the first vision with its long period of 2300 years would be

¹⁴This declaration was first published in Ellen G. White, "Dear Brother and Sister," *Present Truth*, November 1, 1850, 87. In this publication, her statement is slightly different, "The Lord showed me that the 1843 chart was directed by his hand and that no part of it should be altered; that the figures were as he wanted them. That his hand was over and hid a mistake in some of the figures, so that none could see it, until his hand was removed." Later this quotation was repeated in Ellen G. White, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (Saratoga Springs, NY: James White, 1851), 61; and Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publ. Assn., 1882), 74. Interestingly the CD Rom, *Ellen G. White Writings: Comprehensive Research Edition* added a note explaining that the commentary about the chart of Ellen G. White "applies to the chart used during 1843 movement, and has special reference to the calculation of the prophetic periods as it appears on that chart."

¹⁵Hiram Edson, "The Time of the Gentiles, And the Deliverance and Restoration of the Remnant of Israel from the Seven Times, or 2520 years of Assyrian or Pagan and Papal Captivity Considered," *Review and Herald*, January 10, 1856, 113. Interestingly, Edson quotes Ellen G. White almost verbatim stating, "It is evident that God saw fit to suffer a mistake in some of the figure on the 1843 chart, but for a wise purpose hid that mistake until the proper time arrived for the mistake to be developed." The reference to "figures" seems to refer to the events that they expected to be fulfilled in relation with the 2300 mornings and evenings of Daniel 8:14.

continually in Daniel's mind, and the other periods mentioned, the 1260, 1290, and 1335 days, would come in merely as subdivisions of that."¹⁶

Modern Adventist Scholarship

Most of the modern Adventist interpreters of Daniel continue, using an exegetical approach, supporting the traditional position of the Adventist pioneers.

William H. Shea, for instance, embraces all the central presuppositions of Adventist historicism. The prophecies of Daniel, he says, "begin in the historical time of the prophet himself and then extend into the future beyond the prophet's day."¹⁷ This approach is used to interpret the 1290 and 1335 days where the arguments are supported through a careful analysis of the structure and context of Dan 12:11-12. Regarding this portion, he states that it is "an epilogue, or an appendix, to the prophecies of 11:2 – 12:4."¹⁸

Shea argues that the structure of Daniel indicates that the time periods always follow the report of the vision.¹⁹ Therefore, the time components are never part of the visions, but they are part of the explanations. Shea further explains that the prophetic times "are connected by the events that they describe . . . they never date new events."²⁰ Consequently, for Shea, the times of Daniel 12 are "dating events that have already been described in Daniel 11."²¹ Shea argues that the union of church and state in A.D. 508 seems to be the correct time as the starting point for these periods, ending in A.D. 1798 and 1843 respectively.²²

In his book, *Daniel: The Seer of Babylon*, Gerhard Pfandl—like Shea before him—uses exegetical arguments to explain the 1290 and 1335 days.²³ Pfandl, however, makes a more extensive analysis. He supports his interpretation through three significant exegetical points. First, there is a notable parallelism between Dan 12:11 and 11:31 indicating that both texts represent the same historical events.

¹⁶Uriah Smith, "The 1335 Days," *Review and Herald*, July 2, 1867, 40. See also Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 323-334.

¹⁷William Shea, *Daniel: A Reader's Guide* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 8, 9.

¹⁸Ibid., 272.

¹⁹William H. Shea, "Time Prophecies of Daniel 12 and Revelation 12-13," in Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Revelation -Book I*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 327-360; William Shea, *Daniel: A Reader's Guide*, 272.

²⁰Shea, 272.

²¹Ibid.

²²William Shea, *Daniel: A Reader's Guide*, 274-276. See also, Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dreams of a Jewish Prince in Exile* (Hagerstown, MD: Pacific Press, 2000), 186-189.

²³Gerhard Pfandl, *Daniel: The Seer of Babylon* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004), 118.

Second, the concept of the *tamid* or “daily” closely links the prophetic passages of Dan 8:11, 11:31, and 12:11. Consequently, the meaning of the previous passage lends meaning to the others. Finally, although the guiding angel did not give Daniel a specific moment for the starting point of the 1335 days, for Pfandl, “the context seems to imply that it began at the same time as the 1290 days.”²⁴

A year after his book was published, Pfandl enlarged and enriched his arguments, presenting a small pamphlet entitled *Time Prophecies in Daniel 12*. In this publication, Pfandl adds (mostly using structural analyses), that Daniel’s prophecies are presented “according to the principle of repetition and enlargement.”²⁵ According to this principle, each vision “is always followed by explanations.”²⁶ In view of this fact, Dan 12:5-13 stands as an “epilogue” or enlargement “to the preceding vision”²⁷ of Dan 11 and not as a “new vision with a new topic.”²⁸ Moreover, he states that the Hebrew words *pala*²⁹ and *tamid*³⁰ also link these final sections with the events of Daniel 11 as a reference to the horrible blasphemies pronounced by the king of the north.³¹ Therefore, on the basis of this observation, Pfandl concludes that the 1290 and 1335 days begin with the conversion of Clovis in A.D. 508 ending the first in A.D. 1798 and the second in A.D. 1843/1844.³²

In summary, the traditional Adventist interpretation argues that the prophecies of Dan 12 should be interpreted using the year by day principle and the historicist principle of hermeneutic. In this manner, the 1290 days and the 1335 days represent an equal amount of years starting in A.D. 508 and ending in A.D. 1798 and 1843 respectively. As we have seen, this approach has been historically supported by a significant number of Adventist scholars from historical and exegetical perspectives. The next section examines and discusses the literal approach to these prophetic times closely.

²⁴Ibid, 119.

²⁵Gerhard Pfandl, *Time Prophecies in Daniel 12*, Biblical Research Institute Releases, no. 5 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 2005), 1.

²⁶Ibid, 2.

²⁷Ibid, 3.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Cf. Dan 11:36 and 12:6.

³⁰Cf. Dan 11:31 and Dan 12:11.

³¹Ibid.

³²Pfandl, *Daniel: The Seer of Babylon*, 119. Another important contribution from an exegetical and historical approach is Frank W. Hardy, “The 1290 and 1335 days of Daniel 12: Past or Future?” in Ron du Preez ed., *Prophetic Principles: Crucial Exegetical, Theological, Historical, and Practical Insights* (Lansing, MI: Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2007), 271-298.

The Literal Times Interpretation

The traditional historicist interpretation remained unchallenged for decades among Adventist biblical scholars, theologians, and laymen. However, a series of recent studies have defunct this interpretation. On the one hand, some Adventist scholars and pastors suggest that these prophetic periods cover a literal period in the past, just a few years after Daniel's death. This approach is known as the Preterist School of prophetic interpretation. On the other hand, in recent times Adventist preachers, scholars, and laymen began to emphasize a new futurist approach as an appropriate interpretation of the 1290 and 1335 days. In this section, I will briefly summarize their positions.

Unfulfilled Preterism

The Preterist School of prophetic interpretation understands that the prophetic fulfillment of the prophecies occurred in the authors' own time or shortly after the author's death. Consequently, the time prophecies of Daniel must be interpreted in the historical context of the prophet. It is important to acknowledge that the Preterist School has made little impact on Adventist prophetic interpretation.³³ However, while rejecting some of presuppositions of the Preterist School, a few Adventist authors believe that Dan 12 was completely fulfilled in the past.³⁴

Early in his career Raymond F. Cottrell seems to have supported the traditional historical interpretation.³⁵ Nevertheless, later, in his extensive analysis

³³The hermeneutical presuppositions of preterism widely disagree with key concepts of Adventist theology in terms of authorship, date, inspiration, and accuracy of the Scriptures. For a brief description of the principal presuppositions of the preterist school see Alden Thompson, "Apocalyptic: Daniel," in *Introducing the Bible: The Old Testament and Intertestamental Literature*, vol. 1, eds. Douglas R. Clark and John C. Brunt (New York: University Press of America, 1997), 527.

³⁴For instance, Carlos Nina Ortiz, a former professor and pastor at Universidad Adventista Dominicana (UNAD), holds the point of view that the 1290 and 1335 days are not connected with the 1260 days and the papal abomination. He connected these periods with the abomination that caused desolation announced by Jesus (Matt 24:15, 16), the imperial army of Rome. Therefore, he maintains that the 1290 and 1335 days are literal days. The starting point of this prophecies is the besiege of Jerusalem by Gaius Cestius Gallus, 14 of Tishri A. D. 66, ending the 1290 days when Titus Flavius Caesar again besieged the city on 14 of Nissan A. D. 70. The 1335 days, in his view, did not end the abomination 45 days later, but only marked its climax. His interpretation, however, lacks biblical and historical support and is erratic in many points. Carlos Nina, *Las profecias de Daniel 12 y el tiempo del fin* [The Prophecies of Daniel 12 and the Time of the End] (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic: Carlos Nina Ortiz, 2004), 89-103.

³⁵Raymond F. Cottrell, *The Prophecies of Daniel and Revelation: Part 1 – Daniel: A Syllabus for use in Lower Division College Classes* (Angwin, CA: Pacific Union College, 1951), 105.

of Dan 10–12, *The Eschatology of Daniel 10 to 12*,³⁶ he defends a contextual interpretation of Dan 12:11-12. For him, a contextual approach indicates that all the prophetic times of Daniel reached their fulfillment in the years directly after the restoration of Israel from the Babylonian exile. In his opinion, the 2300 (reduced to 1150 literal days), 1260, 1290, and 1335 days shared the same point of beginning, namely, “the desecration of the temple and the cessation of its ritual service,” at the hand of the last king of the north.³⁷

According to Cottrell, each of these sequences of literal days concluded also in a number of sequential events. The events started with “the restoration of the temple (the end of the 1150 days), the deliverance of the Jews (end of the 1260 days), the crushing of the tyrant (end of the 1290 days), and finally the inauguration of the everlasting and righteous reign of the Messiah and the resurrection of Daniel and the saints (end of the 1335 days).”³⁸ In this way, he suggests that God expected to fulfill Daniel’s vision by ending the problem of sin, inaugurating his kingdom, and dedicating the everlasting sanctuary. Unfortunately, in his opinion, the vision was not completely fulfilled because of the unfaithful behavior of God’s people.

Future Fulfillment

Alberto R. Timm³⁹ and Gerhard Pfandl⁴⁰ identify the interpretation of a future fulfillment for the prophecies of Daniel 12 as the more challenging interpretation for Adventist eschatology. It is important to note that neither the proponents nor their conclusions about a future fulfillment for these prophecies could be identified with the hermeneutical presuppositions and principles of the futurism school of interpretation. Among the proponents of this future fulfillment are pastors, laymen, and well-known scholars. It is beyond the scope of this paper to trace the line of influence of this new interpretation among Adventist scholars, but it seems that Robert Hauser was one of the first in presenting this idea.⁴¹ This

³⁶Raymond F. Cottrell, *The Eschatology of Daniel 10 to 12*, unpublished manuscript, n.p., 1994 (Raymond F. Cottrell Collection, Bx. 13, Fld. 20), Andrews University, Center for Adventist Research, Berrien Springs, MI.

³⁷Ibid., 114.

³⁸Ibid., 114.

³⁹Alberto R. Timm, “The 1,290 and 1,335 Days of Daniel 12,” online at <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/daniel12.htm>, accessed November 13, 2011.

⁴⁰Pfandl, *Time Prophecies in Daniel 12*, 1.

⁴¹Robert Hauser, *Give Glory to Him: The Sanctuary in the Book of Revelation* (Angwin, CA: Robert W. Hauser, 1983). While he did not completely reject the Adventist position, he suggested that these prophecies could have future applications. He says, “But didn’t these prophecies have a fulfillment in the past? Yes. From Ellen G. White’s discussion about the

interpretation, evidently, found a receptive place in the thinking of lay members such Marian G. Berry⁴² and Charlene Fortsch.⁴³ This “new style of futurism”⁴⁴ has recently reached both Adventist pastors and scholars.

For instance, Siegfried Schwantes, an Old Testament theologian and former professor of the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary, Andrews University, and Kenneth Cox, a well-known Adventist evangelist, clearly expect a literal fulfillment of these days just before the second coming of Jesus.⁴⁵ Similarly, Samuel Nunez, an Old Testament scholar, advocates this interpretation using a more academic approach. His careful study of the Hebrew words and the structure of Daniel could offer an appealing support for this new interpretation.⁴⁶ The discussion will now focus on describing some of his principal arguments.

However, before considering Nuñez’s arguments, it is worthwhile to highlight two principal assumptions held by advocates. First, the 1260, 1290, and 1335 days are literal days to be fulfilled in the future.⁴⁷ Second, the events of the 1260, 1290,

1843 chart we can assume that the historical application ... in Daniel 12 was correct. However, we cannot assume from what is said that it was the only application” (ibid., 204). That he could be the first Bible student in presenting this idea could also be supported on the basis of Victor Michaelson response to his ideas one by one as early as 1985. See Michaelson, *Delayed Time-Setting: Heresies Exposed* (Payson, AZ: Leaves-Of-Autumn Books, 1985).

⁴²Marian G. Berry, *Warning in the 1260, 1290, 1335 Days Timelines of Daniel 12* (Brushton, NY: Teach Services, 1990).

⁴³Charlene Fortsch, *Daniel: Understanding the Dreams and Visions* (Anaheim, BC, Canada: Prophecy Song, 2006). Fortsch does not explain completely her ideas about the future fulfillment of these periods. However, she embraces the concept that the prophetic days of Daniel 12: 11-12 are literal days for the future. For instance, “The following timelines cannot move backward and be interpreted in the timeframe of the Dark Ages. They can only move forward to events in the future...These timelines reveal the final events at the close of this world’s history” (ibid., 343).

⁴⁴Michaelson, 7.

⁴⁵Kenneth Cox, *Daniel: A Closer Look at the Book that Tells What Will Happen in the End Times* (Coldwater, MI: Remnant Publications, 2005), 149-155. Siegfried J. Schwantes, *Comentario o Livro de Daniel*, online at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/51712214/DANIEL-SIEGFREID-J-SCHWANTES-PH-D>, accessed Nov 13, 2011, says that this epilogue has its focus on “the end of the time,” therefore the 1290 and 1335 days must be considered literal days. All the events described in Daniel 12: 11-12 will happen during a final crisis of 1290 days followed by a time of trouble of 45 days that will end with the second coming of Jesus Christ (ibid., 133). Schwantes is an acknowledged scholar of Old Testament studies. He holds a PhD from The Johns Hopkins University.

⁴⁶Samuel Nuñez, *Las profecías apocalípticas de Daniel: La verdad acerca del futuro de la humanidad* [The Apocalyptic Prophecies of Daniel: The Truth about the Future of Humanity] (Mexico, DF: Samuel Nunez, 2005).

⁴⁷Hauser, 202; Berry, 135; Fortsch, 343; Schwantes, 133; Cox, 155; Nunez, 191, 195.

1335 days begin with a universal or national Sunday law.⁴⁸ It should be noted, nevertheless, that Nuñez does not widely focus on the events and the exact moment in which these prophetic times will be fulfilled.⁴⁹ Instead, he spends time and exegetical effort to demonstrate that these days must be understood literally as part of the time of the end.⁵⁰

According to Nuñez, there are several exegetical reasons to interpret these prophetic times literally. First, Nuñez points out that the chiasmic structure of Dan 12 indicates that verses 1-6 and 8-13 deal with events of the “time of the end.”⁵¹ Thus, the prophetic periods enclosed in these sections should refer to the time and history of the last days. Second, wherever the Old Testament uses the word *yom* or *yamim* (day, days) with an ordinal or cardinal number the described measure of time is always literal.⁵² Because the time periods of Dan 12:11-12 are expressed by cardinal numbers, they should be understood literally. For Nuñez this is self-evident, due to the fact that the symbolic periods in Dan 7 (*iddan*), Dan 8 (*ereb boqer*), Dan 9 (*sabuim*), and Dan 12:7 (*mo’ed* - time) never use the term *yom* (day). Third, Daniel uses the same strategy in all literary visions. He first describes the vision and then comes the prophetic period: (a) 7:2-14 and 7:25, (b) 8:3-12 and 8:14, 26, (c) 11:2-12:4 and 12:7, 11, 12.⁵³ The only periods, according to Nuñez, to be understood literally in these literary structures are those presented in verses 11 and 12 of Dan 12.

Additionally, Nuñez suggests other conclusions to support his position that could not easily and necessarily be assumed from his exegetical work. For instance, he argues that the Hebrew terms in chapter 12 *tamid* (continuous) and *shiqqus shomen* (desolating abomination) relate to events of the end. These events are identified with the future actions of the king of the north against the heavenly ministry of Christ, especially in relation to the attacks upon the fourth commandment of God’s law.⁵⁴ It seems that Nuñez does believe that the “daily” and the “desolating abominations” of the previous chapter share similarities with Dan 12. However, the historical events and time of fulfilment of these two

⁴⁸In this aspect they differ. Nunez separates the 1260 from the 1290 and 1335 days (195), though the Sunday law initiates both periods. Hauser (208) and Berry (138) initiate the 1335 days with a National Sunday Law in the USA and the 1260 and 1335 days with a Universal Sunday Law worldwide.

⁴⁹Although he states that a Sunday law will be the starting point of these prophecies, he is not as descriptive as Hauser and Berry, 195, 196.

⁵⁰Samuel Nuñez, “The Prophecy of the Man Clothed in Linen in Daniel 12:5-13,” unpublished manuscript, San Marcos, CA, n.d.

⁵¹Ibid., 19.

⁵²Ibid., 40.

⁵³In this specific exegetical aspect, Nuñez concurs with Shea and Pfandl.

⁵⁴Ibid.

chapters are different, and the active agents of chapters 8 and 12 point to different historical identities, namely the little horn and the king of the north. Finally, Nuñez also affirms that while in the first three visions of the book (chapters 2, 7, 8) the literary structure tends to be symbolic, the last chapters (11 and 12) tend to be literal. In summary, for Nuñez, the words of the “man clothed in linen” (12:9) indicate that the vision of Dan 12 should be understood as pointing to the time of the end; it is about events that ought to happen in the end time.⁵⁵

As has been observed, the literal interpretation recognizes the time prophecies of Dan 12 as literal days. In this approach, some interpreters tend to see the fulfillment of these times in the past, while others believe that they will be fulfilled in the future. The futurist approach to these prophecies has obtained support and acceptance in some circles of the Adventist church. Nonetheless, the support of this view remains insignificant in comparison with the support of the traditional historicist view. The idealist interpretation of Dan 12:11-12 in Adventist eschatology will now be discussed.

The Multi-Perspective and the Idealist Interpretations

Desmond Ford’s multiple fulfillments or “apotelesmatic principle” and Zdravko Stefanovic’s literary approach to Dan 12 represent minor approaches in Adventist studies of Dan 12. Ford proposes an interpretation that harmonizes all the major systems of prophetic studies; the Historicist, Preterist, Futurist schools. Stefanovic argues for an idealist or spiritual approach that minimizes the historical application and fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecies.

The Multi-Perspective Approach of Desmond Ford in Daniel 12

Desmond Ford approaches Daniel’s book from a historical-grammatical-contextual-critical method of interpretation.⁵⁶ F. F. Bruce, in the foreword of Ford’s *Commentary of Daniel*, indicates that Ford wrote his dissertation “based on the primary exegesis of the Biblical text . . . that establish what the author meant and what the first readers understood, or were intended to understand.”⁵⁷ Bruce, however, stresses that Ford in his commentary “moves beyond it to explore and set forth the plenary sense”⁵⁸ of Daniel’s visions.

Ford briefly outlines his position about the 1290 and 1335 days. In doing so, he heavily relies on the works of Wordsworth and Fausset to suggest that these dates could be understood by “year-day as well as day-day principles.”⁵⁹ In other

⁵⁵Nuñez, *Las profecías apocalípticas*, 191-196.

⁵⁶Desmond Ford, *Daniel* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1978), 5.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid., 283.

words, for Ford these prophetic periods could be interpreted as literal or symbolic days. Consequently, the 1290 and 1335 days have had two complete fulfillments.

First, the primary and intended historical event of the prophecy is identified with Antiochus Epiphanes and his repulsive actions in the temple of Jerusalem. Second, these prophecies also have experienced a secondary fulfillment throughout the history of the medieval church and the “antichrist’s supremacy from A.D. 538 to 1798.”⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Ford does not limit possible fulfillments of these prophecies to these two events. He is also open to another probable “*apotelesmatic fulfillment*” in the last days. He states, “[Daniel] is saying that in this time of the end there will be a repeat performance of what happened throughout the Christian history.”⁶¹ Conveniently, Ford seems to purposefully accommodate his arguments to combine three hermeneutical methods and conclusions of prophetic interpretations, namely, the widely recognized academic preterism, the historicism of his own tradition, and some kind of prophetic futurism. This represents an idealist approach opening a place in the table to all these multiple fulfillments.

The Idealist Approach of Zdravko Stefanovic in Daniel 12:11

Zdravko Stefanovic, a professor of Old Testament studies, wrote the most recent commentary on Daniel from an Adventist perspective entitled *Daniel, Wisdom to the Wise: Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. The commentary has received excellent reviews “for opening up a fresh perspective while preserving the historic Adventist understanding.”⁶²

Stefanovic divides his commentary into three principal parts. First, *the notes* explore “the linguistic, literary, and historical aspects of the original text.”⁶³ These exegetical notes support the second section, *the exposition*, where he suggests, “what the text meant at the time it was written based on what the author likely intended to say.”⁶⁴ These two sections seem to present the author’s point of view about the meaning of Daniel’s prophetic visions.⁶⁵ The last section contains the

⁶⁰He does not explain when these days started and finished.

⁶¹Ford, *Daniel*, 283.

⁶²See the declaration of Alden Thomson on the back cover of Zdravko Stefanovic, *Daniel, the Wisdom to the Wise: Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2007).

⁶³Stefanovic, *Daniel*, 12.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵Stefanovic clearly states the main purpose of his work affirming that “this commentary is biblical expository, it focuses on the text and themes from the book of Daniel and on the points of teaching that are derived from them. Because of its focus on the biblical text, this commentary is *not* intended to be a resource tool providing a wealth

summary of teaching where the author explains “what the text means today.”⁶⁶ It is also important to note that in chapters 2 and chapters 7–12, instead of the summary of teaching, there are *applications of Daniel’s prophecies* presenting the traditional historical understanding of these chapters.⁶⁷ However, it seems the author is careful to distance himself from the historical applications of Daniel’s prophecies. He objectively presents the traditional positions but he does not advocate or support any particular interpretation. His exegetical methodology seems to lead him to abandon the task of finding any historical fulfillment for Daniel’s visions.⁶⁸

Therefore, according to Stefanovic “it is difficult to come up with a symbolic meaning”⁶⁹ about the 1290 and 1335 days. Consequently, neither a literal meaning nor what Stefanovic terms “symbolic meaning” is obvious in the context of Dan 12.⁷⁰ Aided by his exegetical approach, Stefanovic proposes a “literary approach” to Dan 12:11-12 explaining,

The most satisfactory way to look at the numbers given in these passages is literal. When these two numbers are put together with the expression *time, times, and half* from verse 7, then the three numbers, namely, 1,260 days, **1,290 days**, and **1,335 days**, appear in a numerical progression. This progression lets the reader of the book know that a seeming or apparent “delay” in the expectation of the end is possible from the human point of view.⁷¹

Hence, for Stefanovic, God did not reveal to Daniel a historical sequence of his actions throughout history or for the future of God’s people, or even for Daniel’s time.⁷² God merely informed Daniel that his battles against antagonistic

of material on apocalyptic literature nor any other disciplines such as dogmatic theology or church history.” See Stefanovic, *Daniel*, 12.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸See the book reviews written by Angel M. Rodriguez and Frank W. Hardy: Rodriguez, “[Book Review] Daniel: The Wisdom to the Wise: Commentary on the Book of Daniel,” *Ministry*, March 2008, 28, 29; Hardy, “[Book Review] Daniel: The Wisdom to the Wise: Commentary on the Book of Daniel,” *Ministry*, March 2008, 29.

⁶⁹Stefanovic, *Daniel*, 12, 444.

⁷⁰Ibid., 447.

⁷¹Ibid., 447, 448.

⁷²Proponents of the idealist approach to Daniel and Revelation argue that biblical prophecies are not primarily intended as a reference to specific historical events, but as a manifestation of spiritual lessons and/or the way in which God deals throughout history with injustice, evil, and oppression. In such a way, the historical applications of the time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation are minimized or denied. For instance, Willard H. Hinkley specifically states about Daniel’s prophecies that “We should regard the book of Daniel as a whole, knowing that it was written for the sake of its spiritual meaning, and not for the purpose of recording historical events in a connected series,” *The Book of*

spiritual forces, those who are in open opposition to his purposes, would endure longer than Daniel and the believers could previously anticipate.

A Brief Evaluation of the Interpretations

Here, the different positions discussed above are briefly evaluated. First, the symbolic approach to Dan 12:11-12 seem to represent the most plausible interpretation for these prophetic periods. Apparently, the traditional historicist interpretation respects the literary, contextual, and thematic structure of the book of Daniel. Also, from a historical perspective the symbolic interpretation has demonstrated the accuracy of the historical events in connection with the 1290 and 1335 days. Recently, Jean Carlos Zukowski defended the accuracy of the year and events of A. D. 508 as the beginning point of these prophetic periods. He suggests that the religious-political commitments between the state and the church experienced in this year a level of compromise never seen before in the history of the Christian church.⁷³

However, it seems some areas need further work and clarification. First, the historicist school of interpretation may need to clarify its methodology and hermeneutic. For instance, many interpretations claim to use a historicist approach to the book of Daniel but they arrived at different conclusions about the historical and prophetic fulfillments of Daniel's numerical prophecies.⁷⁴ Second, it seems that the proper interpretation of the starting historical year of the 1290 and 1335 days is closely related to the proper identification of the historical or spiritual entity that the "daily" is pointing to.

Daniel: Its Prophetic Character and Spiritual Meaning (Boston: Massachusetts New-Church Union, 1894), 7-13; see also Jonathan Menn, *Biblical Eschatology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 194, 195; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 29, 43; John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1966), 17.

⁷³Jean Carlos Zukowski, "The Role and Status of the Catholic Church in the Church-State Relationship Within the Roman Empire from A.D. 306 to 814," PhD diss., Andrews University, 2009, 341-351. He states, "A.D. 508 and 538 are singled out as the key dates when the models of relationships between church and state and between rulers and clergy changed," 340. He also says, "This study proposes that A.D. 508 is the most significant year for the church-state relationship in Clovis's reign, since it marked the culmination of the union between the Franks and the Catholic Church," 348.

⁷⁴This affirmation was particularly true within the historical, social, and theological context of William Miller and Adventist pioneers. But, this tendency is still alive among Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Advent Christian Church, heirs of Albany Conference and William Miller. See Clarence H. Hewitt, *The Seer of Babylon: Studies in the Book of Daniel* (Boston, MA: Advent Christian Publication Society, 1948), 365-367. Hewitt is a prominent theologian and professor at Aurora University, a Christian College associated with the Advent Christian Church. This group is a branch of the Albany Conference, one of major groups that resulted from the great disappointment of 1844.

While the pioneers widely identified the *tamid* with the *continuing paganism* of Roman power, more recent Adventist scholarship takes the position that the “daily” points to the heavenly ministry of Jesus Christ. Early in the Adventist interpretation of these prophetic periods, John N. Loughborough noticed that those who argue that the “daily” represents the Jewish daily sacrifices or the permanent ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary “found no event to which either the 1290 or 1335 years would reach.”⁷⁵ Therefore, modern Adventist scholars that identify the “daily” with the continual intercession of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary need to make clear what specific historical actions of Christ’s intercession was taken away by the actions of the little horn during the years A.D. 508 and A.D. 538.⁷⁶ In this manner, the traditional historicist interpretation would more accurately present the year A.D 508 as the starting point of the 1290 and 1335 days.

It seems that Nuñez’s position presents some essential points of concern.⁷⁷ First, it appears to be inconsistent with the structure of Dan 12 to take out verse 7 in order to interpret the 1260 days following the traditional Adventist position.⁷⁸ In contrast, Berry consistently interprets verse 7 as a literal time in the future together with the 1290 and 1335 days.⁷⁹ Second, Nuñez implies that the Hebrew term *yom* accompanied with cardinal numbers requires a literal interpretation, forgetting that the expression belongs to the apocalyptic section of the book of Daniel. In prophetic sections of the Bible, the word “day” requires a symbolic understanding. Third, Nuñez does not offer any historical or scriptural evidence

⁷⁵J. N. Loughborough, “The Thirteen Hundred and Thirty-Five Days,” *Review and Herald*, April 4, 1907, 9, 10. More recently, Frank W. Hardy and the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* have made the same observation, that without a proper understanding of *tamid* it is impossible to comprehend the 1290 and 1335 days. See Hardy, 282; Nichol, 880.

⁷⁶For further discussion on this topic see, John W. Peters, “The Mystery of the Daily: An Exegesis of Daniel 8:9-14” in <http://www.spvbible.org/studies>, accessed November 15, 2011. See also the response to Peters, Gerhard Pfandl, “Evaluation of the ‘Mystery of the Daily’ by John Peters,” and the response to Pfandl by John W. Peters “Response to Gerhard Pfandl’s Evaluation of ‘The Mystery of the Daily’” in <http://www.spvbible.org/miscellaneous>, accessed November 15, 2011. For a historical development of the daily controversy see Denis Kaiser, “The History of Adventist Interpretation of the ‘Daily’ in the Book of Daniel from 1831 to 2008,” M.A. thesis, Andrews University, 2009.

⁷⁷The most extensive answer to Nuñez’s interpretation is that of Ruben Tenorio, “Los 1260, 1290 y los 1335 días en el contexto de Daniel 8–12” [The 1260, 1290, and 1335 days in the Context of Daniel 8 to 12] and “Daniel 11 y 12: Interpretación y estructura” [Daniel 11 and 12: Interpretation and Structure] papers presented at the Simposium Teológico, Montemorelos University, June 2009.

⁷⁸Nuñez, 170. He translates the preposition of the verse 7 *le* as “after” instead of “for” or “during.” Thus, the text reads “How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders *be?* ... that it shall [be] **after** (not *for*) a time, times, and half *a time*” (emphasis supplied).

⁷⁹Berry, 196.

to relate the abomination of desolation to the imposition of worship on Sunday in the last days.⁸⁰ Apparently, the abomination of desolation is not limited to supplanting the Lord's day, but more specifically to the obscuring of Christ's salvific work by human provisions of salvation. Finally, Nuñez frequently offers alternative translations of the Hebrew text in order to support his theological conclusions. Nuñez, evidently, leaves the historicist school of interpretation, at least in Dan 12, to venture into a speculative interpretation of the 1290 and 1335 days.

In order to defend a literal fulfillment in Daniel's context of these prophecies, Cottrell applies features of classical prophecies to apocalyptic literature. While classical prophecies are conditioned on the human response to a divine invitation, apocalyptic prophecies are not. He says, "Inasmuch as predictive prophecy is a declaration of the divine purpose, and its fulfillment in history is conditional upon the response of those to whom it is addressed, non-fulfillment within the original historical context makes these predictions subject to reinterpretation by later inspired writers."⁸¹ It must be noted, however, that although he acknowledges that unfulfilled apocalyptic prophecies could be reinterpreted by authorized prophets, he does not mention any possible reinterpretation of Daniel's prophecies as a valid one.

Stefanovic's approach like an idealistic spiritualization of Daniel's prophecies and contains enormous implications for Daniel studies in general and Adventist eschatology in particular. If the prophetic periods of Dan12 signify only a delay in God's purpose for his people, then Daniel becomes a book without eschatological and prophetic emphasis. All the historical positions assumed by the church throughout history become irrelevant and unnecessary.

Finally, Desmond Ford, in his attempt to unite the research methods and conclusions of four conflicting schools of prophetic interpretation, argues in favor of a multi-perspective approach to the interpretation of Daniel's prophecies. Such multi-perspective approach is summarized in his interpretative axiom, "it must be said that each of the systems is right in what it affirms and wrong in what it denies."⁸² One of the main problems with Ford's approach is that his "apotelesmatic principle" attempts to find some truths in all systems of prophetic interpretation without necessarily criticizing the degrees of errors inherently present in those systems.

The Eschatological Identity of Seventh-day Adventists: A Reflection

Before concluding this study, it is important to discuss briefly some main points of the theological and eschatological identity of Seventh-day Adventist Church in

⁸⁰Nuñez, 189.

⁸¹Ibid., 125.

⁸²Ford, 68.

relation with the interpretations of the time prophecies of Dan 12. Does Seventh-day Adventist eschatology have a specific identity? If it does, how does such identity relate to the theological identity of the Adventist Church? One would argue that, taking into account the general consensus of Adventist interpreters, the main mark of the eschatological identity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a historicist approach to the eschatological prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. From this key aspect of Adventist eschatological identity arise two main hermeneutical principles. First, all prophecies of Daniel and Revelation flow in a harmonious historical continuum from 457 B.C. to A.D. 1844. Second, in order to fulfill that historical continuum, the prophecies expressed as “days” must be interpreted by the year-day principle.

Obviously, if we agree that the eschatological identity of the Adventist Church is closely related to the principles mentioned above, then, the literal and idealistic approaches to Dan 12 stand in conflict with such identity. Both approaches, at least in their position of Dan 12, dispute the year-day principle and the historicist continuum of apocalyptic prophecies.

Nevertheless, Adventist theology is also characterized by a dynamic understanding of biblical truth. According to George R. Knight the concept of “present truth” as an identifying mark of Adventist theology involves a rejection of “creedal rigidity” as well as an acceptance of “progressive understanding” of the biblical doctrine.⁸³ In this sense Roberto Badenas rightly claims, “for Adventist Christianity, the very word ‘truth’ ought to mean discovery and growth.”⁸⁴ Apparently, this reality of the theological identity of the Church continues to call us to be open to different ways of biblical interpretation or understanding without *a priori* closing the door in favor of historical dogmatic positions.

In other words, Adventists should not assume historical positions on theology and eschatology as “final truth,” but rather they should engage in a continual, humble, and diligent searching of the truth that opens the way to an always-increasing light. In faithful acceptance of this identity, Adventist interpreters should continue to evaluate those positions that seem to depart from the traditional understanding of the Church. In doing so, they should reinforce those elements that seem to nurture the apocalyptic and eschatological vision of the

⁸³George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Belief* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 21-26. It is also important to highlight that the concept of “present truth” was also viewed as the truths they discovered after the disappointment. In other words, they viewed particular components of biblical truth of being of special importance in the time of the end as truths that should be proclaimed especially.

⁸⁴Roberto Badenas, “Dealing with ‘Present Truth’: 2 Peter 1:12 Revisited,” in *Exploring the Frontiers of Faith*, eds. Børge Schantz and Reinder Bruinsma (Lüneburg, Germany: Advent-Verlag, 2009), 211.

Church. A renewed exposition of traditional interpretations could benefit the postmodern mindset of young believers and support the Adventist continual expectation for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Certainly, the sense of “present truth” requires an always-increasing knowledge and study of the biblical teaching. Honest prayer and meticulous biblical scrutiny should mark such continual searching of the truth. New light does not necessarily negate or undermine established truth. It could be also adding new perspectives or approaches to widely accepted teachings. In doing this task, two counsels from the pen of Ellen G. White seems essential to remember. White proposes that on one hand, traditional truth is always open to correction by the Word of God; new light is always welcome in the community of faith. She stated,

There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible . . . No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.⁸⁵

On the other hand, she admonished that the enemy of God is always ready to introduce doctrinal errors as new scriptural light into the Christian community. She pointed out, “the great deceiver has many agents to present any and every kind of errors to ensnare souls—heresies, prepared to suit the varied tastes and capacities of those whom he would ruin.”⁸⁶ Therefore, new light should be carefully tested by the testimony of Scripture and the community of faith.

Conclusions and Implications

Evidently, most Seventh-day Adventist theologians have been univocal in their belief that the traditional historicist approach represents the best interpretation of Dan 12:11-12. This group of interpreters defends a historicist approach to apocalyptic prophecies. In the past thirty years, some Adventist theologians have been inclined to interpret these prophetic days as literal days in the past or in the future. Other interpreters prefer multiple fulfillment approach or idealist spiritualization as the proper meaning of the 1290 and 1335 days. These new positions have challenged the historical view of the Church. This shift from uniformity to diversity has historical, social, and theological reasons worth investigating in future studies.

Two implications of this study merit attention. One is that, the church has two great sources of identity. On one hand, the theological identity of “present truth” is applied as a general approach to biblical studies. On the other hand, the

⁸⁵Ellen G. White, *Councils to Writers and Editors* (Hagerstown, MD: Pacific Press, 1993), 35.

⁸⁶Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Ended . . . A Glimpse into Eternity* (Silver Spring, MD: Better Living Pub., 2002), 292.

eschatological identity described above as an approach to biblical prophecies. It seems critical that Adventist theologians work with these two identities in mind to further develop Adventist approaches to biblical prophecies. In other words, current works on prophetic interpretation from an Adventist perspective should appreciate both the concept of a progressive truth as well as the apocalyptic nature of Adventist eschatology. Secondly, it seems obvious, (at least in prophetic studies of Daniel and Revelation), that there is currently an existing diversity of theological approaches within the Adventist Church. The question to ponder is, What kind(s) of diversity can be accepted without losing or endangering the theological and eschatological identity of the Church?