

Andrews University

Digital Commons @ Andrews University

Memory, Meaning & Life

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

8-29-2010

The End-Time Increase of Scientific and Theological Knowledge

Martin Hanna

Andrews University, mhanna@andrews.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/mml>

Recommended Citation

Hanna, Martin, "The End-Time Increase of Scientific and Theological Knowledge" (2010). *Memory, Meaning & Life*. 53.

<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/mml/53>

This Blog Post is brought to you for free and open access by the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Memory, Meaning & Life by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

Memory, Meaning & Faith

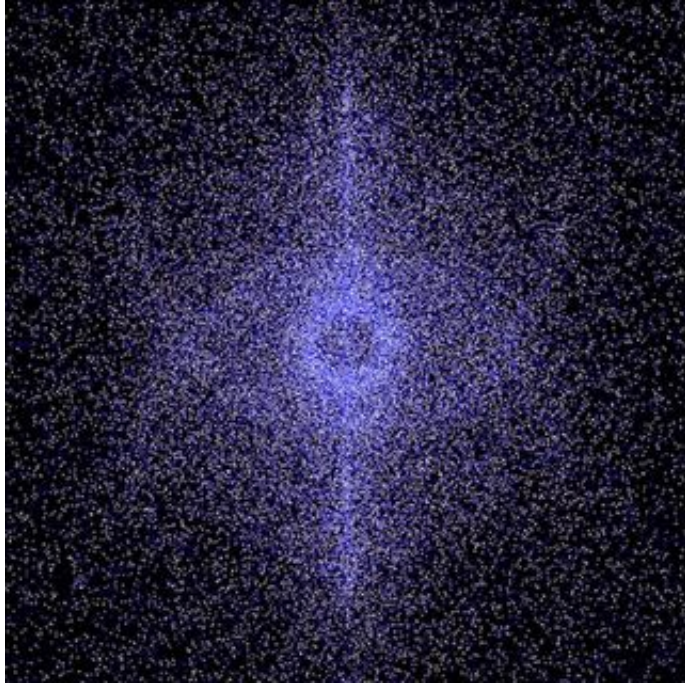
[Main](#)

[About](#)

[Archives](#)

August 29, 2010

The End-Time Increase Of Scientific And Theological Knowledge



Is [Seventh-day Adventist \(SDA\) theology](#) focused on the defense of traditional biblical interpretations? Or is it focused on an ever-increasing reformation of traditional interpretations? More specifically, how is the increase of our biblical knowledge related to the increase of our scientific knowledge? Does scientific knowledge threaten or complement biblical knowledge?

In this post, I suggest some answers to these questions by briefly presenting an interpretation of a text from the book of the Daniel which is a favorite among SDAs. Then I compare my interpretation of Daniel with the writings of [Ellen White](#), who is a SDA thought leader.

The Writings of Daniel

Science-theology relations may be illuminated by the message of the book of Daniel about an end-time increase of knowledge. Daniel records the words of an angel who says: “O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (Dan 12:4, KJV).

A number of questions arise in my mind when I read this text. Who are the many who will increase knowledge in the end-time? Do they increase knowledge by acquiring and/or by sharing knowledge? What does going to and fro mean? Is this a reference to travel from one place to another? Is it a reference to different methods for increasing knowledge? What kind of knowledge will increase? Is it theological knowledge and/or scientific knowledge?

The book of Daniel provides answers to these questions. First, the primary reference is not to an increase of scientific knowledge, but to an increase of theological knowledge through understanding the prophecies of Daniel. This is evident in that “wisdom” is associated with those who “turn many to righteousness” ([Dan 12:3](#); see also [9:3](#)). This results in some conflict between the perspectives of those who are unrighteous and those who are righteous. This is because “none of the wicked will understand, but the wise [who are by implication, righteous] will understand” ([Dan 12:10](#); see also [11:33-35](#)).

Second, at the same time, the increase of theological knowledge is compatible with the increase of scientific knowledge. The young Hebrew captives were so skilled in knowledge and wisdom that they not only mastered the science of the University of Babylon—they also graduated at the top of their class! ([Dan 1:4, 17, 20; 2:14](#)). It is important to note that the same words (knowledge and wisdom) which are used to identify the science of Babylon are used to identify the sacred science of God. For example, after receiving the spiritual interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, Daniel blessed God as the giver of “knowledge” and “wisdom” ([Dan 2:21](#); also [20-23](#); [5:11-14](#); [8:16-17](#); [9:23, 25](#); [10:11, 12, 14](#)).

This brief survey of one part of the book of Daniel suggests that, in the end-time, just before the second coming of Christ,

those who will go “to and fro” to increase and to share knowledge include God’s people. In addition, the process of increasing theological knowledge is compatible with the process of increasing scientific knowledge. How does Ellen White’s perspective on science and theology compare with this interpretation of Daniel?

The Writings of Ellen White

Ellen White emphasizes the increase of theological knowledge which results when we go “to and fro” between the Old Testament (OT) book of Daniel and the New Testament (NT) book of Revelation. “The [OT] book of Daniel is now unsealed, and the revelation made by Christ to John [in the NT] is to come to all the inhabitants of the earth. By the *increase of knowledge* a people is to be prepared to stand in the latter days” (*Selected Messages*, 1:105, emphasis supplied).

Daniel’s theme of the *increase of knowledge* is repeated frequently by Ellen White in connection with both theological and scientific knowledge. “‘What need is there,’ say they [the end-time Laodiceans], of an *increase of knowledge*” (*Testimonies*, 5:265, emphasis supplied). Therefore, “well-organized work must be done in the church, that its members may understand the manner in which they may impart light to others, and thus strengthen their own faith and *increase their knowledge*” (*Review*, 7 March 1893, emphasis supplied). “Every grain of knowledge is to be regarded as of high value The students should improve every moment to *increase their knowledge*” (*Manuscript Releases*, 13: 145-146, emphasis supplied).

“God desires His workers to gain daily a better understanding of how to reason logically from cause to effect, arriving at wise, safe conclusions. . . . We cannot afford to make mistakes that are the result of our cherishing erroneous ideas. . . . There is need of knowledge that is the fruit of experience. We should not allow a day to pass without gaining an *increase of knowledge* in temporal and spiritual things. We are to plant no stakes that we are not willing to take up and plant farther on, nearer the heights we hope to ascend. The highest education is to be found in training the mind to advance day to day” (Letter 164, 1903, 4; *Manuscript Releases*, 10:300).

This increase of knowledge involves the study of Scripture and nature. “Nature still speaks of her Creator. . . . [At the same time,] we need the *fuller revelation* of Himself that God has given in His written word” (*Education*, 16-17, emphasis supplied). Similarly, “as we observe the things of the natural world, we shall be enabled under the guiding of the Holy Spirit, *more fully to understand* the lessons of God’s word” (120, emphasis supplied). “*The book of nature and the written word do not disagree; each sheds light on the other. Rightly understood* they make us acquainted with God and his character by teaching us something of the wise and beneficent laws through which he works. We are thus led to adore his name and to have an *intelligent trust* in his word” (*Signs of the Times* [March 20, 1884]: 177, emphasis supplied).

Questions

- Is science a threat to theology?
- Can science and theology help each other?
- Are the perspectives of Daniel and Ellen White helpful in answering these questions?

Martin Hanna has previously written for Memory, Meaning & Faith on:

[Science and the Cosmic and Trans-cosmic Christ of Scripture](#)

[Is Atonement a Substitution and/or an Influence?](#)

[James Arminius: Reconciling Religious Discussions Among Christians](#)

[The Cosmic Christ According to Matthew Fox](#)


[Science-Theology Relations: How Did We Get Here? Where Are We Going?](#)

[The Biblical Worldview and Laws of Nature](#)

Posted by [Martin Hanna](#) on August 29, 2010 in [Science and Theology](#) | [Permalink](#)

[Save to del.icio.us](#) | [The Way...](#)

Comments

 You can follow this conversation by subscribing to the [comment feed](#) for this post.

In Daniel 12:4 Daniel is told to "seal the book until the time of the end." This establishes the context for the last part of the verse; so the increased knowledge spoken of in the last part can only be the knowledge contained in Daniel's book that is now unsealed. This is the knowledge of that part of Daniel's prophecies that has direct relevance to the "time of the end."

In understanding Daniel 12:4, I personally find it very helpful to compare this verse with Amos 8:11-12:

"But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall RUN TO AND FRO, and knowledge shall increase" (Dan. 12:4; NKJV).

"Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord God, 'that I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall RUN TO AND FRO, seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find it'" (Amos 8:11-12).

The "running to and fro" in Daniel 12:4 is surely in the same context as the "running to and fro" in Amos 8:12 -- the diligent "seeking the word of the Lord." But, of course, in Daniel 12:4 it is specifically the diligent searching of the unsealed prophecies of Daniel as they shed light on the prophecies of Revelation. And in this we see the crucial role prophecy plays for God's people in the last days. I found Martin's selection of one Spirit of Prophecy quote to be particularly relevant to understanding Daniel 12:4:

"The book of Daniel is now unsealed, and the revelation made by Christ to John is to come to all the inhabitants of the earth. By the increase of [prophetic] knowledge a people is to be prepared to stand in the latter days" (2SM 105).

While scientific knowledge is useful to the extent it affirms theological knowledge, in my view the knowledge referred to in Daniel 12:4 is in the one and only context of theological knowledge.

Posted by: Engel Yoder | [September 08, 2010 at 10:17 AM](#)

Point well taken Engel. Daniel predicts an end time explosion of theological knowledge. At the same time, we agree that Daniel was assisted by God in the study and mastery of the science of the Babylonians. As you put it, even today scientific knowledge may support theological knowledge. I would like to push that thought a bit further to suggest that scientific knowledge properly interpreted is, in a sense, theological knowledge. This is because the study of science is the study of God's revelation in nature.

Posted by: [Martin Hanna](#) | [September 13, 2010 at 11:29 AM](#)

I like the idea that the study of science is the study of God. What I take exception to is associating scientific knowledge, even in a secondary application, with what God specifically sealed till the time of the end. In this crucial time of earth's history, our primary focus should be on what God knows we need to not only be prepared for eternity individually, but more importantly to corporately hasten that great day. Here's another relevant quote I've just come across:

"The prediction of Daniel, 'Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased' (Dan. 12:4), is to be fulfilled in our giving of the warning message; many are to be enlightened regarding the sure word of prophecy. . . . Upward Look, 37.

I appreciate the broader view you have taken on the subject. My point is directed more to those expositors who, regarding Daniel 12:4, tend to make more of scientific knowledge and advancements than on the explicit prophetic knowledge God has unsealed for our special and immediate needs in the last days.

Posted by: Engel Yoder | [September 14, 2010 at 11:08 AM](#)

I agree, Engel, with your central point--the promised increase of knowledge is an increase in a knowledge of biblical truth.

At the same time, I am comfortable with a secondary application of the principle to the increase of other kinds of knowledge. This increase can even be useful in facilitating the transmission of the biblical truth we are called to proclaim.

The following quotations from Ellen White seem relevant to this issue. "A knowledge of science of all kinds is power, and it is in the purpose of God that advanced science shall be taught in our schools as a preparation for the work that is to precede the closing scenes of earth's history." Fundamentals of Christian Education, 186.

"The great storehouse of truth is [1] the word of God--the written word, [2] the book of nature, and [3] the book of experience . . . Here are the treasures from which Christ's workers are to draw. . . . Through His own appointed channels the Lord will impart a knowledge of Himself to every seeker. . . . Natural science is a treasure house of knowledge from which every student in the school of Christ may

draw." Christ's Object Lessons, 125-126.

Posted by: [Martin Hanna](#) | [October 29, 2010 at 11:58 PM](#)

One of the verbal roots וָשׁוּב šûṭ (Da 12:4b) is attested in the Standard (Preexilic) Biblical Hebrew with the meaning "go about, to and fro", usually in order to find some thing (material or information). Jeremiah is the last writer that uses it with this meaning. After the exile, all occurrences (three in all) reflect a figurative meaning: not a physical wandering about to search for something, but it refers to doing such searching / investigation by eyes: Zec 4:10; 2Ch 16:9, and certainly in Dan 12:4.

Unfortunately, most translations failed to render the true meaning in Dan 12:4. A majority have taken the literal basic meaning of "going to and fro", and others (after Old Greek, Theodotion etc.), understood that "many will fall away (reading סֹף "to apostatize", instead of šûṭ "to go about, investigate"), and the wickedness (or troubles) shall increase" (textual confusion between רָעָה "bad things" and תַּעֲדָה "knowledge").

Fortunately, a minority of translators rendered the true meaning. For example the Spanish version CAB has: "Muchos lo estudiarán y aumentarán su conocimiento." (Many will study it and the knowledge will increase). The usual Romanian evangelical translation CNS gives the same meaning: "Many will read it..."

The proximate literary context of Dan 12:4, which is about the prophecy of Daniel, not science and technics in general, must determine our translation and exegesis. Thus KJV, ASV and the related versions are not to be followed in this case, nor our traditional interpretation regarding airplanes and modern media. These signs, if they are indeed signs, must be found elsewhere, not in Dan 12:4.

Posted by: [Florin Laiu](#) | [July 08, 2011 at 08:11 AM](#)

Greetings to you Florin. Thanks for the textual analysis.

My concern is that any application of scientific knowledge to Dan 12:4 is a distraction from the real message of the verse. It relegates the message to little more than a curiosity, like the natural signs that are to precede the Second Coming. These signs indeed have their purpose, but Dan 12:4 should be regarded as a specific call to God's people living in the time of the end to study the unsealed prophecies. Understanding these prophecies is not a matter of passing interest. It is an important step in leading God's people to receive the seal of God "on their foreheads" (Rev 7:3), thus enabling them to stand in the great day of God's wrath.

If our evangelists would recognize the profound significance of Dan 12:4 as it concerns the prophetic knowledge God has unsealed, they may find that their preaching on this text would lead their listeners into a more earnest desire to understand for themselves the prophetic messages for our day.


Posted by: Engel Yoder | [July 20, 2011 at 08:13 PM](#)

Verify your Comment

Previewing your Comment

Posted by: |

This is only a preview. Your comment has not yet been posted.




Your comment could not be posted. Error type:

Your comment has been posted. [Post another comment](#)

The letters and numbers you entered did not match the image. Please try again.

As a final step before posting your comment, enter the letters and numbers you see in the image below. This prevents automated programs from posting comments.

Having trouble reading this image? [View an alternate.](#)



[Contact](#)

[Archives](#)

[Feeds](#)

Powered by [TypePad](#)

Copyright © 2010 Andrews University