The Year-Day Principle Reexamined

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For here we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate any error so long as reason is left free to combat it.

Thomas Jefferson

I determined to go wherever the truth took me, even if that were, indeed, out of the door of the Adventist Church itself.

Richard M. Davidson
Foreword

I am not a theologian, but a linguist, and therefore this research work on the Year-Day Principle is written from a linguistic perspective. I do not subscribe to historicism, preterism, or futurism, etc., because I find no support in the Bible for such theological constructs. I believe that the theological schools of (prophetic) interpretation do nothing more than force the Bible into dogmatic black boxes that distort and corrupt its message. I read and interpret the Bible from the scientific-linguistic perspective because I have strong reasons to believe that linguistics provides verified empirical tools for biblical interpretation. Although some theologians might argue against the scientific perspective I bring to the Year-Day Principle debate with this document, the truth is that the theologians themselves affirm that biblical interpretation is an objective, scientific field of research. If this is the case, then, the Year-Day Principle should not be treated as an axiom and exempted from rigorous scientific inquest. Even the most evident scientific truths need to be reexamined and reaffirmed from time to time in order to maintain their relevance. Such a periodical reexamination is even more important for theological beliefs that might have originated in deductive rather than inductive studies and might be a priori rather than a posteriori theological constructs – more often than not cherished religious perspectives that seem right although never confirmed with empirical data. As a scholar, I have attempted to bring to this work the inquisitive approach of the researcher who depends for conclusions on factual data and not on personal opinions and feelings, theological beliefs, or dogmatic perspectives. The document is replete with quotations that are sometimes rather large, and those quotations refer the readers to various theological works on the Year-Day Principle – papers, books, and commentaries. The purpose of this documentation is to provide the undecided readers with the opportunity to develop their own knowledge on the Year-Day Principle issue from the source rather than depend on second-hand evaluation of that information. This work, then, is intended to include both the organized data that offers the writer’s perspective on the Year-Day Principle debate, and also raw data that would allow the readers to examine the information relevant to the Year-Day Principle issue on their own and reach personal conclusions on the issue in agreement with or in opposition to the one the writer has articulated in this document.

I hope that this research document will be relevant and valuable to the readers in the clarification of the Year-Day Principle issue, and that the evaluation of the raw sources on the principle included in the document will help them establish their own position on the matter.

This foreword would not be complete without my thanks to Lynn Renee, my wife, who has been a dedicated supporter, adviser, and proofreader during the research and writing of this work.

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Evansville, December 18, 2013
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I. Introduction

Three Interpretation Schools

The traditional interpretation of *certain* time prophecies in Daniel (chapters 7-12) and Revelation (chapters 9-13) has been done from the theological perspective of the three main hermeneutical schools, – preterist, futurist, and historicist. The difference between the three interpretation schools, states Shea, is that while preterism “focuses upon the past,” that is, “on the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes” in Daniel and “especially on the reign of the emperor Nero” \(^1\) in Revelation, and futurism “places the major emphasis of these two books in the future,” \(^2\) historicism “sees these prophecies as being fulfilled through the course of human history beginning at the time of the prophets who wrote them.” \(^3\) As historicists, the Seventh-day Adventists [further, SDA] have adopted both the historicist method and its computation tool for the time expressions in Daniel and Revelation – the Year-Day Principle [further, YDP] – that is, “the principle that a ‘prophetic day’ stands for a ‘year’ of actual calendrical time extending through the historical events in which they were fulfilled.” \(^4\)

Prophetic Schools - Restrictive

The presuppositions and assumptions that define the three hermeneutical schools place severe restrictions on the interpreters who belong to those schools and limit biblical text interpretation to what will harmonize with the particular schools. The final result is the misinterpretation of the biblical text. Froom makes his readers aware how significant and also how hazardous it is to belong to a theological school and to subscribe to a certain interpretation model, and how the interpreters fall into certain exegetical patterns peculiar to their schools and abandon the biblical authors’ intended meaning of the texts under examination:

Complexities Simplified by Threefold Grouping. — The tracing of prophetic interpretation from the eighteenth century onward becomes more complex. But by holding in mind the three basic schools of interpretation now operating, the analysis is still relatively simple: (1) The Historical School continues on strongly, strengthening and perfecting its interpretation; (2) the Jesuit Preterist School begins to be adopted seriously by an increasing group of Protestants; and (3) the Jesuit Futurist School, generally held among Catholics, becomes more aggressive, but is not adopted by any Protestant group until early in the nineteenth century.

3. Details harmonize With Overall Patterns. — If these three schemes are kept in mind, it will be easy to trace developments. Once an expositor is cataloged, it is a relatively simple matter to know what he believes on all major points, as those who hold to the respective schools run rather true to pattern. Thus the Historical School expositor will apply the year-day principle to all time periods, whereas this will be denied by the other two schools. Likewise, the Historical School holds the Papacy to be the prophesied Antichrist, and such is denied by the other two schools. \(^5\)

The Principle That Must Be True

The YDP is one of the most important devices in the SDA prophetic interpretation toolbox – the “wrench” that according to the SDA historicist theologians has the power to break open the symbolic, apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. It would not be possible to overstate the significance the SDA historicists have *assigned* to this hermeneutical tool. The
Glacier View theologians, who have derided Ford’s critique of the SDA unbiblical dogmas in his Daniel 8:14 manuscript and have dismissed his proposal for another method of prophetic interpretation, the Apotelesmatic Principle [further, APP], as the solution to the numerous issues that have confronted the SDA church since its inception due to its inconsistent and selective interpretation of Daniel and Revelation, admit:

One of the most valuable keys to the historicist interpretation of the apocalyptic books, Daniel and Revelation, is the “year-day principle.” It is also a key to the understanding of the birth and growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. N. F. Douty, in his book, Another Look at Seventh-day Adventism (Grand Rapids, 1962, p. 95) aptly observes: “Yet Seventh-day Adventism, which claims to be divinely called to this work of completion, has this very theory as its bed-rock foundation, so that to discard it would be to destroy itself.”

The SDA historicist contention that the YDP “is called a principle because without its use the historicist interpretation of prophecy would not be possible,” is a circular, fallacious argument based on an assumption—a pettio principii. It is the unscientific belief that an opinion or position must be true since it is the unique and indispensable confirmation of a pre-established theological construct, interpretation, or dogma. States Tregelles:

It is true that some expositors show that this principle [“year-day system”] is needful in their explanations of the prophecies themselves: this really is only a pettio principii: a certain exposition cannot stand unless this canon is assumed; therefore (it is concluded) the canon must be true. The right mode of treating the question would be this: —if a certain exposition stands or falls together with a canon of interpretation on which it is based, then the exposition in question must be held or not according as that canon is proved or supported by God’s word.

The notion that the YDP is central to the SDA historicist interpretation of the apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation is emphasized often in church apologetics, theological articles, and books. Richard Davidson, professor of Old Testament [OT] interpretation, states, for instance, that “the year-day principle is crucial in the historicist interpretation,” while Alberto Timm, the Rector of the Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary (LATS), claims in an article he wrote for Andrews University Seminary Studies [AUSS] that the principle is “a basic hermeneutical component of the historicist school of prophetic interpretation.”

The SDA historicists also seem to claim exclusive authorial rights to the YDP, or the “copyright on the year-day principle,” which would make them the originators of the principle and the singular interpreters of the prophetic truths contained in Daniel and Revelation, although some SDA theologians interpret the statement as metaphorical. Whether the claim is figural language or a frivolous statement that comes from bombastic SDA theologians is not evident from the context, but this appears to be the first time that such an arrogant pronouncement has ever been circulated from historicists:

Preterism casts doubt upon Christ because, according to its myopic viewpoint the Saviour is not supposed to see beyond the first century, and the delay of the Advent has caught Him, as well as His followers, by surprise. Futurism casts doubt upon Christ because His revelation leaves a huge vacuum between the first century and the last century of the human race, leaving the post-first-century and pre-twentieth-century believers in the dark prophetically, if not spiritually. Only historicism, which holds the copyright on the year-day principle, can truly unfold Christ as the Alpha and Omega of Revelation 1:8.
The exclusive historicist privilege on the YDP seems to be based on the untenable claims that God Himself “is the initiator of the idea that a day is representative of a year and a year is representative of a day,”12 that “in the judgment prophecies of Numbers 14 and Ezekiel 4 God deliberately used the day for a year principle as a teaching device,”13 and that “in Daniel chapters seven and eight, for example, the interpreting angel uses the historicist method”14 in his explanations on the prophetic visions.

**YDP and Historicism – Inseparable**

The *SDA Encyclopedia* [SDAE], defines historicism as “a school of prophetic interpretation that conceives the fulfillment of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation as covering the historical period from the time of the prophet to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth,”15 while the *SDA Bible Student’s Source Book* [SDABSSB] quotes Tenney who states that “the historicist view, sometimes called the continuous-historical view, contends that Revelation is a symbolic presentation of the entire course of the history of the church from the close of the first century to the end of time.”16 The definition of historicism is even more explicit in Noe’s statement that “historicists see Revelation [and Daniel] as depicting specific and identifiable historical events, institutions, movements, and periods that transpire in a chronological sequence throughout the entire church age. These began in the first century, have continued through the centuries, and will eventually lead up to the Lord’s return.”17 This theological *construct* is the foundation of the SDA church and the core of the SDA historicist interpretation of Daniel and Revelation.

Most theologians see the YDP and historicism linked together in an inseparable tandem that stands or falls with the parts. When he writes about the SDA “prophetic heritage,” Hyde contends that “this year-day principle was at the heart of the historicist, or historical, school of prophetic interpretation followed by God's loyal witnesses for more than 1800 years,”18 and that therefore “the historicist school held to a persistent application of the year-day principle to the great time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.”19 Davidson claims that “the year-day principle is crucial in the historicist interpretation,”20 while Pfandl states that “as all students of prophecy know, the backbone of historicism is the year-day principle.”21 Noe concurs with Pfandl, and argues that “the primary methodology applied by historicists is the ‘year-equals-a-day principle’ (‘year-day theory’).”22 Timm states that “a basic hermeneutical component of the historicist school of prophetic interpretation is the so-called ‘year-day principle’.”23 If this is the case, then evidence that the YDP is not biblical would also show that historicism is unbiblical and unreliable as a prophetic interpretation school.

**The YDP – Unverified Assumption**

The contention that the YDP is a biblical method of prophetic time interpretation does not appear to be more than a presumptuous theological *assumption* because the claim was never confirmed with empirical evidence, although the “principle” has been accepted in the historicist circles as scientific, factual, and true. In his critical paper on the APP Ouro states:

One of the main problems we have found with Ford’s application of the apotelesmatic principle is the lack of [1] coherence and [2] internal consistency. If it is indeed a fundamental principle of interpretation and a [3] scientific methodology, then it [4] should apply to prophetic texts throughout the Bible. Ford applies the apotelesmatic principle to Daniel but not to Christ’s apocalyptic prophecy in Mark 13. What is more, he
uses it only in selected portions of Daniel. In his commentary on this book, Ford does not apply it to Daniel 2 or 7, but he does apply it to Daniel 8, 9, and 11.  

When the same scientific criteria are applied to the YDP, the evidence shows that the SDA historicist principle fails on similar counts. The principle does not have (1) coherence and (2) internal consistency, and it is not (3) “a scientific methodology” because (4) it is not applied in a consistent manner “to prophetic texts throughout the Bible.”

The YDP Must Be Reexamined

Our presuppositions, assumptions, hermeneutical methods, exegetical tools, creeds, and doctrines need to be reexamined from time to time in order to determine whether or not they will stand rigorous scientific evaluation and critique. We cannot afford to be complacent about these matters and hope that no one will see our logical fallacies, inference errors, and lack of empirical evidence that should support our beliefs. States Froom:

We may well observe –

1. *That intelligent faith is based on sound, unassailable fact.* It is not built on pleasing fables and transitory feelings. It is not founded on pious hopes and plausible assumptions. It is not reared upon unreliable traditions and imaginative folklore. Instead, it is built upon solid, trustworthy, factual evidence.

2. *That it is impossible for God to lie, and inconceivable that He should deceive.* He never contradicts the laws of truth and evidence that He has established upon which we are to base our faith and verify our findings, and by which we are to evaluate and check all evidence. The truth of God ever accords with the highest demands of reverent reason, historical fact, and scientific procedure.

3. *That truth has nothing to fear either from reverent investigation or from the attacks of hostile perversion.* If it be truth, it is bound ultimately to triumph over its detractors. Indeed, the more it is buffeted, the brighter it shines and the more majestic it stands forth in its towering majesty.

Such observations are pertinent because, along with our increasing growth and the inevitable prominence that comes as a result, especially as we enter the crisis time of earth’s last hour, we shall become the center of the world’s critical and ofttimes hostile scrutiny. Every position we hold will then become the object of bitter attack. It therefore behooves us to know, as never before, the certainty and surety of the foundations upon which our faith is built. It is imperative for us to be assured and established beyond reasonable question upon every major fact of our prophetic faith. We are specifically admonished by the Spirit of prophecy – and such counsel is buttressed by our own commons sense – that these fundamentals are to be verified beyond a reasonable doubt. We are further told that if we are not so prepared and buttressed, the “wisdom of the world’s great ones will be too much for us.”

Problems with Interpretation

The purpose of this research document is to critique the YDP and show that the historicist “principle” is not a biblical or scientific method and cannot be supported with the Bible or with linguistic evidence. It is not the objective of this writer, at the present time, to propose an alternative approach to the interpretation of the Bible or of Daniel and Revelation. The exclusive goal of this short excursus on Problems with Interpretation is to show that most of the theological problems the SDA Church has faced since its inception are due to its wrong approach to Biblical and prophetic text interpretation, and to encourage the needed and appropriate change.
That the SDA church has a unique hermeneutical method for the interpretation of the Bible and in particular of Daniel and Revelation, should be no surprise to those readers who are familiar with the book *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach* published by the Biblical Research Institute (further, BRI) – the SDA equivalent of the *Magisterium* in the Catholic Church. The book contains a mélange of articles on different biblical interpretation issues. The Appendix A section in the same book includes “Methods of Bible Study,” the 1986 *Annual Council Methods of Bible Study Committee* (further, GCC-A) Report that is “addressed to all members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the purpose of providing guidelines on how to study the Bible, both the trained scholar and others.” The GCC-A Report was also published in the April 1987 issue of the magazine *Ministry*.

When one manages to overcome the gauche, and sometimes difficult to understand English language in which the document was formulated, the question to ask is whether or not the SDA administrators should have the prerogative to dictate to the church members and scholars how to read the Bible. The answer is that the Adventist interpretation of the Bible and the prophetic books, Daniel and Revelation, would not survive without the peculiar historicist presuppositions and assumptions that are at the foundation of the SDA hermeneutics, and therefore the only approved method of biblical interpretation appears to be the historical-biblical method. States Müller:

> The historical-biblical method is sometimes called the biblical-grammatical approach to Scripture, the historical-grammatical method, or the grammatical-historical method. It is to be distinguished from the predominant historical-critical method with its source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, tradition history, and socio-scientific criticism.

In contrast with most other approaches, the historical-biblical method acknowledges the self-testimony of Scripture and studies its phenomena. It accepts the claim that God revealed Himself (1 Sam 3:21), that He entered into a relationship with the human authors of Scripture (Amos 3:7; Eph 3:5), that He also revealed propositional truth and communicated messages (Dan 10:1; Titus 1:3), that He inspired the human authors to share their messages with others (2 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 1:10-12; 2 Pet 1:19-21), and that the inscripturated message is the Word of God (Mark 7:10-13).

The *GCC-A Report* warns the SDA scholars and church members that the adoption and use of a rather parallel hermeneutical approach, the historical-critical method, poses grave theological and spiritual dangers to them and must be avoided:

> In recent decades the most prominent method in biblical studies has been known as the historical-critical method. Scholars who use this method, as classically formulated, operate on the basis of presuppositions which, prior to studying the biblical text, reject the reliability of accounts of miracles and other supernatural events narrated in the Bible. Even a modified use of this method that retains the principle of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason is unacceptable to Adventists.

> The historical-critical method minimizes the need for faith in God and obedience to His commandments. In addition, because such a method deemphasizes the divine element in the Bible as an inspired book (including its resultant unity) and depreciates and misunderstands apocalyptic prophecy and the eschatological portions of the Bible, we urge Adventist Bible students to avoid relying on the use of the presuppositions and the resultant deductions associated with the historical-critical method.
Predetermined Text Exegesis

The unacceptable consequence that might follow from the use of the historical-critical method would be a “wrong” interpretation of Daniel and Revelation that might damage a fundamental creed known among Adventists as the “Sanctuary Doctrine.” The risk for an “incorrect” interpretation of the two prophetic books, though, is small or negligible. No matter what hermeneutical method the SDA theologians used in their interpretation of those books, the final results would be the same because they are predetermined. The presuppositions and assumptions entrenched in the distinctive brand of SDA historicism would secure those conclusions, because the SDA “hermeneutical principles of apocalyptic interpretation” are assumed to be invariable and “nonnegotiable” exegetical methods:

Seventh-day Adventists arrive at their interpretations of Bible prophecy by employing the principle of the “historicist school” of prophetic interpretation. This historicist view (also known as the “continuous historical” view) sees the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation unfolding at various points in historical time, often encompassing the sweep of history from the times of Daniel and John (the human authors of these books) to the establishment of God’s eternal kingdom.30

I do not have anything particularly new to offer, but I will underline the need to remain firmly committed to our nonnegotiable hermeneutical principles of apocalyptic interpretation.31

How to Misinterpret the Bible

Those readers who would like to proof-text the Bible in order to misinterpret the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation should be confident that the SDA theologians can offer them “good” practical advice for this kind of “biblical research.” The unscientific and unstructured hermeneutical prescriptions that compose the 1986 GCC-A Report32 is a relevant example of the mumbo-jumbo “interpretation science” that has been peddled for decades in the SDA Church among common members, theologians, and Bible scholars.

Most theological articles that have been published in SDA books, journals, or magazines seem to examine the Bible from a perspective that should have been shelved long ago – the “grammarian” approach. The “research” tools most common for this “interpretation” are lexicons and grammar books. Kevan represents well this anachronistic and unscientific approach:

The basic principle of Biblical interpretation which emerges from this point of view is that the sense of Scripture is to be found in the grammatical meaning of the words. To respect the grammatical sense is the fundamental rule in the study of all books, and the Bible, though rightly revered as “the Book of books,” is nevertheless still a book. It is no magical object left mysteriously lying in man’s path and requiring occult methods for extorting its powers. Every word is therefore to be accepted in its normal meaning and in the context of the style of writing in which it appears. Law, history, poetry and prophecy, each has its own literary style, and the interpreter will not be unmindful of these characteristics when endeavoring to reach an understanding of any given passage.33

Lexical word studies are more dangerous than useful, and so are noun inflection and case research as also verb patterns and tense studies as exclusive exegetical means. Silva has attempted to provide theologians with some rudiments in semantics,34 while Barr has warned against the extensive and unscientific use of etymological studies in apparent search for word...
meaning in context, but their efforts have not been sufficient to reform the anachronistic and defective exegetical practices that still dominate the SDA biblical and prophetic interpretation.

A Rigid and Inflexible Mindset

The problem is a rigid and inflexible mindset, the “know-it-all” attitude that is much afraid of serious biblical research and delights in obscurantist dogmatism. Blanco represents well this unscientific and dangerous perspective:

Today it is not so much additional Biblical verification that we need, as essential as that is, but the power of the Holy Spirit to melt hearts and make these truths penetrate our innermost being. Speaking of the movement of 1844, Ellen White says: “Like a tidal wave the movement swept over the land. From city to city, from village to village, and into remote country places it went, until the waiting people of God were fully aroused. Fanaticism disappeared before this proclamation, like early frost before the rising sun. Believers saw their doubt and perplexity removed, and hope and courage animated their hearts.”

The Biblical evidence for the rightness of the historicist interpretation of Scripture is readily available, the basic research has been done, as long as time lasts there will always be theological questions to answer, but this alone is not our greatest need. We need to listen to what the Holy Spirit has been saying to the church all these years, and if we approach Scripture any other way than the way the Holy Spirit has led, we are rejecting His authority. Let us not add sin to sin and sin against the Holy Spirit. We need to bow in humble submission to the third Person of the Godhead and acknowledge His sovereignty within and above the Scriptures.

The facts, though, do not corroborate Blanco’s overoptimistic and triumphalist perspective. It seems that rather than complete “the basic research” and collect “the biblical evidence for the rightness of the historicist interpretation of Scripture,” the SDA scholars have become complacent and have relied too much on their theological tradition to protect their cherished beliefs. The inevitable consequence is that church members have started to realize that some SDA creeds cannot stand rigorous inspection and that some beliefs seem to be established on assumptions and speculations and not on serious biblical research. The closest evidence for such a condition is this same document that questions one of the most prized historicist hermeneutical assumptions and shows that far from confirmed and inviolable, the YDP cannot be defended from the Bible or from linguistics.

An Enlightened Scholarship

The solution to this perpetual theological problem is eternal vigilance and the disposition to doubt, critique, and reinvent ourselves. A complacent and overconfident attitude, no matter where cultivated, is dangerous and counterproductive. This is so much more the case in biblical research and theological studies where the stakes could be so high – eternal life or death.

The SDA theologians need to move beyond the antiquated and unscientific word and grammar studies that define most of their exegetical research into the discourse level of Biblical interpretation in order to understand the intended message of the Bible as a whole, and the message of the prophetic books, Daniel and Revelation. The grammatical-historical method must be expanded and upgraded with the linguistic knowledge that reflects current language science research and text exploration. The SDA hermeneutics must be flexible and negotiable. This
process will require some unlearning and relearning together with a reexamination and possible reinterpretation of the Bible and especially of the prophetic books, Daniel and Revelation.

Linguistics, the modern language science, requires biblical interpreters to go “above and beyond the sentence,” and to focus on language discourse – the approach native language users take in the language communication process. Schiffrin explains:

In this chapter we learn about discourse analysis, the branch of linguistics that focuses on language use above and beyond the sentence. The terms “above” and “beyond” may sound like we are embarking on an interstellar expedition of some kind, but they capture different features of the “discourse” mission. For most of its long scholarly tradition, linguistics perceived the sentence as the limit of the language system. Linguists focused mainly on the forms of language (sounds, morphemes, word, and sentences); how language was used in context was not explored. Speakers, hearers, and situations were outside the realm of analysis. It is by examining units larger than sentences, then, that the discourse analysts go “above” the sentence. And it is by examining aspects of the world in which language is used that discourse analysts go “beyond” the sentence. At the same time, it is important to remember that real people, using language in the real world (and in the rush of real time) are analyzing discourse as well – drawing inferences about meaning from features of the discourse.

France, the New Testament [NT] scholar, is persuaded that an intelligent use of the most current research and information from all the fields that could affect biblical interpretation must become an integral part of the grammatical-historical method for adequate and successful biblical interpretation. He states:

There can be no problems for the evangelical student in the commitment to rigorous exegesis to discover “what the author really meant,” and this will involve the fullest possible use of linguistic, literary, historical, archaeological and other data bearing on that author’s environment. The natural meaning of the biblical writer's words in the light of all this comparative material must be the starting-point of any serious study, whether by a conservative or by a radical. And that is what grammatico-historical exegesis means.

Defense That Will Not Stand

In the arguments intended to support and defend the YDP as a biblical, linguistic, and authentic hermeneutical method of prophetic time interpretation, the SDA historicist theologians have claimed that,

(1). The “year-day principle” is based on “the relationship that came to be established between the terms ‘day’ and ‘year’” in the Bible,

(2). The “year-day” parallelism “forms the general linguistic usage and thought pattern” that later developed into a “more specific quantitative relationship [rule or equation] in prophetic texts,”

(3). Without the YDP’s application to the prophetic time expressions in Daniel and Revelation the correct interpretation of the prophecies contained in these books would not be possible,

(4). As a principle or rule of prophetic time interpretation, the YDP has been “established through the reasonable interpretation of Scripture,” and that
The Year-Day Principle Reexamined

(5). The YDP must have a solid biblical and linguistic basis as a prophetic time hermeneutic because God himself is “the initiator of the idea.”

The purpose of this document is to challenge the five SDA historicist claims identified above and demonstrate that the YDP is not a linguistic method of prophetic interpretation, cannot be supported with the Bible, and has no Divine origin. The counter-evidence presented in the document will reveal and demonstrate that:

(1). The accidental “relationship” between “day” and “year” in the Bible results from idiomatic expressions and biblical text translation parallelism, and not from an assumed “general linguistic usage and [Hebrew] thought pattern” expressed in the biblical text,

(2). The claim that random “year-day” parallelism forms “the general [‘day-year’] linguistic usage and though pattern” in the Bible that “later developed into a “more specific quantitative relationship [rule or equation] in prophetic texts,” is false as most “day” and “year” term occurrences in the biblical text are not linked in pairs but happen as independent terms and there is no empirical evidence that such accidental occurrences later developed into a “more specific quantitative relationship [rule or equation] in prophetic texts,”

(3). The SDA historicists have applied the YDP in a selective, inconsistent, and unscientific manner to the time expressions in the Bible – Daniel and Revelation included, – and therefore their prophetic text interpretation is incorrect, unsound, and unreliable,

(4). The SDA historicist contention that the YDP was “established through the reasonable interpretation of Scripture” is not an empirical fact but a circular, fallacious argument or petitio principii – an admission that the SDA historicist “exposition [on Daniel and Revelation] cannot stand unless this cannon [YDP] is assumed,” and that, therefore,

(5). The SDA historicist arrogant claim that “God was the initiator of the [YDP] idea,” and that He was the one who inserted the YPD into the biblical text is another circular argument unsupported with evidence. The YDP is an erroneous theological assumption with no empirical or factual biblical or linguistic basis, and not a Divine time hermeneutic or rule.
II. The Historicist YDP Definition

Multiple and Inconsistent Labels

The *Oxford English Dictionary* [further, OED] describes the term *to define* as “to state exactly what (a thing) is; to set forth or explain the essential nature of,” and refers to the word *definition* as “a precise statement of the essential nature of a thing; a statement or form of words by which anything is defined.”¹ The YDP’s definition, then, should inform the reader about the principle’s (1) *essential nature* (name or label), and (2) its *properties* (application parameters).

There are quite a few, and rather dissimilar, labels for the YDP, depending on the SDA historicists who have proposed them. The “year-day principle”² is termed a “prophetic scale,”³ “apocalyptic rule,”⁴ “year-day tool,”⁵ “biblical hermeneutic,”⁶ “method of interpretation,”⁷ “year-day relationship,”⁸ “key to the historicist interpretation,”⁹ “year-day equation,”¹⁰ “biblical datum,”¹¹ etc. These labels are not equivalent. While “tool,” “hermeneutic,” “method” and “relationship” are qualitative and rather vague, “scale,” “rule” and “equation” are quantitative, specific, suggest generalization, and indicate a linguistic pattern with *high statistical average.*

The YDP and the “Scale” Claim

The phrase “prophetic scale” requires special mention. The mathematical concept designates a calibrated ratio that has a universal application and whose numerical value remains constant at all times through its applications. This all-inclusive and invariable mathematical proportion is far different from the SDA historicist “prophetic scale” that, as will be further shown in this document, has been applied in an inconsistent manner, that is, at random and as an exception. Froom makes a mistaken comparison between a map’s proportional and constant “one inch for one hundred miles” scale that is applied across-the-board to all the objects represented on a map and the YDP as a historicist “prophetic time measurement” device that has been applied at random and in a selective manner to the time expressions in the Bible:

Moses and Ezekiel had long before given the inspired key to all prophetic time measurement; namely, that the prophetic time unit is always *a day for a year,*¹ just as on a map one inch may stand for one hundred miles. In the application of this basic principle the fulfillment of the prophesied seventy weeks of years—which were to extend from the time of Persia to the Messiah—was first seen to be exactly accomplished in the baptism and death of Christ in connection with the seventieth week. These sublime transactions sealed forever for the Christian church the “year-day” principle, a principle recognized similarly by the Jews.¹²

The Flawed YDP Perspective

The fact that the SDA theologians have used the labels mentioned above in what appears to be a haphazard fashion in order to define the YDP indicates carelessness on their part and lack of awareness that all the above terms have specific and precise lexical and semantic values and that some even suggest quantitative numerical proportions. This uninformed and flawed theological perspective on the YDP can be observed again and again from the definition of the *assumed* “principle” to its defense and support and to its application, and leads to confusion and suspicion about the SDA historicist prophetic time computation method.
Vague Application Parameters

The YPD properties (application parameters) that would indicate to which biblical texts
the historicist prophetic time principle should be applied and how it should be applied are also
formulated in an imprecise and inadequate manner. Here again, the numerous and dissimilar
SDA historicist statements about the YDP application appear to mandate discordant and
therefore inconsistent text ranges and selective text applications. Some of the most common
historicist statements on the YDP application parameters are tabulated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDA Historicist(s)</th>
<th>Bible Texts</th>
<th>Application Parameters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pfandl</td>
<td>Apocalyptic time prophecies</td>
<td>“the year-day principle [which] says that a day in apocalyptic time prophecies represents a year.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shea</td>
<td>Apocalyptic prophecy</td>
<td>“the apocalyptic rule of a symbolic and prophetic day equaling a historical year (Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDA Encyclopedia</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
<td>“According to the year-day principle, a symbolic day in prophecy stands for a literal year.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDABC at Daniel 7:25</td>
<td>Symbolic prophecy</td>
<td>“By the year-day principle, as illustrated in Num. 14:34 and Eze. 4:6, a day in symbolic prophecy stands for a literal year.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glacier View Scholars</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
<td>“calculating prophetic days into literal years.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glacier View Scholars</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
<td>“According to the two principal texts …Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6…a day is representative of a year and a year is representative of a day.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>Certain time prophecies</td>
<td>“Historicists hold that in certain time prophecies, a ‘prophetic day’ represents an entire year of ‘actual calendrical time.’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glacier View Scholars</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
<td>“Ezekiel, then, has the day-for-a-year principle, while Numbers has the year-for-a-day principle.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The SDA historicists cited above appear to make the dissimilar and unequal claims that
the prophetic time formula should be applied to: (1) “prophecy” (unspecified), (2) “certain time
prophecies” (unspecified), (3) “symbolic prophecy,” and (4) “apocalyptic time prophecies.”
Moon does not limit the historical principle’s application to apocalyptic prophecies, but states
that the principle should be applied to “certain time prophecies [emphasis added],” which makes
his YDP definition vague enough to be impractical because the readers have no clear idea what
kind of prophecies (classical, symbolic, or apocalyptic) would require the YDP application.

Incorrect Sample Generalization

Some theologians in the historicist tradition, such as Mede, were explicit in the extended
use of the YDP. Barnes comments that “He [Mede] maintained that, ‘alike in Daniel, and for
aught he knew, in all the other prophets, times of things prophesied, expressed by days, are to
be understood of years [emphasis added].” In other words, Mede argued that the YDP should
be applied without restrictions or qualifications to **all prophetic passages** in the Bible. This
extended YDP application to “all the other prophets” that Mede seems to embrace does not
appear to be too unusual when one reviews the applications some SDA theologians have
proposed for the YDP in the Old Testament [further, OT]. For example, the Glacier View
scholars claim that Laban used the YDP “computation” formula when he made the marriage arrangement with Jacob:

Genesis 29:27 indicates that Jacob's period of service to Laban in return for his coveted bride Rachel must have been computed on the year-day principle [emphasis added]. Quoting the words of Laban, this verse reads: “Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years.”

Shea is another SDA historicist who contends that the YDP has been applied to (1) certain historical narrative texts (Exodus 13:10; 1 Samuel 1:21, 2:19, and 20:6; Judges 11:40) where the English “yearly” reads in Hebrew “from days to days;” (2) Samuel 27:5 and Numbers 9:22, where the term “day” stands for “year,” and Genesis 47:9 where the Bible text reads, “all the days of X were...years,” or “his days shall be ...years;” (2) certain poetical passages (Job 10:5, 15:20, 32:7, and 36:1; Deuteronomy 32:7, and Psalms 77:5 and 90:9-10) where “day” and “year” are parallel, (3) some agricultural law texts (Leviticus 25:1-7), which describe the weeks of years, (4) the Jubilee law texts (Exodus 16:23, 31:15 and 35:2; Leviticus 16:31, 23:3, 24, 32, and 39 and 25:4, 5) where the Jubilee years are calculated, (5) Daniel 9:24-25, the passage in which historicists claim that prophetic weeks are used, and (6) some classical prophecies or symbolic action texts such as Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 that have been described for a long time as the main biblical passages in support and defense of the YDP.

These texts reveal the main issue that confronts the YDP’s definition – an incorrect and unscientific sample generalization. Rules are devised in “the action or process of generalizing, i.e. of forming, and expressing in words, general notions or propositions obtained from the observation and comparison of individual facts or appearances [emphasis added].” This means that the researcher needs to (1) collect, (2) evaluate, and (3) interpret statistical data for patterns. For this purpose, in the YDP’s case, the scholars must (1) obtain the number of time expressions in the entire Bible, (2) compare the number of biblical time expressions to which the YDP has been applied with the number of time expressions to which the principle has not been applied, and (3) draw a generalization, that is, formulate the general principle or rule that defines the YDP’s application to those texts based on the sample pool and the obtained statistical ratio.

The examination of Shea’s list of biblical time expressions to which the YDP has been applied indicates that almost all the YDP support time samples have been obtained from texts that belong to (1) historical narratives, (2) poetical texts, (3) agrarian laws, (4) Jubilee laws, and (5) classical prophecies. There are no biblical texts that establish the direct and explicit application of the YDP to apocalyptic prophecies due to the simple fact that “in the apocalyptic texts this [‘one day stands for one year’] is never stated, it is an underlying principle.” Data for the YDP generalization, then, is from texts that do not belong to symbolic, apocalyptic prophecies, and yet the SDA historicist definition limits and restricts the principle’s application to symbolic, apocalyptic prophecies!!

To limit the YDP application to symbolic, apocalyptic prophecies, then, is in opposition with the established empirical evidence from the collected time samples, and that makes the historicist rule unscientific and invalid. This erroneous generalization also shows that the historicist “principle” has not been obtained a posteriori, through a scientific, inductive process
that used the collected empirical data for the generalization process, but *a priori*, that is, before the appropriate data was collected, through **unreliable deductive logic**. The unavoidable conclusion is that the historicist principle is not a scientific, “rule” or “equation” because it is not based in facts, but on the historicist school’s need for the assumed “principle” in order to formulate its exclusive and incorrect prophetic interpretations to Daniel and Revelation.

**YDP Formulas in Contradiction**

The Glacier View scholars interpret Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 to refer to two distinct principles of prophetic time interpretation that should be applied to the prophetic passages in Daniel and Revelation: “Ezekiel, then, has the day-for-a-year principle, while Numbers has the year-for-a-day principle [emphasis added].”

Joreteg expresses his frustration about the confusion this twofold and contrastive YDP application situation might cause in the following words:

> But if we look at these texts more carefully we find that in the first example there is a day-year principle, where 40 days translated to 40 years. In the second example there is a year-day principle, where 390 years translated to 390 days. That actually seems to be two principles and not one! When should a day become a year and when should a year become a day? These two texts do not tell us. Has it anything to do with the severity of the sin? *Is God arbitrary in deciding when to use one principle or the other? It would certainly be comforting to find other texts supporting this concept before we use it as a tool for our studies* [emphasis added].

**Miller’s Eccentric Time Formulas**

The “prophetic time” calculation game becomes sensational when one includes William Miller, the father of Adventism, into the “time equation” (pardon the pun!). Miller was too good with numbers – prophetic time numbers. He gambled with them, manhandled them, and made them do what he wanted. He used not one, but multiple “principles” or “formulas” in order to interpret the Bible time prophecies at his own convenience. States Arasola:

Miller did, however, differ from most historicists in employing more than one formula for the interpretation of time:

> “Figures sometimes have two or more different significations, as day is used in a figurative sense to represent three different periods of time.

1. Indefinite (Eccles. vii.14)
2. Definite, a day for a year (Ezek. iv.6)
3. Day for a thousand years (2Pet. iii.8)

If you put on the right construction it will harmonize with the Bible and make good sense, otherwise it will not.”

In another context he clarifies his argument on the meaning of the word “day” by stating that there were three types of days: natural, lasting 24 hours or one cycle of the earth round its axis; prophetic, meaning a year or one cycle of the earth round the sun; thousand year days, which due to their length deserved the title “Lord’s day.” In addition to using the popular year/day method Miller also employed the thousand years for a day calculation in some of his interpretations of the date of the *parousia*. The basis for turning a day into
a thousand years was naturally derived from 2 Pet 3:8. 10. King James’ translation, “be not ignorant of this one thing,” appeared to emphasize the legitimacy of this chronology.1528

Miller used 15 different “proofs” for his prophetic time calculations and time predictions that reached to the end of the world and the Second Coming. His calculations were so extensive and intricate that almost the entire Bible seemed to be structured around codified time expressions and time formulas. He had, for instance, 7 different approaches to calculate the end of the world:

Miller prepared fifteen proofs which on closer analysis include seven diverse ways of calculating 1843 as the final year of world’s history [emphasis added]. The actual sequence in which Miller developed his 15 proofs is unclear because many of them are referred to or found in the earliest written sources 27 A clue as to the evolution of Miller’s thinking might be available in the Vermont Telegraph from the early part of 1832, when Miller presented his view in writing for the first time. These have not been available for this study, but there are other observations one can make on Miller’s fifteen proofs.29

Such are the SDA historicist roots for the prophetic time interpretation and event prediction in Daniel and Revelation. With “scholars” like Miller in the SDA historicist background it is no wonder that the proud time setting tradition has continued in the Adventist historicist circles for almost two centuries until now and will continue into the predictable future, and that the non-SDA scholars dismiss the SDA church prophetic interpretation and look at the SDAs as Millerites on the ventilator.

Definition That Fails the Test

The evidence presented above shows that the SDA historicists do not have a correct and adequate – scientific, empirical, logical, and coherent – definition for the YDP. The proposed definition suffers from multiple and dissimilar labels, discordant formulations, questionable application parameters, and unscientific generalization. The readers confronted with such definition confusion cannot help but become perplexed, – not sure how to manage the inconsistent YDP information provided and how to use the historicist “rule” in order to interpret the prophetic time expressions in Daniel and Revelation, and the entire Bible. When to this definition muddle are added the two YDP formulas in contradiction, the “day-for-a-year,” and the “year-for-a-day,” and Miller’s eccentric Second Coming time calculations, it becomes obvious that the SDA “principle” is a counterfactual theological contrivance and not a linguistic rule based on solid empirical evidence.

No YDP Definition Is Required

There are some SDA historicist theologians, such as Don F. Neufeld, who find even the notion of a YDP definition strange because they see no textual evidence that Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 contain a “general statement” that would require a universal application to the time expressions in the Bible. No doubt, then, that it would be quite difficult to define and explain something that has not been empirically observed or documented and does not exist, and this might be the main reason for the hard time the SDA historicists have had in their futile attempts to define and describe the YDP in a relevant, scientific, and correct manner:
It should also be noted that these prophecies [“the 1260 days and the 2300 days”] were expressed in terms such as “days” (Dan. 8:14; Rev. 12:6), “times” (Dan. 7:25), “months” (Rev. 13:5). There is no indication in the prophecies themselves that any scale measure ought to be applied to the “days,” “months,” or “times” [emphasis added]. The Holy Spirit gave directions to do this only after the time was postponed. At whatever time the fulfillment would have come, the Holy Spirit could have provided the appropriate scale.

Some have felt that Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 establish the year-day principle as needing to be applied to all time prophecies [emphasis added]. But a careful examination of these passages shows that the principle is applied only to specific cases and that there is no general statement in these passages suggesting that a universal principle is set forth [emphasis added]. In fact, Seventh-day Adventists do not apply the principle consistently to all time prophecies. For example, the length of the millennium is stated in Revelation 20:3, 5, and 7 as being a “thousand years.” This is accepted literally. If the year-day principle were applied, the length would be 360,000 or as much as 365,000 years.  

Historicism and Pseudo-Historicism

The SDA theologians have claimed that their exclusive interpretation of certain time prophecies in Daniel (chapters 7-12) and Revelation (chapters 9-13) from a historicist perspective is correct because the YDP application has allowed them to connect those prophecies with actual historical events that validate their interpretation. This claim, though, is not based in empirical facts. Ingram has shown that the SDA theologians have not been able to provide historical evidence for 457 B.C. – the time when the “2300 years prophetic period” is presumed to have started, and much less factual support for an event that was assumed to occur in heaven in 1844. States Ingram: “What happened in the fall of 457 B.C. that we use that as the starting point of the 2300 days/years, other than it fits in with October 22, the fall of 1844?”

This pointed question reveals the core issue with the SDA unique interpretation of the apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. It seems that the SDA historicist scholars like to depend on invented or manufactured events in order to support their theological beliefs, and whether or not they use the YDP to “decode” the time expressions in Daniel and Revelation the result is the same – failure to produce genuine historical evidence for their interpretations. The truth is that the most popular SDA “prophetic dates” such as 457 B.C. and 1844, 538 B.C. and 1789, etc., have never been confirmed with actual historical facts. Unconfirmed events cannot be accepted as truthful and reliable. It is obvious that the claim that SDA historicism rests on sound historical data is untrue. What the SDA theologians seem to promote is a fraudulent historicist perspective that should be called pseudo-historicism – historicism without the historical facts that would validate it. This means also that the SDA application of the YDP to the apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation is mistaken because the hermeneutical “principle” is often applied to fictitious time periods and fabricated events and not to factual historical time periods and actual events related to those prophecies, and therefore the “prophetic time” calculations are speculative and incorrect.
III. Historicist Defense of the YDP

For the most part, the SDA historicists have handled the YDP as an established and indisputable hermeneutical tool for the time expressions in Daniel and Revelation, and therefore not much has been written to defend the “principle” except for short apologetic articles published from time to time in church magazines or other publications. Moreover, all the articles written on the issue have been based on four unconfirmed assumptions: 1. that the Bible is a Time Almanac with historical “landmarks” and that therefore the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation cover “the historical period from the time of the prophet to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth,” 2. that God himself was “the initiator of the idea that a day is representative of a year and a year is representative of a day,” 3. that “the angel interpreter in the book of Daniel” applied the historicist time rule when he interpreted the book, and 4. that the SDA historicists are right in their interpretation of the time prophecies in Daniel and Revelation while all the other interpreters are wrong.

This section of the YDP document attempts an extensive review of the Adventist materials written in support and defense of the YDP in order to compile and organize the arguments the theologians have used in their YDP apologetics. Included among the SDA and non-SDA historicist theologians who have written on the YDP in the past decades we can mention Hewitt (1948), Gordon (1983), Hyde (1982), Davidson (2000), W.E. Read (1968), Heppenstall (1981), Zurcher (1981), Timm (2004), Pfandl (2003), Ford (1964), Paulien (2008), Moon (2002), Holbrook (1996), and Shea (1982). The publications of these theologians, Bible scholars, and church administrators will be examined in the order in which their names have been mentioned above:

Clarence H. Hewitt

Hewitt, an Advent Christian Church [ACC] theologian and lecturer in Biblical Studies and Exegesis at the Aurora College, interprets Daniel and supports the YDP in a book that “followed the Historical school of interpretation.” The non-SDA agrees on some points with the SDA theologians on the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation, but also differs at numerous and various levels with their approach in the matter. Hewitt’s interpretation of the prophetic books seems to be, on the whole, more established in historical facts and less dependent on speculations and assumptions than the one promoted in the SDA theological circles. His argumentation for the historicist time principle is eight pages short and unoriginal, but makes a good addition to the YDP publications review in this document. Hewitt begins his discussion with the definition and rationale for the YDP:

The historical school of prophetic interpretation has always relied upon the so-called year-day theory in dealing with the time periods of prophecy. The theory may be defined as the principle that in prophetic language a day of symbolic time represents a year of actual, historic time [emphasis added].

Without endorsing all the applications that have been made of this principle, or the elaborations of it by such writers as H. G. Guinness, so that triple fulfillments of every time period may be expected on the basis of solar, lunar and calendar years, we give it as our considered judgment that we have here a true canon of interpretation with regard to chronological prophecy. It is our position that the theory possesses general
validity, such that prophetic time periods are usually to be understood on this basis, unless good reason exists for treating them otherwise.  

The ACC historicist continues his discussion on the principle with a question and answer statement in which he introduces his YDP claims: “Other than sanction of traditional usage, what are the reasons which lead us to such a conclusion? They are four in number,” and then proceeds to enunciate and develop those four points:

1. The year-day theory is sustained by the analogy of prophetical symbolism generally. As the objects and activities with which prophecy deals are expressed in symbols, so the periods of time are likewise contemplated in a figurative manner. **As great empires and powers are represented under the diminutive figures of animals, heads and horns, so the actual length of their existence in history is expressed by greatly shortened periods; i.e. by time in miniature, allowing a day to symbolize an entire year** [emphasis added]. There is thus a fine appropriateness in the year-day principle to the general concept and method of symbolic prophecy in other relations.

2. The year-day principle was revealed by God to the prophets, and may therefore be said to have been employed by them with divine guidance and approval.

The original instance of this principle is recorded in Numbers 14:34. This passage has to do with the punishment which came upon Israel for disobeying the command of God to go in and possess the land, a sin which resulted from believing the evil report of the ten spies.

It may be urged that this passage is neither a symbolic nor a chronological prophecy in the usual sense of these terms. This may be granted. Nevertheless, the elements of prediction and symbolism are certainly present, and the forty days of unbelief were truly made by divine appointment a figure for the forty years of Israel’s future wanderings. **Implicit in such a situation is the principle of a day for a year** [emphasis added].

**If this passage stood alone, it might well be regarded as an isolated incident and at the most merely suggestive** [emphasis added]. But it is not an isolated instance of this principle. An even clearer example is recorded by the prophet Ezekiel, where the Lord definitely commanded him to employ this type of representation in prophecy.

The fact that scholars are not agreed as to all the expository details of this unusual and intriguing piece of symbolism [Ezekiel 4:6] in no way affects **the basic principle involved** [emphasis added]. All are agreed that Ezekiel was commanded to enact a symbolic prophecy concerning the final siege and fall of Jerusalem, which came to pass only a few years later, and of the duration of the punishment upon the unhappy houses of Israel for their sins. All are agreed that the prophet was directed to represent a year of punishment by a single day of his symbolic “bearing” of their iniquity. “I have appointed thee each day for a year,” the Lord said. Literally, “I have appointed thee a day for a year, a day for a year,” as in the A.V. marginal reading. **It seems indubitable that the phrase is quoted from the passage in Numbers, and the double repetition of it serves to emphasize the thought that we have here as striking corroboration – or, better still, a deliberate and impressive restatement – of the year-day principle** [emphasis added].

Did the passage in Numbers stand alone, or this one in Ezekiel, we might pass it over as a special instance, but when we have both, and when they are tied together in so unmistakable a manner, it becomes probable that the underlying factor in both is a **genuine principle of prophecy divinely revealed** [emphasis added]. This fact is recognized by many able commentators. Thus, for example, Dean Plumptre, remarks apropos of Ezekiel’s “each day for a year,” that “what has been known as the year-day theory flows naturally from it.”

3. This probability takes on the aspects of certainty when we note the recurrence of this same principle in another prophet. **The famous prophecy of the Seventy Weeks in Daniel 9 is based squarely on the year-**
day principle [emphasis added]. Expositors of all schools recognize that this period of 490 days symbolizes 490 years.³

4. A fourth argument for the year-day theory is that it meets the pragmatic test: it works. As I have shown very clearly in Chapter Three, and Guinness also in Appendix D, the principle “works” when applied to the “time, times, and the dividing of time,” which, reduced to 1,260 days and interpreted as years, reaches from the decree of Phocas in A.D. 606 or 607 to the events of 1866-70. With less assurance we may point to the 1,290 and 1,335 day periods as likely examples also, reaching from 70 A.D. to 1360 and 1405, respectively, the “harbinger” dates of the period of “blessedness” introduced by the Reformation. It is possible, also, that the “seven times” of his madness which were to “pass over” King Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:32) are to be understood as a symbolic reference to the “seven times” of Gentile dominion (“the times of the Gentiles” – Luke 21:24) which, on the year-day basis, may reasonably be held to reach from 606 B.C., the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar, to 1917 A.D. when General Allenby captured Jerusalem and Palestine was soon thereafter opened up to Jewish colonization.⁸

Hewitt, though, warns his readers that sometimes “certain of these applications of the principle do not always come out to the exact year,” and that the historicist time principle should not be “applied to every time period of prophecy” because there might not be historical matches to those applications:

We need scarcely be disturbed by the fact that certain of these applications of the principle do not always come out to the exact year. Mr. Guinness, who has probably invested more time in the study of prophetic chronology than any other recent writer, feels that if a period extends from the terminus a quo to the “epoch” of the event that completes it, the measure is sufficiently exact. The Peace of Carlowitz, for example, was actually signed two or three years after the precise termination of the 396 years, and yet the turning point of the struggle which issued in that treaty was just about the expiration of the time measurement. Similarly, the 1,260 years from the pope-exalting decree of Phocas expired in 1866, not in 1870, when the Pope’s temporal power was abrogated, yet that termination of the period of the Papacy was the direct outcome of the wars which began in 1866. This writer declares that all these prophecies have been fulfilled according to what the eminent Francis Bacon called “that latitude which is agreeable and familiar unto divine prophecies, being of the nature of the author, with whom a thousand years are but as one day, and therefore not fulfilled punctually at once, but having springing and permanent accomplishment throughout many ages, though the height of fullness of them may refer to some one age.”⁷

We may conclude, therefore, that a principle of prophetic time ratio [emphasis added] which was revealed to two great prophets, Moses and Ezekiel, which was afterward employed by the angel Gabriel in a vision to Daniel with regard to the precise year of the appearing of the Messiah, and which works in a convincing manner when applied to many of the time periods of prophecy [emphasis added] whose accomplishments we have already witnessed, is to be accepted as a valid principle of interpretation.⁸

The question remains, however, as to whether this principle is necessarily to be applied to every time period of prophecy. Here we must advise caution. It was clearly not to be applied to Jeremiah’s “seventy years” for the captivity of Judah, or to Christ’s “three days and three nights” to His own resurrection. Only one expositor, so far as I know, has ever suggested that the 1,000 years in Revelation, chapter 20, should be interpreted on this scale as 365,000 years. Doubtless, also, it would be a case of over-preciseness to make the half hour of silence in heaven (Rev 8:1) symbolize a period of seven and a half days! In Chapter Six we found ample reason for disregarding the year-day principle in the case of the 2,300 days, even though that period is found in connection with a symbolic prophecy.⁹

Hewitt’s conclusion to his brief YDP support and defense presentation is also expressed in four short points that attempt to capture the essential aspects of the historicist prophetic time
principle. His application perspective indicates that he sees the YDP application as specific and selective rather than across-the-board to all the prophetic time expressions in the Bible:

The present state of our knowledge concerning this matter suggests the following conclusions:

1. The year-day theory is a valid principle of prophetic interpretation and is generally but not indiscriminately to be applied.

2. In symbolic prophecy, the presumption is that a time period will be subject to the year-day principle unless cogent reasons exist to the contrary.

3. Among the valid reasons for disregarding the principle in relation to a given period are: (1) the presence in the text of evidence that the prophet did not intend the number to be so understood, (2) the consideration that the period is disproportionately long or disproportionately short to be interpreted in this way, or (3) an indication that the prophet was thinking of literal time.

4. It is presumptive evidence that a time period is subject to this principle when it meets with a convincing fulfillment in history on this basis. It is presumptive evidence that the year-day theory should not be applied when the attempt so to apply it breaks down.\(^{10}\)

The arguments Hewitt proposes in order to authenticate and support the YDP are standard historicist claims proposed for the same reason, although his definition is not specific about the prophetic texts to which the principle should be applied – classical or apocalyptic, and whether or not literal time expressions in prophetic passages should be “decoded” through the same formula. One notices that the theologian is selective about the YDP application, and avoids “endorsing all the applications that have been made of this principle. This selective and uneven approach is what Ouro calls unscientific when he examines Ford’s application of the APP. The ACC theologian also states that the historicist principle” should not be applied to biblical texts when there is “good reason” for exclusion. What is that “good reason” we are not told, and what specific criteria one should consider for this important decision is left unexplained.

One point in his support for the YDP is the “diminutive figures of animals, heads and horns,” and the related “time in miniature.” These notions are a vague reference to the “symbolic symmetry” Thurston suggested in 1812 and the “miniature symbolization” concept Bush proposed in 1843. There is no question that the symbolic prophecies represent historical bodies and historical events through metaphorical pictures, but there is no clear textual evidence that these symbols are tied to a time rule or equation for their interpretation.

Hewitt’s claim that “the year-day principle was revealed by God to the prophets,” and that it “may therefore be said to have been employed by them with divine guidance and approval,” seems nothing more than a speculation based on the notion that the Bible is historicist text and follows historicist presuppositions and assumptions. The scholar’s examples, Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6, that appear to indicate a “basic principle involved” should not be adequate to establish a generalization when one considers more than 4,000 time expression in the Bible that deviate from this assumed “pattern.”

Hewitt also seems to conflate “prophetic symbolism” with the YDP. While it is true that some prophecies in Daniel and Revelation are symbolic, the texts do not indicate specific
“prophetic time ratio[s].” To think otherwise is to work based on speculation, not empirical evidence. The historicist assumption that “the day-year principle was revealed by God to the prophets,” seems to be based on another assumption – that our interpretation of biblical passages such as Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 is correct, and that, indeed, those two texts establish and support a universal prophetic time calculation. Matters get worse when Hewitt also suggests selective applications for the “principle” which he himself calls a “prophetic time ratio [emphasis added].” These are quantitative terms that indicate universal mathematical proportions with universal application, and the inconsistent and random exclusion of biblical texts from the “ratio” negates the very “principle” the ACC theologian has attempted to support.

The claim that Daniel 9:24-27 validates the YDP has no factual basis. It is another circular argument drawn from the historicist interpretation of the biblical passage. While it is true that the best interpretation of the “490 days” in Daniel 9:24 is as 490 years, this conclusion does not require the YDP. The contention that the historicist time rule “works” becomes rather doubtful when one notices what kind of “fulfillments” Hewitt claims in order to support the YDP. If the theologian wanted to negate the “principle,” the examples he offers as fulfillments for certain prophecies would be the right kind of arguments needed to show that the time calculation does not work. When one adds to these fulfillment failures the “rule of thumb” that the prophetic fulfillments should be allowed to occur with Bacon’s “latitude which is agreeable and familiar unto divine prophecies,” little remains from the assumed “precision” with which the historicists claim that some prophecies have been fulfilled, and the “pragmatic test” fails to deliver.

Paul A. Gordon

Gordon, Ellen G. White Estate director, examines the beliefs of the SDA pioneers, among which the positions Smith and Andrews have on the YDP because, states his publisher, “events in the past few years have pushed the subject of the doctrine of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment into the forefront of interest and discussion as never before,” and also because “some have charged that Seventh-Day Adventists did not derive it [‘the doctrine of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment’] from Scripture, but from the writings of Ellen White.”

The theologian first mentions the important and relevant truth that “students of Bible prophecy have not all agreed as to methods of prophetic interpretation,” but that “the pioneers took the historical approach in their study [emphasis added],” and then defines the historicist school of prophetic interpretation and provides the rationale for the historicist time principle:

3. Historical. (The Adventist approach generally). The unrolling [sic!] of the historical events from the times of Daniel and John until the second coming of Christ combine [sic!] to fulfill prophecy.

The Biblical key to the 2300 day prophecy of Daniel 814 was extremely important to the Adventist pioneers [emphasis added]. They considered it of the highest priority to establish with confidence that the year-day principle was valid for calculating prophetic time. William Miller and all the Adventist preachers prior to October 22, 1844 built their faith on it [emphasis added].
Gordon then introduces Smith and Andrews as representative historicist theologians in the SDA church and cites them in support and defense of the YDP. He begins with Smith because the Adventist “was one of the first to write an affirmation of the year-day prophetic concept,” and was involved in the SDA church apologetics:

Uriah Smith did not join the pioneers of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church until near the end of 1852, though he had been among the Millerites while quite young. Yet he was one of the first to write an affirmation of the year-day prophetic concept, discussing the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9:24, 25 in 1854. “Unto the Messiah the Prince, says the prediction, shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks – 69 weeks or 483 days. Messiah the Prince is Jesus Christ. Reckoning from 457 B.C. 483, years bring us to A.D. 27, where we find Christ commencing His public ministry, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying. “The time is fulfilled.” No time can here be referred to, but the 69 weeks which were then fulfilled. This fixes the fact that the days are prophetic; that is, a day for a year. Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6. We also see that it harmonizes perfectly with the conditions of the prophecy. RH, March 21, 1854

Smith was editor of The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald magazine for 50 years, and in this position he had to answer questions from the readers. One such question was about the “prophetic time” in Daniel 8:14 and its calculation. The reader wondered how the historicist time formula could be applied to the Hebrew terms “evening-and-morning” in the verse. The SDA church pioneer offers 6 reasons for the traditional SDA interpretation:

On the question here introduced, there are a number of sources from which light may be obtained. If the expression “evening and morning” is synonymous with the word “day,” then we can attach to it a prophetic signification, the same as to the latter, and it becomes a matter of complete indifference which is used.

1. On the definition of these words we find the following in Gesenius: Under the word evening, he gives the expression “evening and morning” (geh-rev boh-ker, according to the spelling given in the Hebrew concordance) and defines it, “a day and night, that is, the civil day of 24 hours. Dan. 8:14.” The word “day” (yohm) is defined by the same author as follows: “Day, so called from the diurnal heat. Spoken of the natural day from the rising to the setting of the sun, opp. the night; also of the civil day, or 24 hours which includes the night.”

2. Gesenius makes the expression “evening and morning” as above, equivalent to the Greek nuxthemeron, a word which Liddell and Scott define as meaning, “A day and night, the space of 24 hours.”

3. The Greek word for day, hemera, corresponding to the Hebrew yohm, is defined by Robinson thus: A day, i.e., the time from one sunrise or sunset to another, the same as nuxthemeron.”

4. In Genesis 1:5 we read that the evening and the morning (geh-rev boh-ker) were the first day (yohm).

5. Dr. Hales in his Analysis of Chronology, vol. 1, p.10, says: “The earliest measure of Time on record is the Day. In that most ancient and venerable account of the Creation by Moses, the process is marked by the operations of each day. The ‘evening and the morning were the first day,’ etc. Gen. 1:5, etc. Here the word ‘day’ denotes the civil or calendar day of 24 hours, including the ‘evening’ or natural night, and ‘the morning’ or natural day; while the sun is either below or above the horizon of any place, in the course of the earth’s diurnal rotation, between two successive appulses of the same meridian to the sun: corresponding, therefore, to a solar day in astronomy.
6. The Septuagint in Daniel 8:14 expresses the word days in the text, the same as in verses 11 and 12 of chapter 12, showing how the seventy learned Jews understood the original Hebrew, two hundred and eighty-five years before Christ.

From all these authorities, it is impossible to conclude otherwise than that, although the literal Hebrew of Daniel 8:14 is “evening morning” according to the margin, it means precisely the same as though the other expression for day (yom) had there been used [emphasis added]. That the expression is symbolic, each day standing for a year, is proved by two considerations: (1) **Being in the midst of a symbolic prophecy, the days must be considered symbolic** [emphasis added], unless we have the most positive reasons to show that they are literal; which we have not. (2) **The days are evidently given to cover very nearly the whole duration of all the kingdoms mentioned in the prophecy; but taken as literal days, amounting to about six years and a half, they would not cover a portion that would be worth mentioning of the existence of even the first empire. They must therefore denote 2300 years, as all expositors agree** [emphasis added]. – RH, June 12, 1866.14

When he examines the question, “How long the vision?” in Daniel 8:13, Smith concludes that literal days would not fulfill the prophetic time requirement:

Now if in reply the angel singled out a period only six years and one third in length, then there is no correspondence either between this answer and the vision in connection with which it was given, or between the answer and the question which directly called it forth. **These days if taken literally would be far from covering the duration of any one of the kingdoms of the prophecy taken singly, how much less of them all taken together** [emphasis added].

This is symbolic prophecy: it would be natural therefore to conclude that the time introduced would be of a like nature. – RH, Feb. 3, 1876.15

Smith’s arguments above sound quite similar to Hewitt’s contentions in support of the YDP definition and application. The reason is not hard to understand – historicist presuppositions and assumptions appear to be universal among the theologians who belong to the same prophetic interpretation school, and this case is no exception.

The pioneer’s defense of the YDP also involves an appeal to Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34 as the essential support texts for the historicist time principle:

**The Bible gives the exact proportion between literal and symbolic time** [emphasis added]. Ezekiel during the selfsame Babylonish captivity in which Daniel’s prophecies were delivered symbolizes years by days. He was commanded to make known to his fellow exiles by the river Chebar, near the Euphrates, the fate of Jerusalem, with her last king Zedekiah, and also God’s reason for it. For this purpose he was to lie prostrate with his face toward the city, on his left side 390 days for Israel, and on his right side 40 days for Judah, restricted all the while to a famine diet, like the Jews he represented shut up in the siege. And God said, I have appointed thee each day for a year. Eze. 4:6.

In this representation Ezekiel himself became a symbol. He was acting a symbolic part, an individual representing a nation, the days in which he was acting his part symbolizing the actual years of the punishment of those whom he represented. – *Ibid*.

Another instance, not so evidently symbolic in its nature, but equally definite in showing how God uses short periods of time to represent longer ones, and the proportion to be observed between them, is found in Numbers 14:34. **“Forty days, each for a year** [emphasis added].” – *Ibid*.16
Smith remembers to mention the historicist tradition that includes the Church Fathers and known historicists, who have shared the same prophetic time equation, although with somewhat different applications, when he claims that the YDP is biblical and accurate:

This principle of interpretation, though not the exact application of this prophecy, was adopted by Augustine, Tichonius, Primasius, Andreas, the venerable Bede, Ambrosius, Ansbertus, Berengaud, Bruno Astensis, etc. – Ibid.\(^\text{17}\)

The ultimate evidence for the “correctness” of the YDP application, in Smith’s personal perspective, is the “accomplishment of these predictions,” or the “pragmatic test,” and Gordon quotes Smith as follows:

But that which demonstrates beyond question the correctness of the year-day principle is the fact that we, living down in the last years of prophetic fulfillment, are now able to trace out in history the accomplishment of these predictions [emphasis added]; and we find that the seventy weeks of Daniel 9, the 1620, 1290, and 1335 days of Daniel 7 and 12, and Revelation 12 and 13, and the five months, and hour, day, month, and year of Revelation 9 have all been exactly fulfilled a day for a year [emphasis added].

The 2300 days of Daniel 8:14 are therefore 2300 literal years [emphasis added]. – Ibid.\(^\text{18}\)

Gordon’s second witness in support of the historicist time formula is Andrews, famous SDA General Conference president, writer, AR editor, and historicist scholar who in his approach “suggested the impossibility of its [YDP] application in literal time to the great kingdoms of Daniel’s vision because of the length of time they remained in power.” \(^\text{19}\) Andrews is quoted to state that:

The prophet learned the duration of his vision. For he heard Gabriel ask Michael, “How long shall the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? [emphasis added]” And Michael, who answered the question to Daniel, said, “Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” Verses 13, 14.

Now, it is plain that the period of twenty-three hundred days cannot be understood to mean so many literal days; for this would not make quite seven years, and would cover only a very small part of the duration of one of the three great empires in this vision.

If we compare spiritual things with spiritual, we shall find the key to the interpretation of these days [emphasis added]. For the different inspired writers were all led by the same Spirit of truth. They were like so many workmen engaged in building a temple. If we can find the rule which governed one of them, we shall find the same rule governing all the rest in like circumstances. Now God gave this rule to Ezekiel in the interpretation of the symbols of his own vision: “I have appointed thee each day for a year.” Eze. 4:6. We shall find in Gabriel’s explanation of this vision of Daniel given in the ninth chapter, that the days in Daniel’s prophecy are so many years. – RH, March 10, 1874. \(^\text{20}\)

The historicist’s conclusion based on the testimonies of the above SDA pioneers is that “Scripture strongly supports the year-day principle,” because this “concept essential to the unique Adventist belief regarding the sanctuary and its cleansing” is “explicitly stated in the symbolic instructions given to Ezekiel,” and is authenticated in Daniel:
The pioneers believed that Scripture strongly supports the year-day principle. Considering the concept essential to the unique Adventist belief regarding the sanctuary and its cleansing, they believed it to be explicitly stated in the symbolic instructions given to Ezekiel [emphasis added], a contemporary of Daniel, and implied (1) in the symbolic nature of Daniel’s vision, (2) in the time lapse of the several kingdoms of the vision, and (3) in the pragmatic tests of fulfillment [emphasis added].

They demonstrated its validity within Daniel’s vision itself. From the beginning, Seventh-day Adventists have maintained that the fulfillment of the 70 weeks has precisely demonstrated not only the accuracy of that prophecy but also the validity of the year-day concept in prophecy generally. The balance of the 2300 days inevitably brings us to 1844 and Christ’s final work in heaven’s sanctuary in the Most Holy Place [emphasis added].

Assumptions and Arguments

The incorrect assumptions on which Smith and Andrews base their support arguments for the YDP are relevant because the same errors will be repeated in later SDA apologetic publications that have attempted to defend the historicist time “rule” or “equation.” The first untested historicist assumption is that the Bible is a historicist book that contains “the unrolling of the historical events from the times of Daniel and John until the second coming of Christ,” and the second unconfirmed assumption is that a time formula is required for “calculating prophetic time” in Daniel and Revelation.

The “evidence” the two SDA pioneers propose in order to support the historicist principle is not correct. Smith, for example, argues that the “evening-morning” time expression in Daniel 8:14 denotes “the time from one sunset to another,” or a calendar day, but fails to explain the prophet’s choice of a phrase that would cause confusion among his readers instead of the common Hebrew term for day, yohm, in order to express the time there. As if the failed interpretation of the text is not enough, Smith continues with the unempirical and unverified assumption that “the days are evidently given to cover very nearly the whole duration of all the kingdoms mentioned in the prophecy,” because in the historicist perspective long time periods are postulated but not documented for most prophetic events in Daniel and Revelation.

Smith continues from the failed arguments and claims that “the Bible gives the exact proportion between literal and symbolic time” and uses as supportive “evidence” the literal time expressions in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6, unaware that his statements contradict each other when he quotes that the prophet had to lie “on his left side 390 days” and “on his right side 40 days” because no symbolic days were traded in the prophetic events. Smith’s apologetic continues with the contention that “God uses short periods of time to represent longer ones,” although there is no evidence in the text that short periods of time are “represented” with long periods in that biblical passage. The pioneer also appeals to religious tradition to support the YDP, as if the fact that some creed or belief was held as true for centuries means also that it was biblical and accurate, but considers as his most valued evidence for the historicist time rule “the fact that we, living down in the last years of prophetic fulfillment, are now able to trace out in history the accomplishments of these predictions.” He is not aware, though, at his time, that the “fulfillment evidence” will be revised in the future and found inaccurate and mistaken.

Andrews fails to recognize that the question posed in Daniel 8:13 narrows the event time boundaries to three main prophetic issues, (1) “the vision concerning the daily sacrifice,” (2) “the
transgression of desolation,” and (3) “the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot,” and that no other prophetic objects or actions are mentioned in the question. For this reason the prophetic terminus a quo (start point) and terminus ad quem (end point) of the events comprised in the 2300 “evening-mornings” must be limited to the blasphemous actions of the little horn. When one considers also the fact that the SDA interpretation of Daniel 8:14 drifts from an assumed SDA historicist event to a non-event claimed to have happened in heaven in 1844, then the terminus a quo and terminus ad quem for the “little horn prophecy” are no more relevant and factual in support of the YDP.

The SDA pioneer also claims that the prophetic time formula is “explicitly stated in the symbolic instructions given to Ezekiel, a contemporary of Daniel, and implied (1) in the symbolic nature of Daniel’s vision, (2) in the time lapse of the several kingdoms of the vision, and (3) in the pragmatic tests of fulfillment,” and suggests as irrefutable evidence the fact that “Seventh-day Adventists have maintained that the fulfillment of the 70 weeks has precisely demonstrated not only the accuracy of that prophecy but also the validity of the year-day concept in prophecy generally,” because “the balance of the 2300 days inevitably brings us to 1844 and Christ’s final work in heaven’s sanctuary in the Most Holy Place,” but these historicist assumptions fail to survive rigorous scientific examination and are shown to be incorrect and presumptuous.

Gordon M. Hyde

Hyde, an associate director of the SDA General Conference Sabbath School Department at the time he wrote the article, feels ecstatic and triumphalist about the rich SDA historicist tradition in the use of the YDP for prophetic interpretation, but provides no acceptable empirical support for the historicist “principle.” His theological perspective, though, is based on the standard SDA historicist presuppositions and assumptions:

The system of prophetic interpretation followed by our Lord, by the apostles, by some early church fathers, by occasional witnesses in the dominant Roman Church of the Middle Ages, by the powerful and courageous men of the great German Protestant Reformation, by later Reformers of England, Switzerland, France, and Holland, by American expositors of the Colonial and early national periods, and by people of the worldwide, interchurch Advent Awakening of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries contained a key principle, as Damsteegt repeatedly demonstrates. **This principle is what we speak of as the year-day principle, in which a day in the sweeping periods of prophesied movements and related events stands for a year of historical or chronological time** [emphasis added]. This principle pointed to key events in the life of our Lord on earth and to the long period of world domination by a church drunk with secular power and non-Biblical doctrine.

**This year-day principle was at the heart of the historicist, or historical, school of prophetic interpretation** [emphasis added] followed by God’s loyal witnesses for more than 1800 years. This system of prophetic interpretation saw the unfolding fulfillment of Bible prophecy in steady sequence from the prophets’ day to the Second Advent at the end of the age. It recognized the parallels in the great outline prophecies of Daniel, of our Lord, and of the apostles (especially of John in the Revelation), identifying Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome as the four great powers ending in the breakup of the Roman Empire and followed by the rise of the persecuting “little horn” power of the papacy. Although with growing understanding and application as the events foretold drew nearer, **the historicist school held to a persistent application of the year-day principle to the great time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation** [emphasis added], especially emphasizing the seventy weeks and the 1260-and 2300-day periods. (In fact,
The Year-Day Principle Reexamined

The location of the termination point for the 1260 days of Daniel and John was anticipated and even published one hundred years before it came! This system also strongly identified the “antichrist,” the “little horn,” and “the beast” as symbols of the papacy. This was widely recognized and proclaimed by the Reformers and even by some witnesses within the Catholic Church itself. This widespread understanding gave added direction and purpose to the Reformers. 22

The arguments Hyde uses to defend and support the YDP are from tradition, historicist assumptions, and questionable prophetic fulfillments, and strengthen the confidence of those SDA church members who never doubt or question their creeds or examine whether or not such beliefs have a rock-solid foundation in God’s Word. For tradition, the theologian likes to remind his fellow-believers that the Adventist historicism follows a line that began with Jesus, the apostle, the Church Fathers, the German Protestants, the English, Swiss, French, and Dutch reformers, and those who participated in the American revivals. What he writer fails to mention to the readers is that most of this protestant tradition is not included in the SDA doctrines and misses from the interpretation of the prophetic books, Daniel and Revelation.

The SDA theologian also states that the historicist school of prophetic interpretation “contained a key principle,” the hermeneutical rule or equation that “a day in the sweeping periods of prophesied movements and related events stands for a year of historical or chronological time,” which “pointed to key events in the life of our Lord on earth and to the long period of world domination by a church drunk with secular power and non-Biblical doctrine,” and “recognized the parallels in the great outline prophecies of Daniel, of our Lord, and of the apostles,” and identified “Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome as the four great powers ending in the breakup of the Roman Empire and followed by the rise of the persecuting ‘little horn’ power of the papacy.” The SDA historicist claims fulfillment for the “seventy weeks and the 1260-and 2300-day periods,” and for the recognition of “the ‘antichrist,’ the ‘little horn,’ and ‘the beast’ as symbols of the papacy.” Nothing, though, is proposed as evidence for the fulfillment of those prophecies, and the reason could be that most of these fanciful claims cannot be supported with true historical events.

Richard M. Davidson

Davidson, professor of OT Interpretation at the SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University, takes the good SDA feelings a little farther, and mentions the euphoria mood that embraced him due to his premature, over-confident, and over-optimistic conviction that Shea had defended the YDP with irrefutable Bible evidence. It is unfortunate to note, though, that the historicist’s personal contribution to the YDP’s defense does not show in the article:

The year-day principle is crucial in the historicist interpretation [emphasis added]. This principle was also widely held by Reformation theologians. Adventists have traditionally supported the year-day principle from Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34, only two texts, and both outside of Daniel, Skeptical of such an approach even before the Glacier View Conference, I still remember my euphoria as I read the DARCOM volumes,15 which show not two or three lines of evidence but 23 different biblical reasons that validate the application of the day-for-a-year principle to the time prophecies of Daniel as well as Revelation [emphasis added]. And most of this evidence is from the book of Daniel itself! 23
The careful review of Davidson’s comments on the YDP and its importance for the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation indicates that the first line of support and defense for the historicist time formula comes, in the theologian’s perspective, from the Reformation tradition because “this principle was also widely held by Reformation theologians.” Davidson, though, fails to mention that the Reformation heirs have failed to continue in the same historicist interpretation tradition and that at the present time there are few or no Protestants who still “decode” the time expressions in Daniel and Revelation with the YDP. This writer has searched in vain for current non-SDA theological books and articles that even discuss the topic, let alone publications that would defend the principle. Davidson would have made a significant contribution to the YDP issue had he done a little research in order to discover the reasons for which this time formula has been abandoned to such a degree in the Christian world. Perhaps after this kind of instructive research he would have been less enthusiastic to recommend the Reformation tradition as evidence that the historicist “principle” is biblical and valid.

We must concede that Davidson’s (rather late!) awareness that the SDA theologians had relied on “only two texts, and both outside of Daniel,” in their failed support and defense for the YDP is commendable but does not help the historicist cause. Two texts, or “23 different biblical reasons that validate the application of the day-for-a-year principle,” would not be effective apologetic tools when the whole argumentation is based on illogical deductions and twisted interpretations. The OT professor should have taken on himself to examine Shea’s claims for the YDP and make sure that what the SDA theologian offered as “evidence” were empirical facts, and not flawed word studies and speculations. He would have then seen that Shea’s main YDP support arguments based on a misunderstood “year-day relationship” were incorrect because that “relationship” was in fact due to Hebrew-English word parallelism that resulted from the translation of Hebrew idiomatic expressions into English. Such concurrence events between the Hebrew and English words cannot be generalized into a “pattern” or “rule” because the events occur at random and impact on a small number of biblical texts, and that disqualifies them from the “pattern” or “rule” statistical rank.

W. E. Read

W. E. Read, a retired administrator, makes a futile attempt to show the validity of the YDP first based on questionable interpretation tradition, and then on the idiomatic Hebrew usage of the word “day.” As we have shown in the discussion of Davidson’s comments on the tradition of the YDP interpretation, religious tradition means nothing when one discerns that most current theologians have abandoned the outdated approach to the interpretation of the time expressions in Daniel and Revelation and have repudiated the historicist calculation formula.

The SDA administrator’s lack of professional expertise shows as he comments on “the wide range of meaning of the original words,” as if this lexical aspect of language which he misunderstands and misapplies could be used to support the generalization at rule level that the SDA historicists claim for the “principle.” Such an assumed generalization has remained an assumption and nothing more all through the historicist prophetic interpretation phenomenon because idioms cannot “evolve” into across-the-board language rules. The historicist arguments W. E. Reid advances in his support of the YDP are as follows:
2. The wide range of meaning of the original words [emphasis added]. The main Hebrew word rendered as “day” in the Old Testament is the noun yom, or yamin (plural). In the Greek LXX, and in the Greek New Testament, it is hemera, or hemerai (plural). These words have a wide range of meaning [emphasis added].

a. In the Old Testament. In most places the Hebrew word yom generally means “day” and is so translated in our K.J.V. Bibles more than 1,200 times. Furthermore, quite generally it means a 24-hour day (Gen. 1:5). Sometimes it means just the light part of a day (verse 16). But one of the ways in which it is translated is by using the word “year” [emphasis added]. One concordance lists no less than 23 instances of this, and notice the first use: “Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance [of the passover] in his season from year to year” (Hebrew miyamin yamimah; Ex. 13:10). But the Hebrew word yamin is used twice in the plural form, which idiomatically means year to year [emphasis added], for the Passover was an annual festival.

b. In the Septuagint. What applies to the Hebrew word yom, or yamin (plural), applies also to the Greek word hemera, singular or plural. This is rendered “year” in the same texts in the LXX. (See footnote 8.)

c. In the New Testament. There are just three instances of hemara translated as “year” in the New Testament. See Luke 1:7, 18; “Elisabeth was . . . well stricken in years” (hemerais): Luke 2:36: Anna “was of a great age” in the Greek text it is “advanced in years” (hemerais).

3. The word “day” can mean a long period of time. This is obvious, even in our own language, but concerning the Hebrew word, note: “a day of wrath” (Zeph. 1:15); “The day of trouble” (Eze. 7:7). “The day of vengeance” (Isa. 61:2); “The day of affliction” (Jer. 16:19); “The day of judgment” (Matt. 10:15); “A day of salvation” (Isa. 49:8).

4. The words “day” and “year” are equated in places. The words “day” [yom] and “year” [shanah] are in several instances equated. Note the following: “The day of the Lord” (Eze. 30:3); “The . . . year of the Lord” (Isa. 61:2); “The day of visitation” (Isa. 10:3); “The year of . . . visitation” (Jer. 11:23); “The year of recompences” (Isa. 34:8); “The days of recompence” (Hosea 9:7).

In each instance “day” in Hebrew is yom, and “year” is shanah. In the Greek LXX the word “day” is hemera, and “year” is eniautos.

This equation can be seen also in one verse as in the following: “David . . . hath been with me these days [yamim], or these years” [Shanim] (1 Sam. 29:3). “And the time literally, ‘days,’ [yamim] that Jehu reigned over Israel . . . [were] twenty and eight years [Shanim]” (2 Kings 10:36). And in Ezekiel 22:4 it reads; “Thy days [yamim] to draw near, and art come even unto thy years” [Shanim]. In these examples the Hebrew words rendered as “days” and as “years” are yamim and shanim.

In this review we have seen that the word “day” [yom] was used in a variety of circumstances, and applied to many different aspects of human affairs and relationships. So ought there to be any real difficulty in understanding that the same principle of recognizing that a day represents a year could be applied to the prophetic periods? 24

The “evidence” W. E. Reid provides in support and defense of the YDP is that “the word ‘day’ [yom] was used in a variety of circumstances,” and that the same term was “applied to many different aspects of human affairs and relationships.” The administrator concludes from the biblical examples provided that “the same principle of recognizing that a day represents a year could be applied to the prophetic periods.” The OED defines “to represent” as “to stand for or in place of (a person or thing),” or “to denote by a substitute.” The SDA administrator must, therefore, mean that the Hebrew term “day” was used to “stand in place for” or “substitute” the Hebrew word “year.” But this is not the case in the examples the writer misunderstands. The
Hebrew word “yom” did not stand for or substitute the Hebrew word “year” in the above examples, but, in some instances, it was translated so from Hebrew into English.

The relationship W. E. Reid misunderstands because he is not qualified to work with such linguistic matters is a **translation parallelism** - the Hebrew term “day,” in independent or idiomatic occurrence, was translated into English in different forms and with various expressions, depending on the meaning required in context. No prophetic “principle” or “time scale” is involved here. How the amateur theologian could have confused a simple translation relationship with a “principle,” “rule,” or “equation” is inconceivable but not improbable. The SDA publications are chock-full with such spurious arguments for beliefs that could not be found in the Bible but are promoted again and again as based on solid biblical evidence.

Edward Heppenstall

Heppenstall, professor at the SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University, reviews the use of the YDP in the SDA historicist interpretation of Daniel and Revelation. Most of the texts he examines have been interpreted based on the three assumptions mentioned at the introduction to this section of the document, and cannot be used as empirical evidence for the principle. Some of his statements seem to rearticulate the SDA historicist interpretation of certain prophetic passages in Daniel and Revelation. Assumptions and suppositions appear to be the common feature of his comments:

Both Daniel 7 and Revelation 12 place the 1260 years within the Christian Era. There is no evidence that following the defeat of Antiochus or the end of the Roman Empire, “the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven” was given to the saints. Obviously, the time period stretches far into the future and the 1260 represent years, not literal days. How could such a short period of three and a half years be that crucial and fulfill the same time prophecies of both Daniel 7 and Revelation 12?25

The events pictured in the first two verses of this chapter involve the standing up of Michael, the time of trouble, the resurrection of the dead, the retribution to eternal life. The reference to the resurrection excludes any possible reference to Antiochus or pagan Rome.

The all-important question is asked: “How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” That is, the wonders given in the previous chapters and visions. Daniel had already asked the same question in Daniel 8:13. He appears throughout anxious to know the time.

The answer involves three time periods. First, one of the angels answers: “It shall be for a time, times, and an half, and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.” In other words, at the close of this period of 1260 days or years, the holy people will cease to be scattered. Obviously, this does not apply either to Antiochus or to pagan Rome.

If this statement applies to the Jews, Antiochus did not scatter the Jews. But the Romans did—in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem. The Jews were scattered until the 1940s, when they returned to Palestine and established the state of Israel.26

Daniel had prayed for an explanation of the 2300 days, thinking it meant an extension of their seventy-year exile, a delay in Israel’s return to Jerusalem. The seventy weeks that are determined upon the people of Israel is part of the vision given in chapter 8. Daniel reported that while he was praying, Gabriel came, “whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning” (verse 21). This vision at the beginning cannot refer to
anything mentioned in this ninth chapter, for as yet no vision has been given. The only vision “at the beginning” that involves both Gabriel and Daniel is the vision of the 2300 days.

Does the “seventy weeks” in this particular period mean seventy weeks of years or seventy weeks of days? The Hebrew phrase does not mention either days or years. The Hebrew text uses a word that signifies “heptade or haptades,” meaning division of seven. Literally that is, seventy sevens of days or of years. If it means seventy sevens of years, then the time is literal, 490 years. If it means seventy sevens of days, then the time is symbolic of years. The phrase by itself cannot be made to fit either years or days. This can only be determined by the context and the nature of the case.

Since the seventy sevens of Daniel 9 is part of the 2300 days, this would suggest that we must stay with prophetic time, interpreted according to the year-day principle. Gabriel gives to Daniel the time that is now left to the Jewish people, seventy sevens. It is unlikely that Daniel would adopt one mode of reckoning for the 1260 days (chapter 7), a different one for the seventy sevens (chapter 9), then revert in the twelfth chapter to his original mode, based on the year-day principle. All these prophecies are symbolic; should not the time periods be so also? Cannot the seventy sevens just as well refer to symbolic time?

The support arguments Heppenstall has suggested in his apologetic for historicism and the YDP are often formulated as axioms or indisputable truths. The author seems confident that the force of his claims would not allow the readers to question or dismiss them. He argues, for instance, that (1) “obviously, the time period stretches far into the future and the 1260 represent years, not literal days,” that (2) “the reference to the resurrection excludes any possible reference to Antiochus or pagan Rome,” that (3) “obviously, this does not apply either to Antiochus or to pagan Rome,” that (4) “the phrase by itself cannot be made to fit either years or days,” and also that (5) “this would suggest that we must stay with prophetic time, interpreted according to the year-day principle.” When one looks at the SDA theologian’s use of “obviously,” “excludes,” “does not apply,” and “cannot be made,” it becomes clear that Heppenstall has full confidence that his interpretation of the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation is true and unshakable. Such confidence, though, shows to be misplaced as one examines in detail the historicist claims and sees that their scientific and empirical value is near zero.

Jean Zurcher

Zurcher, an SDA church administrator, writes a three-part article to support the YDP, and then completes his task with responses to the criticisms about some of his arguments. In the first part of his article, the writer sets the context for the defense of the YDP with comments about the importance of the SDA hermeneutical principle for SDA historicism, and states that “the keystone, so to speak, of our [SDA church] interpretation of the time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation is the year-day principle,” and then argues that this hermeneutical tool did not originate in the SDA church, but derives from “a tradition that goes back more than a thousand years to the first centuries of our era.” Zurcher, though, does not forget to warn his readers that traditional use does not make doctrinal points true or infallible. Sometimes his comments contradict the perspectives of other SDA historicist theologians on the SDA historicist interpretation in the “apocalyptic chronological prophecies,” but this does not seem to concern the SDA theologian:

Whatever the importance of the role of the year-day principle in our system of interpretation, it should be pointed out that it was not the pioneers of the Advent Movement who invented the year-day method of
exegeting apocalyptic chronological prophecies. Rather, they inherited a tradition that goes back more than a thousand years to the first centuries of our era.

It is generally thought that the year-day principle was applied by the Church Fathers in interpreting the 70 weeks of Daniel, from the end of the second century onward. We have every reason to believe that, instead, they followed the Jewish week-year tradition, as we shall point out in a subsequent article. However that may be, at least 14 Jewish authors are known to have applied the year-day principle to the 2300 evenings and mornings (see A. Vaucher, Lacunziana, vol. 1, pp. 54-56).

Many Catholic theologians in the Middle Ages and in modern times also admitted the year-day principle without question, as well as a large number of Protestant interpreters from the Reformation to our day. In The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers, LeRoy E. Froom mentions nearly 200 authors who employed the year-day principle in their interpretation of the time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. It cannot be doubted that we find ourselves in good company.

Nevertheless, the accuracy of a principle, as that of truth, does not depend on the number of its proponents. Ellen White expressed this point well: “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. Age will not make error into truth.”—Counsels to Writers and Editors, p. 35. That is why Adventists have never attempted to justify the year-day principle by tradition, however ancient it might be. Right from the beginning our pioneers sought to found it on a Biblical basis. Today our increased knowledge should help us to consolidate it further.

Zurcher then proposes 14 more or less traditional historicist arguments in support and defense of the YDP. His claims are rather similar to the ones Shea proposed at about the same time in his personal support and defense for the historicist principle, based on (1) historical narrative texts, (2) agrarian legislation, (3) Jubilee legislation, (4) classical prophecies, and (5) apocalyptic prophecies, organized in almost the same fashion, and introduced in this document in the order in which the SDA administrator approaches them in his three-part article:

[1]. According to opponents of the year-day principle, one of the major objections is that it rests on two texts alone in the Old Testament, Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6. They readily point out, also, that in these texts the principle is applied in opposite ways [emphasis added]. In the first instance, it is a matter of a year for a day, whereas in the second text we have the reverse principle, a day for a year.

However valid these remarks may seem, they do not match up to reality. There are more Biblical examples of similar methods of calculation than is generally thought. Nor are they limited to prophetic language. We find evidence of this in Genesis 29:27. This verse contains an interesting concept: “Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.”

[2]. Perhaps in this connection we should also consider the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream by Joseph (Gen. 41:25-30). Admittedly, the seven years of plenty and the seven years of famine do not stand in relation to days or weeks. However, the same form of relationship exists between the seven cows, the seven ears of corn, and the seven years. Each individual symbol represents a year [emphasis added].

[3]. Although the year-day principle is not affirmed explicitly, the various examples quoted show that a principle of calculation was employed from the patriarchal period [emphasis added] at least to the time of the Exile that established a day-year, year-day, or even a week-year relationship. There are yet other relationships based on the same principle. This makes it perfectly correct to state that there is a Biblical principle according to which “a day in prophecy stands for a year” (The Great Controversy, p. 324; The Desire of Ages, p. 233; Prophets and Kings, p. 698).

The same viewpoint was taken by the authors of the statement drawn up by the Sanctuary Review Committee: “The year-day relationship can be Bibliically supported, although it is not explicitly identified
as a principle of prophetic interpretation. . . Furthermore, the Old Testament provides illustrations of the year-day interchangeability in symbolism (Gen. 29:27; Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6; Dan. 9:24-27).”—ADVENTIST REVIEW, Sept. 4, 1980, p. 14; Ministry, October, 1980, p. 18.33

[4]. We are left, then, with the principal objection: “Even if we could ‘prove’ that the year-day principle is a Biblical datum, there is no basis to apply the principle in Daniel 8:14 or 9:24.” At first sight, this seems a well-founded argument. However, proper exegesis of Daniel 9:24-27 and then Daniel 8:14 and 7:25 [emphasis added] reveals, under one form or another, either in the text or in the context, the well-known Biblical principle of calculation. Thus, the historic interpretations of the time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation that stand at the foundation of the Advent Movement will be seen to be confirmed.34

[5]. The prophetic periods in Daniel and Revelation are given to us in symbolic figures, each representing literal years. However, I do not believe that the year-day principle is an absolute imperative in calculating each of these prophetic time periods [emphasis added].35

[6]. What are the sabbaths referred to here? Those during which Israel should have let the earth lie fallow, in harmony with the Lord's instructions regarding the sabbatical and jubilee years (Ex. 23:10, 11; Lev. 25:1-17). From this, we see that the threescore and ten years of Jeremiah's prophecy are the result of a calculation similar to that of Ezekiel 4:4-6. However, instead of being based on a day for a year, the reckoning is on the basis of a year of exile for every sabbatical year, during which the land was deprived of its rest. In other words, if each of the 70 years of exile represents one sabbatical year, there must have been 490 years of rebellion during which the children of Israel failed to observe God's laws and statutes.36

[7]. Obviously, the year-day principle cannot be applied to the 70-year prophecy of Jeremiah. However, as we have seen, this does not mean that the Biblical key to interpretation does not apply to this prophecy [emphasis added]. On the contrary, the 70 years of exile turn out to be the result of a calculation outlined in the prophetic text itself.37

[8]. It is certainly no coincidence that the 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecy are mentioned in the same chapter as Daniel's 70-week prophecy. The two are linked closely by cause and effect. Daniel prayed in regard to Jeremiah's prophecy, and the angel Gabriel came immediately to his side in response to his petition [emphasis added].

It goes without saying that Daniel knew the deep reasons behind Israel's tragedy. He avowed them constantly in his intercessory prayer, as he confessed the sins of his people. Like the author of the book of Chronicles, Daniel probably also knew the other aspect of Jeremiah's prophecy that represented the 70 years of exile as a result of the sabbaths during which the land had been deprived of its rest. His allusions to the curses pronounced by Moses refer back to the same text in Leviticus 26 (Dan.9:10-13).38

[9]. The interpretation of the 70 weeks depends on the meaning ascribed to the “weeks” referred to here. In the original Hebrew, the word shabu’a designates a group of seven, which we call heptad or hebdomade, after the corresponding Greek word. The Jews counted the hebdomades in three ways: (1) as a week, made up of seven days; (2) as the sabbatical year, made up of seven years (Lev. 25:1-7); and finally (3) as the jubilee year, made up of seven times seven sabbatical years—that is, 49 years (verse 8).

Thus the word shabua’—week—which is used here and elsewhere, may designate a period of seven days, seven years, or 49 years, depending on whether we are dealing with the week, the sabbatical year, or the jubilee year. The meaning can be determined only by the context. In Daniel 10:2, for example, we read of a fast of three weeks. Clearly, this can mean only 21 days [emphasis added].39

[10]. But what about the 70 weeks of Daniel 9:24? Everything in the text and the context refers to the message of the sabbatical and jubilee years. Jewish tradition, the Talmudists, the author of the Seder-‘Olam, and Jewish interpreters in general have estimated that the weeks in Daniel’s prophecy can only be weeks of years. There is evidence that the Church Fathers used the same basis to interpret the 70 weeks.40
Thus, we have two means of calculating the 70 weeks, on the basis of either the sabbatical year or the jubilee year. The calculation on the basis of the sabbatical year is certainly the simplest: 70 weeks of seven sabbatical years equal 490 years, which are arrived at without having recourse to the year-day principle [emphasis added]. This method has the advantage of harmonizing with the mode of calculating the 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecy. Moreover, the phrase expresses the fullness of the spirit of forgiveness as Jesus was later to define it before His disciples: “seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:22), a concept that corresponds perfectly to this time prophecy representing the totality of the period of grace allotted to the people of Israel. 

The second means of calculation, based on the jubilee year, also can be justified. Besides, there are few interpreters who do not recognize in Daniel 9:24 the message of the year of grace par excellence, the jubilee year. According to the law of Moses, this truly was the holy year, during which the people were to be freed from all forms of servitude. It was the symbol of the year of abundant grace and pardon that should be inaugurated by the promised Messiah. Moreover, the year of grace announced by Jesus in His sermon at Nazareth is a perfect echo of the jubilee message (Luke 4:16-19; The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 729).

Why, then, should we not apply the jubilee method of calculation to the 70 weeks, as set forth in Leviticus 25:8? “And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years.”

The figure seven and its multiple, seven times seven, occur in this prophecy exactly as in the jubilee text. The first period of seven weeks, at the end of which the restoration of Jerusalem was to be completed, corresponds to the first jubilee—seven times seven years of sabbaths equals 49 years (Dan. 9:25). The remaining 63 weeks (62 + 1) are also a multiple of seven, that is, seven times nine jubilees. Therefore, the 70 weeks can be considered as ten jubilees each of 49 years’ duration, that is, $7 \times 7 \times 10 = 490$ years. Together they make up the grand Messianic jubilee of 490 years.

We have historical proof in the Gospels that the fulfillment of the prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27 came at the end of the 70 weeks—that is, after 490 years. This prophecy was well known in Jesus' time, and everyone in Israel had the possibility of being aware that the time of the Messiah had arrived. “And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not” (Luke 3:15). The rulers of the Jews even sent a delegation to John the Baptist to ask whether or not he was the “prophet,” in other words, the Messiah who was to come (John 1:19-27). More important, at the beginning of His ministry Jesus Himself affirmed that “the time is fulfilled” (Mark 1:15). Furthermore, in His prophetic discourse, He applied the prophecy to His generation, specifically naming the prophet Daniel.

Zurcher’s less than traditional arguments in support of the YDP come from “astronomical evidence.” He argues that the time prophecies in Daniel 7:25 and 8:14 are also “proven” with celestial calculations, according to De Chéseaux, a Swiss astronomer. The SDA historicist prefaced his astronomical argument with the contention that “in referring to astronomy we place the prophecies in a historical and scientific context [emphasis added],” and that this approach could only benefit the SDA interpretation of Daniel and Revelation:

Because the majority of interpreters over the past centuries understood the 2300 evenings and mornings of Daniel 8:14 to be prophetic days, they naturally applied the year-day principle. However, in the eighteenth century, an astronomer demonstrated that the time prophecies of Daniel 7:25 and 8:14 also were astronomically significant. Unfortunately, this interpretation generally has been ignored. Nevertheless, it bears out our conclusions in a striking manner.

Our recourse to astronomy may seem strange at first. Yet what is more natural when one remembers that Daniel was educated in all the science of the Chaldeans and considered one of the wise men of Babylon
(Dan. 2:14, 17, 48)? Moreover, on each occasion the two prophecies are given on the basis of time concepts, which are directly dependent on astronomy. In referring to astronomy we place the prophecies in a historical and scientific context.\textsuperscript{45}

The SDA historicist then summarizes De Chéseaux’s solar and lunar astronomical research and chronological time computations that led the Swiss astronomer to think that his celestial time estimates made it possible for him “to determine the precise date of the crucifixion of Jesus,” and also “the three and a half times of Daniel 7:25 and the 2300 evenings and mornings of Daniel 8:14,” and therefore authenticated the YDP. States Zurcher:

Following the example of Isaac Newton, a Swiss astronomer by the name of Jean Philippe Loys de Chéseaux (1781-1851) became deeply interested in the prophecies of Daniel. A correspondent of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Paris and foreign associate of the Academy of Gottingen, Germany, De Chéseaux had made a name for himself through his astronomical and mathematical research. Being preoccupied with chronological calculations, he was led to try to determine the precise date of the crucifixion of Jesus. This naturally led him to examine more closely Daniel's prophecies.

Needless to say, he was immediately impressed by the astronomical references to the day, the week, the month, and the year. The three and a half times of Daniel 7:25 and the 2300 evenings and mornings of Daniel 8:14 did not fail to intrigue him. He immediately recognized the relationship between the three and a half times and the 1260 days. Then, being a shrewd mathematician, he noted a relationship between the 1260 days and one of his astronomical calculations. Previously De Chéseaux had discovered the 315-year cycle, at the end of which the sun and moon returned short of seven or eight minutes to their original position in the heavens.

“Having discovered this 315-year cycle,” he recounts, “I then noticed that it represented one quarter of the 1260-year period, or the three and a half times of Daniel 7:25 and 12:7, compared with Revelation 12:6 and 14, and consequently that this prophetic period was also a lunar cycle, so that at the end of 1260 Julian years ... the Sun and the Moon returned within about a degree to the same position in the Ecliptic.”—Remarques historiques, chronologiques et astronomiques, sur quelques endroits du livre de Daniel (Historical, Chronological, and Astronomical Remarks on Certain Parts of the Book of Daniel) (Lausanne, 1754), pp. 22, 23.

No astronomical research had ever arrived at such precision. In the eyes of De Chéseaux, this 1260-year lunar cycle literally carried the Creator’s seal. Not only did the number have the advantage of being a round figure but it was at the same time remarkable for its multitude of common factors. For, he observed, “1260 is divided by ... 35 divisors, which is, I believe, the greatest number of divisors that a number of this kind can have.”

Briefly, then, without entering into De Chéseaux’s complicated astronomical calculations, it is most interesting to learn that the 1260 prophetic days of Daniel and Revelation correspond to a lunar cycle of 1260 years’ duration. Certainly the Chaldean wise men had a knowledge of this cycle, which means that Daniel had no difficulty in understanding its profound meaning. The moon, the dark, lifeless star, queen of the night, was always considered a symbol of the works of darkness. Similarly, the three and a half times represents the unfinished work of Satan, in contrast to the figure seven, symbolizing the perfect, completed work of the Creator.

Convinced that the 1260 years had been designated by the Holy Spirit, in connection with “the duration of the most remarkable periods of celestial movement,” De Chéseaux concluded “that the same could well be true of that of the 2300 years” (ibid.). He checked his astronomical tables and discovered that at the “end of the 2300 Gregorian years, or 840,057 days less 6 hours and 14 minutes, the sun and the moon returned to within a degree of their original position, and that at the end of the 840,057 days plus 7 hours 23 minutes, the sun returned to precisely the same point in the Ecliptic” (ibid.).
To his great joy, De Chéseaux thus discovered that the prophetic period comprising the 2300 evenings and mornings of Daniel 8:14 also represented a cyclic period of 2300 years—an extraordinarily precise period, unknown to astronomers until then. To help us understand the importance of this discovery not only for the interpretation of the prophecy but also for astronomical knowledge, De Chéseaux briefly explained what must be understood by a cycle. He writes: “It is a space of time which harmonizes different astronomical revolutions, incorporating each of them a certain number of times without remainders and without fractions.”—Page 20.

Thus we have four types of cycles. The first harmonizes solar years with days; the second, lunar months with solar years; the third, solar days with lunar months. Finally, the fourth type of cycle should harmonize at the same time the solar year, the lunar month, and the day. Discovering this fourth cycle appeared so difficult that astronomers believed it to be impossible. It was, for them, to astronomy, what perpetual motion is to mechanics.

However, thanks to the 1260-year lunar cycle and the 2300-year solar cycle, De Cheseaux also discovered the famous fourth cycle, previously considered impossible and imaginary, which was meant to harmonize the three other cycles. The mystery is found in the difference between the two prophetic periods. This represented 1040 years and was found to be the number of the perfect cycle. Marveling at the result, De Chéseaux wrote the following significant lines:

“This period of 1040 years, or solar revolutions, indicated in some way by the Holy Spirit, is a cycle at once solar, lunar, and diurnal, of the most perfect accuracy. I have discovered two singular confirmations. . . May I in the meantime be permitted to give this new cycle the name of Daniel cycle.”—Page 27.

Although Guinness had already used this “astronomical evidence” collected from the Swiss astronomer as an argument in his support and defense of the YDP and therefore Zurcher’s statements are not new or original, the SDA theologian awakened opposition and encountered criticism from some AR readers, also SDA church members, when he utilized the celestial calculation argument to defend the YDP. Eisele responded to Zurcher’s article with the comments:

It must be pointed out that serious errors exist in Dr. Zurcher’s third article. Some of these errors also exist in and were taken from volume 3 of LeRoy E. Froom’s The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers.

The astronomical evidence put forth is incorrect [emphasis added], and the language used to describe it is self-contradictory concerning the facts, and overly optimistic regarding the applications and conclusions. M. Loys de Cheseaux (1718-1751) was not an astronomer of note, but was a Swiss physician and numerologist who died at the age of 33 and whose main works were edited and published posthumously as memoirs by his sons. The dates given in the REVIEW article have him born after his published work and living 70 years.

It is a contradiction of terms and manifestly impossible to have the sun return to the same position on the ecliptic (the exact path of the sun in the sky and the approximate path of the planets and the line through the constellations of the zodiac) in either 1260 Julian years or 2300 Gregorian years. Both of these units of time take precession of the equinoxes (the change of seasons) into consideration, and this amounts to 7.9 degrees and 31.4 degrees, respectively. The proper astronomical unit of time to use would be the sidereal year. As far as the location of the moon is concerned, assuming the sun and moon started from the same point, 1260 Julian years later, the moon would be 125.6 degrees away from the sun, and this angle is equivalent to about ten days away from the nearest lunation (new moon). At the end of 2300 Gregorian years the separation would be 13.2 degrees, which is one day away from the nearest lunation.

The terms Julian and Gregorian have an exact meaning in astronomy and the civil calendar. The Julian and Gregorian years are exactly 365.25 days and 365.2425 days, respectively, and are both practical
approximations to the more precise tropical year of 365.24219878 days. The sidereal year is 365.25636042 days (epoch of 1900). The proper lunar month to use is the synodical month of 29.53058912 days.

The mixing of Julian and Gregorian units of time is improper. The 1260 Julian years are equal to 460,215 days. The 2300 Gregorian years are 840,057.75 days. The difference is 379,842.75 days. This time interval falls short of 1040 Julian or Gregorian years by 17.25 days or 9.45 days, respectively. If we divide the days by 1040 years, we get an average year of 365.2334135 days. This is a meaningless number and does not correspond to any year interval. It is joked about in elementary math that you cannot mix apples and oranges. Apparently, if one subtracts apples from oranges astronomically, one ends up with a lemon.

The Chaldeans and Hebrews were aware of the Metonic cycle of 19 years for calculating new moons (lunations) and the saros cycle of 18 years and 11 days for calculating eclipses. They were probably also aware of the Callippic cycle of 76 Julian years. These were sufficient for their contemporary needs.

There are literally scores of other lunar-solar cycles that come to light when using modern values of the astronomical constants involved that are much more accurate and useful than the 315, 1040, 1260, and 2300 years mentioned in the article. It takes no higher mathematical concept than arithmetic to verify the results. It is difficult to believe that the Holy Spirit would mix astronomical units of time (Julian and Gregorian) when giving us prophetic time intervals. It is probably a good thing that these facts have been brought to light at this time. Apparently, Cuninghame and H. Grattan Guinness are responsible for spreading these false scientific ideas, which were repeated by Froom in his book. 48

Marz, another reader of Zurcher’s article is even more direct and pointed about the spurious “astronomical evidence” the SDA administrator had offered in his AR article to support and defend the “2300 years prophetic date.” He states:

With the aid of a computer, I have repeated M. de Cheseaux's calculations, using both his eighteenth-century data and more accurate modern data on the length of the year and the synodical month. One can reproduce his results, including his 1040 solar-lunar-diurnal cycle. But even with the old data, the computer shows there are several solar-lunar cycles better than the relatively inexact 2300-year cycle. With modern data neither the 1040- nor the 2300-year cycles are particularly significant. 49

Zurcher responds to the prompt corrections the readers offered against the “astronomical argument” with a comment that sounds anachronistic and obscurantist and appears to contradict the historicist’s previous reference to science as a means for the verification of the prophetic dates. He states:

When we let the Bible speak for itself it appears to me that there is no more obvious error than to wish to apply the mathematical precision of modern astronomy, arrived at with the aid of a computer, to the astronomical data in the Bible [emphasis added].

Clearly, the method of calculating months and years in the Bible is based on practical reality and not on astronomical exactitudes [emphasis added]. Besides, is it even possible to observe months and years in harmony with scientific accuracy? Most ancient peoples observed lunar months of 29 or 30 days’ duration, and never 29 and a half. Similarly, is it possible to observe a year of 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 45.51 seconds, or 365.2422 days? For this reason, the Biblical month is reckoned as 30 days and the year as 360 days.

Scientifically, this is not correct, but the person who desires information in harmony with the Bible should know that there is a difference between Biblical and prophetic tradition and astronomical precision [emphasis added]. However, it would be wrong to believe that this difference originated in the ignorance of ancient peoples as far as astronomical data is concerned. According to the Bible and certain
customs of ancient peoples, the 30-day month and 360-day year are theoretical measurements, the only ones that can be applied in prophetic calculation.\textsuperscript{50}

Prophetic Time Speculations

The SDA administrator’s apologetic for the YDP comprises multiple perspectives and facets, and deserves close examination. When he refers to the YDP’s traditional historicist background, Zurcher argues that “it was not the pioneers of the Advent Movement who invented the year-day method of exegeting apocalyptic chronological prophecies.” The English term “invent” in the sense of “devise” or “contrive” appears to be an appropriate word choice in this context when we remember that the principle was the result of logical deductions and not empirical research. The claims that the SDA church “inherited a tradition that goes back more than a thousand years to the first centuries of our era,” that the YDP “was applied by the Church Fathers in interpreting the 70 weeks of Daniel,” and that “a large number of Protestant interpreters from the Reformation to our day” used the principle are irrelevant when no empirical evidence is available to support it. Zurcher, indeed, recognizes this truth and cites Ellen White who warns her SDA readers that “the fact that certain doctrines have held as truth for many years by our people is not a proof that our ideas are infallible.” The theologian also adds that “Adventists have never attempted to justify the year-day principle by tradition, however ancient it might be,” and that “right from the beginning our pioneers sought to found it on a Biblical basis.”

That the YDP is “applied in opposite ways” to Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 does not dissuade Zurcher in his efforts to show the “Biblical basis” for the historicist time formula because, he maintains, “there are more Biblical examples of similar methods of calculation than is generally thought,” and because “nor are they [the examples] limited to prophetic language.” The SDA administrator cites Genesis 29:27, part of a historical narrative, as an example: “Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.” How this text provides evidence of a time rule must be Zurcher’s secret. The claim is absurd, and one does not need to be a theologian to see it. It is one of the numerous situations in which the SDA historicists have claimed too much for the principle. Zurcher’s speculations get even worse when he sees in Genesis 41:25-30 another example of the YDP. He claims that “the same form of relationship exists between the seven cows, the seven ears of corn, and the seven years. Each individual symbol represents a year.” His invalid conclusion is that “a principle of calculation was employed from the patriarchal period at least to the time of the Exile that established a day-year, year-day, or even a week-year relationship,” and shows how desperate is the writer to provide some semblance of Biblical support for the historicist rule.

The next item for the SDA theologian is to show that the YDP must be applied to Daniel 9:24-27, Daniel 8:14, and Daniel 7:25, and “proper exegesis” could do that, in Zurcher’s perspective. There is no question what “proper exegesis” is meant here – the SDA historicist take on the verses above. The conclusion appears to have been established, and is that “the historic interpretations of the time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation that stand at the foundation of the Advent Movement will be seen to be confirmed,” although no historic data follows Zurcher’s contention in order to support the claim. This situation seems to be perennial. Again and again the SDA historicists claim fulfillment for the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation but are seldom
or never able to provide historical events in order to support the claims. Caught in a candid personal moment the SDA historicist seems to negate his previous apologetic work when he states that although “the prophetic periods in Daniel and Revelation are given to us in symbolic figures, each representing literal years,” he does not “believe that the year-day principle is an absolute imperative in calculating each of these prophetic time periods.”

However, instead of being based on a day for a year, the reckoning is on the basis of a year of exile for every sabbatical year, during which the land was deprived of its rest. In other words, if each of the 70 years of exile represents one sabbatical year, there must have been 490 years of rebellion during which the children of Israel failed to observe God's laws and statutes.

Zurcher’s next claims are related to the sabbatical and Jubilee years which he connects with the 70 years in Jeremiah 29:10. He claims that “from this, we see that the threescore and ten years of Jeremiah’s prophecy are the result of a calculation similar to that of Ezekiel 4:4-6,” but also appears to argue that “instead of being based on a day for a year, the reckoning is on the basis of a year of exile for every sabbatical year,” and thus he makes the YDP irrelevant for some apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. About the 70 weeks in Daniel 9 he argues that there is “no coincidence that the 70 years of Jeremiah’s prophecy are mentioned in the same chapter as Daniel’s 70-week prophecy,” and that “everything in the text and the context refers to the message of the sabbatical and jubilee years,” but then he indicates that the message in Daniel 9:24-27 is conditional on the translation of the Hebrew word shabu’a for interpretation, although he again states that because “everything in the text and the context refers to the message of the sabbatical and jubilee years” the “70 sevens” should be understood as 70 years, which means that “we have two means of calculating the 70 weeks, on the basis of either the sabbatical year or the jubilee year.”

The SDA theologian’s arguments from astronomical calculations are based on his express purpose to “place the prophecies in a historical and scientific context,” but are incorrect. When readers confront Zurcher about the errors in the article he writes that “When we let the Bible speak for itself it appears to me that there is no more obvious error than to wish to apply the mathematical precision of modern astronomy, arrived at with the aid of a computer, to the astronomical data in the Bible.” Whether or not Zurcher is anachronistic and obscurantist cannot be concluded from the above “astronomical exchange,” but it is obvious that he contradicts himself when he is critiqued for invalid arguments and shown that he is wrong. In the end, the sophisticated “astronomical evidence” the SDA historicist has proposed in order to support the YDP and certain historicist dates cannot stand the test and is proven to be without merit. Left aside, though, is the main issue in the argument: We are not told what was the historical event that occurred in 1844 and which the SDA theologian hoped to confirm through “astronomical” or other kinds of evidence. The records show that no historical event with religious significance occurred in 1844 except for Miller’s Second Coming calculation failure with its catastrophic social and religious consequences.

Alberto R. Timm

Timm’s support for the YDP is based on the “miniature symbolization” concept that historicists such as Thruston, Bush, T. R. Birks, and E. B. Elliot advanced more than 150 years
ago. The SDA theologian anchors his discussion in two traditional assumptions that Shea claims to have “demonstrated” or “proven” within the deductive environment of the historicist hermeneutics. These untested assumptions are that, (1) “the endpoint of each apocalyptic prophecy reaches beyond ‘the intermediate historical context of the prophet’ to a more distant ‘end of time when the ultimate kingdom of God will be set up,’” and (2), “‘the magnitude of the events involved’ in each of those prophecies requires the year-day principle ‘to accommodate their accomplishment’ within the timespan provided by the prophecy itself.”552 These two historicist assumptions seem to require also a few historicist misconceptions, among which are that (1) prophecies have little or no relevant prophetic content for the prophets themselves because the predictions indicate future times and events, that (2) the events described in the prophecies are exclusive end-time incidents, and that, therefore, (3) large time periods are needed for all those prophecies to be fulfilled. These assumptions and misconceptions might work within the historicist school parameters, but prove to be incorrect in other hermeneutical contexts.

The “miniature symbolization” claims have never been regarded by the SDA historicists as essential to the support of the YDP, but such arguments have been used sometimes to deflect criticism against the principle. The initial representational insight was that of “symbolical symmetry,” and it was Thurston who promoted it. This historicist pictographic notion was developed later into the “miniature symbolization” concept that was defended by Bush. States Timm about Thurston’s representational explanation:

In 1812, Frederic Thruston applied the principle of “symbolical symmetry” to interpret the prophetic time element expressed “in miniature” in Rev 11:3-4. He explained that

“a symbolical prophecy is a picture; and all the objects being visible at one view, are of course in miniature. The times must, therefore, be also in miniature, as days for years. A beast, the miniature picture of an Empire, could not with any correspondent propriety be said to live 1260 years. The prophetic times are therefore in miniature; and the idolatrous Empire, which prevails 1260 years, is represented by a beast who lived 1260 days. It is on the same principle as that alleged symbolical symmetry, which requires that every word, in a symbolical representation, be symbolically understood [emphasis original].”553

From the concept of “symbolical symmetry” Bush derived the notion of “miniature symbolization,” that some historicists used to defend the application of the YDP to time expressions that appeared to indicate short periods of time, but which the historicist theologians believed to represent long prophetic time spans:

In 1843, George Bush, professor of Hebrew and Oriental Literature at New York City University, elaborated on the concept of “miniature symbolization.”554 He defined that concept in the following terms:

The Scripture presents us with two distinct classes of predictions – the literal and the symbolical. Where an event, or series of events, of a historical character, is historically announced, we naturally look for the announcement to be made in the plainest, simplest, and most literal terms. No reason can then be assigned for designating periods of time in a mystical or figurative diction. . . . But the case is entirely reversed in regard to the symbolical prophecies. . . . The prophets have frequently, under divine prompting, adopted the system of hieroglyphic representation, in which a single man represents a community, and a wild beast an extended empire. Consequently, since the mystic exhibition of the community or empire is in miniature, symbolical propriety requires that the associated chronological periods should be exhibited in miniature also (emphasis original).555
Bush argues further that:

the grand principle into which the usage of employing a day for a year is to be resolved, is that of miniature symbolization. As the events are thus economically reduced, the periods are to be reduced in the same relative proportion. What that proportion is, we cannot positively determine without some antecedent information touching the rate or scale of reduction. But the probability is, that such scale will be at the rate of a day or minor revolution of the earth round its axis, for a year or greater revolution of the earth round the sun (emphasis original).

The claims Thurston and Bush made about the prophetic scale representation and which Timm has included in his preamble to the arguments submitted in defense of the YDP are tainted with historicist presuppositions and assumptions. Thurston, for instance, takes for granted that “the idolatrous Empire” had existed for 1260 years, but does not provide the empirical evidence that supports the claim. He also makes the claim that “every word in a symbolical representation” should be interpreted as figurative, but does not attempt to distinguish metaphorical language from literal language in the prophetic chapters. Bush, on the other hand, separates divine predictions into “literal” and “symbolical,” but does not include enacted parables such as the one in Ezekiel 4:6, in which the narrative events are symbolic but the time expressions are literal.

Also, when he discusses events “economically reduced,” in which “the [time] periods are to be reduced in the same relative proportions,” Bush first acknowledges that “what that proportion is, we cannot positively determine without some antecedent information touching the rate or scale of reduction,” but then assumes that “the probability is, that such scale will be at the rate of a day or minor revolution of the earth round its axis,” without any empirical evidence that would validate his supposition. He also assumes that “events of a historical character,” that are “historically announced,” must have their announcements “made in the plainest, simplest, and most literal terms.” If such were the case, then Daniel 8:14, claimed in the SDA theological circles to predict a historical event, should be read as literal language, and the YDP should not be applied to the text.

Timm organizes the 32 historicist claims based on the “miniature symbolization” concept into four groups, (1) General Claims, (2) Specific Texts, (3) Daniel Texts, and (4) Revelation Texts, and then explains how the miniature symbolization should be applied to the interpretation of various Bible texts and to the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation – the most relevant and practical section of his article. He depends on ideas from historicists such as Bush, Birks, and Elliot for the miniature symbolization application specifics:

General Claims

The SDA theologian includes 9 claims as general statements intended to support the historicist prophetic interpretation and the YDP as the historicist time computation tool:

[1]. Some nineteenth-century historicist scholars argued that the year-day principle of prophetic interpretation should be applied only to the time elements of those specific symbolic prophecies whose symbols represent broader entities than the symbols themselves [emphasis added].
[2]. The prophets have frequently, under divine prompting, adopted the system of **hieroglyphic representation**, in which a single man represents a community, and a wild beast an extended empire [emphasis added]. Consequently, since the mystic exhibition of the community or empire is in **miniature**, symbolical propriety requires that the associated chronological periods should be exhibited in **miniature** also (emphasis original)."11"

[3]. "The grand principle into which the usage of employing a day for a year is to be resolved, is that of **miniature symbolization**. As the events are thus economically reduced, the **periods** are to be reduced in the same relative proportion. What that proportion is, we cannot positively determine without some antecedent information touching the **rate or scale** of reduction. But the probability is, that such scale will be at the rate of a day or minor revolution of the earth round its axis, for a year or greater revolution of the earth round the sun (emphasis original)."12"

[4]. One of the most comprehensive nineteenth-century expositions of the year-day principle is T. R. Birks's *First Elements of Sacred Prophecy* (1843).14 Birks, a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, suggested that God used the symbolical year-day principle “to keep the Church in the attitude of continual and lively expectation of her Lord’s return” [emphasis added],6 despite the fact that “the long delay” of that event was “prophetically announced,” because it was announced “in such a manner that its true length might not be understood, till its own close seemed to be drawing near” [emphasis added]."15"

[5]. Discussing the so-called “**systematic employment of MINIATURE in hieroglyphical symbolization**” as related to Num 14:34, Birks distinguished between a miniature in **type** and a miniature in **symbol** (emphasis original). He argued that a type is a real, and a symbol an unreal or ideal, representative of a real object. In the type, the spies, who were real persons, represented the whole nation [Num 13:1-16]; and the forty days of their search, a real period, represented the real time of the stay in the wilderness [Num 13:25; 14:33, 34]. In the visions of Daniel or St. John the ten horned beast [Dan 7:7, 19, 20, 23, 24; Rev 13:1-8], or the sun-clothed woman [Rev 12:1, 2], unreal figures, represent an empire, or the Church of Christ; and twelve hundred and sixty days [Dan 7:25; Rev 11:3; 12:6], or forty-two months [Rev 11:2; 13:5], an unreal period grammatically suggested, represent the true period designed, of as many years. The analogy, therefore, contained in this Scripture history [Num 14:34] is precise and complete. **It supplies us, from the lips of the All-wise God himself, with a distinct scale, by which to interpret every prophetic period which bears the internal marks of a suggestive character, as a miniature representation of some larger period.**16 [emphasis added].

[6]. In 1847, E. B. Elliott provided additional helpful insights about the concept of miniature symbolization. Elliott, late vicar of Tuxford and a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, stated that “a **symbolic Beast's time of prospering was intended probably to figure out some much longer time as that of the Empire symbolized**” (emphasis original).18

[7]. He argued also that “if day mean[s] year in one miniature symbolic vision [Ezek 4:5, 6] it seems reasonable so to construe it in all” (emphasis original).

[8]. While other historicists applied the year-day principle only to those symbolical visions in which the personifying symbol was a person or animal, Elliott believed it should also be applied to other visions in which “the same chronological proportion of scale (if I may so say) between the personifying symbol and nation symbolized, is observed,” such as in Isa 54:4, 6; Jer 2:2; 48:13; Ezek 23:3; and Hos 2:15,19 where a person symbolizes Israel or a single human lifetime symbolizes the span of Israel's national history.

[9]. Elliott states further that even where the personifying symbol is not a **person or animal**, it may yet have its own scale of time, appropriate to the mutations figuratively described of it in the picture or poem: and if so, this is observed
and applied; for example, in personifications under the figure of a *flower* or long-lived *tree* in their state of growth and decline. Even in symbolizations by wholly *inanimate objects*, the same observance of the fit scale of time may be often seen; as in Horace’s symbolization of the Roman nation, and its civil wars, under the figure of a storm-tossed ship returning into port, – ‘0 navis referent, &c;’ where the *briefer* storm represents the *longer* civil commotions (emphasis original)²¹

The general arguments about the historicist application of the YDP to “miniature symbolization” texts are that some symbolic prophecies “represent broader entities than the symbols themselves,” that “since the mystic exhibition of the community or empire is in *miniature*, symbolical propriety requires that the associated chronological periods should be exhibited in *miniature* also,” and that “as the events are thus economically reduced, the *periods* are to be reduced in the same relative proportion.” One other issue mentioned is that “what that proportion is, we cannot positively determine without some antecedent information touching the *rate* or *scale* of reduction,” although the historicist assumptions would suggest that “such scale will be at the rate of a day or minor revolution of the earth round its axis.”

T. R. Birks is confident that “God used the symbolical year-day principle to keep the Church in the attitude of continual and lively expectation of her Lord’s return,” and therefore the end time of the prophecies were revealed “in such a manner that its true length might not be understood, till its own close seemed to be drawing near.” The application of the “miniature symbolization” is also qualified with specific parameters indicated in arguments 5-9. While the data concerning symbolic prophetic times is relevant and important, how the exegete makes sure that the scale Birks talks about is year=day and not different is assumed, and not obtained through inductive research. This situation brings the reader full circle to the historicist presuppositions and assumptions, and fails to solve the serious YDP problems. Timm’s General Claims, therefore, contribute little or nothing to validate the YDP as a scientific and valid approach to prophetic interpretation.

Specific Texts

Timm further reviews specific biblical texts and demonstrates how the miniature symbolization perspective applies to those texts. For this section of his apologetic arguments the SDA historicist submits 3 claims:

[1]. The expression “for every day a year” appears in the book of Numbers (14:34) in the historical episode of the twelve spies chosen from the twelve tribes of Israel “to spy out the land of Canaan” prior to its conquest (13:1-25). After “forty days” of searching, the spies returned to their camp (13:25). The negative report of ten of them (13:26-33; cf. 14:6-9) led “the whole congregation” of Israel to rebel against Moses and Aaron and “against the Lord,” even to the point of deciding to stone the two spies, Joshua and Caleb, who did not agree with that report (14:1-10). Then “the glory of the Lord” appeared in judgment to all the Israelites (14:10-12). After Moses pled with God to spare the rebellious people from being completely destroyed (14:13-19), God announced the following sentence:

And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day a year, you shall bear your iniquity, forty years, and you shall know my displeasure (Num 14:33,34).
The episode under consideration presents a parallel typological relationship between spies and tribes, and between days and years. Crucial in the whole narrative are microcosmic entities (twelve spies and forty days) representing larger macrocosmic realities (twelve tribes and forty years). According to Elliott: “We have, thus, from the lips of God himself, the clear relation established in this notable instance of chronological prophecy, that while the spies represent the nation, a day should represent a year.”

While in Num 14:34 the expression “for every day a year” occurs in a historical setting, in Ezek 4:6 the expression “a day for each year” appears in a symbolic prophecy. As Num 13-14 comprises a typology in miniature, so Ezek 4 portrays a symbolic representation in miniature. Several small symbols are mentioned in Ezek 4 and 5 to illustrate the coming destruction of Jerusalem. Already in 4:1-3, the prophet Ezekiel is asked to take a “brick” and “portray upon it” the city of Jerusalem, surrounded by a siege. That was a miniature model of the city surrounded by enemy armies prior to its destruction. But in vv. 4-8 the prophet himself becomes a miniature symbol, first, of the house of Israel and, then, of the house of Judah. In those verses we read the following:

Then lie upon your left side, and I will lay the punishment of the house of Israel upon you; for the number of the days that you lie upon it, you shall bear their punishment. For I assign to you a number of days, three hundred and ninety days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment; so long shall you bear the punishment of the house of Israel. And when you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah; forty days I assign you, a day for each year. And you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, with your arm bared; and you shall prophesy against the city. And, behold, I will put cords upon you, so that you cannot turn from one side to the other, till you have completed the days of your siege.

Once again we are facing a small microcosm (the prophet himself) representing a broader macrocosm (first Israel and then Judah). The act of Ezekiel lying on his left side for 390 days was understood by Bush as

“a miniature hieroglyphic of Israel; a man, of a nation. Hence as the man represented the nation in miniature, so the 390 days represented the period of 390 years in miniature. In like manner, his lying forty days on his right side symbolized the foreseen iniquity of Judah through the period of forty years (emphasis original).”

The previous consideration confirmed the fact that the time periods mentioned in Num 13-14 and Ezek 4 occur within the context of specific miniature symbolizations. While in Numbers the context is of a miniature typology, in Ezekiel it is of miniature symbolization. But in both cases the hermeneutical principle, provided by the text itself to interpret the time elements involved, is each day for a year. This led several nineteenth-century historicists to believe that the year-day principle should be used only in regard to those time prophecies in which occur [sic!] a similar miniature symbolization [emphasis added].

The examples for Specific Texts are not much better in defense of the historicist principle than the ones in the General Claims because the “miniature symbolization” assumptions conflict with the YDP definition that mandates that the historicist time computation principle be applied exclusively to symbolic, apocalyptic prophecies. Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 are historical narratives. While Numbers 14 contains a classical punishment prediction, Ezekiel 4 is an acted parable. In both passages the time expressions are literal, not symbolic, and there are no eschatological elements in the texts. As such, an YDP application is unpredicted and unwarranted, and cannot be justified.
Daniel Texts

Before he presents the “miniature symbolization” application examples specific to the book of Daniel, Timm identifies the texts in the prophetic book to which the pictographic rule should be applied:

Crucial to understanding the validity of the concept of miniature symbolization as a hermeneutical tool to interpret apocalyptic prophecies is the task of identifying precisely the passages of Scripture in which that concept occurs associated with some prophetic time period. In regard to the book of Daniel, the present discussion will consider how this concept is applicable to the following time periods usually interpreted by historicists from a year-day perspective: (1) “a time, two times, and half a time” (Dan 7:25); (2) 2,300 “evenings and mornings” (Dan 8:14 [also NASB, NIV]); (3) “seventy weeks” with their time subdivisions (Dan 9:24-27); (4) “a time, two times, and half a time” (Dan 12:7); and (5) 1,290 days and 1,335 days (Dan 12:11,12).24-57

The SDA historicist then submits 6 passages from Daniel to which, according to him, the “miniature symbolization” application is correct, and also 4 passages from the same prophetic book to which the application would not be appropriate:

Miniature Rule Applied

[1]. In the apocalyptic prophecy of Dan 7, all main entities are portrayed in a clear miniature symbolization. According to the Protestant historicist tradition, the “lion” with “eagle’s wings” (v. 4) represents the Babylonian Empire; the “bear” (v. 5) refers to the Medo-Persian Empire; the “leopard” with “four heads” (v. 6) describes the Greek Empire; the “fourth beast” with “ten horns” (v. 7) is an allusion to the Roman Empire; and the little “horn” (v. 8) is a symbol of papal Rome. As the entities (“beasts” and “horns”) of the vision represent larger political powers (empires), so does the symbolic time-element involved represent a broader range. There is almost a consensus among historicists that “a time, two times, and half a time,” during which the saints should be oppressed by that little horn (v. 25), stands for 1,260 literal years.25

[2]. Likewise, in Dan 8 two different animals are used as miniature symbols of larger empires. The “ram” with “two horns” (vv. 3, 4) is identified by the text itself as a symbol of Medo-Persia (v. 20); and the “he-goat,” with “a conspicuous horn between his eyes” (vv. 5-8), as a representation of the Greek Empire (v. 21). Once again, the counterfeit activities of the little horn are mentioned (vv. 9-12), which would be reversed only at the end of the symbolic period of 2,300 “evenings and mornings” (vv. 13, 14 [also NASB, NIV]).26 As the entities mentioned (animals and “horns”) are symbols of broader and longer-living empires, so the time element (2,300 “evenings and mornings”) is seen to represent 2,300 years.27

[3]. Daniel 9:24-27 mentions the prophetic period of “seventy weeks,” subdivided into “seven weeks,” “sixty-two weeks,” and “one week.” The content of the passage itself, isolated from the background context of Dan 8, is worded in apparently concrete language, without a clear miniature symbolization involved. But by recognizing that Dan 9:24-27 is a later appendix explaining the vision of the 2,300 evenings and mornings of Dan 8:14 (cf. 8:26, 27; 9:20-23), one might conclude rightly that seventy weeks and its shorter time-period subdivisions have to be understood also within the miniature-symbolization context of Dan 8. Linguistic evidences indicate that the seventy weeks were actually “cut off” (Heb., nehak) of the larger period of 2,300 days-years and, therefore, must be interpreted as 490 years.28 If not understood as 490 years, the seventy weeks becomes senseless as a messianic prophecy. So evident is the year-day principle in Dan 9:24-27 that this passage and Num 14:34 and Ezek 4:5, 6 are considered by historicists as the hermeneutical keys to interpret the time periods of other symbolic prophecies.29

[4]. Three significant prophetic time periods are mentioned in the concluding section of Daniel (12:4-13): (1) “a time, two times, and half a time” (v. 7); (2) “a thousand two hundred and ninety days” (v. 11); and
(3) a “thousand three hundred and thirty-five days” (v. 12). One might be tempted not to apply the year-day principle to those time periods because of the fact that no explicit miniature symbolization is found in that specific section of the book. But this argument cannot be accepted when one looks beyond the narrow context into the larger prophetic scope of the book. Actually, “a time, two times, and half a time” (v. 7) seems to be just an echo of the same time period mentioned previously in Dan 7:25. If the miniature symbolization found in Dan 7 requires the time period in 7:25 to be understood as 1,260 years, then, to be consistent, the same period in 12:7 must also be interpreted as 1,260 years.

[5] The allusion in Dan 12:11 (NIV) to the “daily” and the “abomination that causes desolation” connects the 1,290 and 1,335 days not only with the content of the vision of Dan 11 (see v. 31), but also with the 2,300 “evenings and mornings” of Dan 8:14 (see 8:13; 9:27). The very same apostate power that would establish the “abomination that causes desolation” in replacement to the “daily” is described in Dan 7 and 8 as the “little horn,” and in Dan 11 as the “king of the north.” These recurrences confirm that the 1,290 days and the 1,335 days of Dan 12:11, 12 share the same prophetic-apocalyptic nature of “a time, times, and half a time” of Dan 7:25 and of the 2,300 “evenings and mornings” of Dan 8:14.

[6] The attempt to isolate the content of Dan 12:4-13 from the prophetic chain of Dan 11 is not endorsed by the literary structure of the book of Daniel. Shea explains that in the prophetic section of the book of Daniel each prophetic period (70 weeks; 1,260, 1,290, 1,335, and 2,300 days) appears as a calibrating appendix to the basic body of the respective prophecy to which it is related. For instance, the vision of chapter 7 is described in vv. 1-14, but the time related to it appears only in v. 25. In chapter 8, the body of the vision is related in vv. 1-12, but the time appears only in v. 14. In a similar way, the prophetic time periods related to the vision of chapter 11 are mentioned only in chapter 12. So, if we apply the year-day principle to the prophetic periods of Dan 7 and 8, we should also apply it to the time periods of Dan 12, for all these time periods are in some way interrelated, and the description of each vision points to only a single fulfillment of the prophetic time period related to it.

Miniature Rule Not Applied

Before he focuses on the biblical passages in Daniel to which he believes that the “miniature symbolization” rule should not be applied, Timm states:

The above-mentioned symbolic time periods are interpreted by means of the day-year hermeneutical principle because of their direct or indirect relationship with a specific miniature symbolization setting. But in the book of Daniel there are also a few other prophetic time periods to which that principle of interpretation cannot be applied because of their historical nature, which is without any miniature-symbolization point of reference. Attention will be given to the “seven times” of Dan 4:16, 23, 25, 32; the “seventy years” of Dan 9:2; and the “three weeks” of Dan 10:2.

The texts in Daniel to which, from an SDA historicist perspective, the “miniature symbolization” should not be applied are in the historical sections of the prophetic book:

[1] The “seven times” of Nebuchadnezzar's punishment for his pride (Dan 4:16, 23, 25, 32) were erroneously understood by some nineteenth-century historicists as 2,520 years (7 x 360 days = 2,520 days-years). There is no doubt that the “seven times” are mentioned within Nebuchadnezzar's symbolical prophetic dream of a huge and fruitful “tree” that would remain devastated for “seven times (vv. 8-18). Daniel’s interpretation of the dream (vv. 19-27) and its actual fulfillment (vv. 28-37) corroborate the fact that no miniature symbolization at all is involved in this incident. In the prophetic dream, the tree represented just one person (Nebuchadnezzar) with whom it was fulfilled (vv. 20-22, 28). The prophetic “seven times” (v. 16) were interpreted by Daniel as “seven times” (vv. 23, 25) and actually fulfilled just as “seven times” (v. 32). Understood as seven literal years, this period can be easily accommodated with the lifetime of King Nebuchadnezzar. No room is left in the text for a year-day interpretation of this prophetic period that would stretch it beyond those seven years. Only an allegorical reinterpretation of the dream’s
basic entities ("tree" or "Nebuchadnezzar") can favor any other artificial fulfillment not contemplated by the text itself.

[2] The prophetic promise that Jerusalem would be restored after “seventy years” of Babylonian captivity (Dan 9:2) is taken from Jer 29:10. References to the same time period are found also in Jer 25:11, 12, and 2 Chron 36:21. By reading the respective literary setting of each of those passages, one can easily perceive that not only in Dan 9:1-19 and Jer 29:1-32, but also in Jer 25:1-14 and 2 Chron 36:17-21, the narratives are always expressed in a literal language, without any miniature symbolization or other kind of symbolisms. Thus, the “seventy years” of Dan 9:2 have to be understood as a literal period of time.

[3] Similarly, the “three weeks” of Dan 10:2-3 occur in a different literary context from the “seventy weeks” of Dan 9. In this passage, the prophet refers to his own concrete experience of “mourning for three weeks,” abstaining from “meat, wine, and delicacies.” There is nothing symbolic in these verses, the actions of which all occurred within “the third year of Cyrus” (10:1), so there is no basis for interpreting this time period as anything other than three ordinary, literal weeks.

[4] The previous considerations on the occurrences of miniature symbolizations in the book of Daniel allow us to suggest that the year-day principle seems applicable in that book to the “seventy weeks” with their time subdivisions (9:24-27); “a time, two times, and half a time” (7:25; 12:7); the 1,290 days (12:11); the 1,335 days (12:12); and the 2,300 “evenings and mornings” (8:14). By contrast, the absence of such symbolization in regard to the “seven times” (4:16, 23, 25, 32) and the “seventy years” (9:2) and the “three weeks” (10:2-3) implies that these specific time periods have to be taken literally as seven years, seventy years, and three weeks (10:23), respectively.

The examination of the texts in Daniel to which Timm applies the “miniature symbolization” rule indicates that the SDA historicist does his application within the historicist context of presuppositions and assumptions. He takes for granted, for instance, that “the little ‘horn’ (v. 8) [in Daniel 7] is a symbol of papal Rome,” that “the time element (2,300 ‘evenings and mornings’) is seen to represent 2,300 years” based also on the assumption that the little horn in Daniel 8 is Rome, that “Dan 9:24-27 is a later appendix explaining the vision of the 2,300 evenings and mornings of Dan 8:14,” and that “the very same apostate power that would establish the ‘abomination that causes desolation’ in replacement to the ‘daily’ is described in Dan 7 and 8 as the ‘little horn.’” Timm seems to ignore the fact such formulations are historicist interpretations of Daniel and assumed to be biblical truth. He also mentions that “linguistic evidences indicate that the seventy weeks were actually ‘cut off’” although there is no empirical linguistic evidence for such a rendition of the Hebrew hapax in the context of Daniel 9:24.

The theologian is also inconsistent in his applications. Although he claims that the “miniature” rule should not be applied to biblical contexts that lack miniaturization, he reverses himself on the rule he had previously established and states that “one might be tempted not to apply the year-day principle to those time periods [Daniel 12:4-13; Daniel 12:7, 11, and 12] because of the fact that no explicit miniature symbolization is found in that specific section of the book. But this argument cannot be accepted when one looks beyond the narrow context into the larger prophetic scope of the book.” His argument does not appear to indicate genuine concern for the preservation of the intended message of the text, but desire to match his interpretation with the historicist hermeneutical guidelines.

That this is not just the writer’s impression becomes evident when one notices that historical narrative passages in Daniel are excluded from the anticipated YDP application.
because “the narratives are always expressed in a literal language, without any miniature symbolization or other kind of symbolisms” although he had earlier made a particular case for the YDP use with texts that had “no explicit miniature symbolization.” This approach does not appear to be a consistent application of the pictorial rule to Daniel, although the historicist himself expects that “if the miniature symbolization found in Dan 7 requires the time period in 7:25 to be understood as 1,260 years, then, to be consistent [emphasis added], the same period in 12:7 must also be interpreted as 1,260 years,” and that “if we apply the year-day principle to the prophetic periods of Dan 7 and 8, we should also apply it to the time periods of Dan 12.” The problem that confronts him and other SDA historicists is that the YDP definition, application samples, and application parameters do not match, and this causes random, inconsistent, and often bizarre results in the use of the historicist time calculator.

Revelation Texts

The fourth and final part of Timm’s discussion on the “miniature symbolization” rule and its application to prophetic time is concentrated on Revelation Texts. The historicist’s purpose here is to show the readers how miniaturization also works in Daniel’s companion book. The introduction to this last section contains a list of texts to which Timm will attempt to match the miniature symbolization rule:

The discussion about the concept of miniature symbolization in the book of Revelation will center mainly around the following prophetic time periods: “ten days” (Rev 2:10); “five months” (Rev 9:5, 10); “the hour, the day, the month, and the year” (Rev 9:15); 42 “months” and 1,260 “days” (Rev 11:2, 3); “three days and a half” (Rev 11:9, 11); 1,260 “days” (Rev 12:6); “a time, and times, and half a time” (Rev 11:1; 9,11); 1,260 “days” (Rev 12:6); “a time, and times, and half a time” (Rev 12:14); and 42 “months” (Rev 13:5).41

For Revelation, Timm makes 10 “miniature symbolization” claims in order to defend and reinforce the historicist perspective on the book’s interpretation and the application of the historicist time calculation principle:

[1] The period of “ten days” mentioned in Rev 2:10 occurs within a literary setting not clearly symbolical (see vv. 8-11). But, according to the concept of miniature symbolization, it is not just the presence of some symbols that justifies the use of the year-day principle. The real point at stake is whether the main entity involved (“the church in Smyrna”) can be considered a symbol (as in Ezek 4) or a type (as in Num 13-14) of a broader corporative reality. This means that if the “church in Smyrna” is considered just as a reference to the first-century Christian community of that specific town,34 then the “ten days” would have to be taken just as a literal ten days. But if that church is understood as a miniature symbol of the Christian church between “about the close of the 1st century (c. A.D. 100)” and “about A.D. 313, when Constantine espoused the cause of the church,”35 then the “ten days” should also be considered a miniature symbol of a longer period, most probably ten literal years.36

[2] Twice in Rev 9:5, 10, appears a reference to “five months,” during which “those of mankind who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads” should be tormented (v. 4). The entire narrative of the fifth “trumpet” (vv. 1-12), in which those references appear is crowded with symbolic entities, such as “star,” “bottomless pit,” and exotic war “locusts.” Those interpreters who regard the presence of symbolic entities as sufficient to justify the use of the year-day principle would not hesitate to consider those “five months” as 150 literal years. But by looking beyond the presence of such symbolisms toward an actual miniature symbolization, one becomes once more dependent on a broader historical fulfillment of this trumpet to justify the application of the year-day principle. If the trumpet is seen as a miniature representation of an
era of the Christian Church – for instance, from the “rise” of the Ottoman Empire in A.D. 1299 to the “downfall” of the Byzantine Empire in A.D. 1449\(^3\) – then the “five months” can only be taken as 150 years.

[3]. In Rev 9:15, occurs the expression “the hour, the day, the month, and the year,” of which at the end “four angels” were “to kill a third of mankind.”\(^3\) This time period appears within the description of the sixth trumpet (vv. 13-21), in which are used such symbolic expressions as “the great river Euphrates,” “horses” with heads like those of lions, “mouths” that issued “fire and smoke and sulphur,” and “riders” having “breastplates the color of fire and sapphire and of sulphur.” As in the case of the “five months” (vv. 5, 10), so “the hour, the day, the month, and the year” can only be seen as 391 years and 15 days if this trumpet is considered a miniature portrait of the Christian church, for example from the “downfall” of the Byzantine Empire in A.D. 1449 to the fall of the Ottoman Empire in A.D. 1840.\(^3\)

[4]. The 42 “months” and the 1,260 “days” mentioned in Rev 11:2, 3 (see also 13:5; 12:6) are recognized as synonyms not only of each other, but also of “a time, two times, and half a time” derived from Dan 7:25 (see also Dan 12:7; Rev 12:14).\(^5\) This implies, just by itself, that the miniature symbolization by which the vision of Dan 7 is presented requires the year-day principle to interpret not only “a time, two times, and half a time” in Dan 7:25, but also all of the other correlated time periods. Yet, in addition to the miniature-symbolization prophetic background of Dan 7, the actual content of Rev 11:3-12, in which the 42 months and the 1,260 days are mentioned, is focused on the historical events related to the “two witnesses,” also called “the two olive trees” and “the two lampstands” (v. 4).

[5]. Within the same pericope of Rev 11:3-12, there are also two references to a period of “three days and a half” (vv. 9, 11). By considering the “two witnesses” as miniature representations of the broader prophetic testimonies of the OT and NT, one can easily conclude that those “three days and a half” stand for three years and a half.\(^4\)

[6]. In Rev 12, the time periods of the 1,260 days (v. 6) and “a time, and times, and half a time” (v. 14) are synonymously identified as the age during which the apocalyptic “woman” would find refuge in “the wilderness” (vv. 6, 14) from the satanic “dragon, with seven heads and ten horns” (v. 3). The presence of a symbolic “woman” as a miniature representation of God’s faithful church\(^5\) confirms the already-settled year-day interpretation of each of those periods as 1,260 years.

[7]. The prophetic period of 42 months reoccurs in Rev 13:5 as the period in which the “beast” with “ten horns and seven heads” (v. 1; cf. 12:3) would exercise the “great authority” granted to him by the dragon (v. 2). Here in Rev 13:1-8, the “little horn” of Dan 7 and 8 reappears under the symbol of a “beast” as a miniature representation of papal Rome. The nature of this symbolic vision also corroborates the 1,260 years of religious persecution.

[8]. In the book of Revelation, the time periods of “three days and a half”(11:9, 11); “ten days” (2:10); “five months” (9:5, 10); “the hour, the day, the month, and the year” (9:15); “a time, and times, and half a time” (12:14); 42 “months” (11:2; 13:5); and 1,260 “days” (11:3; 12:6) all occur within a miniature symbolization setting. To all those time periods the year-day principle of prophetic interpretation seems applicable.

[9]. But what could be said on this matter about the 1,000 years of Rev 20? If the year-day principle is applied to all those periods, would it not be inconsistent to fail to also apply it to the 1,000 years?

If the only criterion to use the year-day principle is the presence of a given period within an apocalyptic narrative, then there would be no convincing reason not to interpret the 1,000 years of Rev 20 as 360,000 years. The attempt to consider the word “years” (vv. 2-7) by itself as an obstacle for the year-day principle does not seem convincing, however, because in other places that principle is applied to this word. Already in the expression “a time, two times, and half a time” (Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 12:14), the word “time” is taken as “year” and multiplied by 360, the number of days in a year in biblical times. The normal biblical lunar
year included twelve months of twenty-nine or thirty days each, with an additional month added as necessary to synchronize with the solar year (about seven times in nine years).

By reading Rev 20:1-10 where the 1,000 years are mentioned six times, one might notice that several apocalyptic symbols are mentioned, such as the “bottomless pit,” “a great chain,” “thrones,” the “beast” and “its image,” “Gog and Magog,” and “the false prophet.” But it seems quite evident that the overall tone of this apocalyptic narrative cannot be considered a true miniature symbolization. First, the “beast” and “its image,” which were the main miniature protagonists in Rev 13, are mentioned in Rev 20 only in a tangential way (vv. 4, 10). The predominant figure in the whole narrative is the “dragon,” also called “old serpent” (v. 2). While the “beast” and “his image” gave to Rev 13 a miniature-symbolization tone, the presence of the “dragon” in Rev 20 does not have the same tone. This is due to the fact that in the book of Revelation, the “dragon” is not a miniature symbolization of a larger entity or community, but a designation for one spiritual being called “Devil” and “Satan” (20:2; cf. 12:9). For this reason, it seems more consistent to understand the 1,000 years of Rev 20 as a literal 1,000 years.

[10]. Some readers of the Revelation might wonder about the “half an hour” of “silence in heaven” when the Lamb (Christ) opens the seventh seal (Rev 8:1). If the sealed “scroll” (or “book,” KJV) in Rev 546 and each of its “seven seals” (6:1-17; 8:1-5) are considered miniature symbolizations of broader historical realities, then that “half an hour” might be considered a symbolic time, representing about a week of literal time.47 However, if one considers Rev 10:6 (“there should be time [Greek krónos] no longer,” KJV) as implying that no symbolic time prophecy would reach beyond the fulfillment of the 2,300 “evenings and mornings” of Dan 8:14 in 1844 A.D.48 then not only the “half an hour” of Rev 8:1 but also the 1,000 years of Rev 20:1-10 would have to be understood as literal time periods, to which the year-day principle should not be applied.62

The argument section on the application of the “miniature symbolization” rule to Revelation continues to broadcast the same historicist presuppositions and assumptions that plague the other three previous sections. In order to accept the “miniature symbolization” process of certain biblical texts in the prophetic book, the readers are required to agree that the local church in Smyrna (Revelation 2:10) should be “understood as a miniature symbol of the Christian church between “about the close of the 1st century,” and “the ‘ten days’ should also be considered a miniature symbol of a longer period, most probably ten literal years,” while the sixth trumpet should be interpreted as “a miniature representation of an era of the Christian Church, for instance, from the ‘rise’ of the Ottoman Empire in A.D. 1299 to the ‘downfall’ of the Byzantine Empire in A.D. 1449.39” On this basis, the “five months” can only be taken “as 150 years,” and, “the hour, the day, the month, and the year’ [could] only be seen as 391 years and 15 days if this trumpet is considered a miniature portrait of the Christian church, for example from the ‘downfall’ of the Byzantine Empire in A.D. 1449 to the fall of the Ottoman Empire in A.D. 1840,” etc. So drenched are Timm’s claims in the historicist scheme, that the interpretation of the biblical texts in Revelation must follow that exegetical path in order for the pieces to fall into place.

This kind of tilted perspective allows little room for the intended meaning of the text, and turns the Bible into a historicist book. Where the pieces of the puzzle refuse to fall together, the theologian must manipulate the text and the context in order to make things fits. Such is the case with the 1,000 years in Revelation 20. Timm asks, “If the year-day principle is applied to all those periods, would it not be inconsistent to fail to also apply it to the 1,000 years?” His answer is that although in the same chapter “several apocalyptic symbols are mentioned, such as the ‘bottomless pit,’ ‘a great chain,’ ‘thrones,’ the ‘beast’ and ‘its image,’ ‘Gog and Magog,’ and
‘the false prophet,’” such “details” should not perturb the reader because “it seems quite evident [emphasis added] that the overall tone of this apocalyptic narrative cannot be considered a true miniature symbolization,” and, therefore, “for this reason, it seems more consistent to understand the 1,000 years of Rev 20 as a literal 1,000 years.” A similar standard explanation is provided for the “half an hour” in Revelation 8:1. What does not fit with the historicist perspective on the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation seems to be either discounted or “transformed” to match the general historicist picture.

Inadequate Theological Arguments

The full circle in Timm’s “miniature symbolization” claims and arguments in support and defense of the YDP is the conclusion of his paper. In that conclusion, the SDA historicist repeats his previous arguments with 3 abridged claims and a paragraph in which five “additional, more specific conclusions” are drawn:

[1]. In many apocalyptic prophecies, both the major entity and the time element involved have been zoomed down into a symbolic microcosmic scale that can be better understood by zooming them up into their macrocosmic fulfillment. The miniature-symbolization motif provides a basic thematic correlation between Num 14:34 and Ezek 4:6, on one hand, and the symbolical time elements of Daniel and the Revelation, on the other. The presence of this motif justifies the carrying of the “each-day-for-a-year” principle from Num 14:34 and Ezek 4:5,6 over to those apocalyptic visions in which the time periods involved appear within a similar miniature-symbolization context. This miniature-symbolic parallelism enriches the year-day principle with a meaning that goes far beyond a mere proof-text approach.

[2]. The presence of miniature symbolizations in the book of Daniel allows the year-day principle to be applied to the “seventy weeks” with their time subdivisions (9:24-27): “a time, two times, and half a time” (7:25; 12:7); the 1,290 “days” (12:11); the 1,335 “days” (12:12); and the 2,300 “evenings and mornings” (8:14). But the absence of such symbolization in regard to the “seven times” (4:16, 23, 25, 32), the “seventy years” (9:2), and the “three weeks” (10:2) implies that these time periods have to be understood literally.

[3]. In the book of Revelation, the time periods of “three days and a half” (11:9, 11); “ten days” (2:10); “five months” (9:5, 10); “the hour, the day, the month, and the year” (9:15); “a time, and times, and half a time” (12:14); 42 “months” (11:2; 13:5); 1,260 “days” (11:3; 12:6); and perhaps even “half an hour” (8:1), all occur within a similar miniaturization setting. It seems evident that the year-day principle is applicable to these periods, but not to the 1,000 years of Rev 20, where no miniature symbolization occurs.

A comparative study of these passages leads to additional, more specific conclusions. First, prophetic miniature symbolization can involve entities such as symbols (as in Ezek 4) and types (as in Num 13-14). Second, the presence of miniature symbolization requires that the main entity or entities involved represent larger corporative powers (as the “little horn” in Dan 7 and the ten-horned “beast” in Rev 13). Third, tangent allusions to miniature symbols do not replace the lack of miniature characteristics in the main entity or entities (as with the “dragon” in Rev 20). Fourth, a prophetic time period is of a symbolic nature and has to be interpreted from a year-day perspective whenever it appears in the midst of miniature symbols (as with the 1,260 “days” and the 42 “months” in Rev 13:1-8) or in subsequent passages explaining those symbols (as with the 2,300 “evenings and mornings” in Dan 8:14 and the 70 “weeks” in Dan 9:24-27). Fifth, a prophetic time period previously defined as of a symbolic nature does not lose its symbolic nature when referred to in not so clearly miniature-symbolic contexts (as in “a time, two times, and half a time” from Dan 7:25, which reappears in 12:7 and Rev 12:14) [emphasis added].

Timm’s borrowed “miniature symbolization” arguments might appear quite sophisticated and impressive, but the YDP application, even in that specific fashion, remains unscientific,
random, and inconsistent. In Ouro’s perspective, such a haphazard use of the principle is equal with an application failure and disqualifies the historicist “rule” as a legitimate prophetic time hermeneutic. When the YDP is defined as a “scale,” “rule,” or “equation,” and when its support texts come for the largest part from non-symbolic historical narratives, poetical passages, labor and Jubilee religious legislation, and classical prophecies, while the application of the principle is exclusive to symbolic, apocalyptic prophecies, then this historicist time hermeneutic cannot work because its overall theoretical organization is inconsistent and unreliable.

The SDA historicist’s arguments seem to provide acceptable evidence that certain time expressions in the Bible and in Daniel and Revelation are symbolic and should be read in a figurative manner, while others are literal and no prophetic “scale” should be applied to them, but Timm fails to explain how his “evidence” supports the historicist “principle” or “rule,” as he does not provide the connective element that would signal the change from qualitative prophetic symbolism to the assumed day=year quantitative generalization. As such, his arguments remain a futile exercise because they do not contribute with solutions to the problems the YDP faces as an incorrect generalization based on data from various biblical texts except the apocalyptic prophecies but which is applied as the exclusive time hermeneutical tool to the apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation.

Gerhard Pfandl

Pfandl, an associate director with the BRI, makes a weak attempt to support the historicist principle, but his contentions are neither irrefutable nor original. His 2003 article includes arguments borrowed from Ford’s support for the YDP because “one of the best summaries of the year-day principle, based on the works of T. R. Birks” and H. G. Guinness, is found in Dr. Ford’s first commentary on Daniel.64 What is ironic, though, is that Pfandl cannot do better than mimic Ford in his defense of the YDP while at the same time he concedes that “this [Ford’s defense arguments], of course, Dr. Ford rejected 18 years later, because he contends that it cannot be biblically justified.”65 Pfandl resorts to the arguments Ford rejected as unbiblical and invalid about two decades before in order to defend a historicist assumption that Ford considers indefensible and bankrupt now! How is that for serious and reliable SDA scholarship?

But things get even less original! The SDA historicist theologian’s 2007 article published in the BRI’s April Reflections66 seems to be almost identical to his 2003 article. We must assume that Pfandl has never heard of self-plagiarism, in which an author publishes again his previous work as if it were new and original. That this matter has been completely overlooked at the BRI must indicate something about the professionalism of the “scholars” who work there. There is no doubt that the BRI associate director has been hard at work in his efforts to imitate all the writers who have crossed his path. Even his 2004 book, Daniel: The Seer of Babylon, seems to derive its title from Hewitt’s 1948 book, The Seer of Babylon: Studies in the Book of Daniel. So much for original scholarship! While Pfandl’s “contribution” to the YDP’s apologetic is rather inadequate from a research perspective, the fact that the BRI associate director summarizes Ford’s extensive review of support arguments for the YDP in Daniel makes it worth the effort to include his version of the arguments from Reflections in this section of the document.
Pfandl starts his defense of the YDP with what he appears to consider the most authoritative “evidence” for the historicist principle, the argument from tradition, while Shea, in contrast, leaves this argument to the end of his discussion on the YDP and warns the readers that the support from tradition does not prove that the method is correct. States the overconfident historicist:

Until the 19th century, most students of the apocalyptic books Daniel and Revelation used the historicist method to interpret the time prophecies in these books. One of the main pillars of the historicist method is the year-day principle which says that a day in apocalyptic time prophecies represents a year. During the 19th century, the historicist method was slowly replaced by the preterist and futurist systems of interpretation both of which deny the year-day principle. Preterists place most of the prophecies into the past up to the time of the Roman Empire; futurists place most of them into the future, specifically into the last seven years prior to the Second Advent. According to their view, the beginning point of the seven years is the secret rapture of God’s people.

Seventh-day Adventists continue to use the historicist method of interpretation because they believe that the year-day principle is not a paradigm imposed on the text, but that it is found in Scripture itself. In Daniel chapters seven and eight, for example, the interpreting angel uses the historicist method to explain the various symbols as empires in history, one following the other.

It is ironic that one of the best summaries of the year-day principle, based on the works of T. R. Birks and H. G. Guinness, is found in Desmond Ford’s first commentary on Daniel. In his second commentary on Daniel, eighteen years later, he no longer uses it. Contrary to this position, most Seventh-day Adventist interpreters believe that the year-day principle is based on Scripture.

The BRI accidental theologian seems to demonstrate that he lacks a sense of proportion in his overture comments to the YDP defense. First, he appears to believe that the YDP tradition is evidence that supports the principle, then he worsens the stakes against the historicist principle with the unverified claim that “in Daniel chapters seven and eight, for example, the interpreting angel uses the historicist method to explain the various symbols as empires in history, one following the other.” The high point of his comments here, though, is that he reduces the theological debate to his personal grudge with Ford when he states that “contrary to this position [against the historicist time “principle”], most Seventh-day Adventist interpreters believe that the year-day principle is based on Scripture.” There is no question that Ford has been one of the most prominent SDA theologians for the past four or five decades, but to place the Australian theologian as the main opponent to the YDP is to disregard the full number of Christian interpreters who have no time to waste with the SDA theologians and the historicist time rule.

Pfandl manages to summarize the arguments in support and defense for the YDP from Ford’s and Shea’s perspective and adds his personal contribution to these arguments with some flippant and “smart Alec” remarks in order to compensate for absent rigorous scholarship on his part. Here are the arguments he proposes:

1) Since the visions in Daniel 7 and 8 are largely symbolic, with a number of different beasts representing important historical empires (7:3-7; 8:3-5, 20-21), the time periods (7:25; 8:14) should also be seen as symbolic.

2) The fact that the visions deal with the rise and fall of known empires in a history, which extended over hundreds of years, indicates that the prophetic time periods must also cover long time periods.
3) The peculiar way in which the time periods are expressed indicates that they should not be taken literally. If the “time, times, and half a time” in Daniel 7:25 stands for three and a half literal years, God would probably have said “three years and six months.” In Luke 4:25 and James 5:17 where three and a half literal years are referred to, each time the phrase is “three years and six months.” Similarly, Paul remained in Corinth “a year and six months” (Acts 18:11), and David reigned in Hebron “seven years and six months” (2 Sam. 2:11).

4) In Daniel 7 the four beasts which together account for a reign of at least one thousand years are followed by the little horn power. It is the focus of the vision since it is most directly in opposition to God. Three and a half literal years for the struggle between the little horn and the Most High are out of proportion to the comprehensive scope of salvation history portrayed in this vision. The same applies to Revelation 12:6 and 14 where the one thousand and two hundred and sixty days or three and a half times cover most of the history between the first and second advent of Christ.

5) According to the context, the expressions “time, times, and half a time” (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14), “forty-two months” (Rev. 11:2; 13:5), and “one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (Rev. 11:3; 12:6) all apply to the same time period, but the natural expression “three years and six months” is not used once. “The Holy Spirit seems, in a manner, to exhaust all the phrases by which the interval could be expressed, excluding always that one form which would be used of course in ordinary writing, and is used invariably in Scripture on other occasions, to denote the literal period. This variation is most significant if we accept the year-day system, but quite inexplicable on the other view.”

6) The prophecies in Daniel 7-8, and 10-12 lead up to the “time of the end” (8:17; 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9) which is followed by the resurrection (12:2) and the setting up of God’s everlasting kingdom (7:27). “In the sweep of history described in these prophecies that extends from the prophet in the sixth century B.C. to our time and beyond, literal time periods of only 3½ to 6½ years are not capable of reaching anywhere near this final end time. Therefore, these prophetic time periods should be seen as symbolic and standing for considerable longer periods of actual time extending to the end of time.”

7) The only commonly used measure of time not used in the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation is the year. Days, weeks, and months, are referred to, but not the time unit “year.” The most obvious explanation is that the “year” is the unit symbolized throughout these prophecies.

8) There are a number of texts in the historical narratives of the OT in which “days” stands for “years” (Ex. 13:10; 1 Sam. 2:19; 20:6; Judges 11:40, etc.). Also in the poetic portions of the OT “days” at times stands in parallel to the word for “year” (Job 10:5; 32:7; 36:11; Ps. 77:5; 90:9-10; etc.). “Both of these usages provide a ready background for the kind of thought that could be extended to the more specific quantitative application of this relationship in apocalyptic.”

9) In the judgment prophecies of Numbers 14 and Ezekiel 4 God deliberately used the day for a year principle as a teaching device. “According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know my rejection” (Numbers 14:34). And in an acted-out parable the prophet Ezekiel was told to lie 390 days on his left side and 40 days on his right side, “I have laid on you a day for each year” (Ezekiel 4:6).

10) In Dan. 9:24-27 the 70-week time prophecy met its fulfillment at the exact time, if we use the year-day principle to interpret it. Many interpreters, who in other apocalyptic texts do not use the year-day principle, recognize that the 70 weeks are in fact “weeks of years” reaching from the Persian period to the time of Christ. Thus the pragmatic test in Daniel 9 confirms the validity of the year-day principle.

References to the year-day principle can be found in Jewish writings of the intertestamental period. The Book of Jubilees, for example, uses the word “week” to refer to seven years. As O. S. Wintermute explains, “Each period of seven years is referred to as a ‘week of years’ or simply as a ‘week.’ Each period of seven weeks of years, i.e., forty-nine years, is designated a jubilee.” Thus Noah’s age in Jubilee 10:16 is given
in these words, “Nine hundred and fifty years he completed in his life, nineteen jubilees and two weeks and five years.”

Time periods and dates in the book of Jubilee are frequently given with the week standing for 7 years. For example, the marriage of Abram to Sarai in 12:9 took place “in the fortieth jubilee, in the second week, in its seventh year;” and Abram’s change of name in 15:1-7 occurred “in the fifth year of the fourth week of that jubilee in the third month.”

The first five claims Pfandl advances are based on unverified historicist assumptions, and not on empirical evidence. He argues that “the visions in Daniel 7 and 8 are largely symbolic” and therefore the time periods in the prophetic passages “should also be seen as symbolic,” but ignores the situations when the prophetic time is explained in non-symbolic language and therefore it should be understood as literal. He also ignores the fact that he interprets Daniel and Revelation from a historicist perspective that demands that all the prophecies in the two books should end at the Second Coming. He assumes to know God’s mind when he claims that instead of the time expression “time, times, and half a time” in Daniel 7:25 “God would probably have said ‘three years and six months,’” and based on the assumption that the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation should conclude at “the time of the end” and never earlier than that, he decides also that “three and a half literal years for the struggle between the little horn and the Most High are out of proportion to the comprehensive scope of salvation history portrayed in this vision.”

Pfandl argues from the absence of empirical evidence when he quotes Birks to state that “the Holy Spirit seems, in a manner, to exhaust all the phrases by which the interval could be expressed, excluding always that one form which would be used of course in ordinary writing, and is used invariably in Scripture on other occasions, to denote the literal period,” and also that “in the sweep of history described in these prophecies that extends from the prophet in the sixth century B.C. to our time and beyond, literal time periods of only 3½ to 6½ years are not capable of reaching anywhere near this final end time. Therefore, these prophetic time periods should be seen as symbolic and standing for considerable longer periods of actual time extending to the end of time.” Such historicist arguments cannot be valid unless the time prophecies in Daniel and Revelation are shown, based on empirical evidence, to end at the Second Coming.

The next two claims in support of the YDP have the same historicist assumptions at their foundation, among which are the unverified ideas that “in the sweep of history described in these prophecies that extends from the prophet in the sixth century B.C. to our time and beyond, literal time periods of only 3½ to 6½ years are not capable of reaching anywhere near this final end time,” and that “therefore, these prophetic time periods should be seen as symbolic and standing for considerable longer periods of actual time extending to the end of time” without a thought that shorter fulfillments might exist for those prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. Pfandl also draws arguments in his favor from zero empirical evidence and comes to conclude from the absence of the time expression “year” in Daniel and Revelation that “the most obvious explanation is that the ‘year’ is the unit symbolized throughout these prophecies.”

The arguments under point 8 are a mixed bag of assumptions and speculations. Pfandl claims, for instance, that “there are a number of texts in the historical narratives of the OT in which ‘days’ stands for ‘years,’” although in none of those examples “days” substitutes “years,” that also “in the poetic portions of the OT ‘days’ at times stands in parallel to the word for
‘year,’” and that “both of these usages provide a ready background for the kind of thought that could be extended to the more specific quantitative application of this relationship in apocalyptic,” although no empirical evidence is provided for the assumed quantitative time extension. Pfandl claims that “in the judgment prophecies of Numbers 14 and Ezekiel 4 God deliberately used the day for a year principle as a teaching device,” but does not explain how that “teaching device” has become a time rule, and argues that Daniel 9:24-27 cannot be interpreted without the YDP, although some SDA theologians counter with a sabbatical year approach for the interpretation of the same biblical passage. The historicist’s evidence from the Jewish writings shows that those men used sabbatical year and Jubilee language in their documents, but such usage is no evidence for a prophetic time principle or rule.

Pfandl chooses to write his conclusion on the support of the YDP in a frivolous and “smart Alec” manner in the hope, I assume, that his readers will ignore the lack of research and scholarship evident in the article:

Our study has shown that the historicist method of interpretation is not a Johnny-come-lately on the theological scene, rather it rests on a solid biblical and historical foundation. It was used by the angel interpreter in the book of Daniel and during the intertestamental period by Jewish writers. Until the nineteenth century it was employed by most interpreters of the Bible. And in spite of what some may claim, it is not an outdated method belonging to the past, but a valid principle of interpreting apocalyptic prophecies today.69

The BRI inexpert theologian seems to fail to understand that whether or not the historicist time principle can be described as “a Johnny-come-lately on the theological scene” is not the issue in the YDP debate. The issue is whether or not there is biblical support and linguistic evidence for the principle, and Pfandl has not been able to provide this kind of empirical validation for the YDP in his article. Had he done his research, the BRI theologian would have found out that the historicist rule was far from being supported with the Bible. In truth, the biblical and linguistic evidence appears to be against this illogical and unscientific time computation rule. The fact that almost no scholars outside Adventism use the YDP to decode the time expressions in Daniel and Revelation should also be another indication that something is not all right with the SDA assumption and its support and defense arguments.

Desmond Ford

Ford has written a few times and in different publications in order to defend and support the YDP. His earliest apologetic contribution for the historicist time rule is the two-part article published in 1964 in Ministry.70,71 The arguments presented in that article seem to be the precursors to Ford’s “Appendix F – The Year-Day Principle,” included in his 1978 book Daniel.72 This “Appendix” is recognized among the SDA scholars as one of the best documents in support of the historicist time rule. Ford’s claims are included below:

1. The time prophecies are essential parts of two Bible books that God Himself has urged us to understand. Daniel, for example, is the only Old Testament book concerning which we have record of Christ Himself urging its specific study (Mt 24:15) and the Apocalypse opens with a divine blessing upon both “he that readeth” and “they that hear.”
2. The time periods in more than one place are announced amid settings of particular solemnity. In three
instances Christ Himself is the Revelator of the time messages (cf. Dan 8:11-14; 10:5, 6; 12:6 with Rev
1:13-16).

3. The predicting point regarding the divinely indicated importance of the prophetic times finds support in
the fact that ordinary “days” cannot be here intended by these prophecies. As the visions themselves
embrace comprehensive rather than trifling themes, so the time periods emphasized are symbolic of
extensive, rather than limited, eras.

a. The visions, including the time periods, are obviously symbolic, but the basic symbolism employed in
each instance has definite ascertainable significance. In Dan 2, for example, the four metals of the image
are identified as signifying four kingdoms. Likewise the four beasts of Dan 7 are interpreted as representing
four kingdoms.

b. The peculiar way in which the time periods in Daniel and Revelation are expressed also indicate that
they must apply symbolically. Consider for example the “time, two times, and half a time” of Dan 7:25.
Why is it phrased this peculiar way if it refers but to three and a half years? The year-day theory would
require that the symbol be expressed in such a way as to indicate that it is not to be taken literally. Does not
Dan 7:25 do this admirably?

c. The case [Daniel 7:25] is similar with the next great time period – the 2300 days. “For two thousand
and three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state.” This is
certainly not the usual and literal expressions for a period of between six and seven years.

d. The context of both Dan 7 and 8 forbids the idea that the periods could be literal. In the first case the
little horn emerges from the fourth world empire and endures till the time of the judgment and the advent,
and 7:25 declares that the period of “a time, two times, and half a time” extends over most of this time.
How impossible this would be if three and a half years only were intended!

4. Inasmuch as short-lived beasts are employed as symbols of long-existent empires, it is most likely that
the times mentioned are also presented to scale, with a small time unit representing a larger one.

5. The one measure of time commonly used by man which is not employed in the symbolism of Daniel and
Revelation is that of a year. Days, weeks, and months are referred to (1260 days, seventy weeks, forty-two
months), but the ordinary word for a year is not found. Instead the Hebrew word mo’ed is used (Dan
12:7). The most obvious explanation of this omission of the usual word for year in Daniel and Revelation,
while other calendar terms are found, is that the year is the measure typified throughout these prophecies
and that the day, the smallest of the symbolic calendar times, is employed to represent it.

6. Are there such indications in the rest of Scripture that God has ever chosen such symbolism? In Num
14:34 and Eze 4:6 we find evidence that such is the case.

7. The pragmatic test should now be applied and the question asked: Have any of Daniel’s prophecies
already met with precise fulfillment that accords with the principle we are studying? Dan 9:24-27, the
prophecy of seventy weeks, seems to offer just such a fulfillment. While the Hebrew word here for weeks,
shabua’, simply means a hebdomad (a unit of seven days), nevertheless the Scriptural usage of this term is
always for a week of days (see Gen 29:27, 28); Dan 10:2: It is not used, for example, in Lev 25:1-10 for
this seven-year period).

8. Another testimony that should not be omitted is that of Rev 10:5-7. The New Testament quotations
referring to this passage in Daniel indicates that the fulfillment of the time periods in the Daniel passage
were still future when John made the prophecy. Only the year-day principle applied to Daniel’s periods
could make these New Testament fulfillments possible, providing that these periods were meant to be as
specific as other Bible periods such as the 120 years before the Flood, or the 450 years concerning
Abraham’s seed, or the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.
9. The principle of repetition and enlargement characterizing the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation also casts light on the time periods employed in these books. It is obvious to any unbiased reader of Daniel that the seventh chapter covers the same ground as the second. Similarly chapter 8 again traverses the world empires, even naming two of those first mentioned in the first outline of chapter 2. Chapter 8 finishes with the destruction of the wicked by the stone cut out “without hands” as does chapter 2. As certainly as the fourth empire is pictured as remaining in its fragmentary state until the Second Advent, so it is with the little horn of chapter 8.

The Historicist Time of the End

The nine arguments Ford proposes to support the YDP seem to be based on a collection of deductions and suppositions that start with the three main SDA historicist assumptions mentioned at the beginning of this section: 1. that the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation cover “the historical period from the time of the prophet to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth,” that 2. God is “the initiator of the idea that a day is representative of a year and a year is representative of a day,” and that 3. the SDA historicists are right in their interpretation of the time prophecies in Daniel and Revelation while all the other interpreters are wrong. Based on assumption 1 is also the assumption that the expression “time of the end” in Daniel designates the end of the world and the time of the Second Advent, and therefore the apocalyptic prophecies in the prophetic book must extend all through the Christian Era to the Second Coming.

The immediate hermeneutical consequences are unnatural limitations on the textual content and the reduction of the interpretation options. Words and phrase must support the historicist perspective, and contribute to the pre-established conclusion, or the text interpretation is incorrect. The common expression “time of the end,” for instance, must mean “the end of the world” and nothing else. Pfandl’s arguments for this perspective are common among the SDA historicist theologians:

Since in the time of Jesus the great tribulation and the resurrection were still future (Matt 24:21; John 5:28, 29), Daniel 11:35-12:4 cannot refer to the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the second century B.C. Daniel’s time of trouble and the partial resurrection must come in “the time of the end” as this aeon comes to a close prior to the establishment of the kingdom of God.74

The structure of Daniel 11, as well as the links and similarities with other chapters of the book of Daniel, gives us ample ground to conclude that it does indeed span the time from the Persian kings to the resurrection and the final judgment at the end of earth’s history.75

In conclusion we can say that interpreters by and large consider “the time of the end” (et ques) to be an eschatological term, some applying it to the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, others to the time immediately prior to the second advent.

The linguistic and thematic parallels in chapters 2, 7, 8, and 10-12 support the second view. They indicate that all these visions reach to the time of the Second Advent. I agree therefore with J. R. Wilch who, in his study on “time” (et) pointed out that the five instances of “the time of the end” (et ques) in Daniel 8-12 all refer to the “absolute eschatological end.”44 Yet this end is not a point in time, but the final period of history. Wilch calls it the “final ’act’: the ’situation of the end.’”45

The vision in Daniel 8, therefore, cannot terminate in the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. It too must reach to the absolute end of the course of history. For contextual reasons the expression “the time of the end” (et ques) in the book of Daniel seems to be a technical term standing for the final period of human history.
leading up to the eschaton, Christ’s return, when the old aeon will give way to the new one and God’s kingdom will be established “without human hands” (Dan 2:34).  

Pfandl’s arguments, though, are circular. He first reads into Daniel his biased historicist assumptions and interpretation, and then argues that the “time of the end” cannot describe the events related to Antiochus IV Epiphanes while he has excluded those events, ignored factual historical evidence and replaced that evidence with a doctored narrative. His SDA historicist suppositions control his interpretation to such a degree that he distorts the message of the biblical text in order to fit his biased historicist perspective. Daniel, though, contains a rather similar time expression in its text, “the latter days,” and this time the SDA theologian seems to agree with Birks on the expression’s interpretation:

Concluding our study of the phrase “the latter days,” we can say that the context remains decisive in each case for the meaning of “the latter days.” It is an idiomatic expression for “future” or “in days to come.” It is therefore in itself not a technical eschatological term, because its contextual settings and varieties of usages allow it to be employed in different ways. Only the context of a given passage can determine if the expression is being used with an eschatological nuance.

“We have the express declaration of the angel, that the whole prophecy — for there is no reason to suppose any part excepted — relates to what shall befall the people of Daniel in the latter days” (p. 169).

In these words, joined with their context, there are two assumptions — one, that the latter days denote exclusively the times at, or just before, the Second Advent; and the other, that the whole prophecy, without exception is included in those latter days. Let us examine them in order.

(1) First we have to ascertain the true sense of the term “latter days.” It occurs first in the blessing of Jacob (Gen. xlix. 1). Among the events there ascribed to the latter days is the dispersion of Levi among the other tribes: and this began with the division of the land under Joshua.

The next passage is in the prophecy of Balaam (Numb. xxiv. 14). In this second instance, it plainly includes the victories of David over Edom and Moab, and the times of the Assyrian captivity.

The third is Deut. iv. 30. Upon this we have an inspired comment in the first chapter of Nehemiah, which proves that it began to be fulfilled, at latest, with the return from Babylon.

The fourth is Deut. xxxi. 29. “ Evil will befall you in the latter days.” The chapter of Daniel which goes immediately before clearly shows that this also had begun to be fulfilled.

Five instances next occur in the prophets (Isa. ii. 1; Ez. xxxviii. 8, 16; Hos. iii. 5; Mic. iv. 1), where it refers to the future time of Israel restoration; and four in Jeremiah (xxiii. 20; xxx. 24; xlvi. 47; xlix. 39), where the time is not evident. Besides these, the word acharith alone is often used, to denote a remnant, residue, or posterity; as in Job xlii. 12, where it signifies all the remainder of the patriarch’s life after his affliction.

The evident conclusion from the whole is, that the phrase denotes simply future days, or times to come, but that some degree of remoteness of distance is also commonly implied. There is no warrant whatever in Scripture for restricting it to the time of the second advent.

Unverified and Untenable Claims

The Hebrew adverbial “time of the end” is similar to the Hebrew idiomatic time expression “latter days.” Their meaning must be derived from the biblical context and
understood from the biblical writer’s perspective. When theological assumptions are introduced into the interpretation, then the author’s intended communication is abandoned, and the time phrase changes with those assumptions. In this specific interpretation case, if the historicist assumption is that Daniel’s prophecies must all terminate at the end of the world and never some time before, there is no room for an alternate interpretation perspective on the issue because the assumption is that God himself had decided what the text must mean. When we remove the questionable assumption that “the time of the end” must mean the Second Coming, what remains from Ford’s nine arguments that defend the YDP is that the symbolic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation are, indeed, symbolic. Point 1 and 2 express general truths and are, therefore, redundant, while points 3, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, and 4 describe prophetic time expressions and their non-literal character. Points 8 and 9 are based on the “Second Coming” assumption and are therefore invalid.

Point 5 is speculative and fallacious because the writer makes an attempt to draw validation for the YDP from the absence of the term “year” in Daniel when he states that “the most obvious explanation of this omission of the usual word for year in Daniel and Revelation, while other calendar terms are found, is that the year is the measure typified throughout these prophecies and that the day, the smallest of the symbolic calendar times, is employed to represent it.” This claim is an argumentum ad ignorantiam or argument from ignorance – the notion that lack of information on an issue validates the author’s assumption and that because there is no counterevidence the first claim must stand. Ford’s attempt to connects point 5 and 6 through an appeal to “symbolism” is not valid because Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 do not contain symbolic, but literal text and cannot support the historicism “principle.” Also, the “pragmatic test” Ford proposes as verification for the YDP fails because when the Hebrew term sabu‘im is read as “sevens” (hebdomad) rather than “weeks” there is no need for the hermeneutical time principle in the interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27.

The claims Ford proposed in his 1978 “Appendix F – The Year-Day Principle” in order to defend the YDP are far from irrefutable. In fact, they are what all SDA historicist arguments that support the YDP look like – unscientific, unempirical and unsound – because no factual evidence could be claimed in support of the “principle” and because to defend the historicist principle is an impossible task. It is no wonder that Ford abandons his own arguments for the YDP two years later in his Glacier View Manuscript,79 refers to evidence that shows that the historicist time method cannot be supported from the Bible or from linguistics, and suggests the Apotelesmatic Principle in its place.80

Jonathan K. Paulien

Paulien, professor of Religion and Dean of the School of Religion at Loma Linda University, argues for a “new look at the year-day principle” in a 2008 presentation for the Adventist Theological Society [further, ATS]. The readers can see from the examination of the statements the SDA historicist makes in his discussion that the approach he takes to defend the YDP is far from “new” and “original.” In fact, his arguments for the time hermeneutic appear to be inspired to a large degree from other SDA theologians who wrote on the issue. Paulien begins
his presentation with a YDP definition that is as traditional, imperfect, and unreliable as the ones other SDA historicists have suggested:

And it occurred to me this morning. I really should give you a definition, but since I made it up this morning it may not be perfect, you know, but, just, I thought, what is the Year-Day Principle? I think we would probably agree to something like this, “In Bible prophecy, but more specifically apocalyptic prophecy, those prophecies that cover a span of time in the prophet’s time to the end, in apocalyptic prophecy, whenever a period of time is described in days its fulfillment is counted in years.”

Is that more or less your understanding of the Year-Day Principle? I probably didn’t word it too well, and I should have worked through several definitions and so forth, but I thought of it this morning that it would be good just to put it before you. Ok, so, the Year-Day Principle as we understand it is roughly described as follows: “In apocalyptic prophecy whenever a period of time is described in days its fulfillment is counted in years.”

The SDA scholar admits that the historicist time computation formula is not popular among the theologians outside the SDA Church, and that in fact non-SDA theologians who consider the historicist “principle” biblical and authentic are extremely rare:

Now the Year-Day Principle has been increasingly rejected or neglected, even in the SDA church, definitely outside the SDA church. From a scholarly perspective, the Year-Day Principle has been rejected by virtually all scholars outside the SDA church. I do know of a fellow named John Stanley who attends the Society of Biblical Literature and he is a historicist who is not a Seventh-day Adventist, but that’s the only one I know personally.

Preterite scholars would reject the Year-Day Principle because you don’t need a bunch of years if you are speaking to the immediate situation. Futurists would reject it because you don’t need a bunch of years when you talk about the last years of earth’s history. Idealists reject it because they say, You know, the way we read the Bible you don’t deal with history. Period. You are not dealing with real events, you are dealing with ideas.

So, in the scholarly realm, the Year-Day Principle has been largely rejected outside the SDA church. Devotionally, even among the Seventh-day Adventists there are many who would say, “It’s not practical. It doesn’t change your life. Why do we waste time with things like that?” The more postmodern attitude would be simply, “It’s not worth the effort.” And in fact, from a postmodern perspective the idea that you can have confidence that God, you know, would have set a specific date ahead of time, that’s kind of arrogant, you see. So, even among us as a people there are some scholars who would feel that the Year-Day Principle is not compelling within the Scriptures and there are many, particularly the younger among us, who simply are busy with other things and they feel that it is not of such a practical changing value.

The reason for its almost universal dismissal in the Christian theological circles outside the SDA Church is the fact that the historicist principle cannot be defended with the Bible, is not scientific, and cannot be supported with linguistic evidence. It has no exegetical basis in the text of the Scriptures. These motives should be enough for the SDA historicist theologians to discard the principle as unsound and illegitimate for the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation. States Paulien about the historicist rule:

The basic argument for a preterist-futurist-idealist ultimately comes down to, “Look, the Year-Day Principle is not exegetical. You can’t exegute your way through the Bible and find the Year-Day Principle.” Is there some truth in that? I think so. There is some truth in that. The number one text in the Bible that demonstrates the Year-Day Principle is Numbers 14:34, and the question I want you to consider as you look at that text. Is it the intention of the text to state the Year-Day Principle? “According to the number of days in which you spied out the land, 40 days, a year for each day, you shall bear the iniquity 40 years, and
you shall know my displeasure.” Exegetically, in a sense of what the intent of the text is, is that stating the Year-Day Principle? No, not really! It’s not even a prophecy. It’s a sentence, a judicial sentence. God sentences the people to 40 years of penalty for 40 days of disobedience. So, there is something important going on here that we’ll come back to for our purpose, but it isn’t an exegetical statement. See, there’s [sic] two ways that you can undermine the truth: One is to reject it or deny it. The other is to claim too much. If you claim too much and people find the claim false, what happens? They may reject the baby along with the bath water that they found. So it seems to me that the number one text, the closest text to stating the Year-Day Principle is Numbers 14.

Second closest, Ezekiel 4:6: “After you have finished this, lie down again this time on your right side and bear the sin of the house of Judah. I have assigned you forty days, a day for each year.” Now, here’s the opposite. Forty years of disobedience require Elijah, excuse me, Ezekiel, to lay [sic!] down for 40 days on one side. Painful. Have you been on an airplane lately? Not good. You can’t move. Very bad. So, the Lord was really illustrating the suffering of the people through this act. But once again, this is not an exegetically-based statement of the Year-Day Principle. It’s rather a prophetic act in which the prophet models by his action the punishments God has for his people.

Paulien, though, believes that he can still salvage the time hermeneutic because he has discovered a “new” approach to Biblical interpretation that would allow him to demonstrate that the doomed historicist “principle,” is still a valid and legitimate interpretation rule in spite of the fact that there is no biblical or linguistic evidence that would support and defend it, and he calls this perspective “a third approach to the Scripture.” He states:

So, the critics are making a claim. It is not exegetical. There is no place in the Bible where it states, In apocalyptic prophecy wherever you see days count them as years. Right? There is no such text. So, does that mean it’s gone? I don’t think so. I believe that the counterattack has focused in the wrong place. And to illustrate where we are going, there are three scholarly approaches to Scripture.

Many of you can remember Gerhard Hasel’s work, New Testament Theology. Remember that one? And in that he articulates the three things that I am about to share with you, that is, first of all, one way to approach Scripture is exegesis. And exegesis, I think in the simplest terms, is answering the question, “What is the writer trying to say?” You’re focusing on a text like Numbers 14. What’s going on in that text? What is its immediate situation? You know, when someone sat down to write this, who were they [sic!] speaking to? All right, that’s the exegetical approach.

However, Bible study doesn’t stop with exegesis. Exegesis is a necessary foundation. It’s a safeguard. It keeps our attention to the details of the text. But it isn’t the end of Bible study. If you think it’s the end of Bible study we’re in trouble, because there’s not one of us in this room that can exegete the entire Bible in a lifetime and do justice to it. We all in terms of exegesis have to depend a little bit on the work of others and reserve our exegetical efforts for the problems we feel about the text where we really need to go deeper, where we want to understand.

A second level of approaching the Scripture it’s what I call New Testament or biblical theology and that’s attempting to study in all the writings of a particular author. What did that writer believe? When Paul wrote his letters, what did he believe about Jesus? What did he believe about the end that would cause him to write what he wrote? In other words, it takes the writings of Paul, goes beyond those writings to attempt to understand in a whole body of writing what Paul’s theology was. New Testament wide, you can take the New Testament as a whole and say, “Within its context, what is the message of the New Testament in that first century setting?”

A third approach to the Scripture is what we can call systematic or practical theology. A practical theology comes at the question differently. It basically asks the question, “What should I believe? What should we believe? What is truth?” You see, that question is not directed at the first century when the New Testament
was written or the ancient times when the Old Testament was written. That question is focused and directed on our situation, our needs, and our questions.

Should a Christian smoke, for example? It’s a very important question. But it’s not a question the Bible would answer directly. It’s a question we may need to answer from science. For example, is tobacco really harmful to the body? Or we might answer it from the Spirit of Prophecy. So, systematic theology is not limited to the Bible. This is very important. Exegesis is limited to the text of the Bible. Biblical theology would be largely limited to the world of the Bible and its authors. Systematic theology is not limited to the Bible. Therefore Ellen White can have authority even though she is not in the canon. She can have authority in the realm of systematic theology as she helps to grapple over the issues that we face, the questions that we ask each day.

History can play a role in helping us to understand prophecy, for example. Experience, science, even psychology and sociology. If we are made in the image of God even psychology might tell us something about us and about God that we would not understand some other way. So systematic theology needs to be grounded in the foundation of exegesis, the foundation of Biblical theology but can go beyond those to find truth. I think it’s very important for the year-day principle if we are going to express it in a way that will be convincing and powerful to the people that we are seeking to meet, and many of those people are inside our own church. 

Here things become a little muddled because the Loma Linda theologian seems to use personal and “original” terms in order to redefine theological terms established long ago in the theological circles. He confuses “systematic theology” with “practical theology” and then offers this “new approach” as a brand-new hermeneutical method. He should have been informed much better. Merriam-Webster defines “systematic theology” as “a branch of theology concerned with summarizing the doctrinal traditions of a religion (as Christianity) especially with a view to relating the traditions convincingly to the religion's present-day setting,” and “practical theology” as “the study of the institutional activities of religion (as preaching, church administration, pastoral care, and liturgics).”

These two theological sub-disciplines are distinct and separate, and their goals are too different to allow confusion between them. The Merriam-Webster definition seems to indicate that “systematic theology” summarizes and organizes ecclesiastical traditions and then relates them to the current religious context, while “practical theology” deals with institutional religious activities such as “preaching, church administration, pastoral care, and liturgics” and has nothing to do with biblical interpretation. How Paulien, an expert SDA theologian, manages to mix up these theological sub-disciplines is hard to understand, but it is obvious that he is confused about the issue and that his definition for “systematic theology” as “practical theology” is incorrect.

Things get even worse because Paulien’s particular and “original” brand of “systematic theology,” no matter what that is, should not, and cannot be proposed as a “third approach to the Scripture” independent of exegesis. In fact, the opposite is true because the “systematic theology” sub-discipline cannot function without biblical exegesis on which it depends in order to maintain its biblical status. The idea that systematic theology “can go beyond those [exegesis and Biblical theology] to find truth” is a speculation with no empirical support. States Williams:

First, systematic theology is a topically driven discipline. Second, systematic theology is synthetic in nature; it is an integrative, interdisciplinary activity. Systematic theology is dependent upon the exegesis of Scripture; dependent upon the entirety of Scripture; and dependent upon the insights of biblical theology.
two millennia of the church’s theological reflection, the church’s confessional heritage, and whatever else from human experience and academic study that can help us to answer the question.85

Both Warfield and Murray79 insisted that systematic theology is dependent upon the proper exegesis of Scripture. The tasks of the exegetical and biblical theologian precede the synthetic and integrative calling of the systematic theologian. A reasonable correlate of this contention is that systematics also bears a dependent relationship to biblical hermeneutics. Where biblical theology is naturally organized textually and historically, systematic theology has tended to access the Bible without reference to the historical nature of biblical revelation and without much attention to contextual issues—that is to say, without respect to sound biblical hermeneutics. But if systematics asks the question, what does the whole Bible teach about X?, then it is inherently connected to what the Bible teaches—that is, what Scripture intends to teach, or even what the text demands. Does not the principle “do not go beyond what is written” hold for our theologizing? The single most important principle of hermeneutics—figuring out the meaning of a communication—is authorial intent. Just as we expect people to interpret our words according to our intention, so too do the authors of Scripture.80 86

Williams cannot be clearer about the vital relation between systematic theology and exegesis when he states that “if systematics asks the question, what does the Bible teach about X,” the answer must be found in biblical exegesis and “what Scripture intends to teach, or even what the text demands,” and that we are in serious danger when we depart from the Bible and move “beyond those [exegesis and Biblical theology]” as Paulien argues that we should do in our unbiblical and desperate search for the YDP validation. Williams should know. Systematic Theology professor at the Covenant Theological Seminary with a strong reputation among the Reformed and evangelical scholars in his field, the theologian is familiar with the issues that surround systematic theology and biblical exegesis and aware of their relationship parameters.

It is obvious that the Loma Linda SDA historicist does not have his facts straight in this matter. He cannot avoid or discard the empirical criteria that exegesis imposes on biblical interpretation in order to legitimize the YDP. The road to a legitimate historicist time principle must take the researcher through rigorous biblical interpretation and serious and factual biblical support. Nothing less will do. In fact, Paulien himself provides evidence that his mistaken “systematic theology” approach does not work when he states that “the Seventh-day Adventist belief in a Year-Day Principle is not primarily grounded in any single text of the Scripture,” and appeals to historicist assumptions in order to validate the time formula:

So is there, really, such a thing as a Year-Day Principle? On a purely exegetical basis, no, there is no text in the Bible that says: Whenever you’re dealing with Bible prophecy and you find something described in days, count it as years. There is no such statement in Scripture. However, the Seventh-day Adventist belief in a Year-Day Principle is not primarily grounded in any single text of the Scripture. It’s rather grounded in two significant assumptions, convictions. And those convictions are first of all that God knows the future and shares it with his prophets. Do you believe that? God knows the future. If you don’t believe that, the Year-Day Principle is not a discussion we can have. I mean it’s…Forget it!

If I’m dealing with you and I’m trying to convince you of the Year-Day Principle and I find out that you don’t believe that God knows the future and will share it with his prophets I say, OK, put that aside. Let’s ask a different question. Let’s talk about your childhood. Or let’s talk about where along the way did you come to question… Sorry, I don’t want to be too graphic, but then you know (laughs) the reality is people make decisions for a lot of reasons. And if I am wrestling with someone on the Year-Day Principle and they [sic!] don’t believe that God knows the future, I don’t think that’s the point for discussion. We need to talk about deeper spiritual issues, more foundational, and then, later on, we might be able to come back to that topic.
A second major conviction is that apocalyptic literature in the Bible offers prediction. It actually points to the future and offers specific prediction of comprehensive sequence of historical events. In other words, Adventists are historicists. We believe that the prophets were capable of outlining sequence of events in the future. Because we are historicists, we are open to the possibility of a Year-Day Principle.

Both of those I think are foundational, and both of those convictions have a reason with the help of history, with the help of the church growing and developing through the centuries. So, they go beyond exegesis. Adventists view the prophecies from the perspective of time past. In other words, Adventists are who we are because we can look at the same prophecies from the opposite perspective of the prophet. The prophet was looking forward. Some of that stuff was murky, the glass darkly of Paul. But as we look back from the other end we can see things in that prophecy the original prophet might not have been thinking as he or she wrote it down.

So we view these prophecies from the perspective of time past, and that goes beyond exegesis. It’s applying our experience, and history, and Ellen White, and other aspects, to the question of what was that prophecy saying. It grants the possibility, probability, and certainty if you wish that there is a deeper Divine intention in every one of those that even that prophet understood. In other words, what Daniel could have understood when he wrote his prophecy is not all that God may have intended, and we need to be open to that possibility. Exegesis, by itself, can give a pretty good idea what Daniel may have intended but it’s not going to give you the whole picture of what God may have intended. And that is exposed as Scripture expands and as history moves beyond Scripture to shed light on what the Scriptures teach.

The two “assumptions” or “convictions” on which the YDP is “grounded,” believes Paulien, are that: (1) “God knows the future and shares it with his prophets,” and that (2) “apocalyptic literature in the Bible offers prediction,” that is, that “it actually points to the future and offers specific prediction of comprehensive sequence of historical events” because “the prophets were capable of outlining sequence of events in the future.” For these two reasons, he claims, the SDAs “are open to the possibility of the Year-Day Principle.” Paulien leaves unexplained how the historicist time formula, a quantitative rule, derives from these two suppositions.

That God knows the future and that apocalyptic prophecies – and even classical prophecies – predict events are unquestionable biblical truths. Such notions are well known and accepted in the Christian world. Persistent efforts, though, to demonstrate that there is historical fulfillment for some biblical prophecies interpreted from the historicist perspective have failed because the “evidence” presented is at least questionable and at most implausible. In fact, the rather infamous “2300 years” prophecy, the most important of all time prophecies in the Bible for the historicist Adventists, cannot be supported with historical evidence. No certain biblical event has been proposed yet for the *terminus a quo* (start point) of the claimed “prophetic time period,” while for the *terminus ad quem* (end point) assumes a fictitious and unverifiable event thought to have happened in heaven in 1844.

When he debates whether or not there is good biblical support for the historicist time formula, Paulien distinguishes between what appears to be “exegetically compelling,” and what seems to be “exegetically defensible” and somehow manages to come full circle and affirm what he had denied in his previous statements – that the YDP is “exegetically defensible” because exegesis, in his perspective, does not negate the “possibility of a Year-Day Principle.” States the SDA theologian:
So, a very important distinction I want to make here this afternoon, and that is that the Year-Day Principle does not have to be exegetically compelling. I don’t think it is. I don’t think exegetically you can compel somebody to believe in the Year-Day Principle. But it does need to be exegetically defensible. There is a difference. If exegesis denies the possibility of a Year-Day Principle then we have a problem. It doesn’t. If the Year-Day Principle was exegetically defensible, that exegesis can be the foundation of the principle working forward.88

The SDA historicist seems to find new “exegetical evidence” for the YDP in agrarian and Jubilee legislation. His claims are similar to Shea’s arguments on the same issue, but appear improvised and unstructured. The Loma Linda theologian suggest two more “principles” that appear to have preceded the YDP during biblical times: (1) the “Year-Day Thinking,” or the “Year-Yay Equivalency,” and (2) the “Sabbatical Year Principle.” States Paulien:

So, let me ask the question: What is exegetically compelling that may lead us to a Year-Yay Principle? I would argue what I’ve come to call Year-Day Thinking or Year-Yay Equivalency in Scripture and in the ancient world. The Year-day Principle as such was never stated until the thirteen century, I believe, A.D. But the Year-Day Thinking, Year-Day Equivalency, is frequently stated not only in the Scriptures but outside the Scriptures in ancient times. For example, the Sabbatical Year Principle, the idea of a day for a year, that the seven days of the week would be analogous to the seven years of the agricultural cycle for example. That goes all the way back to Leviticus. A sabbatical, the equivalency of days and years, which is demonstrated by the fact that the seventh year and the seventh day are both Sabbaths. You see, this is a clear idea that years and days can be equivalent. They didn’t know about the turning of the earth and the rotation around the sun, yet they sensed that there is some kind of equivalency between those two.

Hammurabi’s code, way back in 1762 B.C. It is stated: Hammurabi’s going to have a birthday party, not a birthday party, an anniversary party for his thirty years of being king of Babylon. And the party will last thirty days. A day for each year of his reign. You see? Year-Day Equivalency. That’s not a Year-Day Principle. It’s not talking about prophecy, but Year-Day Equivalency. Year-Day Thinking is manifested in the ancient world. Numbers 14:34, that’s where it fits. It is clearly a statement, I believe, of Year-Day Equivalency. While it may not state the Year-Day Principle in a prophetic term it clearly shows that days and years are equivalent in God’s mind in dealing with issues like that.

Ezekiel 4 is the same thing. While they reverse day for a year, year for a day, it doesn’t matter. The equivalency is clear. It’s Year-Day Thinking. Daniel 9. You have the 70 weeks of Daniel. Doesn’t say weeks of days, doesn’t say weeks of years. It’s just 70 weeks. But that 70 weeks is a direct response to what? The 70 years of captivity, suggesting that the appropriate equivalent is not 70 weeks of days but 70 weeks of years corresponding to the 70 years of the captivity. This would be 490 years now of a new probation. Why a new probation? Because the 70 years of captivity were what, Sabbatical years!

In other words, each of those 70 years of captivity represented six failed years of obedience to God. Now, seventy time six is what? 420. It’s roughly 420 years from the fall of Jerusalem back to the beginning of Saul’s reign. In other words, the 70 years captivity is a judgment on the whole monarchy. Because Israel did not keep the Sabbaths the land will get its Sabbaths while they are in exile. And how long? 70 years. So the seventy weeks of Daniel are corresponding to the 490 years of Israel’s original probation which ended roughly around the time of Daniel 9.

Leviticus 26, 2 Chronicles 36, basically state what I just said, that the captivity years were deliberately seen as sabbatical years pointing back to Leviticus which teaches that every seven years you have a cycle – six years of agriculture, one year let the land rest. Because they did not practice obedience to God’s will the captivity occurred. Qumran’s Jews use the principle of weeks for seven year periods. They didn’t state the Year-Day Principle but they utilized something like the Year-Day Principle.89

The two “principles” Paulien mentions in the paragraphs above are far from “new.” Shea describes the first one, the “Year-Day Thinking” or “Year-Day Equivalency” as a “thought
pattern” in the Hebrew language, calls the second “a particular kind of relationship between ‘days’ and ‘years’ that transcends the mere idea that the latter were made up of the former,” and suggests texts in Exodus 13:10, 1 Samuel 20:6, 1 Samuel 2:9, Genesis 5, and Genesis 47:9 as examples.92 A closer examination of Shea’s claims demonstrates that the “Hebrew thought pattern” is an unverified theological speculation, while the “relationship” between “day” and “year” is in fact a translation parallelism phenomenon between two languages, Hebrew and English, and results from the translation of the term “day,” that occurs in some Hebrew idiomatic expressions, as “year” into the English language. This translation “relationship” has no universal rule value and cannot control the prophetic time interpretation across-the-board in the OT.

Paulien also examines the Sabbath and Jubilee time cycles and declares that the “sabbatical” indicates “the equivalency of days and years” because “the seventh year and the seventh day are both Sabbaths,” while Shea states that “the sabbatical year is modeled from the sabbatical day, that is, from the weekly Sabbath.”93 How the Hebrew terms “day” and “year” could be equal or equivalent is hard to understand if we accept the Merriam-Webster definition of “equivalent” as “equal in force, amount or value.” One wonders if Paulien indeed suggests that “day” and “year” should be considered of equal time value. Also, the claim that “days and years are equivalent in God’s mind in dealing with issues like that” cannot be verified, and must be considered an unverified and unconfirmed historicist speculation.

The SDA theologian appears to ignore the fact that not all the time expressions in the Bible are symbolic and need to be “decoded” with the YDP when he mixes the literal time expressions from Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 with the symbolic time expressions from Daniel and Revelation. This biblical text mixture seems to contradict and negate Paulien’s own YDP definition that “in apocalyptic prophecy, whenever a period of time is described in days its fulfillment is counted in years” and therefore restricts the historicist time principle’s application to symbolic and apocalyptic prophecies. This YDP definition issue has been discussed in detail in this document together with other problems that have plagued the historicist time principle since its introduction as a theological axiom. Such inherent logical and procedural flaws are due to fact that the “rule” has been the built through deductive and speculative logic, and not through the inductive and empirical approach, and cannot be solved. The evidence is clear that the historicist time formula is unscientific and unreliable and should not be used as the universal solution for prophetic time interpretation.

The Loma Linda theologian proposes a selective and uneven application of the historicist time principle to “unusual numbers,” or “weird numbers,” because in his perspective the uncommon numbers signal that something different occurs in those biblical passages and that the text must be decoded with the special historicist interpretation tool:

See of all that evidence in the ancient world for year-day thinking? So, how do we apply and when do we apply the Year-Day Principle? I would suggest first of all wherever you have unusual numbers. I mean, some of the key texts for Adventist belief are very weird numbers, aren’t they? How many of you said, My child is 1260 days old today. Let’s have a party. We don’t do that. It’s not a normal number. How many would say, I’ve been teaching at the seminary for 2300 evenings and mornings? There is something about that number. It’s very clear. It’s pointing to something else. 70 weeks is also an unusual number. 42 months. It is an unusual number. It’s not the normal way of speaking. So I think particularly where you
have these unusual or abnormal numbers it’s signaling us something different here. You know, flash is on. Pay attention! Something here to get your attention. The need to balance long range prophecies.  

Paulien’s perspective seems to be that the historicist interpretation of the time prophecies in Daniel and Revelation cannot be done without the time formula, and therefore the principle must be biblical, valid, and true. He bases his theological viewpoint on the same assumptions common to the SDA historicist Bible scholars that “so many of the Bible’s prophecies go from the prophet’s time to the end,” that “the prophecies had to stretch way beyond the Roman Empire to reach the Second Coming of Jesus,” and that “the only way they [the prophecies] can stretch like that is if you apply the year-day principle.” States the theologian:

So many of the Bible’s prophecies go from the prophet’s time to the end! And you can define much of the beginning and you can define the end and in-between is 1260 days. But if those 1260 days are only 1260 days you got a big gap in the faith. You see? That was critical, I think, for a pioneer, and history demonstrates that the prophecies had to stretch way beyond the Roman Empire to reach the Second Coming of Jesus and the only way they can stretch like that is if you apply the Year-Day Principle. So we were compelled to it by the passage of time. That is systematic theology, that’s not inappropriate to Scripture. It is the way, in fact, most churches wrestle with the issue of doctrine. And I think that we were simply forward as to how we come at the Year-Day Principle if it at least pulls the rug out from the argument, Well, if it’s not exegetical we can’t have it. Well, it’s not your ball, so you can’t play with it. Ok (laughs).

The little horn, of course, is the chief opponent during these long periods of the 1260 days, as nasty or badder than the others and yet three and a half years? I don’t think so. It doesn’t make sense. Time prophecies lead to the time of the end and therefore need the Year-Day Principle in order to function appropriately.

I just quickly run you through the five “1260 days” texts of Revelation. You have 42 months in two places, 1260 days in two places, “time, times, and half a time.” Each time that the 1260 days is mentioned these five times in Revelation, each time is mentioned is preceded by something associated with the time of Jesus or his disciples, and it’s followed by the final events of earth’s history. Every time the 1260 days period is there, it’s the link between the time of Jesus and his disciples and the time of the end. If you don’t read it as Year-Day the prophecy evaporates in terms of creating the link that is there in the text.  

His immediate response is that “it doesn’t make sense” to interpret the biblical time prophecies without a hermeneutical time calculation rule because such prophecies “need the Year-Day Principle in order to function appropriately” from a historicist perspective. This fallacious argument – the notion that a theological construct must be correct because a certain interpretation depends on it – is far from new and original. Tregelles describes it as a petitio principii and explains:

It is true that some expositors show that this principle [“year-day system”] is needful in their explanations of the prophecies themselves: this really is only a petitio principii: a certain exposition cannot stand unless this canon is assumed; therefore (it is concluded) the canon must be true. The right mode of treating the question would be this: —if a certain exposition stands or falls together with a canon of interpretation on which it is based, then the exposition in question must be held or not according as that canon is proved or supported by God’s word.  

Paulien’s conclusion on the YDP includes claims that were never supported with appropriate evidence or authenticated in the argument phase of his discussion. These claims are that the historicist time hermeneutic had been established through (1) “a combination of careful studies of Scripture,” (2) “careful exegesis,” and (3) “a sense of how prophecy works in the Bible
as a whole.” To these claims the Loma Linda scholar adds the overconfident assurance that “the Year-Day Principle is solid, reasonably scientific, something that we don’t need to be ashamed of” because it has survived the exegetical test:

So, apocalyptic prophecies are usually symbolic. So, why should we assume that every number is literal? And finally, what we’re dealing with is at the level of systematic theology as I’ve defined it. The Year-Day Principle is brought to us through a combination of careful studies of Scripture, careful exegesis, a sense of how prophecy works in the Bible as a whole and I thank the previous speaker for refreshing us on that, but it is also grounded in our convictions about the knowledge of God, our convictions about historicism and how history works through the book of Revelation. And grounded on all of those principles which are founded in the Scriptures I believe the Year-Day Principle is solid, reasonably scientific, something that we don’t need to be ashamed of. Looking forward. 97

The SDA historicist’s conclusion comes at the end of a long line of theological acrobatics that includes multiple assumptions, deductive statements, standpoint reversals, and logical fallacies. His overconfident declarations fail, though, to respond to the multiple problems that confront this time formula. The historicist equation continues to remain implausible because there are no biblical texts that support it, and no linguistic or other scientific or empirical evidence could be invoked in its defense. It remains an assumption that the SDA historicists have used in order to validate a speculative and unbiblical interpretation of Daniel and Revelation.

Jerry A. Moon

Moon, Professor of Church History and Chair of the Church History Department at the Andrews University SDA Theological Seminary, takes some time off from his professional endeavors and writes an article that attempts to defend the YDP from a “detractor.” 98 The historian is no exegete, so the readers should not expect much from his arguments. Indeed, what Moon does is to summarize Shea’s defense of the YDP in volume 1 of the Daniel and Revelation Committee [further, DARCOM] series. Because a review of Shea’s abridged arguments from Moon’s standpoint contributes to an overall perspective on the SDA historicist defense of the YDP, Moon’s contentions are also part of the review. Relevant to this document are the claims included in the first three sections of Moon’s article that deal with the main YDP discussion points: (1) “Working Definition and History of Interpretation,” (2) “Linguistic Background,” and (3) “Biblical usage of the Year-Day Principle.” Moon’s arguments are as follows:

Working Definition

The year-day principle is one of the distinguishing features of historicist prophetic interpretation as contrasted with preterism and futurism. Historicists hold that in certain time prophecies, a “prophetic day” represents an entire year of “actual calendrical time” (William H. Shea, “Year-Day Principle, Part I,” in Selected Studies in Prophetic Interpretation). 99

We showed in section II, “The Historicist YDP Definition” of this document, that there are multiple SDA definitions for the YDP. Moon, though, seems to be the only one who qualifies the application of the historicist principle to “certain time prophecies.” See below:
The Year-Day Principle Reexamined

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<td>Pfandl</td>
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<td>Shea</td>
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<td>SABC at Daniel 7:25</td>
<td>Symbolic prophecy</td>
<td>“By the year-day principle, as illustrated in Num. 14:34 and Eze. 4:6, a day in symbolic prophecy stands for a literal year.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glacier View Scholars</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
<td>“calculating prophetic days into literal years.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glacier View Scholars</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
<td>“According to the two principal texts ... Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6... a day is representative of a year and a year is representative of a day.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>Certain time prophecies</td>
<td>“Historicists hold that in certain [emphasis added] time prophecies, a ‘prophetic day’ represents an entire year of ‘actual calendrical time.’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glacier View Scholars</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
<td>“Ezekiel, then, has the day-for-a-year principle, while Numbers has the year-for-a-day principle.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Later in this research document, Ouro demonstrates with scientific evidence that the inconsistent and selective APP application to the Bible is an application failure that disqualifies the APP as a hermeneutic principle. The same scientific and empirical investigation criteria are applicable to the YDP as a historicist time formula. Moon’s arbitrary restriction of the YDP application to “certain time prophecies” shows that in fact the YDP is not a legitimate rule that applies across-the-board but an exceptional procedure – a historicist hermeneutical construct intended to validate a peculiar interpretation of certain prophecies in Daniel and Revelation.

History of Interpretation

As early as the 3rd century B.C., the 70 weeks of Daniel 9 were understood to be 70 “weeks of years,” that is, $70 \times 7 = 490$ years. The Septuagint, in translating the Hebrew for “weeks” in Daniel 7:25-27, inserted the additional phrase “of years,” providing the first published example of what would later be called the “year-day principle” (L. E. Froom, Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers).

Not until enough centuries had passed to make such long ages of prophecy comprehensible were the longer prophecies of 1290 days, 1335 days, and 2300 days understood as years. Thus Rabbi Nahawendi in the early 9th century was the first to recognize the year-day principle as operative in the 1290 and 2300 days (Froom). But the year-day principle had been recognized in Daniel 9 at least as early as the 3rd century B.C., and in such an authoritative Jewish writing as the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The claim that the interpretation of the 70 weeks of Daniel 9 as weeks of years provides “the first published example of what would later be called the ‘year-day principle’” is a wild speculation based on a biased historicist interpretation of some documents. Neither Shea (quoted) nor Moon provides any empirical or factual support for the assertion. There is ample evidence, though, that the context of Daniel chapter 9 provides the Bible researchers with enough clues to support the interpretation of the 70 weeks as weeks of years. Some evidence for this interpretation perspective that comes from various SDA theologians has been presented in this YDP document as part of the review on the apologetics of the historicist time principle.
Linguistic Background

The linguistic background of the year-day principle is found in many Old Testament texts where the word “days” actually stood for “year” or “years.” Note, for example, the formula that recurs 10 times in Genesis 5: “All the days of x were so many years, and he died.” Old Testament poetry also used “days” and “years” in equivalent parallelism, referring to the same period of time.

“For all our days pass away under thy wrath, our years come to an end like a sigh. The days of our years are threescore and ten” (Ps 90:9-10). After many such examples, Shea observes that this closely parallel use of “days” and “years” prepared the “ancient Semite, whose mind was steeped in this parallelistic type of thought,” to intuitively associate the “days” of chronological prophecies with calendar years, especially in symbolic passages where literal days do not make logical sense (Shea).

The scientific term “linguistic” and phrases that include this technical and specialized term seem to occur with increased frequency in articles written by people who have no expertise in the field but use the term to confuse the readers and make false claims of expertise. Shea, for instance, uses this technical term 11 times in “Why Antiochus IV is Not the Little Horn of Daniel 8,” in hollow and redundant expressions such as “linguistic setting” (page 50), “linguistic evidence” (page 53), “linguistic relations” and “linguistic evidence” (page 55), “linguistic links,” “linguistic relations” (page 55), “linguistic relations,” (page 55), “linguistic correspondences” (page 58), “linguistic, chronological, and thematic” (page 60), “linguistic links” (page 62), and “linguistic relationships” (page 62). These frivolous pseudo-linguistic terms and phrases seem to be used in order to create a false impression of scholarship and expertise in linguistics, to validate error, and to confuse the readers.

Moon uses another hollow expression, “linguistic background,” and becomes obvious that he is not qualified to deal with this kind of arguments when he never explains the specific nature of that claimed and assumed background. Linguistics is a large scientific field with numerous subfields, and to describe a “linguistic background” in nonspecific terms is worse than useless. Shea, Moon, and other uninformed SDA theologians fail to understand that the texts provided as “evidence” for the historicist “rule” are in fact examples of idiomatic expressions and year-day translation parallelism that have nothing to do with the YDP. This issue will be discussed in ample details further in this document.

Biblical Usage of the YDP

The earliest biblical text that directly reflects the year-day principle is Leviticus 25:1-7. Here the command to “keep a Sabbath,” previously associated with the seventh day of the literal week, is applied to a seventh year. Verses 3 and 4 are parallel in structure to the fourth commandment, Exodus 20:8-11, except that the word “year(s)” is substituted for the word day(s). The Sabbath here commanded is not the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, but a seventh-year Sabbath (Shea).

Leviticus 25:8 further extends the year-day symbolism. “You shall count 7 Sabbaths of years, 7 years, 7 times, and to you the days of the 7 Sabbaths of years shall be 49 years.” Clearly the weekly cycle of sevens of days, has become a symbol for a cycle of sevens of years. The weekly seventh-day Sabbath is the origin of the term here applied to a seventh-year Sabbath, and the term weeks means not weeks of days, but weeks of years.
This furnishes a textual background for the prophecy of Daniel 9. In Leviticus 25:8, 7 weeks of years, or 7 times 7 years, reaches to 1 jubilee. In Daniel 9:24, 70 weeks of years, (70 x 7 years, or 10 jubilees) reaches to the Messiah, the personification of the jubilee.

Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 provide further confirmation that in certain contexts the prophetic message was constructed on the basis of a scale or symbolic correspondence between prophetic days and calendar years.

The examples Moon has borrowed from Shea to show YDP usage in the Bible are based on misinterpreted biblical texts. Leviticus 25 contains labor and Jubilee legislation that gravitated around the ancient Hebrew heptadic cycle. The regular week was a heptade of days, while the annual week was a heptade of years. The claim that “the weekly cycle of sevens of days, has become a symbol for a cycle of sevens of years,” is false. No textual evidence could be offered for it. The 70 “sevens” in Daniel 9 are also understood as 70 years based on the known heptadic Jubilee cycle. Again, there is no evidence in Daniel 9 for a historicist time principle or rule.

Frank B. Holbrook

Holbrook, an associate director with the BRI and the DARCOM’s seven volume series editor, has been at the center of the Glacier View debate and has contributed to the SDA defense against Ford, the “heretic.” His book, The Atoning Priesthood of Jesus Christ, pushes the unbiblical notion that Jesus is an Aaronic priest who has “ministered” in the first and second apartments of the “heavenly sanctuary” since His Ascension. Part of the SDA sanctuary doctrine support is the reaffirmation of the YDP as the indispensable time equation for some prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, and the SDA theologian includes that material in “Appendix B, The Year-Day Principle” of his book. The scholar has nothing innovative or remarkable to affirm in his defense of the YDP, and therefore limits his contribution to a summarization of the apologetic work that Shea has published on the historicist time principle in 1982 and has revised in 1992. Holbrook’s purpose is to inform those readers who have not had access to Shea’s apologetic work on the time principle. States the BRI scholar:

How shall the time periods in the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation be understood? Proponents of the preterist/historical-critical and futurist schools of interpretation take the time expressions to denote literal time. On the other hand interpreters of the historicist school view the time expressions as symbolic units designed to indicate much longer periods of literal, historical time. Furthermore, the historicist holds that these time units are to be unlocked with a key commonly known as the “year-day principle.” On this basis, one symbolic day represents one literal, historical year.

Thus, the year-day principle is an integral presupposition of the historicist method of prophetic interpretation, a method which sees the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation unrolling in fulfillment across the centuries from the times of Daniel and John until the establishment of God’s eternal kingdom. The most recent treatment of this subject among Seventh-Day Adventists has been written by William H. Shea in Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation, DARCOM 1:56-93.

For the benefit of those readers who may not have access to this work, we summarize as far as it is practical in a limited space Dr. Shea’s reasoned position that the year-day principle is a biblically grounded concept, a divinely designed method for unlocking the significance of the apocalyptic time periods.
The BRI theologian summarizes Shea’s 23 original arguments in defense of the historicist principle published in DARCOM volume 1 into 14 essential claims and includes them in the “Appendix B, The Year-Day Principle,” organized in the same fashion in which Shea has structured his arguments. These YDP contentions are again abridged in the conclusion to the “Appendix B” and are reproduced below in Holbrook’s order:

[1]. It is evident to any reader [sic!] that the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation are written largely in symbolic language.

[2]. This notable feature includes their time periods which call attention to their symbolism by being expressed in unusual time units and

[3]. are too short to allow the events being portrayed to be accomplished. Thus,

[4]. it is evident that these short, symbolic time units must be interpreted by a sound principle that will unlock their symbolism.

[5]. The biblical data – both prose and poetry – amply demonstrate that the Hebrew mind-set from earliest times associated year-day relationships.

[6]. Thus, it was only natural for such a method of stating time periods to be employed in both legislation and prophecy.

[7, 8]. The first application of a year-day principle occurs in the legislation regarding the sabbatical year and the jubilee year, the latter period of 49 years being based on the days in seven weeks of years.

[9, 10]. In the realm of classical prophecy Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 demonstrate that the year-day principle could be used to equate a past day for a future year, or a past year for a future day respectively.

[11]. The 70-week prophecy (Dan 9) strikingly displays an apocalyptic application of the year-day principle in which a future, symbolic day stands for a future, literal year. The accurate fulfillment of the time elements of this prophecy confirms the validity of the year-day principle as the biblical key to unlock symbolic time units in apocalyptic prophecy.

[12, 13]. Because internal evidence demonstrates that the prophecies of the 70 weeks (Dan 9) and the 2300 days (Dan 8) span many centuries, their short time units must be understood as symbolic of much longer periods of actual historical time. The year-day principle is thus a required tool to unlock the time units of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation so they may present their important messages to the peoples who live – and who will yet live – in the Christian Era.

[14]. Unlocking the time periods in Daniel 7-9 especially enables both Daniel and Revelation to proclaim God’s judgment-hour warning to our present modern world and to offer His final invitation of grace.

Truths, Assumptions, and Errors

Holbrook’s claims are a mixture of truths, assumptions, and errors. For instance, it is true that “the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation are written largely in symbolic language,” but it is also true that the time expressions are formulated both in symbolic and literal language and that the literal time expressions must be interpreted in a literal manner. The notion that the “time units” are “too short to allow events being portrayed to be accomplished” is based on the historicist assumption that all the symbolic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation are also eschatological, that is, the events depicted in them reach to the end of the world. There are some
prophecies, though, that have been intended for the Jews – such as the predictions about the little horn in Daniel 8. Historical records provide undeniable evidence that this little persecuting horn is Antiochus IV Epiphanes and not the imperial and papal Rome merged together, and that the prophetic period of “2300 evenings-mornings” is a time that could be measured in decades, not in hundreds of years. The fact that no historical event occurred in 1844 also supports the perspective that the entire “2300 year” prophetic time period is fictional, and not historical. The **historical interpretation** of Daniel 8:8-14, therefore, does not need a time formula.

The claim that “biblical data – both prose and poetry – amply demonstrate that the Hebrew mind-set from earliest times associated year-day relationships” mixes partial truth with error. It is true that the Hebrews were used to the heptadic time (units of sevens) such as the weekly and the Jubilee cycles, but the association between “year” and “day” in the Hebrew language is due to **idiomatic language structures and Hebrew-English translation parallelism**, and not to a linguistic principle. Most of these “year-day relationships” are generated during the translation of the Hebrew texts into English. These are word associations that occur between the source language, Hebrew (the language from which the translation is made) and the target language, English (the language into which the text is translated), and not relationships that occur inside the Hebrew language. Word relationships between two languages do not act like language rules and cannot be used to support the YDP. The claim that “the first application of the year-day principle occurs in legislation regarding the sabbatical year and the jubilee year” is a speculation unsupported with linguistic evidence. The Hebrews did not need to use a “year-day” formula in order to calculate their sabbatical and jubilee years, and there is no evidence that such a historicist rule was ever used.

The passage in Numbers 14:34 is a classical prophecy in which **the days and the years are literal**, not symbolic. The clues needed for the interpretation of the prophetic message are included within the biblical context, and therefore no historicist time formula is needed. Ezekiel 4:6 is an acted parable, and **its time expressions are also literal**. The notion that the texts in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 “demonstrate that the year-day principle could be used to equate a past day for a future year, or a past year for a future day respectively” is not centered on textual or linguistic evidence. Past days and future years do not “equate” in these two passages, but are parallel time expressions, and no general principles are established in the texts that would mandate their application to the entire Bible or to the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. For the above reasons, the claim that Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 establish a valid prophetic time calculation is incorrect because it is based on the misinterpretation of the two biblical passages.

William H. Shea

The Glacier View events and their intense theological aftershocks caused the SDA church to establish the **Daniel and Revelation Committee** [DARCOM] that produced a set of seven books in support of the SDA historicist perspective on Daniel and Revelation. Shea wrote the first volume in the DARCOM series, **Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation**, that includes a comprehensive defense of the YDP in the chapters “Year-Day Principle Part 1 & 2.” In the first part of his defense, the SDA historicist proposes what he calls “twenty-three biblical reasons validating the application of the year-day principle to the time periods in the apocalyptic
prophecies of Daniel and Revelation,” while in the second part he makes 12 claims about an apparent application of the YDP in the first two centuries of the Christian Era. His 23 “reasons,” though, are not biblical or empirical, and fail to provide adequate support for the YDP, while his 12 claims from tradition are not acceptable evidence for the time formula – as the historicist himself admits. Shea’s 23 defense “reasons” are organized in three sections, (1) the “general evidence,” (2) the “more specific evidence,” and (3) the “most specific evidence,” and are presented in this document in the same order as in Shea’s chapter.

The General Arguments

Shea’s first “biblical reasons” or arguments fall under “general evidence” and are based on philosophical and speculative statements established on SDA historicist presuppositions and assumptions and cannot be authenticated with the Bible, while their connection with a historicist time hermeneutic or formula is impossible to understand because the qualitative prophetic factors described could not have evolved into a universal quantitative formula or equation that would have to be applied to the entire Bible and also to Daniel and Revelation:

[A] In the category of the more general reasons it was noted that [1] the historicist interpretation of these prophecies provides a more philosophically satisfactory view of God's attention to all human history; and thus [2] His prophetic attention to the history of the Christian Era requires longer than literal time periods in these apocalyptic prophecies.

[3] Something adverse or evil for the world or God's people commonly took place during these time periods, and the reversal of those conditions came at their conclusions. In this way they provided microcosms of the economy of sin during which the great controversy between good and evil has been worked out. If these were merely literal time periods, they would not have provided much of a proving ground for that controversy.

[4] Apocalyptic prophecies present a longer range view of history than do classical prophecies. If their time periods are literal, however, they would be considerably shorter than the time periods in classical prophecy. This paradox is best resolved by interpreting the time periods in apocalyptic as standing symbolically for longer periods of actual historical time.

[5] The importance in salvation history of the events involved in these apocalyptic prophecies also emphasizes the point that longer than literal time periods are necessary for their accomplishment. [6] Furthermore, the emphasis on “the time of the end” in some of the prophecies of Daniel implies that their time periods extend down to that “time of the end” and delimit it. Only symbolic time standing for longer periods of historical time could reach that far.

Shea’s statements seem to be a mixture of deductive speculations such as “the historicist interpretation of these prophecies provides a more philosophically satisfactory view of God's attention to all human history,” “his prophetic attention to the history of the Christian Era requires longer than literal time periods in these apocalyptic prophecies,” and “if these were merely literal time periods, they would not have provided much of a proving ground for that [great] controversy,” and the non-empirical claim that “the importance in salvation history of the events involved in these apocalyptic prophecies also emphasizes the point that longer than literal time periods are necessary for their accomplishment,” which is based on the assumption that “the emphasis on ‘the time of the end’ in some of the prophecies of Daniel implies that their time periods extend down to that ‘time of the end’ and delimit it.”
The assumptive and speculative nature of Shea’s statements is obvious from the manner in which he phrases most of his comments: “more philosophically satisfactory view,” “his prophetic attention,” “they would not have provided much of a proving ground for that [great] controversy,” “this paradox is best resolved,” and “implies that their time periods extend.” Such tentative and approximate comments in crucial theological matters do not encourage much faith in Shea’s deductive logic and academic conclusions when one knows that the SDA historicist scholar cannot support his claims with the Bible like all the good Christian theologians should do. What is even more important is that his “evidence” does not seem to be connected to the historicist time rule or support the “principle” in a clear, specific, and empirical manner.

More Specific Arguments

The second group of “reasons” in Shea’s “arsenal” seems to be even more assumptive and speculative than the first. Shea discusses “symbolic time versus literal time,” the “spectrum of usage for the word ‘days’ that leads logically to their symbolic use,” and the “rather direct correspondence between the contents of the prophecies of the trumpets and the plagues in Revelation,” while he again uses logical and tentative arguments such as “converge to support the idea,” “should be interpreted,” “leads logically,” “best interpreted,” “rather direct correspondence,” “best seen,” and “require periods of time” in order to argue for his theological perspective. The five “somewhat more specific reasons,” also lack a direct empirical connection with the historicist time principle:

[B] In the intermediate category of somewhat more specific lines of evidence in support of the year-day principle [7] the question of symbolic time versus literal time is dealt with further. Apocalyptic prophecies employ symbolic numbers with symbolic time units in symbolic contexts. These factors converge to support the idea that these references to time should be interpreted as symbolic rather than literal.

[8] In the book of Daniel there is a spectrum of usage for the word “days” that leads logically to their symbolic use when they are quantified in its prophecies. [9] Especially short time periods in apocalyptic, such as the seventieth week, three and one-half, and ten days, are best interpreted symbolically since they provide little interpretive sense on a literal basis. [10] There is a rather direct correspondence between the contents of the prophecies of the trumpets and the plagues in Revelation. The former contain time prophecies, however, while the latter do not. These are best seen as providing symbolic time periods in the historical series of trumpet prophecies that lead up to the eschatological plague series. [11] Time periods that span kingdoms, like those of Daniel 8 and 9, require periods of time longer than those that are literal in character in order to extend that far in history.114

This second group of arguments in support and defense of the YDP that Shea proposes seems to be based on the distinction between “symbolic time versus literal time,” the alleged presence of “symbolic numbers with symbolic time units in symbolic contexts,” and the assumption that Daniel 8 and 9 contain “time periods that span kingdoms” that “require periods of time longer than those that are literal in character in order to extend that far in history.” What is inconsistent about Shea’s more specific claims is that further in his apologetic chapters he contradicts himself and seeks evidence for the YDP from time examples in literal historical narratives and poetical parallelisms that do not include symbolic time or long time periods.
Most Specific Arguments

The 12 most specific “reasons” in support of the contention that the YDP has a linguistic background and is biblical are those included in the “specific evidence” – the final historicist arguments in Shea’s “Year-Day Principle Part 1” chapter. These are also the arguments that will be examined in detail later in this document in order to demonstrate that the evidence Shea proposes in defense of the “principle” is at best erroneous and at most deceptive:

[C] For the category of specific evidence in support of quantifying symbolic time in apocalyptic on the basis of a “day” for a “year,” some background material from the OT was cited first.

[12] There are a number of instances in the historical narratives of the OT in which the Hebrew word for “days” was used to stand for “years.” [13] There are also a number of instances in the poetry of the OT in which the word for “days” stands in parallel with the word for “years.” Both of these usages provide a ready background for the kind of thought that could be extended to the more specific quantitative application of this relationship in apocalyptic.

[14] Leviticus 25:1-7 is the first biblical passage in which the year-day equation is applied. In this instance the Sabbath day with its preceding six days becomes the model for the sabbatical year for the land. [15] The jubilee period in turn was reckoned on the basis of the days in seven weeks of years. The jubilee provides an especially apt parallel to the time periods of Daniel 9:24-27.

[16] The next use of the year-day principle is found in Numbers 14:34 where past days were used to reckon future years. [17] The reverse of this is found in Ezekiel 4:6 where past years were employed to reckon future days. A close comparison of the phraseology found in these two passages indicates that they made use of the same year-day principle, but they applied it in different ways. They differ in turn from the usage made of it in Leviticus 25:18. On this basis one can reasonably see this same principle extended to yet another use in apocalyptic. That further use comes closest in character to its earliest use in Leviticus 25:8.

[18] A point of particular importance for this principle is the way the word used for the time units of Daniel 9:24-27 (sabu’a) is translated. The biblical and extrabiblical evidence currently available indicates that this word should be translated specifically as “weeks.” Since the events of this prophecy could not have been accomplished within a literal 70 weeks, these weeks should be interpreted as standing symbolically for longer periods of actual historical time. [19] The parallel from Leviticus 25:8 provides “years” for the “days” of those weeks. [20] The same point can be made within the narrative of Daniel 9 itself when these days are compared with Jeremiah’s 70 years in verse 2. Several aspects of this narrative provide rather direct links between these two time periods and the “years” of the former and the “days” of the latter.

[21] The same point can be made about the 2300 “evening-mornings” or “days” of Daniel 8:14 when they are compared with the years of Daniel 11:6, 8, and 13. Events that occurred during the overarching time span of Daniel 8 are interpreted in greater detail in its explanation in Daniel 11.

The years of 11:6, 8, and 13 refer to events that occurred during the Hellenistic period. They parallel the symbolic “evening-mornings” or “days” of 8:14 that began in the Persian period and extended through that same Hellenistic period as well as beyond. Thus the book of Daniel appears to teach the year-day principle twice: once in chapter 9, and once in chapter 8 when it is compared with its explanation in chapter 11.

[22] Finally, the applications made of this principle have been examined to see how well it has worked. This has been done through examining historical dates supplied by extrabiblical sources for the events of the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27. Within the limits provided by the sources available, they appear to fit together quite satisfactorily.
This principle has also been employed by commentators on Daniel and Revelation to predict events that were still future from their own time. In some instances predictions made on this basis have been fulfilled in a remarkably accurate fashion. The year-day principle appears to have passed both of these pragmatic tests in ways that lend further support to its validity.\[15\]

These 12 specific argument points are also qualified with numerous tentative phrases such as “could be extended,” “one can reasonably see,” “should be translated,” “could not have been accomplished,” “should be interpreted,” “appears to teach,” “they appear to fit together quite satisfactorily,” and “appears to have passed both of these pragmatic tests.” The deductive and tentative language Shea uses in order to formulate these arguments indicates their inadequate theoretical strength and the absence of empirical evidence to support such speculations.

Inadequate Tradition Claims

The final round of Shea’s historicist arguments intended to support the YDP are from an assumed Jewish interpreters’ tradition, and is included in the “Year-Day Principle Part 2” of the same DARCOM volume, Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation. In this chapter, Shea makes 12 claims that he is not able to validate with adequate empirical evidence and must be discarded as assumed or fabricated “evidence.” In order to place his claims in the correct perspective, Shea warns the readers not to place too much trust in the “evidence” from tradition he proposes in order to defend the historicist principle:

However to be purely objective, it should be pointed out that the discovery of the application of the year-day principle in the extrabiblical sources of pertinent Jewish materials does not “prove” that this method of prophetic interpretation was applied by Daniel, nor does it “prove” the correctness of such a method [emphasis added].\[16\]

The caveat delivered, Shea submits his 12 “evidence” claims in an attempt to connect the Jewish Literature from the first centuries with the SDA historicist method of prophetic interpretation. Later in the same section we will show that the SDA historicist makes assumptions that he cannot confirm with empirical evidence about the use of the YDP in the first centuries as an interpretation tool for Daniel and Revelation, and that sometimes he distorts the facts in order to achieve his apologetic goals. Here are Shea’s claims:

[1]. On the basis of recent researches into the Jewish materials of the second century B.C., it has become evident that the year-day principle was known and applied by Jewish interpreters during the second century down to the post-Qumran period [emphasis added]. It is no longer tenable to hold that the principle was a ninth century A. D. phenomenon.\[17\]

[2]. The principle is used in several ways in the work. A striking example is the computation of Noah's age at his death. His age is first given as 950 years. Then it is given as 19 jubilees, two weeks, and five years. …The use of the year-day principle is evident in this example from the way the word for “weeks” \(2 \text{ weeks } \times 7 \text{ days } = 14 \text{ days [years]}\) was used in combination with jubilees and years [emphasis added].\[18\]

[3]. Since jubilees can refer only to a period of years, it is evident that the “weeks” of the 70 weeks period and of the fifth and seventh weeks of the seventh jubilee were taken as composed of day-years. Thus it is evident that the author employed the year-day principle when he composed his chronology [emphasis added].\[19\]
This document provides evidence that (in Qumran thought) jubilees which could only consist of years were to be subdivided into weeks. Therefore, the interpretation of its time periods required the use of the year-day principle whether or not it is explicitly stated in the portions of the text that have survived. The document indicates that the principle was used by at least some Jews at Qumran.

Like the 11 Q Melchizedek document, this fragmentary unpublished document derives its building blocks from Daniel’s 70 weeks, but it presents them in a rearranged form. In the few lines published it is noteworthy to observe the specific calibration of “a week of years” [emphasis added].

Although the year-day principle is not explicitly stated, it must be employed in order to make any historical application of the 70 weeks of Azazel regardless of whether one dates them in the middle of the second millennium B.C. or in the second half of the first millennium B.C. Without the year-day principle this text would have been unintelligible to its ancient readers [emphasis added], and yet that principle is not stated in its surviving portions and probably was not stated in the original text when it was whole.

In short, the year-day principle can be seen at work in these ancient Jewish writings briefly surveyed [emphasis added]. Four of the texts discuss a prophetic time period of the same length, given either in terms of 70 weeks or as 10 jubilees. The authors of these documents have most likely put the date for the commencement of this prophetic period toward the end of the sixth century B.C.

These documents thus reinforce the general idea that the period of time between the end of the first century B.C. and the beginning of the first century A. D. was, indeed, a time when the Messiah was expected. The evidence for the use of the year-day principle in these Jewish documents is derived from the way the writers use the word “weeks” [emphasis added].

Although it is not entirely clear, it seems that Josephus understood Daniel 9:24-27 as containing a reference to the Romans and their destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by them (Ant 10. 276). If so, such a view would require him to interpret the 70 weeks as symbolic. Thus the evidence for his use of anything like the year-day principle is indirect [emphasis added] and may only be proposed for this particular passage.

However, the author tailors the chronology to span the period between the burnings of the first and second Temples. In other words the author sees 10 jubilees =70 sabbatical cycles =490 years elapsing from Nebuchadnezzar’s overthrow of the nation and its temple to the Roman conquest by Titus. To expand the 70 weeks of Daniel to fit this era assumes that the “weeks” are to be taken as symbolizing longer periods of actual time on a day for a year scheme [emphasis added].

In this possibly first century A. D. document, a time element is mentioned that suggests it was interpreted symbolically rather than in a literal sense. Moses is quoted as saying, “From my death and assumption until the advent of God there shall be 250 times.” According to Charles these “times” are probably to be taken as year-weeks [emphasis added]. Thus 250 times would equal 1750 years (250 x 7) that were to pass between the two events referred to. Thus if the death of Moses would be dated around the middle of the second millenium B.C., the time period would then end early in the Christian Era.

The above 12 apologetic paragraphs are a mixture of various assumptions and unsubstantiated claims reduced to the conclusion that “the year-day principle was known and applied by Jewish interpreters during the second century down to the post-Qumran period.” For instance, Shea assumes that because the “computation of Noah’s age at his death” is in Jubilee time as “19 jubilees, two weeks, and five years,” then “the use of the year-day principle is evident
in this example.” No textual evidence, though, links the two distinct calculations. The same stretch of imagination causes the SDA historicist to assume that “since jubilees can refer only to a period of years, it is evident that the ‘weeks’ of the 70 weeks period and of the fifth and seventh weeks of the seventh jubilee were taken as composed of day-years,” then “it is evident that the author employed the year-day principle.” Shea repeats the same contention often for similar examples in the hope that his speculative and fallacious claims would become credible through simple repetitions.

The scholar also likes arguments based on the absence of evidence, and so he states that “although the year-day principle is not explicitly stated, it must be employed in order to make any historical application of the 70 weeks of Azazel” because “without the year-day principle this text would have been unintelligible to its ancient readers.” Again, it is not empirical facts that lead him to this conclusion but the notion that from his historicist perspective the principle “must have been employed” and there is no other choice in the matter. What leads the theologian to such a speculative conclusion is not a biblical text that defines a specific principle or equation but “the way the writers use the word ‘weeks’” in their works. Another similar claim that depends on the absence of adequate empirical information is that “because Josephus understood Daniel 9:24-27 as containing a reference to the Romans and their destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by them,” the Jewish historian must have used the YDP, although Shea proposes no verifiable factual data that would validate his assumption.

The essence of Shea’s multiple speculative arguments that aim to validate the YDP from misinterpreted Jewish Literature is that he attempts to show that the “week” pattern and the Jubilee language are the precursors of the year-day rule. His arguments do not pass serious inspection because the qualitative and limited idiomatic use of “week” and Jubilee language in those Jewish records cannot explain and support the quantitative use of the YDP as a historicist prophetic time calculation formula. For this reason, his claim that those ancient records validate the YDP is at least unsubstantiated if not misleading and deceptive.

**Historicist Claims Evaluated**

This section of the document assembles the YDP support and defense data from multiple sources and organizes the information into five categories: (1) historical narratives, (2) poetical passages, (3) agrarian legislation, (4) Jubilee legislation, (5) classical prophecies, and (6) apocalyptic prophecies, in order to evaluate the scientific nature of the proposed historicist claims in support of the YDP (deductive or inductive), their empirical value, and their relevance in the defense of the assumed year-day prophetic time principle:

(1). Historical Narratives

Shea and other SDA historicists have claimed that certain historical narratives in the Old Testament contain texts that “reflect” a “relationship” pattern between the Hebrew terms “day” and “year,” and have described the “day-year” random co-occurrence as the linguistic qualitative precursor to the quantitative YDP.\(^\text{129}\)
The first group of texts includes Genesis 5 where a certain announcement repeats throughout the chapter: “And all the days that X lived were …years.” Moon describes this word alignment as a “formula” that together with the “equivalent parallelism” that occurs in the Old Testament poetic texts establishes the “linguistic background of the year-day principle.”

The marriage arrangement between Jacob and Laban in Genesis 29:27 is also claimed to demonstrate the fact that “Jacob’s period of service to Laban in return for his coveted bride Rachel must have been computed on the year-day principle.”

Shea remarks that some Old Testament historical narratives contain certain texts that appear to indicate that “there is [in them] a recognition of a particular kind of relationship between ‘days’ and ‘years,’” because “in these instances the word ‘days’ (always in the plural form) was actually used to stand for ‘years,’” and submits multiple examples of such occurrences among which are texts in Genesis 6:3 and 47:9; Exodus 13:10; 1 Samuel 1:21, 2:19, 20:6, and 27:7; Numbers 9:22; Judges 11:40; 1 Kings 1:1, etc.

Included below is a list of selected biblical texts in which the Hebrew terms “year” and “day” occur together, and which Shea cites in his arguments in support of the YDP in order to demonstrate how the “year-day relationship” is “reflected” and expressed in certain historical narrative sections of the Bible:

**Genesis 5**

*This kind of thought pattern appears to find its roots in the genealogy of Genesis 5* [emphasis added]. The formula that is repeated ten times over for the antediluvian patriarchs listed there is: “X lived so many years and begat Y. And X lived so many years after he begat Y and begat sons and daughters. And all the days of X were so many years, and he died.” An important relationship between “days” and “years” and prophecy has been derived from the use of these two time units in the third sentence of the Genesis 5 genealogy. Referring to the wickedness of the antediluvians, God said, “My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for his is flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years” (Gen 6:3).

**Exodus 13:10**

*The term “days” was used to stand for a “year,”* [emphasis added] when an annual or yearly event was referred to. For example, the Passover was to be kept, literally, “from days to days,” that is, from year to year, or yearly (Exod. 13:10).

1 Samuel 1:21; 2:19; 20:6

A yearly sacrifice was spoken of as the “sacrifice of the days” (1 Sam 20:6). Hannah took the garments she had made for Samuel once each year (literally, “from days to days,” 1 Sam 2:19). She took them at the same time her husband Elkanah went to Shiloh to offer his “sacrifice of the days,” that is, his “yearly sacrifice” (1 Sam 1:21).

**Judges 11:40**

Judges 11:40 tells about the service of mourning which was held for Jephthah’s daughter “from days to days,” that is, yearly. This passage is particularly instructive since it also states that the mourning was held for four days each year (sanah). Hence, the equation between “days” (“from days to days”) and “year” (sanah) is made directly through the terms employed in this verse.
The term “days” was used at times to specify directly a period of time equivalent to a year [emphasis added]. For example, it is stated (in literal terms) that David and his men dwelt in the land of the Philistines “days and four months” (1 Sam 27:7). That a period of a year and four months is intended is evident, and that is the way translators of the Bible have generally handled this phrase.

Numbers 9:22

Numbers 9:22 is part of a passage that discusses Israel’s wilderness journeying. The tribes moved only when the pillar of cloud lifted from the tabernacle. Otherwise they remained encamped, “whether it was two days [Hebrew dual form], or a month [singular], or [days].” The logical progression of time units described here should proceed from days to a month to a year [emphasis added]. Thus the second occurrence of the word for “days” in this verse (as usual in the plural form) should be taken as standing for a year, which is the way the versions generally render it.

1 Kings 1:1

The term “days” is often used in equation with the “years” of an individual’s life [emphasis added]. For example, 1 Kings 1:1 states that “King David was old and advanced in years” (literally, “in the days”).

Genesis 47:9

It is especially in the book of Genesis that we find this kind of time statement in its fullest form. For example, Jacob makes the following statement to Pharaoh: “The days of the years of my sojourning are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning” (Gen 47:9).133

Hebrew Language Idioms

While it is true that “day” and “year” often occur together in certain Old Testament narrative passages, the claim that this “day-year” concurrence is due to a “Hebrew thought pattern” and that “an important relationship between ‘days’ and ‘years’ and prophecy has been derived from the use of these two time units,” is an unscientific assumption with no empirical foundation. Barr wrote a sharp and thorough critique of the “Hebrew thought” theological supposition in his book The Semantics of Biblical Language134 where he demonstrated that the claim was a philosophical speculation, and not a scientific fact. Also, Shea’s claim that some Old Testament “year-to-day relationship” would later “evolve” into a rule or equation shows gross ignorance in matters of patterns, rules, and generalizations. There is no empirical evidence that qualitative idiomatic language expressions could ever evolve into quantitative patterns with high statistical occurrence values at rule or equation rank level because idiomatic expressions occur at random and not with the mathematical precision and at the high rate that happens with language patterns, linguistic paradigms, or grammatical inflections.

Besides the fact that Shea mistakes the common Hebrew “day-year” idiomatic expression for a language pattern or rule and names it an “important relationship between ‘days’ and ‘years,’” he never explains the linguistic nature of the claimed “relationship.” As an exegete, he could have narrowed and refined his description to a morphological, syntactic, lexical, semantic, discursive, or idiomatic linguistic phenomenon, but he never does so because he has no clue what the relationship he suggested might be. Such a failure to offer an explanation for an
assumed relationship claimed to be hard evidence in support and defense of the YDP should concern the SDA historicists who welcome Shea’s much overstated and unempirical claims for this unidentified “day-year relationship” which is in fact a word concurrence that should have been defined and explained in a scientific and empirical manner and shown to be a natural Hebrew idiomatic language structure.

The linguistic explanation for this Old Testament “day-year” relationship or concurrence phenomenon that Shea assumes to be due to a “Hebrew thought pattern” is not that of a magical association between the “day” and “year” terms that advances through an assumed “logical progression of time units.” The phrases in which this “year-day relationship” occurs are grammatical constructions that have produced specific Hebrew language structures – Hebrew idiomatic expressions. Like all the other ancient and modern languages, Hebrew has developed in its spoken and written language certain peculiar structures called idioms. In these idioms, the words “day” and “year” occur together in recognizable language patterns. States Greswell:

**It is the idiom or modus loquendi of Scripture to speak of years as days** [emphasis added]; to designate sums of years as sums of days; to make no difference apparently between noctidiurnal time and annual. No one can have read the Bible, even in the English version, (in which this distinction is not uniformly attended to), much less in the original, and not have had occasion repeatedly to observe that, where the thing spoken of is and must be years, the language employed about it is and can be proper only for days.

There is no doubt that the Old Testament writers used certain Hebrew idioms to express time, and Greswell supports his scientific and empirical observations in the matter with actual and specific data. The texts Greswell mentions as examples of Hebrew idiomatic time expressions are similar and sometimes even identical to the ones Shea has indicated in order to argue for what he assumes to be a “day-year relationship” pattern, but Greswell provides robust non-speculative and persuasive linguistic evidence that demonstrates the opposite:

Genesis 4:3

Take for example the earliest instance of the idiom, which occurs in the Scripture itself; viz. the account of the sacrifice of Cain and Abel [Genesis 4:3]. **What the authorized version expresses by “And in the process of time,” the Hebrew expresses by “And at the end of days:** the thing intended, as all commentators, Jewish or Christian, are agreed, being “At the end of the year” [emphasis added]."

Genesis 5:3-31

Or take the next example on a much larger scale, in the chronological summary of the lives and deaths of the antediluvian patriarchs [Genesis 5:3-31]: “And the days of Adam, after he had begotten Seth, were eight hundred years...**And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years** [emphasis added].”

Genesis 24:55

**Take a still more unquestionable instance of the same idiom** [emphasis added], in the account of the proceedings preliminary to the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah [Genesis 24:55]: “Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten;” which in the original is, “Let the damsel abide with us days or ten.” And most commentators understand this to be meant of a year, or of ten months;
The Year-Day Principle Reexamined

Genesis 41:1

And to mention no more examples of the same kind; in the account of the dream of Pharaoh, in connection with the history of Joseph in Egypt, “And it came to pass at the end of two full years,” in the English version is simply, “At the end of two years” (the dual of years) “of days,” in the Hebrew [Genesis 41:1].

Greswell’s remarks about the common Hebrew language idioms that have produced the random “day-year” concurrence phenomenon in certain Old Testament texts are not drawn from philosophical speculations or theological deductions. He does not need to resort to a fictional “Hebrew thought pattern” that would introduce an abstract “year-day relationship” into the discussion. All the linguistic evidence required to support his informed conclusion is visible in an unmistakable manner all through the examined texts. What he has discovered is that certain Hebrew syntactic configurations have patterned into qualitative and rather permanent structures and have been included in the Hebrew language usage as idioms.

The Translation “Relationship”

Under the arguments from “Historical Narratives” that is part of the “Most Specific Lines of Evidence” that Shea proposes to support the YDP in “Year-Day Principle – Part 1,” the historian claims that:

There is in the historical narratives of the OT a recognition of a particular kind of relationship between “days” and “years” that transcends the mere idea that the latter were made up of the former. In these instances the word “days” (always in the plural form) was actually used to stand for “years” [emphasis added].

What the SDA theologian fails to realize, and his readers appear to miss is that the claimed “particular kind of relationship between ‘days’ and ‘years’” is in fact a “translation relationship” that results from the specific rendition of certain Hebrew idiomatic time expressions into English. This is the “recognition” Shea should have achieved in his examination of the biblical texts he mentions as “evidence” in support of the YDP. Because he has not come to this educated conclusion in his “recognition” of the manner in which Hebrew idioms are “converted” into the English language, he has mislead himself and the readers about a fictional word for word “years=days relationship” in the Hebrew language in which he claims that “the word ‘days’ (always in the plural form) was actually used to stand for ‘years.’” The truth is that the Hebrew word “days” never stood for the Hebrew word “years,” but was translated so from Hebrew into English. A comparison between Shea’s proposed “relationship” texts rendered into English in the King James Version (KJV) and the Young Literal Translation (YLT) makes this simple “translation relationship” issue more than evident. Shea’s claims about the assumed “relationship” between the terms “days” and “years” in Hebrew are included below together with the YLD and KJV translations of the Hebrew cited texts for comparison and clarification:

Exodus 13:10

The term “days” was used to stand for a “year” [emphasis added],” when an annual or yearly event was referred to. For example, the Passover was to be kept, literally, “from days to days [emphasis added],” that is, from year to year, or yearly (Exod 13:10).
YLT and thou hast kept this statute at its appointed season from days to days [emphasis added].

KJV Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year [emphasis added].

1 Samuel 20:6

A yearly sacrifice was spoken of as the “sacrifice of the days” [emphasis added] (1 Sam 20:6).

YLT if thy father at all look after me, and thou hast said, David asked earnestly of me to run to Beth-Lehem his city, for a sacrifice of the days [emphasis added] [is] there for all the family.

KJV If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice [emphasis added] there for all the family.

1 Samuel 2:19

Hannah took the garments she had made for Samuel once each year (literally, “from days to days” [emphasis added],” 1 Sam 2:19).

YLT and a small upper coat doth his mother make to him, and she hath brought it up to him from time to time [from days to days, emphasis added], in her coming up with her husband to sacrifice the sacrifice of the time [sacrifice of the days, emphasis added].

KJV Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year [emphasis added], when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice [emphasis added].

1 Samuel 1:21

She took them at the same time her husband Elkanah went to Shiloh to offer his “sacrifice of the days” [emphasis added],” that is, his “yearly sacrifice” (1 Sam 1:21).

YLT And the man Elkanah goeth up, and all his house, to sacrifice to Jehovah the sacrifice of the days [emphasis added], and his vow.

KJV And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice [emphasis added], and his vow.

Judges 11:40

Judges 11:40 tells about the service of mourning which was held for Jephthah’s daughter “from days to days” [emphasis added],” that is, yearly. This passage is particularly instructive since it also states that the mourning was held for four days each year (sanah). Hence, the equation between “days” (“from days to days”) and “year” (sanah) is made directly through the terms employed in this verse.

YLT from time to time [from days to days, emphasis added] the daughters of Israel go to talk to the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite, four days in a year.

KJV That the daughters of Israel went yearly [emphasis added] to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.
1 Samuel 27:7

The term “days” was used at times to specify directly a period of time equivalent to a year. For example, it is stated (in literal terms) that David and his men dwelt in the land of the Philistines “days and four months” [emphasis added] (1 Sam 27:7). That a period of a year and four months is intended is evident [emphasis added], and that is the way translators of the Bible have generally handled this phrase.

YLT7 And the number of the days which David hath dwelt in the field of the Philistines [is] days and four months [emphasis added];

KJV7 And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months [emphasis added].

Numbers 9:22

Numbers 9:22 is part of a passage that discusses Israel’s wilderness journeying. The tribes moved only when the pillar of cloud lifted from the tabernacle. Otherwise they remained encamped, “whether it was two days [Hebrew dual form], or a month [singular], or [days].” The logical progression of time units described here should proceed from days to a month to a year [emphasis added]. Thus the second occurrence of the word for “days” in this verse (as usual in the plural form) should be taken as standing for a year, which is the way the versions generally render it.

YLT22 Whether two days, or a month, or days [emphasis added], in the cloud prolonging itself over the tabernacle, to tabernacle over it, the sons of Israel encamp, and journey not; and in its beginning they journey;

KJV22 Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year [emphasis added], that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed.

1 Kings 1:1

The term “days” is often used in equation with the “years” of an individual’s life. For example, 1 Kings 1:1 states that “King David was old and advanced in years” (literally, “in the days” [emphasis added]).

YLT1 And king David [is] old, entering into [the] days [emphasis added], and they cover him with garments, and he hath no heat,

KJV1 Now king David was old and stricken in years [emphasis added]; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat.

Genesis 47:9

It is especially in the book of Genesis that we find this kind of time statement in its fullest form. For example, Jacob makes the following statement to Pharaoh: “The days of the years [emphasis added] of my sojourning are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years [emphasis added] of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years [emphasis added] of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning” (Gen 47:9).

YLT9 And Jacob saith unto Pharaoh, “The days of the years [emphasis added] of my sojourning [are] an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years [emphasis added] of my life, and
they have not reached the **days of the years** [emphasis added] of the life of my fathers, in the days of their sojournings.”

KJV  And Jacob said unto Pharaoh. The **days of the years** [emphasis added] of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the **days of the years** [emphasis added] of my life been, and have not attained unto the **days of the years** [emphasis added] of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

Genesis 5

This kind of thought pattern appears to find its roots in the genealogy of Genesis 5. The formula that is repeated ten times over for the antediluvian patriarchs listed there is: “X lived so many years and begat Y. And X lived so many years after he begat Y and begat sons and daughters. And all the **days of X** were so many years, and he died.”

Genesis 5:4-5

YLT  And the **days** [emphasis added] of Adam after his begetting Seth are **eight hundred years** [emphasis added], and he begetteth sons and daughters. And **all the days** [emphasis added] of Adam which he lived are **nine hundred and thirty years**, and he dieth [emphasis added].

KJV  And the **days** [emphasis added] of Adam after he had begotten Seth were **eight hundred years** [emphasis added]: and he begat sons and daughters: And **all the days** [emphasis added] that Adam lived were **nine hundred and thirty years**, and he died.

Genesis 6:3

An important relationship between “days” and “years” and prophecy has been derived from the use of these two time units in the third sentence of the Genesis 5 genealogy. Referring to the wickedness of the antediluvians, God said, “My spirit shall not abide in man for ever, for his is flesh, but his **days** shall be a hundred and twenty years” (Gen 6:3).  

YLT  And Jehovah saith, “My Spirit doth not strive in man - to the age; in their erring they [are] flesh:” and **his days** [emphasis added] have been an **hundred and twenty years** [emphasis added].

KJV  And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet **his days** [emphasis added] shall be an **hundred and twenty years** [emphasis added].

The above Bible texts provide clear evidence that the terms “day” and “year” do not run in pairs in the Hebrew language. Because he misinterprets the “relationship” between the two words, Shea conflates two distinct and separate matters: (1) time idioms in the Hebrew language, and (2) the translation of those time idioms into English. The “particular kind of relationship” that Shea assumes to occur between the two words is in fact day-year translation parallelism that arises between the Hebrew and English languages when the term “day” in idiomatic Hebrew time expressions is rendered into English as “year” because the context requires this specific translation. The SDA historicist’s speculation that “there is in the historical narratives of the OT a recognition of a particular kind of relationship between ‘days’ and ‘years’ that transcends the mere idea that the latter were made up of the former,” and that “in these instances the word ‘days’ (always in the plural form) was actually used to stand for ‘years’ [emphasis added]” is incorrect. The word “days” does not “stand” for “years” in the Hebrew language, but rather
the Hebrew word “days” is TRANSLATED into English as “years.” This result from the rendition of the Hebrew idiomatic expressions into English, is a totally different matter, and cannot be used to defend the YDP because the “translation relationship” between “day” and “year” is a matter of translation choice and not a natural Hebrew language pattern.

The examples Shea proposes from Daniel to support the claimed “day-year relationship” are a mixed basket. Sometimes the same translation correspondence is obvious in the texts when the Hebrew “day” is translated into English as “year.” The “year-day relationship” cause and effect are the same as in the previous examples – certain idiomatic Hebrew time expressions cannot be rendered word-for-word into English and have to be “adapted” to the English language. When this “conversion” occurs, the Hebrew word “day” is sometimes translated into the English language as “year.” Sometimes, though, the Hebrew term “day” remains unchanged when it is translated into English, and this is no help to Shea for his “relationship” claim. In the examples below, the SDA historicist’s commented texts on the assumed “relationship” between the terms “year” and “day” in the Hebrew idiomatic time language are listed in parallel with the YLD and KJV translations of the cited texts for comparison and evaluation:

Daniel 1:5, 18; 4:34

In the historical narratives the word for “days” could be used to specify a general number of years that had passed. For example, Daniel and his friends appear before the king “at the end of the days” when their schooling covered three years (1:5, 18). Nebuchadnezzar recovered his sanity “at the end of the days” (4:34 [31]) when the period involved covered seven times (4:25 [22]) or years, as this unit is probably best interpreted. “Days” is used also in one historical narrative for a passage of a period of time in the past. The reference back to the “days” of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 5:11 referred to events that had occurred more than half a century earlier.

Daniel 1:5

YLT And the king doth appoint for them a rate, day by day [day-to-day, emphasis added], of the king's portion of food, and of the wine of his drinking, so as to nourish them three years, that at the end thereof they may stand before the king.

KJV And the king appointed them a daily [emphasis added] provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

Daniel 1:18

YLT And at the end of the days [emphasis added] that the king had said to bring them in, bring them in doth the chief of the eunuchs before Nebuchadnezzar.

KJV Now at the end of the days [emphasis added] that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 4:34

YLT And at the end of the days [emphasis added] I, Nebuchadnezzar, mine eyes to the heavens have lifted up, and mine understanding unto me returneth, and the Most High I have blessed, and the Age-during Living One I have praised and honoured, whose dominion [is] a dominion age-during, and His kingdom with generation and generation;“
And at the \textit{end of the days} [emphasis added] I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation;

Daniel 2:28

A similar kind of usage can be seen in Daniel's prophecies where the word for “days” occurs without being quantified numerically. For example, the dream of chapter 2 revealed to Nebuchadnezzar what was to come in the “days,” not latter “years” (2:28).

but there is a God in the heavens, a revealer of secrets, and He hath made known to king Nebuchadnezzar that which \textit{is} to be in the latter \textit{end of the days} \textit{coming} in the days, emphasis added]. “Thy dream and the visions of thy head on thy bed are these:”

But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in \textit{the latter days} [emphasis added]. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these;

Daniel 2:44

The final end of the image of the dream was to come in the “days” of the kings who were to rule the divided kingdom of iron and clay (2:44).

“And \textit{in the days} [emphasis added] of these kings raise up doth the God of the heavens a kingdom that is not destroyed – to the age, and its kingdom to another people is not left: it beateth small and endeth all these kingdoms, and it standeth to the age.”

And \textit{in the days} [emphasis added] of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Daniel 8:26

A similar reference is found in Daniel 8:26 where Daniel was told to seal up the vision, for it pertained to “many days,” even to the time of the end.

And the appearance of the evening and of the morning, that is told, is true; and thou, hide thou the vision, for \textit{it is} \textit{after many days} \textit{for distant days}, emphasis added].

And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be \textit{for many days} [emphasis added].

Daniel 10:14

The same sort of thing is expressed again in Daniel 10:14.

And I have come to cause thee to understand that which doth happen to thy people in \textit{the latter end of the days} \textit{in the future days}, emphasis added] for yet the vision \textit{is} \textit{after days} \textit{for the days}, emphasis added].
Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.

Likewise, Daniel is to stand in his lot “at the end of... days,” that is, he is to be resurrected at the end of time (12:13).

God’s side of the usage of this word is found in His title as “the Ancient of days” (7:9-13). The term describes His past existence, which is not measured in literal days or years, but in ages. He is also sovereign over all the historical and prophetic “days” surveyed in this book.

And thou, go on to the end, then thou dost rest, and dost stand in thy lot at the end of the days.

But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.

God’s side of the usage of this word is found in His title as “the Ancient of days” (7:9-13). The term describes His past existence, which is not measured in literal days or years, but in ages. He is also sovereign over all the historical and prophetic “days” surveyed in this book.

And stood up on his station hath [one] causing an exactor to pass over the honour of the kingdom, and in a few days he is destroyed, and not in anger, nor in battle.

Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.

The same thing can be said about the persecution of God's people referred to in Daniel 11:33 that states they would “fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder, for ... days.” That these “days” should be understood quantitatively seems likely from the fact that this reference stands in the same place in its prophetic flow as do the 31/2 times or 1260 days of Daniel 7:25. The link between these two passages is confirmed by Daniel 12:7, which applies the time period from Daniel 7:25 to the persecution of Daniel 11:32-35. As is noted under “Especially Short Time Periods” below, a persecution measured in terms of a few literal days would not have been very significant, so a longer period of historical time measured rather in years should be in view here.
And the teachers of the people give understanding to many; and they have stumbled by sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil – days [emphasis added].

And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days [emphasis added].

Translated Hebrew Time Idioms

Shea’s proposed examples of “a particular kind of relationship between ‘days’ and ‘years’ that transcends the mere idea that the latter were made up of the former,” show that the claimed “relationship” between the terms “day” and “year” occurs when Hebrew language idioms are translated into English. The Hebrew idiomatic expression “from days to days,” for instance, is rendered in English as “from year to year” (Exodus 13:10; Judges 11:40; 1 Samuel 2:19), “sacrifice of the days” as “yearly sacrifice” (1 Samuel 1:21; 2:19; 20:6), “days and four months” as “a year and four months” (1 Samuel 27:7), “two days, or a month, or days” as “two days, or a month, or a year” (Numbers 9:22), and the Hebrew phrase “in the days” as “in years” (1 Kings 1:1). Sometimes the Hebrew idiomatic time expressions remain the same in the English translation, as is the case with Genesis 47:9 where the phrase “days of the years,” is rendered both in the YLT and the KJV as, “days of the years,” Genesis 5 where the Hebrew repetitive expressions “all the days… are x hundred and x years,” is rendered the same in the English language, or Genesis 6:3 where “his days shall be a hundred and twenty years” suffers no modification in the translation.

The same appears to be the case with the translation of the Hebrew idiomatic expressions in Daniel. The phrase “day-to-day” is rendered into English as “daily” in Daniel 1:5, but the phrase “end of the days” remains the same (Daniel 1:18), while the identical Hebrew expression “end of the days” in Daniel 4:34 does not suffer modification. The Hebrew expression “latter end of the days” (Daniel 2:28) remains unchanged, like the phrase “in the days” (Daniel 2:44), but the expression “for distant days” is translated into English as “for many days” (Daniel 8:26). The Hebrew term “days” also remains unchanged in the translation from the Hebrew language into the English language in Daniel 10: 14, 12:13; 7: 9, 13; 11:20, and 11:32-35.

These examples make it obvious that the “relationship between ‘days’ and ‘years’” which Shea summons to boost his defense of the YDP is not a relationship between the word “day” and the word “year” in the Hebrew language, but the translation relationship between the Hebrew idiomatic expressions that contain the word “day” and the English translations that contain the word “year.” This correspondence is dictated by the need to translate the Hebrew idiomatic “day” into the English literal “year.” Such examples do not contribute to the support and defense of the YDP because random parallel translation coincidences of the Hebrew term “day” and the English term “year” cannot be accepted as a linguistic “rule” or “equation.” These examples do not support the historicist “rule” or “equation” because the “relationship” is not inside the Hebrew text but between the two languages, Hebrew and English. This argument from translation cannot support the YDP and should be discarded as an uninformed, illogical, and unempirical claim.
(2). Poetical Passages

The second group of texts where SDA historicists such as Shea and Moon claim to notice the YDP application is poetical passages. These passages are also copious with texts “in which these two units of time [that is, ‘year’ and ‘day’] are side by side in a particularly close relationship.” These Hebrew language words often occur together in parallel poetical passages, and the phenomenon is due to the use of the rhetorical device known as poetic parallelism. Shea mentions examples of poetic parallelisms that occur in Job 10:5, 15:20, 32:7, and 36:11; Deuteronomy 32:7; Psalms 77:5, and 90:9-10. He argues that the “year-day” parallel Hebrew poetical pairs that indicate a “close and particular relationship between ‘days’ and ‘years,’” are a linguistic device that “provides a background for more specific application of this type of thought in apocalyptic time prophecies,” and he proposes the following Bible texts as examples of a “parallelism pattern” that would later “mature” into an assumed “year-day” rule:

Job 10:5
Are thy days as the days of man, or thy years as man’s years? (Job 10:5)

Job 15:20
The wicked man writhes in pain all his days, through all the years that are laid up for the ruthless. (Job 15:20)

Job 32:7
I said, “Let days speak, and many years teach wisdom.” (Job 32:7)

Job 36:11
If they harken and serve him, they complete their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasantness. (Job 36:11)

Deuteronomy 32:7
Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you. (Deut. 32:7)

Psalm 77:5
I consider the days of old, I remember the years long ago. (Ps 77:5)

Psalm 90:9-10
For all our days pass away under thy wrath, our years come to an end like a sigh. The years of our life [literally, “the days of our years”] are threescore and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. (Ps 90:9-10)

Shea admits that the texts in the book of Job are “examples in which ‘days’ and ‘years’ occur as a poetic pair,” and that “the ‘covenant lawsuit’ poem in Deuteronomy 32 provides another example of Hebrew parallelism which links these two time units together.” Indeed, those examples have nothing to do with a linguistic rule or equation such as the YDP. Poetical Hebrew
language is known to use quite often parallelism to enhance the transmission of thoughts and emotions to the listener or reader, and the SDA historicist is compelled to warn his readers:

The poetic literature of the OT does not provide us with a year-for-a-day principle with which to interpret time periods in prophecy [emphasis added]. It does, however, provide us with instances (like those in the historical prose narratives cited above) in which these two units of time are used side by side in a particularly close relationship…In this kind of literature the relationship arises from the poet’s employment of a literary device known as parallelism [emphasis added]. Thus, Hebrew poetry provides us with further examples of the thought patterns out of which the year-day principle naturally developed.143

That “the poetic literature of the OT does not provide us with a year-for-a-day principle with which to interpret time periods in prophecy” should be enough reason to avoid the mention of such examples in the apologetics for the YDP. But Shea seems to be able to support the historicist principle even with examples that refute it, and that is, indeed, remarkable. He does so when he argues that “Hebrew poetry provides us with further examples of the thought patterns out of which the year-day principle naturally developed.” His claim that “the year-day principle naturally developed” from a Hebrew “thought pattern” in the poetical texts, though, is a simple speculation on Shea’s part, an unsupported claim, an inexpert opinion about what the rhetorical device known as parallelism can do and cannot do. The SDA theologian provides no empirical evidence to show how the claimed “year-day” poetic parallelism concurrence “developed” from the basic qualitative rhetorical device into a quantitative linguistic “rule” or “equation” – which is what the YDP is assumed to be, and his arguments in this matter are false.

Moon also refers to parallelism, seems to follow Shea in a rather similar contention that “Old Testament poetry also used ‘days’ and ‘years’ in equivalent parallelism, referring to the same period of time,” and attempts to extract a rule or equation out of texts such as “For all our days pass away under thy wrath, our years come to an end like a sigh. The days of our years are threescore and ten (Ps 90:9-10).”144 His efforts to substantiate his position with empirical evidence are as successful as those Shea has made because there is no available observed evidence that a common rhetorical device used in a particular section of the Bible could expand into a rule that would govern time expressions all through the Bible.

Parallelism in Poetical Passages

The Old Testament poetical passages are chock-full with parallel rhetorical expressions because parallelism is a common linguistic device in poetical texts used to enhance the inspired messages in the Hebrew poetical books and to provide the creative artistic flavor that is common to poetical passages. In his exegesis on the book of Isaiah, Lowth refers to poetical parallelism in these words:

The correspondence of one verse, or line, with another, I call parallelism. When a proposition is delivered, and a second is subjoined to it, or drawn under it, equivalent, or contrasted with it, in sense; or similar to it in the form of grammatical construction; these I call parallel lines; and the words or phrases answering one to another in the corresponding lines, parallel terms.145

Parallelism occurs so often in the Old Testament, and its presence is so common in the poetical books, that the Old Testament books are divided into two categories relative to the
presence or absence of this rhetorical device in their texts, although a precise distinction between the two categories (poetical and prose texts) is arguable. States Buchanan Gray:

The literature of the Old Testament is divided into two classes by the presence or absence of what since Lowth has been known as parallelismus membrorum, or parallelism. The occurrence of parallelism characterizes the books of Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes (in part), Lamentations, Canticles, the larger part of the prophetic books, and certain songs and snatches that are cited and a few other passages that occur in the historical books.

Absence of parallelism characterizes the remainder of the Old Testament, i.e. the Pentateuch and the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings and Chronicles (with slight exceptions in all these books as just indicated), Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ruth, and part of the prophetic books, including most of Ezekiel, the biographical parts of Jeremiah, the book of Jonah (except the psalm in chapter ii.), and some passages in most of the remaining prophetical books.

It had become customary to distinguish these two divisions of Hebrew literature as poetry and prose respectively: parallelism had come to be regarded as a mark of poetry, its absence as a marks of prose; and by the application of the same test the non-canonical literature of the Jews from the second century B.C. to the second century A.D. was likewise coming to be distinguished into its prose and poetical elements.

The validity of parallelism as a test to distinguish between prose and poetry in Hebrew literature might be, and has been either actually or virtually, challenged on two grounds: (1) that parallelism actually occurs in prose, and (2) that parts of the Old Testament from which parallelism is absent are metrical, and, therefore, poetical in form. 146

Although parallelism occurs quite often in the Old Testament, both in poetical passages and in narrative prose, it has been evident to scholars for a long time that this rhetorical device cannot be defined or construed as an essential linguistic rule, and cannot be generalized into a principle. As a rhetorical device, parallelism remains a figure of speech that has an impact on the immediate context, and does not extend its linguistic effect into other contexts. Poetical parallel structures are not a hermeneutical tool, and no historicist efforts to claim otherwise will change this linguistic, empirical fact.

True Patterns and Statistics

What Shea attempts to show through random examples from narrative and poetical Bible texts is a “close and particular relationship between ‘days’ and ‘years.’” This “relationship,” the SDA historicist theologian argues, “forms the general linguistic usage and thought pattern from which a later, more specific quantitative relationship in prophetic texts will spring.” In other words, this “year-day relationship” that occurs in some biblical texts would generalize later, Shea claims, into the assumed “pattern” or “rule,” known as the historicist year=day prophetic time computation formula used in Daniel and Revelation. The historicist’s arguments, though, are mistaken and quite deceptive. Besides the fact that Shea never establishes the linguistic nature of this claimed “year-day relationship” (morphological, syntactic, discourse, pragmatic, etc.), he appears to ignore the quantitative statistical expectation that must be met before one could state that the “year-day” concurrence is a “pattern,” “rule,” or “equation.”

Colin and Thomas Campbell make it clear in their book148 that association or confluence events between certain items [such as the concurrence of the words “day” and “year” in some
bibal texts cannot be described as patterns and generalized into rules before quantitative or statistical evaluations are performed for those events and falsifiable numerical results that have statistical significance are obtained. Their contention derives from hard, inductive science, not second-rate philosophical deductions, or wild theological speculations:

You might think that deciding whether or not two factors are correlated is obvious – either they are or they aren’t [emphasis added]. But that isn’t the case. When you are looking at a large quantity of data, you have to undertake a statistical analysis to determine if two factors are correlated. The answer isn’t yes or no. It’s probability, which we call statistical significance [emphasis added]. Statistical significance is a measure of whether an observed experimental effect is truly reliable or whether it is merely due to the play of chance [emphasis added]. If you flip a coin three times and it lands on heads each time, it’s probably chance. If you flip it a hundred times and it lands on heads each time, you can be pretty sure that the coin has heads on both sides. That’s the concept behind statistical significance – it’s the odds that the correlation (or other findings) is real, that it isn’t just random chance [emphasis added].

A finding is said to be statistically significant when there is less than 5% probability that it is due to chance. This means, for example, that there is a 95% chance that we will get the same result if the study is repeated [emphasis added]. This 95% cut off point is arbitrary, but it is the standard, nonetheless. Another arbitrary cutoff point is 99%. In this case, when the result meets this test, it is said to be highly statistically significant.149

When we examine the YDP method and its application to time expressions in the entire Bible and in Daniel and Revelation, the obvious implication of the statements above is that unless the YDP is applied to at least 95% of the time expressions in the entire Bible – Daniel and Revelation included – we cannot claim a legitimate and scientific generalization of the “principle” into a quantitative “rule,” or “equation” because the empirical evidence indicates chance, and we must therefore refer to those “year-day” concurrences as random, out of pattern events, that is, irregular and selective applications of the assumed “principle” to the biblical text.

(3). Agrarian Legislation

Most biblical texts that deal with Hebrew agrarian legislation regulate also labor and sacred time celebration. The first passage in this group on Shea’s list is Leviticus 25:1-7, which the SDA theologian claims to be the “earliest biblical text in which the year-day principle is reflected.”150 What Shea means when he uses the word “reflected” is not clear, but the texts refer to the sabbatical year, a time when the Israelites were forbidden to work their fields. Shea argues that “the sabbatical year is modeled from the sabbatical day,” and that “there is a direct relationship between the ‘day’ and the ‘year’ since the same terminology was applied to both.”151 This assumed day-year relationship is claimed to lead to a quantitative modification in Leviticus 25:8 where Shea speculates that “the day-year principle operates the same way here as it does in Daniel – the use of ‘days’ (extended into the future) to mark off the ‘years’ of the future,”152 and, in Shea’s unempirical and unconfirmed historicist perspective, “here [in Leviticus 25:8] terminology for a one-week or seven-day period is applied to a seven-year period. This is the day-for-a-year method of reckoning.”153

Moon has no new and original support arguments for the YDP in this matter, but decides to repeat almost word for word some of Shea’s contention points about the YDP’s claimed
application to Leviticus 25:1-7, with some personal twists added to the discussion, and hopes that one more repetition might rescue Shea’s failed arguments. He states:

The earliest biblical text that directly reflects the year-day principle is Leviticus 25:1-7. Here the command to “keep a Sabbath,” previously associated with the seventh day of the literal week, is applied to a seventh year. Verses 3 and 4 are parallel in structure to the fourth commandment, Exodus 20:8-11, except that the word “year(s)” is substituted for the word day(s). The Sabbath here commanded is not the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, but a seventh-year Sabbath (Shea). 154

The speculative arguments the two SDA theologians push in order to defend the YDP are based on flawed logic. While it is true that the Hebrew terms “day” and “year” occur together in Leviticus 25, it does not follow that “there is a direct relationship between the ‘day’ and the ‘year’” because “the same terminology was applied to both.” Similar religious topics require similar or identical language, and it is hard to understand how the two historici miss this simple matter. Shea and Moon also fail to explain what it means that “the year-day principle is reflected” in Leviticus 25:1-7. It might mean that the YDP has been applied to those biblical texts or that the texts show the “precursor” form of the YDP. It might suggest something else that has not been specified. We are left in the dark about what the term “reflected” means, and this confusion does not help in the clarification of the YDP issue. Tregelles adopts a theological perspective that is much less speculative. He interprets such biblical texts as examples of the manner in which the Hebrews perceived their social and religious time:

The Hebrews, however, used a septenary scale as to time, just as habitually as we should reckon by tens; the sabbatical years, the jubilee, all tended to give this thought a permanent place in their mind.155

That Tregelles is correct in his statement about the Hebrew “septenary scale” is obvious from the extensive use the number seven has had in the Hebrew religious life. Terry examines in detail this Hebrew heptadic mannerism and its function within the Hebrew social customs framework, and discovers that those social customs were merged with the religious rituals through the use of the sacred number seven:

In the Scripture it [number seven] is peculiarly a ritual number. In establishing his covenant with Abraham God ordained that seven days must pass after the birth of a child, and then, upon the eighth day, he must be circumcised (Gen. xvi, 12; comp. Lev. xii, 2, 3). The Passover feast continued seven days (Exod. xii, 15). The feast of Pentecost was held seven weeks after the day of the wave offering (Lev. xxiii, 15). The feast of trumpets occurred in the seventh month (Lev. xxv, 24), and seven times seven years brought around the year of jubilee (Lev. xxi, 8). The blood of the sin offering was sprinkled seven times before the Lord (Lev. iv, 6). The ceremonial cleansing of the leper required that he be sprinkled seven times with blood and seven times with oil, that he tarry abroad outside of his tent seven days (Lev. xiv, 7, 8; xvi, 27), and that his house also be sprinkled seven times (Lev. xiv, 51). Contact with a dead body and other kinds of ceremonial uncleanness required a purification of seven days (Num. xix, 11; Lev. xv, 13, 24). And so the idea of covenant relations and obligations seems to be associated with this sacred number. Jehovah confirmed his word to Joshua and Israel, when for seven days seven priests with seven trumpets compassed Jericho, and on the seventh day compassed the city seven times (Josh. vi, 13-15).156

The Hebrews, indeed, used number seven as a ritual or sacred number in almost all aspects of their religious life. This heptadic time custom or numerical pattern, though, was not generalized in the Hebrew social and religious environment into “formulas” or “equalities” that would have later “developed” into some quantitative linguistic “rules” or grammatical “equations.” The fact is that no linguistic rules have ever been seen to develop from the
collective religious or social use of number seven in the Old Testament books, and to claim otherwise is to make a theological speculation with no supportive empirical evidence that would substantiate the claim.

(4). Jubilee Legislation

Shea further argues that the assumed “reflection” of the YDP in Leviticus 25 extends from the agrarian laws described in the first part of the chapter (verses 1-7) to the Jubilee legislation that is included in the second part of the same chapter (verses 8-55). Both biblical passages in Leviticus 25 are written in literal language, and according to the YDP definition the principle should not be applied to those literal texts or “reflect” in them. Still, Shea claims the application of the YDP both in the first and the second part of the Leviticus 25 chapter, and argues that “the day-year principle operates [emphasis added] the same way here [in Leviticus 25:8-55] as it does in Daniel,” although the YDP’s “operation” in the above texts is speculated and not demonstrated:

Even though this is a legislative passage, the day-year principle operates the same way here [emphasis added] as it does in Daniel – the use of “days” (extended into the future) to mark off the “years” of the future.

The passage is concerned with instruction for observance of the jubilee year. A literal translation of the opening clause of Leviticus 25:8 reads, “You shall count seven Sabbaths of years, seven years seven times, and to you the days of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be forty-nine years.” The explanation of the first numerical expression, as given in the second phrase of the same clause, indicates that a “Sabbath of years” is to be understood as a period of seven years [emphasis added].

Shea’s speculative arguments that make the attempt to connect the Hebrew Jubilee legislation in Leviticus 25:8-55 with the 70 weeks prophetic vision in Daniel 9:24 through the YDP in order to extend and validate the SDA historicist application of the claimed prophetic time formula to the biblical passage in Daniel 9:24-27 are implausible and unempirical. The SDA historicist seems to imagine the YDP “reflected” in biblical texts that are not at all symbolic or apocalyptic, and when his thoughts become too disconnected, convoluted, and inconsistent Shea is hard to follow:

As the seventh and concluding day of the week, the Sabbath has been taken over here to stand for the seventh year of a period of seven years [emphasis added]. Thus each day of the “weeks” that ends with these “sabbaths” in the jubilee cycle stands for one year.

That the “Sabbath” terminology was intended furthermore to stand for “weeks” is evident from parallel phraseology given two chapters earlier [emphasis added]. Reference is made there to the Festival of Weeks or Pentecost being celebrated after seven “full weeks,” literally, “seven sabbaths, full ones” (sabbatot temimot, Lev 23:15). Since one must count more than full Sabbath “days” to get to the fiftieth day designated for the celebration of Pentecost, it is evident that “Sabbaths” means “weeks” here, just as it is commonly translated in the various versions of the Bible. This parallel phraseology pertaining to Pentecost indicates that the “Sabbaths” referred to in Leviticus 25:8 with reference to the jubilee period must also mean “weeks.”

Thus the Sabbath day and the six days that preceded it came to be used as the model by which the occurrence of the jubilee year was calculated according to divine directions.
The theologian’s statements are circuitous and incongruent, based on wild assumptions and speculations that fail to demonstrate that the Leviticus 25 text upholds a “relationship” that common sense and linguistics refuse to accept. The chapter in Leviticus has explicit laws about two fundamental aspects of Hebrew life – agrarian labor and the Jubilee – and its theological application appears to be limited to those commands. To turn these Bible passages into some “precursor” of an assumed principle is to twist the biblical texts in order to support a hidden agenda. In this case, the hidden agenda is the SDA historicist’s need to extract out of the biblical texts a “relationship” that is not intended to be in the texts and cannot be found there.

Shea assumes a “connection” between the Hebrew labor legislation and the Jubilee legislation in Leviticus 25 in order to “prove” that the YDP is biblical because its support and defense have been “established through reasonable interpretations of Scripture,”159 and because he believes that a link between Leviticus 25 and Daniel 9:24-27 would validate his SDA historicist perspective. He then continues his argumentation with the unscientific and illogical claim that the “legitimate” application of the YDP to Leviticus 25 would also make “legitimate” the principle’s application to the prophetic texts in Daniel 9:24-27 and other time prophecies in the same prophetic book:

In prophecy this use of the year-day principle is paralleled most directly by Daniel 9:24-27. A different word (sabu’a) is used in that prophecy, but it means the same thing that the “Sabbaths” mean in Leviticus 25:8, that is, “weeks.” The applicability of the year-day principle to the time periods of Daniel 9:24-27 is especially evident, therefore, from the parallel construction of the Levitical instruction on the jubilee year [emphasis added]. One could almost say that the time period involved in Daniel 9:24-27 was modeled after the jubilee legislation.

Since it is legitimate to apply the year-day principle to the days of the weeks of Leviticus 25 to reckon time into the future to the next Jubilee, it is also legitimate to apply that same year-day principle to the days of the weeks of Daniel 9 [emphasis added] to reckon time into the future from the beginning of their cycle. By extension, this same principle can be reasonably applied also to the “days” of the other time prophecies in Daniel.160

The Interpretation Question

The interpretation issue that has confronted the SDA historicists about the 70 weeks vision in Daniel 9:24-27 is how to translate the Hebrew term sabu’a contained in the text. Some English translations have rendered the term as “week,” while other translations have rendered the term as “seven.” Shea needs support for the claim that Daniel 9:24-27 should be interpreted with the YDP, and for this purpose he launches into a three-page argumentation that the best translation for sabu’a is “week.” The other translation, as “seven,” cannot be accepted as an alternative because it sabotages and undermines the YDP and historicism. States Shea about the first translation option:

Two main but significantly different approaches have been taken toward this matter. The first is to translate the word as “weeks” and to derive the prophecy's time periods from the “days” which compose them. The calculation is done on the basis of the year-day principle [emphasis added]. Thus each day of these “weeks” is viewed as a prophetic day standing for a historical year. This is the approach taken by the historicist school of thought.161
The above Hebrew term’s rendition as “week” would meet the SDA historicist expectation concerning the interpretation of the biblical texts in Daniel 9:24-27, establish the use of the “principle,” and validate the historicist calculation of the time expressions in Daniel. The other option – sabʿa as “seven” – would work in the opposite direction and would be quite detrimental to the historicist interests because it would make the YDP use superfluous in the prophetic book:

The second approach is to translate this word as “sevens, besevened, heptads, hebdomads” or the like. From this purely numerical kind of translation it is then held that sabʿa carries with it directly implied “years,” that is, it is taken to mean “sevens (of years),” literal and not symbolic time. In this manner the intervening step through which those “years” would have been derived from the “days” of the prophetic “weeks” has been avoided by the interpreter. This is the approach taken by the preterist and futurists schools of thought.

One reason for this approach in translation is to separate the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9 from the other time prophecies of the book and to place it in a distinct class by itself. The effect of this is to blunt the implications of the year-day principle advocated by the historicist system of interpretation [emphasis added].

If the year-day principle is thus denied its function in the interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27, then preterists and futurists alike are at liberty to deny its application to the other time prophecies [emphasis added]. On the other hand, if it is valid to apply the year-day principle to the “days” of the “weeks” in Daniel 9, then it is logical to apply the same principle to the “days” in the time prophecies found elsewhere in Daniel as well as to the apocalyptic writings of Revelation.162

What Shea contends in the above paragraphs is that the alternative rendition of the word sabʿa as “seven,” would not be acceptable to the SDA theologians because it would weaken the SDA historicist position on the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation, “blunt the implications of the year-day principle advocated by the historicist system of interpretation,” and make the YDP application to Daniel 9:24 questionable because “the year-day principle [would] thus [be] denied its function in the interpretation of Daniel 9: 24-27.” This would also reveal that the prophetic texts in Daniel 9:24-27 could be interpreted without the “principle.” Shea’s words seem to suggest an organized opposition to the SDA church and the YDP that would cause certain interpreters to conspire against the SDA historicists with the wicked intent to frustrate and neutralize the “true” SDA interpretation of Daniel and Revelation, and insert an awful and fatal deception in its place.

The SDA Persecution Paranoia

That Shea’s fear of an organized opposition against the SDA church is not singular and isolated but some rather common paranoid worldview among the SDA theologians and church members is obvious when one reviews articles, books, and other publications that deal with the SDA prophetic interpretation of Revelation 12:17 and the “remnant.” Blanco represents well this sectarian perspective:

It is difficult for anyone today to avoid the truth of John’s statement that, “The dragon was wroth with the woman and went to make war with the remnant of her seed which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17).
The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America increasingly is being assailed from without and from within, from the left and from the right [emphasis added]. What Paul said to the Apostolic church certainly is true today. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:28-30).

As a church we have had our defectors, our accusers, and our prognosticators who claim to know from the prophecies exactly what will happen and when. In recent years we have had an increasing number of each of these, particularly in North America, who are undermining the pillars of our historic position on the interpretation of prophecy [emphasis added]. Although there is wide room for understanding the prophecies in the book of Daniel and the Revelation, nevertheless there are certain broad strokes of prophecy that are distinctive to Seventh-day Adventist teaching. When dates like 457 B.C. (the beginning date for the 2300 days) are not only questioned but denied; when the three-and-a-half years of the Messiah are taken from the prophetic time line and disconnectedly placed in the immediate future; and when the two beasts of Revelation 13 are no longer the Papal system and the United States, but some other political entity and/or Satan himself, then our mission has lost its meaning.\textsuperscript{163}

There is no logical or biblical reason, though, for the SDA historicists to hold the position that their interpretation of Daniel and Revelation is infallible and should be exempt from serious examination. After all, the SDA historicist “system of [prophetic] interpretation,” is a theological construct or speculation, and nothing more. There is no textual evidence that would corroborate their claim for an absolute truth in the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation. To contend that the Bible has been written from the unique perspective of a certain school of prophetic interpretation or that Daniel and Revelation are historicist books is an extreme and absurd claim that cannot be defended with the Bible. An appeal to a school of interpretation in order to validate a bizarre prophetic interpretation is not rational, scientific, or legitimate. Rather than allow the Scriptures themselves to define the time frame for the fulfillment of true and actual prophetic events, the SDA historicists have boxed Daniel and Revelation into a dogmatic theological mold, have imposed their own peculiar and fanciful interpretations on the Bible, and have used pseudo-historicist and fictitious events to “prove” that their hermeneutical fabrications are correct and biblical.

The \textit{sabu’a} Translation Debate

Pfandl, a zealous historicist, adopts Shea’s perspective on the \textit{sabu’a} issue, and in the meantime takes a swipe at Ford – his former mentor – because the Australian theologian has dared to place himself in the opposite camp and believes, like the SDA contributors to the revised \textit{Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary} [SDABC] that “the year-day principle is not involved in Daniel 9.”\textsuperscript{164} Old grudges never die, and Pfandl makes sure that his Christian brothers and sisters know it! What his readers would rather prefer, it seems, is an original contribution to the debate, but Pfandl is not able to deliver. His borrowed, weak, and obsolete argument is that because \textit{sabu’a} has been translated as “week” in certain contexts it should also be translated as “week” in the specific Daniel 9:24-27 context.\textsuperscript{165} The historicist theologian seems to be unaware of the notion that contexts are different from one another and that it matters little or none how a word is translated in other contexts. From a linguistic perspective, what
matters is the word’s usage in its immediate and particular context, and even amateur theologians should know this basic fact.

The BRI accidental theologian is not a Hebrew language expert. His obsolete defense for the reading of the Hebrew term sabu’a as “week” instead of “seven” is borrowed from other scholars, while he does not seem to be aware that in the SDA historicist tradition there have been numerous theologians who have affirmed the rendition “seven” over “week” for the Hebrew term sabu’a. Even the venerated SDA theologian Edward Heppenstall agrees with Ford about the translation of the term sabu’a as “seven” in the October 1981 number of the SDA magazine Ministry. There, Heppenstall argues in unqualified and confident terms that the Hebrew term sabu’a is a heptade, that is, “division of seven,” and takes its specific meaning from the immediate context:

Does the “seventy weeks” in this particular period mean seventy weeks of years or seventy weeks of days? The Hebrew phrase does not mention either days or years. The Hebrew text uses a word that signifies “heptade or haptades,” meaning division of seven. Literally that is, seventy sevens of days or of years. If it means seventy sevens of years, then the time is literal, 490 years. If it means seventy sevens of days, then the time is symbolic of years. The phrase by itself cannot be made to fit either years or days. This can only be determined by the context and the nature of the case [emphasis added].

Heppenstall’s position on the rendition of sabu’a as “seven” and not as “week” is not unexpected and unique among the SDA historicist theologians. LaRondelle refers often to the “70 weeks” in Daniel 9 as “seventy sevens” when he discusses issues related to the chapter’s interpretation. This might seem insignificant when one overlooks the fact that LaRondelle, just like Heppenstall, taught at the most prestigious SDA religious institution – the Andrews University SDA Theological Seminary. In order to support and validate his own perspective on the issue, LaRondelle also mentions recognized scholars such E. J. Young, and Walvoord who use the English word “sevens” in their remarks on Daniel 9:24-27 and seem to have concluded from their research that the Hebrew term sabu’a should be rendered in English as “seven” and not as “week.” States LaRondelle in two Ministry articles:

“Seventy ‘sevens’ were decreed, or determined [emphasis added], by God as a renewed probationary period for Jerusalem and the Jewish people after the seventy years of the Babylonian exile had terminated (see Dan. 9:24). There can be no doubt about the duration of this period: seventy times seven “years,” or 490 years (see R.S.V.). No day-for-a-year symbolism needs to be supposed here because Gabriel uses no symbols in his detailed chronological explanation. G.F. Hasel observes, “There is virtually unanimous agreement among interpreters of all schools of thought that the phrase ‘seventy weeks’ or literally ‘sevens seventy’ . . . means 490 years [emphasis added].”

The normal, natural exegetical assumption is that the seventy consecutive weeks are an unbreakable unity. They are presented as a unit, just as are the seventy years of Babylonian exile in Daniel 9:2. Edward Young concludes, “If there is no warrant for inserting a gap in Jeremiah’s prophecy, what warrant is there for doing so in the prophecy of the seventy sevens? [emphasis added] Had there been a gap in Jeremiah’s prophecy (Jer. 25:10) Daniel could never have understood the years of the captivity.”

First, Daniel’s expression “After the sixty-two ‘sevens,” the Anointed One will be cut off [emphasis added]” (chap. 9:26) indicates that the death of the Messiah must take place before the seventieth week. It also occurs after the sixty-two weeks; consequently it must fall between the sixty-ninth and seventieth
week! Only after the death of Christ and after the (next mentioned) destruction of Jerusalem (verse 26) do we come to the final one week in verse 27.\footnote{169} J. F. Walvoord agrees that in Matthew 24:15-22 Jesus “had in mind the prediction of the climax of Israel’s seventieth week or seventy sevens of years predicted in Daniel 9:27 [emphasis added].” And a note at Matthew 24:15-20 in The New Scofield Reference Bible speaks of “a future crisis in Jerusalem after the manifestation of the ‘abomination.’”\footnote{170}

Hasel, a recognized SDA theologian, Old Testament exegesis professor, Hebrew language scholar, and expert on Daniel at the same prestigious SDA religious school, does not fail to warn the reader that “Daniel 9:24-27 is a *crux interpretum* in OT studies” (a biblical passage that has puzzled the Bible interpreters), and explains:

One recent writer summed up his assessment of this passage by pointing out that “there is no more intricate problem in Old Testament study than the interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27 [emphasis added].”\footnote{171} In concluding his survey of interpretation J. A. Montgomery stated, “The history of the exegesis of the 70 weeks is the Dismal Swamp of OT criticism.”\footnote{172} Without doubt the passage under consideration is one of the most difficult in the OT.

The SDA historicist reviews both sides of the issue in the debate whether or not the term *sabu’a* in Daniel 9:24-27 should be rendered as “seven” rather than “week” and mentions some reasons for the Hebrew term’s rendition as “seven” among which is the peculiar fact that the *Septuaginta* and *Theodotion*, the celebrated translations of the Hebrew OT into Greek, used the word “hebdomads” to translate the Hebrew masculine plural of the term *sabu’a* (*sabu’im*) into the English language. States G. F. Hasel:

It has been suggested that “the very nature of apocalyptic literature would tend toward symbolical interpretation. The numbers 7, 3, and 10 are acknowledged as the principal digits of symbolism.”\footnote{173} The Hebrew says simply “sevens seventy,” and not “seventy weeks” (K.J.V., E.R.V., N.E.B., N.A.B.) or “seventy weeks of years” (R.S.V.). The term usually rendered “weeks” is *shabu’im* and carries the meaning “weeks,” according to all major lexicons.\footnote{174} However, the LXX and Theodotion, the two oldest versions, render this term ἕβδομαζέω or “hebdomads” on which basis the suggestion has been made that the key phrase *shabu’im shib’im* means “seven heptads – 7x7x10.”\footnote{175} In short, the “seventy weeks” of Daniel 9:24-27 consist of a symbolical figure of “seventy sevens” or “seventy heptads.”

Second, there is the matter of whether there is any justification for considering the “seventy sevens” as symbolical in the first place. Just because the term *shabu’im* is masculine plural instead of the expected feminine plural (*shabu’ath*) which stands normally for “weeks,” seems to be an insufficient grammatical reason cited in support of the symbolical interpretation.\footnote{176} The masculine plural is obviously used by intention\footnote{177} as is the position of this noun before the numeral. The latter appears for the sake of emphasis, in order to contrast the “seven” with the “years” of Jeremiah (Dan. 9:2).\footnote{178} It is true that in Biblical Hebrew there is no explicit usage of the term *shabu’im* for “weeks” or “weeks of years.” The notion of a “week” seems to have been suggested implicitly on the basis of the seven-day and seven-year periods culminating in a “Sabbath” (Lev. 25:2-4; 26:33ff.).\footnote{179} In post-Biblical Hebrew the meaning of “week” in the sense of “weeks of years” occurs hundreds of times for this term in Jubilees (c.150 B.C.), the Mishnah\footnote{180} and the Talmud. The designation of “three weeks” (*sheloshah shabu’im yamim*) in Daniel 10:2, which reads literally “three sevens [of] days,” indicates on the one hand that three regular weeks are meant, and seems to imply, on the other hand, by the addition of *yamim*, “days,” that these “weeks” are not identical with the *shabu’im* of 9:24. The latter are not regular “weeks” of days, but by implication “weeks” of years.\footnote{181}
The inclination to translate the term *sabu’a* in Daniel 9:24-27 as “seven” rather than “week” is not the exception among the non-SDA theologians and Hebrew experts, but rather the custom. G. F. Hasel mentions quite a few of such theologians in the notes to his 1993 paper:

Leon Wood, *A commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), 247, holds also that *sabu’im* means “sevens” but claims that “the form of the word (*sabu’im*) is a participle, meaning literally ‘besevened,’ i.e. made up of seven parts.” This is not supported in any lexicon or grammar, and it cannot be accepted as a sound morphological analysis. The masculine noun *sabu’a* is a noun of the qatul formation (so R. Meyer, *Hebräische Grammatik* [Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1969], 2:58).


One wonders how it has happened that so much debate among the world’s foremost theologians and Hebrew scholars has not worked to settle the translation dispute on the term *sabu’a* in Daniel 9:24-27 if the issue is as simple as Pfandle claims it to be in his recent article written in substandard English enhanced with logical fallacies and grammatical errors that pleads for the rendition “week.” The truth is that matters are far from simple and straightforward in this *sabu’a* translation dispute, and G. F. Hasel makes his readers aware of the complex issues involved in the debate when he examines (1) lexical, (2) morphological, (3) syntactical, (4) rhetorical, and (5) translation reasons that make a case for and against “seven” or “week,” and that prevent Hebrew scholars and theologians to propose the “ultimate argument” that would support one translation over the other in absolute terms.

“Seven” Over “Week” Arguments

G. F. Hasel states that some scholars have proposed in order to support the rendition of the Hebrew word *sabu’a* as “seven” in Daniel 9:24-27 are inadequate and unacceptable, claims that from his informed historicist perspective “this rendering of the noun *sabu’im* as ‘sevens’ is not, however, supported by the best etymological and philological research,” and decides that there are better reasons for the translation “week.” The arguments that favor the rendition “seven,” and which G. F. Hasel has discarded because he considers them inadequate seem acceptable, reliable, and important to this writer, and are included below:

1. Lexical:

   The concept of “sevens” or “besevened” has been derived from the interpretation of “weeks” as “hebdomads” or “heptads” [emphasis added]. The “heptad” is taken to signify “a period or group of seven of something.” Modern renditions or interpretations that use such terms in place of “weeks” for the time elements in Dan 9:24-27 reveal the influence of backgrounds other than that which is based on the straightforward meaning of the Hebrew word in the text, *sabu’im*, as “weeks” [emphasis added].”176
2. Morphological:

The expression “seventy weeks” in Dan 9:24 has been a subject of continuing discussion because of (1) use of the masculine plural form of the noun “weeks” in the Hebrew text of the book of Daniel [emphasis added] and (2) the question of whether the resultant meaning is “weeks,” “sevens,” “besevened,” or “heptad/hebdomad [emphasis added].”177

The masculine plural ending in –im [as in Daniel 9:24, sabu’im] is not used outside the book of Daniel in the OT as a plural for sabua, “week [emphasis added].” The plural for “weeks” elsewhere in the OT employs the –ot form, the feminine plural termination.178

The fact that the plural of sabua appears in the OT with both feminine and masculine endings leads the careful interpreter [emphasis added] to investigate the usage of Hebrew double-gender plurals in nouns. This is a necessary step in ascertaining the significance and meaning, if possible, of the masculine form sabu’im, “weeks,” in Dan 9:24-27. Should the Hebrew term be rendered with “sevens” or the like, as is done in the NIV, the margins of other English versions, and numerous commentaries [emphasis added]?19
Or, should it be translated and interpreted in accord with internal syntactical and structural reasons that are based on the significance of double-gender plurals in biblical Hebrew?179

3. Syntactical:

This word [sabu’im] stands in first position [emphasis added] in the Hebrew sentence of Dan 9:24, that is, it stands before [emphasis added] the numeral “seventy” (sib’im) seemingly for emphasis.180

4. Rhetorical:

Modern commentators have noted time and time again that in the OT usage the Hebrew masculine form sabu’im is unique to the book of Daniel [emphasis added]. Various reasons have been put forth as to why this phenomenon occurs in Dan 9:24-27.

James A. Montgomery, in his magisterial Daniel commentary, has made a brief remark to the effect that “the differentiation in pl. has the purpose of being intentional [emphasis added].”111 He was far ahead of his time in this recognition, as we shall see below, and I believe that his suggestion is correct [emphasis added]. Unfortunately, he did not go on to define the intentionality involved, a matter that therefore calls for continued attention.181

5. Translation:

The terms “heptad” and “hepdomad” are directly related to the rendering in the LXX of the expression “seventy weeks” by the Greek words hebdomekonta hebdomades2 and the use of the Latin hebdomades in the Vulgate [emphasis added]. The influence of this wording of these ancient translations, to which the English “hebdomad/heptad” (respectively, “seven/besevened”) is related, is so pervasive that the NIV has given the translation “seventy sevens [emphasis added],” thus departing from the term “weeks” used in previous English versions.3 A number of other recent English versions, while maintaining the rendering “seventy weeks” in the text itself, provide the marginal reading “sevens” as a substitute for “weeks.”4 182

G. F. Hasel’s comments make it clear that the solution to the translation dilemma about the Hebrew term sabu’a in Daniel 9:24-27 requires much more than the naïve and simplistic explanations Pfandl provides in his articles. Just the review of the articles written by various scholars on this quite controversial topic and the reasons those scholars have advanced in favor
of the two options, “week” or “seven,” could make the content of a full book. We will continue to examine below the arguments that favor the rendition “seven” for the Hebrew term:

David H. Lurie

Lurie presents in his paper on Daniel 9:24 a detailed discussion on the term sabu’a that examines the Hebrew term’s morphological characteristics and continues with its lexical background and translation options to the logical and empirical conclusion that the best rendition of the Hebrew term in English is as “seven” and not as “week:”

The Hebrew word that the KJV translates as “weeks” and the NIV translates as “sevens” is sabu’im. Now sabu’im is the masculine plural form of sabu’a, and sabu’a is the word used in both Biblical and modern Hebrew to denote an ordinary seven-day week. The KJV translators rendered sabu’im as “weeks” and let it go at that, but the NIV translators recognized that sabu’im is a rather peculiar form and so they rendered it as “sevens.” What is peculiar about sabu’im is that the usual plural of sabu’a is sabu’ot, the feminine plural form. It is the form used throughout the Hebrew Bible whenever an ordinary seven-day week is intended. Obviously, then, sabu’im are not ordinary seven-day weeks [emphasis added].

The word sabu’im appears only in the prophecy of the seventy “sevens” and in one other place [emphasis added]. In Dan 10:2-3 we read that Daniel mourned for three sabu’im yamim (literally, for three “sevens” of days”). In this context it is clear that sabu’im means ordinary weeks. But this is the only other place in the Hebrew Bible where the word sabu’im appears, and in this one instance – because the word is intended to denote ordinary seven-day weeks – Daniel takes care to put the qualifier yamim after it. There is more than a hint here that when the word shabu’im appears without a qualifier, as it does in 9:24-27, it has a more general meaning. What that meaning might be has to be discovered either from the context or from other considerations.183

Etymologically sabu’a, the singular of sabu’im, has the same root as seba (“seven”). According to E. J. Young the word sabu’im is really a participial form denoting something that is “sevened” or “besevened:”

“The form is really a participle meaning besevened, i.e. computed by sevens [emphasis added]… and here gives evidence of the fact that the word was originally masculine. What led Daniel to employ the masculine instead of the feminine, however, is not clear unless it was for the deliberate purpose of calling attention to the fact that the word “sevens” is employed in an unusual sense. The word means divided into sevens.”184

S. P. Tregelles

Tregelles, the renowned Hebraist, biblical scholar, and textual critic, is confident that there is a direct thematic connection between the term “heptades” in Daniel 9:24-27 and Jeremiah’s 70 weeks, and concludes that the context of Daniel 9 offers enough clues for the translation of the Hebrew term sabu’a as “seven,” and not as “week.” It appears clear to him that when one takes into account the events that transpire in Daniel 9, the 70 years that are mentioned in verse 2 explain the heptades in verses 24-27:

In considering the ninth chapter of Daniel, we see at once the value which previous prophecy possessed in his [Daniel’s] soul. He had been favoured with many direct communications from God, but here we find him using the prophecy which had been given through Jeremiah as the ground of his confession and prayer: “In the first year of Darius, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of
Jerusalem.” The “books” to which Daniel refers, were apparently the letters which Jeremiah had written to the captives in Babylon (Jer. xxix 10), as well as his other mention of “seventy years” (xxv.11).185

Daniel had made inquiry about seventy years of the captivity in Babylon; the answer speaks also of seventy periods, which in our English translation are called “weeks;” the word, however, does not necessarily mean seven days, but a period of seven parts [emphasis added]; of course it is much more often used in speaking of a week than of anything else, because nothing is so often mentioned as a week which is similarly divided.186

The Hebraist returns to the sabu’a issue later, in the same chapter of his book, and provides the readers with a detailed comment on the term that occurs in Daniel 9:24. This ample explanation allows Tregelles to inform the readers about the reasons for his choice in the translation. Tregelles wants to make it clear to the readers that because the rendition “week” for sabu’a in the prophetic message of Daniel 9 has no linguistic validation, verse 24 cannot be used in order to defend and support the YDP. Besides a competent and clear explanation of the Hebrew words used in Daniel 9:24-27 the scholar also provides the reader with the situational context of the passage and the factors that inform and determine the usage:

Another passage which has been used as a basis for this system [“year-day system”] is the latter part of the ninth of Daniel; - some, however, of the strenuous advocates of the year-day principle fairly own that it has no bearing upon the question. Its supposed connection arises from the word שבעים rendered “week,” having been taken as though it must be simply in its literal meaning seven days. This might be called wholly a question of lexicography: - the word itself is strictly, something divided into or consisting of seven parts – a heptad, a hebdomad. It bears the same grammatical relation to the numeral seven, as one of the Hebrew words used for ten does to the other of similar meaning. Gesenius simply defines its meaning to be “a septenary number,” he then speaks of its use as applied sometimes to days, sometimes to years; - the word itself, however, defines nothing as to the denomination to which it belongs, whether the one or the other. In Ezek. xlv. 21, it is used almost entirely like a numeral, standing with a feminine plural termination in connection with a masculine noun שבעים (according to the peculiar usage of numerals in Hebrew and the cognate languages); and this passage is important as showing its use. It is not to be denied nor yet to be wondered at that it should be more often used of week than anything else, for this obvious reason, that of all things admitting a septenary division there is nothing so often spoken as a week. In this sense, however, it more commonly takes the feminine plural termination.

In the present passage it takes its denomination from years, which had been previously mentioned in Daniel’s prayer: Daniel had been praying to God, and making confession on behalf of his people, because he saw that the seventy years, which had been denounced as the term of the captivity of Judah, were accomplished; and thus the denomination of years connects itself with the answer granted to him: he had made inquiry about the accomplishment of seventy years; he receives an answer relative to seventy heptads of years. The word has here the masculine plural termination, which may arise from year being feminine; but this could not be absolutely stated as the reason, for it is once used (Dan. x. 2) with the masculine plural joined to days*

I am well aware that strong assertions have been made to this effect: - that if we follow the conventional reading (i.e. with points) it is simply “seventy weeks” (i.e. of seven days) but that if we reject the points, it must mean “seventy seventies;” this statement is very incorrect. I do read with the points, but the argument does not rest upon them. I do not admit that periods of seven days are necessarily indicated by the word itself. But if we paid no attention to the points, we are not left to any such meaningless rendering as “seventy seventies;” – the fact must have been overlooked, that in verse 27, where the word occurs in the singular, it is twice written full (i.e. with the letter Vav inserted), and this, without any points to help us, decides the matter.
In translating, we may use the word “week,” not at all as conceding the point of the meaning of the Hebrew word, but simply for convenience sake, and as requiring less explanation and circumlocution than any other in common use. I believe that I need say no more to prove that this ninth of Daniel in no way upholds the year-day scheme.

Milton S. Terry

Terry is in full agreement with Tregelles that the best translation of the word sabu’ā in Daniel 9:24 is as a “seven” or “heptad,” and that the Hebrew term has no independent meaning outside context, but has to draw its semantic value or meaning from the peculiar context within which it has been embedded. His arguments should remind the reader that Heppenstall has taken the same position in a previous statement:

The year-day theory is thought to have support in Daniel’s prophecy of the seventy weeks (Dan. ix. 24-27). But that prophecy says not a word about days or years, but seventy heptads, or sevens (שביעים). The position and gender of the word indicate its peculiar significance. It nowhere else occurs in the masculine except in Dan. x, 2, 3, where it is expressly defined as denoting heptads of days (שביעים). Unaccompanied by any such limiting word, and standing in such an emphatic position at the beginning of ver. 24, we have reason to infer at once that it involves some mystical import. When, now, we observe that it is a Messianic oracle, granted to Daniel when his mind was full of meditations upon Jeremiah’s prophecy of the seventy years of Jewish exile (ver. 2) and in answer to his ardent supplications, we most naturally understand the seventy heptads as heptads of years. But this admission furnishes slender support to such a sweeping theory as would logically bring all prophetic designations of time to the principle that days mean years.

Albert Barnes

Barnes, famous for his Notes on the New Testament that have exceeded the million volume mark in sales due to their simplified biblical criticism, is another theologian who concurs with Heppenstall, Lurie, Tregelles, and Terry in their informed and emphatic statements that the word sabu’ā should be translated as “seven,” and not as “week.” The theologian also insists that what matters most is the word’s usage in that specific context:

It had been maintained by some who contended for “sevens of years,” that the word translated weeks (שביעים, shabuim) was the regular masculine plural of שבע (sheba) seven, and ought, therefore, to be translated sevens. But שבעים (shabuim) as was alleged in reply, “is not the normal plural of the Hebrew term for seven.” The normal plural is שבעים (shibim); but that is the term for seventy, and cannot mean sevens. It seems now admitted on all hands, that both שבעים (shabuim) and the feminine form שבעות (shabuoth) are plural forms of שבע (shabua), which, according to the etymology of the word signifies as hebdomad or septemized period. The only question that remains, therefore, regards the use of the word. What is its use? So that after much controversy, the matter stands very much as Mede left it. “The question,” says he, “lies not in the etymology, but in the use, wherein שבעות (shabuah) always signifies sevens of days, and never sevens of years.”

Moses B. Stuart

One other famous theologian and scholar who concurs with the position Heppenstall, Lurie, Tregelles, Terry, and Barnes take about the rendition of the word sabu’ā as “seven” and not as “week” in Daniel 9:24 is Stuart, professor of sacred literature at the Andover Theological Seminary and the father of exegetical studies in America, known for his theological and
translation works. His explanation is lucid, informed, and to the point. All these scholars should provide sufficient evidence that most theologians and Hebrew language experts have inclined towards the first (“seven”) and not the second choice (“week”) in the translation of the Hebrew term sabu’a. Writes Stuart:

But we shall doubtless be reminded of an analogous case in Dan. 9:24 (to which alone Mede appeals), where, is alleged, seventy weeks certainly mean seventy weeks of years, i.e. 490 years. But here again a critical examination will lead us to see that the appeal is not well grounded. The original word here is not transcribed correctly. Seventy heptades are determined for thy people,” etc. Heptades of what? The natural and indeed necessary answer is: Heptades of years; for the context tells us, that Daniel had just been meditating on the question, whether the seventy years’ exile of the Jews was not at an end; and the angel, who now makes further disclosures to him, tells him that seventy heptades are still further designated for the people of Israel, in which various important events are to be accomplished.

That the word years would of course be naturally and readily supplied after heptades, in such a case, is clearly established by the fact that the common mode of reckoning time is years; and moreover by the fact, that where the writer of the book of Daniel does not mean that years should be understood, he feels himself obliged actually to supply another and appropriate word, so as to prevent any mistake. Thus, in Daniel 10:2, 3, we find the words שבעים ימים שבעים ימים twice employed, where the writer intends to designate three sevens of days, and the consequence is that he in each case inserts the word שבעים ימים (days) after the word sevens or heptades. In no other way could he guard against the mistake of being understood to mean heptades of years.

John F. Walvoord

Walvoord, the second president of the Dallas Theological Seminary, theologian and eschatologist, believes that “in the concluding four verses of Daniel 9 [Daniel 9:24-27] one of the most important prophecies of the Old Testament is contained,” and examines the prophetic message contained in the chapter in full detail and with insightful remarks on the language of the biblical text. States the scholar:

The conservative interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27 usually regards the time units as years. The decision is, however, by no means unanimous. Some amillenarians, like Young, who have trouble with fitting this into their system of eschatology consider this an indefinite period of time. Actually, the passage does not say “years”; and because it is indefinite, they consider the question somewhat open. Further, as Young points out, the word sevens is in the masculine plural instead of the usual feminine plural [emphasis added]. No clear explanation is given except that Young feels “it was for the deliberate purpose of calling attention to the fact that the word sevens is employed in an unusual sense.”

In the Christological interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27, it is generally assumed that the time units indicated are years. The English word “week” is misleading as the Hebrew is actually the plural of the word for seven without specifying whether it is days, months, or years [emphasis added].

Herbert Carl Leupold

Leupold, known as an Old Testament specialist and expert in liturgics, examines the term sabu’a from a lexical and historical perspective in order to ascertain what would be the best translation of the Hebrew word within the context that surrounds it in Daniel 9:24-27, and concludes:
It will clarify the issue if we state the case thus: the supposition involved is usually a dilemma which is not true to the facts of the case. It is claimed that there are only two possibilities: either a normal week of seven days or the unusual week of seven years. **There are in reality three definite possibilities:** *shabu‘a* may mean 1) a “week”; it may mean 2) a “heptad” of time; it could perhaps mean 3) a “year-week,” although this meaning is not supported by Biblical usage [emphasis added]; in other words, *shabu‘a* never has the meaning “year-week” in Biblical passages. Postbiblical usage on the part of the Jews may be cited in favor of this meaning, but that usage can serve only as an index of how in the days after Daniel’s time the Jews were inclined to use the word on the strength of the traditional but wrong interpretation they put upon this passage. **We hold that of the three possibilities just mentioned the second alone is exegetically sound and correct** [emphasis added].

What, then, is the basic feature of our interpretation? First of all, a grammatical factor that must be evaluated carefully. **It is the simple fact that shabhu‘a, “week,” regularly has as a plural the feminine form shabhu‘oth, “weeks.” In this chapter (v. 24, 25, 26, 27) Daniel uses a different form, viz. shabhu‘im, masculine plural [emphasis added].** True, in 10:2, 3 this form recurs, seemingly in reminiscence of our chapter, but with the word “days” appended, *shabhu‘im yamin*. Now the singular means “a period of seven,” “a heptad” (BDB) or “Siebend” (K.W.) or, as some prefer to state it, “Siebenheit.” Since there is nothing in our chapter that indicates a “heptad of days” as a meaning for *shabhu‘im* or a “heptad of years,” the only safe translation, if we do not want to resort to farfetched guesses, of this fundamental expression is seventy “heptads” – seventy “sevens” – seventy Siebenheiten.

Edward J. Young

The Reformed theologian and OT scholar Edward J. Young is known for his theological erudition and research competence. His research field was the OT prophets, and he wrote commentaries on Isaiah, Daniel and other Hebrew prophets. In his famous exegetical book on Daniel, the expert theologian remarks that Daniel 9:24-27 “is one of the most difficult in all the OT and the interpretations which have been offered are almost legion,” and argues that the Hebrew term *sabu‘a* in Daniel 9:24 should be translated as “sevens” because it is a participle:

This vs. [Daniel 9:24] is a Divine revelation of the fact that a definite period of time has been decreed for the accomplishment of all that which is necessary for the true restoration of God’s people from bondage. **Seventy sevens** – lit., **sevens seventy. the word sevens – usually translated weeks – is placed first for the sake of emphasis** [emphasis added]. It constitutes the great theme of the passage. For the same reason, the numeral here follows the noun, and does not precede it, as is usually the case. The thought of the author may then be paraphrased, **“Sevens – and in fact seventy of them are decreed, etc.** [emphasis added].” The word *sevens* here occurs in the m. pl., whereas it generally has a f. pl. This m. pl. also appears in Dan. 10:2, 3. The reason for this m. is not that Dan. is a late writing (BDB), nor was it likely that the m. was chosen because it would sound like the word seventy (Rosenmueller – the two words are spelled with exactly the same consonants), nor is it to indicate that the usual week of seven days are not intended, nor is it to be regarded as an arbitrary correction (Ewald), since it has already appeared in Gen. 29:27 (in the s.). The form is really a participle meaning *besevened*, i.e. computed by sevens (so Stuart and H), and here gives evidence of the fact that the word was originally m. **What led Dan. to employ the m. instead of f. however, is not clear unless it was for the deliberate purpose of calling attention to the fact that the word sevens is employed in an unusual sense** [emphasis added]. The word means divided into *sevens*, and generally signifies the most common of such divisions, namely, the ordinary week of seven days, e.g., Gen. 29:27f. and Dan. 10:2, 3. In the expression itself there is no intimation as to the length of time intended. How long, then, is the seven? In Dan. 10:2, 3 an expression of time, *days*, is added, so that in this passage we are to understand ordinary weeks of 7 days each, or perhaps, three full weeks. Also in Dan. 8:14 where Dan. intends a definite period of time, he adds an expression “evenings-mornings.”

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The above comments on the term *sabu’a* from SDA historicists, classic and modern theologians and Hebraists, and the arguments these scholars have provided suggest that Shea, Pfandl, and the other SDA historicists who claim that the “correct” translation of the Hebrew term is “week,” are at least uninformed in their contention if not tendentious or prejudiced, and that the word *sabu’a* should be read as “seven,” rather than “week” in Daniel 9:24. It becomes also obvious that there is no need for the YDP in order to interpret the prophetic vision in Daniel 9:24-27 because the solution to the interpretation question is found in the chapter’s context.

(5). Classical Prophecies

The Glacier View historicist scholars claim that “the year-day principle is upheld in the prophetic portions of the Old Testament,” and that “the two principal texts for explicating the year-day method of interpretation [are] Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6.”198 This traditional theological position becomes obvious when one notices the numerous references to the above texts in the YDP support, defense, and application arguments. The same Glacier View theologians submit the following comments on Numbers 14:34:

Numbers 14:34 is self-explanatory in showing the direct relationship between the 40 days of spying out the land of Canaan and the 40 years of wandering in the Sinai Peninsula: “According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day a year, you shall bear your iniquity, forty years, and you shall know my displeasure. I, the Lord, have spoken” (verses 34, 35). Some have argued that this passage is not a prophecy and should not be applied to prophetical time periods. The fact is that the punitive declaration was made in advance of the 40 years’ wandering, and so it qualifies as a prophecy.199

Shea, a prominent SDA historicist, and the theologian who appears to have written the most on the YDP in recent decades, makes also a similar claim, and affirms the text in Numbers 14:34 as the one that together with the text in Ezekiel 4:6 has provided the support and defense which has established the YDP as a prophetic time hermeneutical principle:

The third specific biblical use of the year-day principle is found in Numbers 14:34. Here the principle is employed somewhat differently than it is in Leviticus 25.

In Numbers 14 the “days” used to measure off “years” are derived from events of the immediate historical past: the 40 days that the Israelite spies spent in their exploration of Canaan. The people in the camp accepted the bad report given by the majority of the spies contrary to the divine intent. As a consequence, God sentenced them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years: “According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day a year, you shall bear your iniquity, forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.”200

No Universal Rule or Principle

The SDA historicists seem to miss the basic fact that there is no textual evidence that Numbers 14:34 supports the YDP. It is true that the biblical text here is a prophetic narrative, but the passage is not a symbolic or apocalyptic narrative. It is a classical prophetic narrative. It is also true that the terms “day” and “year” occur together in the text, and their correspondence is clear – “for every day a year,” but there is no instruction in the text that this passage should be accepted as a hermeneutical principle or rule that would govern the interpretation of other prophetical passages in the Bible. And what is even harder to understand and accept is the reason
for which the YDP should be limited and restricted to apocalyptic prophecies, according to the “year-day” rule, and not applied to all the other prophetic passages in the Bible, when one recalls that Numbers 14:34, which according to the SDA historicists constitutes the basis for the YDP, is a classical prophecy. Such a limitation and restriction on the YDP application remains unexplained and unjustified, and provides evidence that the YDP is not a scientific rule with an empirical basis, but an SDA historicist interpretation convenience.

Literal, Not Figurative Language

The exclusive application of the YDP to the symbolic, apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation – although the SDA historicists have argued that the rule’s foundation is in the Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 texts – has caused scholars to question the truth of the historicist claim that the YDP has a biblical basis. Theologians such as Tregelles, Stuart, and Terry have insisted again and again that there is nothing in the Leviticus 14:34 propositional content that supports the SDA historicist claim and that defends an exclusive application of the assumed rule to apocalyptic prophecies, especially when one considers that the biblical language used in the text is literal, and not figurative. States Tregelles:

Numbers xiv. 34: “After the number of days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years.”

This passage speaks of a denounced fact; but in it there is nothing that implies a principle of interpretation. The spies had searched the land of promise forty days; and God sentences the murmuring and rebellious Israelites to wander in the wilderness the same number of years. In the prophetic part of the verse, years are literal years, and not the symbol of anything else. Apply the year-day system to this passage, and then “forty years” will expand into a vast period of fourteen thousand four hundred years. All that can be deduced from this passage, as to the connection of the terms “day” and “year,” is, that as the search of the land had occupied forty literal days, so the wandering in the wilderness should continue for forty literal years. Literal years answer to literal days [emphasis added].

Stuart has similar objections to the historicist use of Numbers 14:34 in order to support and defend an unscientific and selective tool of biblical interpretation and to provide authentication for historicism. He insists that the time periods in both Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 are literal and not figurative and that there is in both texts an “express mention and appointment, that days should correspond with years,” and this fact prevents confusion and misunderstanding about the divine intent of the passage:

Another case, bearing some resemblance to this [Ezekiel 4:6], is also appealed to in the way of justifying the interpretation now under examination. It is presented in Num. xiv. Moses sent spies in the land of Canaan, who were absent forty days, and then returned and made a bad report of the land. The consequence was discontent and rebellion in the camp of Israel. With this God was displeased, and he declared that the Israelites should wander forty years in the desert, each year corresponding to one of the forty days in question; Num. 14:33, 34. In this case then, just as in the preceding, there is an express mention and appointment, that days should correspond with years; so that the case is open to no mistake and no misunderstanding. But let us suppose that God had simply said, that the Israelites should wander in the wilderness for forty days, and said nothing more; would any one have ever conjectured that forty years were meant?
Terry concurs with Tregelles and Stuart that there is no support in Numbers 14:34 for the claim that the text establishes a general principle, and much less for a YDP application restriction to certain symbolic passages in the Bible, as the text in Numbers 14:34 is entirely literal and should not provide support for symbolic or apocalyptic texts, and remarks that the “judgment was pronounced on that generation,” and not established as a perpetual directive:

This theory [year-day] derives no valid support from the passages in Numbers and Ezekiel already referred to. In Num. xiv, 33, 34, Jehovah’s word to Israel simply states that they must suffer for their iniquities forty years, “in the number of days which ye searched the land, forty days, a day for the year, a day for the year.” There is no possibility of misunderstanding this. The spies were absent forty days searching the land of Canaan (Num. xiii, 25), and when they returned they brought back a bad report of the country, and spread disaffection, murmuring, and rebellion through the whole congregation of Israel (xiv, 2-4). Thereupon the divine sentence of judgment was pronounced upon that generation, and they were condemned to “graze” (royim, pasture, feed) in the wilderness forty years (xiv, 33). Here then is certainly no ground on which to base the universal proposition that, in prophetic designations of time, a day means a year. The passage is exceptional and explicit, and the words are used in a strictly literal sense; the days evidently mean days, and the years mean years.

Similar Literal Bible Passage

The second biblical passage that the SDA historicists claim as essential for the support and defense of the YDP is the text in Ezekiel 4:6. Just like with Numbers 14:34, the historicists assume that the text in Ezekiel describes and enforces a universal linguistic principle, but ignore the fact that the punishment in Numbers 14:34 was for “unbelief and rebellion,” while the divine parable in Ezekiel 4:6 had been designed with the direct and specific intent to bring God’s people to repentance. State the Glacier View scholars:

Ezekiel 4:4 ff. is a parabolic prophecy in the same vein of thought as the parabolic prophecy of the siege works in chapter 4:1-5 and that of the cut hair in chapter 5:1-12. Generally chapter 4:6 is quoted in support of the year-day principle, but verses 4 and 5 should be added as well. Ezekiel was commanded by God to lie on his left side 390 days for the 390 years Israel was standing in opposition to God, and to lie on his right side 40 days for the violation of God’s law by Judah. Here we have Numbers 14 in reverse. The punishment in Numbers 14:34 was to be one year for each day of unbelief and rebellion, while in Ezekiel the punishment was to be just one day for each year of transgression and rebellion. Ezekiel, then, has the day-for-a-year principle, while Numbers has the year-for-a-day principle.

Shea notices some narrative thread similarities between the passages in Leviticus 14 and Ezekiel 4, but chooses to ignore the dissimilarities between the narratives. Instead, in his struggle to support and defend the YDP, he stipulates that the object lesson in Ezekiel 4 is “dependent upon the earlier one in Numbers [14:34],” and decides that the “equation” in Ezekiel is the linguistic equivalent of the one in Numbers, although he offers a mere speculation for his perspective, and provides no empirical evidence that the two Bible texts support a generalization that could have produced the SDA historicist hermeneutical principle:

Ezekiel 4 describes an acted parable with three main points: the meaning of the pantomime; the prophetic time element involved; and the historical background for the time element…

The time elements of this prophecy warrant comparison with those found in Numbers 14:34. When such a comparison is made, distinct similarities between the two passages emerge.
From these comparisons it can be seen that the later of these two texts (Ezek 4) is directly dependent upon the earlier one in Numbers in several significant ways. The year-day principle found in Ezekiel 4:6 is, therefore, linguistically the same as that found in Numbers 14:34.

That the SDA scholars disagree and even contradict one another about certain issues related to the YDP is obvious again from the comments the Glacier View scholars and Shea make about the “time formulas” in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6. While the Glacier View scholars acknowledge that the two texts describe two time rules, Shea interprets the difference between Numbers 14 and Ezekiel 4 as a variation on the same application theme and ignores the fact that the two quantitative formulas cannot be identical in implementation and results and should be understood as two different hermeneutic time calculation formulas:

The punishment in Numbers 14:34 was to be one year for each day of unbelief and rebellion, while in Ezekiel the punishment was to be just one day for each year of transgression and rebellion. Ezekiel, then, has the day-for-a-year principle, while Numbers has the year-for-a-day principle [emphasis added].

Ezekiel does not say “year for the day” when Numbers says “day for the year.” The latter phraseology (“day for the year, day for the year”) appears in both passages, stated the same way. There is no difference between them in this regard even though their historico-chronological application differs. This fact demonstrates the point that the same year-day principle could be employed in different ways on different occasions [emphasis added].

The two comments above also avoid the main issue – the illogical and unwarranted application of the two biblical texts outside their intended use. Nothing in the texts suggests that the numbers are figurative. In fact, the opposite is true – “day” and “year” are literal in both texts. Also, nothing in the texts indicates that some universal principle was established through their narratives and instructions and that this principle should be extended into a hermeneutical rule that would govern the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation or the prophecies in other biblical books. Such an unjustified and even excessive use of Numbers 14 and Ezekiel 4 seems to be needed in order to validate the SDA peculiar and incorrect historicist perspective on the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation. States Terry again:

The passage [Numbers 14:34] is exceptional and explicit, and the words are used in a strictly literal sense; the days evidently mean days, and the years mean years. The same is true in every particular of the days and years mentioned in Ezek. iv, 5, 6. The days of his prostration were literal days, and they were typical of years, as is explicitly stated. But to derive from this symbolico-typical action of Ezekiel a hermeneutical principle or law of universal application, namely that days in prophecy mean years, would be a most unwarrantable procedure.

This position is shared by Stuart and Tregelles who are quoted below with more support for the position that the texts in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 cannot be used as scientific and legitimate sources to support and defend the YDP when one considers what Stuart calls “the designation of time,” that is, the fact that fulfillment time periods calculated in centuries for the object lessons in Ezekiel 4 would not have been possible from a human point of view:

The usual reference to Ezek. iv. as a ground of justification [for the YDP], is surely wide of the mark. There the prophet is commanded to lie on his left side 390 days, in order to bear the iniquity of the house of Israel, i.e. in order to present a symbol of the punishment which they shall receive, and of the length of time during which it shall be administered; for, it is expressly said to him: “I have appointed to thee each day for
In like manner, he was to lie upon his right side for forty days, so as to symbolize the punishment of Judah for forty years; Ezek. 4:4-6. It matters not for our present purpose, whether these symbolic actions were things to be actually performed by the prophet, or whether they are only represented as being done, (for in either case they would answer the same end for substance); what we are now concerned with is only the designation of time. Nothing can be plainer, than that days are here made the representatives of years from the necessity of the case; for how could the prophet lie upon his left side 390 years? Then, in the next place, the fact that days are to be symbolic of years, is expressly stated at the outset; and plainly it is so stated, because otherwise it would not enter into the mind of either prophet or people, that days could be regarded as the representatives of years. 210

Now this [Ezekiel 4:4-6] is not a symbolic prophecy at all, but simply a symbolic action, which was commanded by God; and unless there had been the express statement, we never could have known that what Ezekiel did, for so many days, really represented the actions of the same number of years. It is true that his is an instance in which a day symbolically represents a year, but the way in which this is done is wholly different from any such ground being taken as though in prophetic language the one were used for the other.

If in this passage day meant year, or if it were to be interpreted by year, what should we find? – that Ezekiel was commanded to lie on his left side three hundred and ninety years, and on his right side forty years. 211

(6). Apocalyptic Prophecies

This group includes texts that the SDA historicists have claimed as apocalyptic prophecies and have interpreted from a historicist perspective. Because their prophetic message was assumed prior to exegesis, these texts, though, have been misinterpreted. This dogmatic perspective, which is known as petitio principii, or “assuming the initial point” is fallacious because it is based on an alleged or assumed fact, and not on empirical confirmation. Such texts, therefore, are not acceptable as factual and reliable evidence for the YDP. Among the texts historicists use in this group some are declared to be the “ultimate evidence” in support of the YDP because it is claimed that they have passed the historicist “pragmatic test.” The Glacier View scholars refer to this assumed supportive “evidence” as “the final arbiter in determining whether the time periods are literal or symbolic,” and then mention some fictitious “prophetic dates” as proof that the principle “works:”

Neither the 1260 days nor the 2300 days fits within the known chronological framework for the Maccabean era, and the abomination of desolation cannot have occurred over a 70-week period. The 70 weeks fits precisely as 490 years from 457 B.C. to A.D. 34, the 3 1/2 times as 1260 years from A.D. 533/538 to 1793/1798, so why cannot the 2300 days fit the period from 457 B.C. to A.D. 1844? The sixth trumpet can be linked from the fall of Constantinople in A.D. 1453 to 1844, so here is another pragmatic confirmation of the validity of the date 1844 and the workability of the year-day principle. 214

Assumptions and Fictional Events

The claim that “neither the 1260 days nor the 2300 days fits within the known chronological framework for the Maccabean era, and the abomination of desolation cannot have occurred over a 70-week period,” is an SDA historicist assumption based on the notion that the Bible is a Time Almanac and that the prophetic visions in Daniel and Revelation present the world’s historical events on a time line with certain “historical landmarks” that have allowed the SDA church to set “prophetic time” dates. What the SDA theologians refuse to accept in their
interpretation is the fact that the initial recipients of those prophecies were the contemporaries to the prophets and not the future generations. An application of the prophetic messages to distant generations at the neglect of those who were the original targets of the prophecies violates and distorts the message of the Bible.

Shea expands on the Glacier View comments and describes two similar kinds of evidence under the “pragmatic test:” (1) the “pragmatic test of historical fulfillment,” and (2) the “pragmatic test of predictive use.” The first issue on the historicist’s validation list is the fulfillment of the “70 [prophetic] weeks of Daniel 9:24-27.” He looks for support in questionable and misinterpreted historical events in order to “prove” that the predictions were fulfilled:

Since the year-day principle appears soundly based in Scripture for the reasons reviewed above, its application should produce some interpretive results that could be confirmed from extrabiblical sources where possible.

The 70 weeks of Daniel 9:24-27 provide a case in point for examination. They were to begin with the issuing of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem. The decree for the return given to Ezra who began that reconstruction (Ezra 4:11-16) was issued in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I (Ezra 7:7-26). The seventh year of Artaxerxes I can be fixed through classical historians, Ptolemy's Canon, the Elephantine papyri, and Neo-Babylonian contract tablets to 458/457 B.C. Jews of that time employed a fall-to-fall calendar (Neh. 1:1; 2:1), so Daniel’s 70 weeks began in the year that extended from the fall of 458 B.C. to the fall of 457 B.C.215

For the second example of “pragmatic test,” Shea indicates Cressener’s calculation on the fulfillment of the 1260 days in Revelation 11-13. The SDA theologian believes that the English interpreter has delivered a historicist prediction for Revelation 11-13 “within two years of the time it actually happened.” Shea considers this “landmark prediction” impressive:

In the year A.D. 1689 an English prophetic interpreter by the name of Drue Cressener (1638-1718) published his predicted date for the end of the 1260 days of Revelation 11-13. This particular time period is given in three different ways in these chapters: 1260 days /42 months /3 1/2 times (Rev 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5). Beginning the prophetic period in the time of Justinian in the sixth century A. D., and by applying the year-day principle to these 1260 days, Cressener came to the conclusion that “the time of the Beast does end about the Year 1800.” He applied the symbol of the beast to the papacy, and the pope was indeed deposed in 1798.

Thus Cressener's specification of the year for that event, and it was given in approximate terms, came within two years of the time it actually happened. This he predicted more than a century before by applying the year-day principle to the time period of this prophecy. Considering the time when this interpretation was set forth, this was a remarkably perceptive prediction. The extraordinary chronological accuracy with which Cressner's prediction met its fulfillment lends support to the idea that he had indeed employed the correct hermeneutical tool with which to interpret this time prophecy, the year-day principle.216

The Failed Historicist Prediction

Some predictions, though, have failed, and the SDA historicists have had to scramble to save themselves from the embarrassment that followed their errors or abandon their claimed fulfillments. Such is the case with Josiah Litch and his prediction about the fall of the Ottoman Empire on August 11, 1840. States Ellen White:
In the year 1840, another remarkable fulfillment of prophecy excited widespread interest [emphasis added]. Two years before, Josiah Litch, one of the leading ministers preaching the Second Advent, published an exposition of Revelation 9, predicting the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and specifying not only the day but the year when this would take place. According to this exposition, which was purely a matter of calculation on the prophetic periods of Scripture, the Turkish government would surrender its independence on the eleventh day of August, 1840.

The prediction was widely published and thousands watched the course of events with eager interest. At the very time specified, Turkey, through her ambassadors, accepted the protection of the allied powers of Europe, and thus placed herself under the control of Christian nations. The event exactly fulfilled the prediction [emphasis added]. When it became known, multitudes were convinced of the correctness of the principles of prophetic interpretation adopted by Miller and his associates, and a wonderful impetus was given to the Advent Movement. Men of learning and position united with Miller, both in preaching and publishing his views, and from 1840 to 1844 the work rapidly extended. 217

But Litch was dead wrong about his prediction, and so was Ellen White when she stated that his prediction ended in “another remarkable fulfillment.” In fact, nothing happened on August 11, 1840, and Litch acknowledged it later in his life. States Anderson:

The truth of the matter is that the month of August, 1840, came and passed without any evidence of Turkey falling. This placed Litch in a quandary. He waited until November, and then came out with a statement saying that Turkey's rejection of a European peace offer on August 15, 1840, assured war with Europe, and doomed the Ottoman Empire. However, by early 1841, it became evident that war was not going to happen. So, Litch came up with a new story, arguing that the fulfillment of prophecy had occurred exactly on August 11, 1840, as predicted. The "fall" of Turkey consisted of a "voluntary surrender of Turkish supremacy in Constantinople to Christian influence." He claimed the Turkish ruler was now a puppet "of the great Christian powers of Europe."

Many Christians questioned Litch's new story. In 1840 the Ottoman Empire covered a vast territory, including a large part of North Africa, Arabia, Palestine, Iraq, southern Russia, and most of the European Balkan states. The Millerite critic Reverend O.E. Daggett argued that Turkey did not "fall" in August of 1840. James Hazen, a Massachusetts clergyman, said the European intervention had kept Turkey from falling. Hazen said the argument that in accepting European aid Turkey fell was "ridiculous." 218

The error that drove Litch to his failed prediction is that he borrowed Miller’s mistaken interpretation of the prophetic time expression “hour and day and month and year” in Revelation 9: 15. Miller had “calculated the five months of the fifth trumpet (Rev. 9:5) to be 150 literal years, and the hour, day, month, and year of the sixth to be 391 years and 15 days.” 219 Litch “revised Miller’s dates to A.D. 1299 to 1449 for the fifth trumpet, and 1449 to 1840 for the sixth,” and then “he predicted that in that month the power of the Turkish Empire would be overthrown.” 220 The “pragmatic test” failed because the time expression “hour and day and month and year” in Daniel 9:15 indicate a point in time, not a time period.

The SDA Church has been known since its inception for its time setting proclivities and its repetitive failures to deliver on its prophetic predictions. In fact, even the origin of the “movement” is buried under Miller’s predictive “debris.” The events described in Revelation 6:12 have been interpreted for a long time in the SDA historicist circles as signs of an immediate Second Coming. Earthquakes and celestial events were explained as fulfillments of the text, and time predictions about Christ’s second coming were made again and again in the SDA Church. When Christ “failed” to come at the predicted times the passage in Revelation 6 was
reinterpreted to fit the SDA historicist needs. There are, therefore, multiple issues with the historicist “pragmatic evidence” for prophetic fulfillment as the SDA historicists present, and some such issues are listed below:

(1) The fact that, in the SDA historicist perspective, some prophecies have been fulfilled does not necessarily mean that the YDP has also been confirmed. To connect the fulfilled prophecies in Daniel and Revelation with the SDA historicist interpretation of historical events is to commit two fallacies: a. the non sequitur (“it does not follow”), which occurs when “the conclusion does not follow from the evidence,”221 and, b. the post hoc (“after this, therefore because of this”),222 that occurs when a false cause is claimed for an event that co-occurs with another event. For instance, it may or it may not be true that the fulfillment of the “70 weeks” prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27 is a confirmation of the YDP. This depends quite a lot on the interpretation of the word sabu’a in Daniel 9:24. The word can be read as “week” or “seven.” If it is read as “seven,” then the YDP is not required, and is not confirmed or validated in the interpretation of the prophetic passage in Daniel 9.

(2) The claimed SDA historicist fulfillment of certain prophecies appears to be supported with evidence from fictional or fabricated events, while actual historical events related to the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation are dismissed as irrelevant to those prophetic passages. For example, the SDA historicists completely ignore the indisputable historical facts which demonstrate that the primary application of the prophecy in Daniel 8:9-14 should be to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and claim that only the Papacy meets the prophetic criteria for the little horn. The witness provided in contemporaneous historical Hebrew narratives that indicate Antiochus IV Epiphanes as the one who fulfilled the prophetic prediction falls on blind eyes and deaf ears in the SDA historicist camp. This absurd SDA approach to the interpretation of Daniel 8:9-14 is not the exception but the rule in the SDA historicist hermeneutics. It should be no surprise, then, that the peculiar SDA interpretation of Daniel and Revelation has been at best ignored and at most ridiculed in all but a few theological circles.

(3) Some prophecies have been reinterpreted after the predictions failed in order to protect the SDA historicists from the embarrassment that would follow the acknowledgement that their Bible interpretations were mistaken. The common excuse was that the purpose of the prophecies and the fulfillment times were misunderstood at the time when the predictions were made because God had hidden their true relevance from the church. Such is the case, for example, with the “2,300 days” time period in Daniel 8:14. When Miller’s eager prediction that Jesus would return in 1844 to cleanse the earth and restore it to its original state failed, the SDA theologians attempted to recover from the interpretation fiasco with the argument that, in fact, an important event occurred in heaven in 1844: Jesus – who had been trapped and locked in a literal “first apartment” of a real “wood and cloth” temple in heaven since 31 A.D., – had moved from that first apartment into a second apartment in order to continue his work as an Aaronic priest. No true biblical or historical evidence is available to support this wild interpretation and unconfirmed claim, but the SDA leaders and theologians hate to be reminded that what brought their church to existence was an interpretation failure hidden under a distortion of the Aaronic priesthood and the book of Hebrews.
Linguistic Evidence Absent

One of the central issues the SDA historicists face in their support and defense of the YDP is that their proposed biblical texts have nothing to do with symbolic or apocalyptic prophecies, while their YDP definition restricts the application of the assumed principle to the apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. Such a definition is illogical, unsound, and unscientific, and places under question the application of the YDP as a valid hermeneutical method or tool because the SDA historicist claim is based on an unsupported assumption that later is treated as factual and supportive evidence for the historicist principle. States Tregelles:

In all these passages, the days when mentioned are simply days, and the years simply years: there is not a single phrase in which it is said that the word days must mean years, except the very places, the meaning of which is the point under discussion. One supposition cannot be brought forward as proof of another.

A distinction has, indeed, been drawn between symbolic and literal prophecies: it is said that in the former we are not to understand days literally, but as the symbols of something else. If this distinction be good, no literal prophecies ought to be brought forward amongst the supposed proofs: -- the sentence of forty days of wandering was a literal, not a symbolic denunciation: Ezekiel, indeed, lay on his side symbolically; but there was no prophecy in the case at all. The use which has been made of this distinction has been to seek thus to avoid the force of literal periods of time mentioned in prophecy which have been literally fulfilled.

The careful examination of all the biblical texts which the SDA historicists have proposed in order to support and defend the YDP shows that those texts have been distorted and misinterpreted in order to validate a pre-established and unscientific theological perspective that favors the SDA historicist prophetic interpretation agenda. The “year-day relationships” in Genesis 5, Leviticus 25, and other biblical texts are not the precursors of the YDP, but derive from simple Hebrew idiomatic expressions that show “day-year” parallelism in the translation process between Hebrew and English. The parallelism in the poetical passages is a rhetorical device, and nothing more than that, and does not expand or evolve into a linguistic rule that governs all biblical texts. To take such texts that have a local application in the Bible and misuse them in order to support and defend an assumed universal principle or rule of interpretation is not correct or legitimate.

The agricultural and Jubilee laws are based in the Hebrew weekly cycle that pervades the Hebrew time perception, but their roles are limited to the religious events described, and do not acquire universal rule force. Numbers 14:34, while a classical prophecy, is written in literal, not symbolic language, and the rhetorical relationship that occurs between “day” and “year” explains the prophetic message, but does not establish a general linguistic principle of interpretation. The text in Ezekiel 4:6 is not a prophecy, but an act of a symbolic nature, and the text is literal in its entirety. To use literal prophecies, expand their literal meaning to a universal rule, and then limit their interpretation application only to symbolic and apocalyptic prophecies is illogical, without linguistic basis, and unscientific.

There is also abundant evidence that the preferred option among the Hebraists and other prominent theologians for the translation of the Hebrew sabu’a in Daniel 9:24 is the English rendition as “seven,” and not as “week.” The reasons for such a translation choice are well
established in linguistic facts. The rendition of *sabu’a* as “seven” makes the historicist time principle irrelevant for the interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27. The historicist support and defense for the YDP fails to deliver with Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6, and the SDA prophetic interpretation tool is shown to be a mere theological *assumption* with no biblical and linguistic support. For the above reasons, the YDP is not a scientific and reliable tool in the interpretation of the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, and its use must be discontinued.
IV. The YDP Defense from Tradition

Overconfidence Is Not Evidence

In the “Year-Day Principle – Part 2”¹ Shea continues the implausible defense and support arguments for the YDP that he proposed in the “Year-Day Principle – Part 1,” makes another desperate effort to authenticate the historicist time rule, this time through an appeal to a claimed Jewish interpreter tradition during the first two centuries of the Christian Era, and argues that those scholars used the YDP for their biblical interpretation. He states:

On the basis of recent researches into the Jewish materials of the second century B.C., it has become evident that the year-day principle was known and applied by Jewish interpreters during the second century down to the post-Qumran period. It is no longer tenable to hold that the principle was a ninth century A. D. phenomenon.²

Pfandl is eager to agree with the senior historicist, and writes a “smart” conclusion to his short paper on the YDP for Reflections in which he does not fail to mention that, in his perspective, the YDP “rests on a solid biblical and historical foundation” [emphasis added]. That he agrees with Shea should be no surprise to the readers who remember that almost all the points the BRI scholar has made in his own unoriginal papers on the YDP seem to duplicate the arguments Ford and Shea had suggested on the issue. That he mentions debatable “historical tradition” as “a solid historical foundation” in support and defense of the YDP demonstrates that he does not understand what rigorous scientific research and empirical evidence are, while the fact that he exhibits overconfidence and insolence in his article should be no news to those who have read at least one or two of his papers on different topics:

Our study has shown that the historicist method of interpretation is not a Johnny-come-lately on the theological scene [emphasis added], rather it rests on a solid biblical and historical foundation. It was used by the angel interpreter in the book of Daniel and during the intertestamental period by Jewish writers. Until the nineteenth century it was employed by most interpreters of the Bible.³

His overconfident claims that the YDP “is not a Johnny-come-lately on the theological scene,” that “it rests on a solid biblical and historical foundation,” that “it was used by the angel interpreter in the book of Daniel,” and that Jewish writers used it “during the intertestamental period,” though, are gratuitous because Pfandl has not provided in his paper empirical support for the claims. He has done nothing more than make some meager assumptions. The conclusion to his paper is a non sequitur.⁴ His work with the Biblical Research Institute, the SDA equivalent to the Magisterium in the Catholic Church, appears to entitle him to believe that his arrogant pronouncements should be accepted as infallible truth. Serious scholars, though, understand the difference between claims and rigorous empirical support for the stated claims.

Tradition Not the Best Defense

Support and defense for the YDP from religious tradition is not “evidence” to which true scholars want to resort. Although it might be correct that this “historicist method of interpretation is not a Johnny-come-lately on the theological scene,” as Pfandl⁵ is enthusiastic to claim in his “clever” statement, such “evidence” does not matter when the YDP is examined from the scientific, empirical point of view. On the contrary, the alleged “historical tradition” could work
against the SDA historicist defense for the YDP because an appeal to tradition, or *argumentum ad antiquitatem*, is a logical fallacy, one of the worst arguments a theologian could resort to, and the weakest argument one could muster in an attempt to prove a point. It is an act of extreme arrogance combined with deep intellectual despair.

Shea himself knows well this fact, and he demonstrates his knowledge on the issue when he warns his readers that from an objective viewpoint his arguments from tradition hold no weight in the support and defense of the YDP. His caveat makes one wonder what could be the possible reasons for the SDA historicist’s proposal of such useless “evidence” to the readers in defense of the “principle:”

However to be purely objective, it should be pointed out that the discovery of the application of the year-day principle in the extrabiblical sources of pertinent Jewish materials does not “prove” that this method of prophetic interpretation was applied by Daniel, nor does it “prove” the correctness of such a method. But it does indicate a very early use by the Jews.

The two SDA historicists should have known better than to make an appeal to religious tradition in order to support and defend the YDP. Their favorite writer, Ellen G. White, the claimed prophet of the SDA church, never missed an opportunity to argue against support from human theories and traditions and warned often and with a strong voice about “the disposition to accept the theories and traditions of men instead of the word of God,” and about theologians who are “clinging to the customs and traditions of their fathers” in order to promote their own religious dogmas and agendas because an appeal to religious tradition indicates nothing less than a refusal to accept the present truth:

But truth is no more desired by the majority today than it was by the papists who opposed Luther. There is the same disposition to accept the theories and traditions of men instead of the word of God as in former ages [emphasis added]. Those who present the truth for this time should not expect to be received with greater favor than were earlier reformers. The great controversy between truth and error, between Christ and Satan, is to increase in intensity to the close of this world's history.

There are many at the present day thus clinging to the customs and traditions of their fathers [emphasis added]. When the Lord sends them additional light, they refuse to accept it, because, not having been granted to their fathers, it was not received by them. We are not placed where our fathers were; consequently our duties and responsibilities are not the same as theirs. We shall not be approved of God in looking to the example of our fathers to determine our duty instead of searching the word of truth for ourselves. Our responsibility is greater than was that of our ancestors. We are accountable for the light which they received, and which was handed down as an inheritance for us, and we are accountable also for the additional light which is now shining upon us from the word of God.

No Support from Jewish Tradition

The “evidence” Shea presents from tradition in the “Year-Day Principle – Part 2” is from some second century Jewish interpreters who, claims Shea, “were first and foremost in the application of the year-day principle to the prophecies.” We will now take a closer look at the “Year-Day Principle – Part 2” material in order to determine if indeed the documents he submits provide empirical and reliable evidence that the mentioned Jewish scholars have indeed used the YDP as a hermeneutical time computation device in their prophetic interpretation.
The first group of Jewish traditional evidence sources is from *Hellenistic Jewish Literature*¹¹ and comprises notes from the *Book of Jubilees*, *Testaments of Levi*, and *1 Enoch*. The common topic thread in these three writings is the use of the Jubilee language for various religious purposes. Shea’s argument that in the first document “we find clear evidence of an extensive use of the year-day principle to mark off the historical periods in Israel's past according to the author's scheme or arrangement,”¹² and that in the second one “it is evident that the author employed the year-day principle when he composed his (Jubilee) chronology,”¹³ is gratuitous and fanciful because outside Jubilee language there is nothing in those texts to support his claim that the authors used the YDP in their documents. This is another case of *non sequitur*.¹⁴

The *Qumran Literature*¹⁵ comprises the second group of traditional sources that Shea claims to provide solid evidence for an early use of the YDP. The texts included in this group are *11QMelchizedek*, *4Q384-390 Pseudo-Ezekiel*, and *4Q180-181 The Ages of Creation*. The connecting thought threads for these texts are references to the 70 weeks and the Jubilee language. Shea’s claims are that because in the first text the writers subdivided the Jubilee into weeks, the basic and simple calculation “required the use of the year-day principle whether or not it is explicitly stated in the portions of the texts that have survived,”¹⁶ that in the second text “this fragmentary unpublished document derives its building blocks from Daniel's (YDP interpreted) 70 weeks,”¹⁷ and that in the third text, “although the year-day principle is not explicitly stated, it must be employed in order to make any historical application of the 70 weeks of Azazel.”¹⁸ Just as with the first group of texts, Shea’s contention that the second group of texts supports the YDP is a fanciful, wishful thought.

Among the *Post-Qumran Interpreters*,¹⁹ Josephus, the Romano–Jewish historian and hagiographer, appears to provide significant and relevant reverse evidence against the claim that the YDP was used in the first centuries of the Christian Era. The historian should have known about such a principle, and, of course, should have used it in his prophetic studies, if this rule was available in his time – which does not appear to be the case. Josephus, instead, “took the time element of the prophecy as literal time,” which should be read as incontrovertible evidence that the informed scholar had no idea about the “principle.” States Shea himself:

> Josephus applied the “little horn” of Daniel 8 to Antiochus Epiphanes (*Ant. 10. 275-276*). He took the time element of the prophecy as literal time, stating it to be 1296 days (*Ant. 10. 271*). This figure is apparently a garbled form of the 1290 days assigned in Daniel 12:11 to “the abomination of desolation” which he substituted for the 2300 evening-mornings (or days) originally in the passage of Daniel 8:14. The 1296 days are approximated to the three literal years the Temple service was disrupted by Antiochus.²⁰

Still, Shea manages to turn around the clear evidence that Josephus, the ancient historian and scholar, did not use the YDP, and in the next two paragraphs the SDA historicist theologian argues the opposite of what he had stated in the first paragraph, and claims that there is “indirect evidence” that Josephus “understood the 2300 evening-mornings as longer, not shorter than the 1290 days,” and “the 70 weeks as symbolic,” and, therefore, did use the YDP in his writings:

> Josephus’ use of the 1290 days here is indirect evidence, incidentally, for the fact that he probably understood the 2300 evening-mornings as longer, not shorter than the 1290 days. That is, he evidently understood that they should not be divided in half to make 1150 days, a procedure that would have suited his interpretation better had he accepted it as the time unit involved.
Although it is not entirely clear, it seems that Josephus understood Daniel 9:24-27 as containing a reference to the Romans and their destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by them (Ant. 10. 276). If so, such a view would require him to interpret the 70 weeks as symbolic. Thus the evidence for his use of anything like the year-day principle is indirect and may only be proposed for this particular passage.21

The texts included in the Post-Qumran Interpreters group are from the Early Rabbinical Interpreters, and include Seder Olam, 4 Ezra, and Assumption of Moses. About the first text, in which “the author sees 10 jubilees = 70 sabbatical cycles = 490 years elapsing from Nebuchadnezzar's overthrow of the nation and its temple to the Roman conquest by Titus,” Shea claims that such a time extension requires a calculation “on a day for a year scheme.”22 The second text, states the SDA historicist, “makes use of the word for ‘week’ as a ‘week of years’ on the basis of the year-day principle in two passages,”23 although the “week of years” is common language in Leviticus 25, and the third text, because “a time element is mentioned that suggests it was interpreted symbolically rather than in a literal sense,”24 seems also to support the SDA historicist principle. In her book, Wood includes Shea’s kind of support and defense for the YDP under manufactured evidence,25 that is, textual misinterpretation and distortion with the express purpose to draw out of the texts propositional truth that was not intended to be in them and that cannot be found there.

Medieval Theological Invention

Numerous scholars who have done intensive and thorough studies on the YDP and have examined the historicist support and defense of the principle have quite a different perspective about the time when the YDP “hit” the “theological market.” That the Old Testament prophets never used the “principle” in order to understand the prophecies revealed to them is no great secret. Tregelles, for instance, refers to Daniel the prophet, and makes the following remarks about the prophet’s time hermeneutics in relation to Shea’s unsupported claim that the YDP was used in the Old Testament time and in the first two centuries of the Christian Era:

The next witness is Daniel the prophet himself. In chapter ix. 2 he tells us that he understood by books, the prophecy of Jeremiah, that the Lord would accomplish seventy years in the desolation of Jerusalem. Daniel did not understand the period spoken of by Jeremiah according to the arbitrary canon ["year-day system"] which some would now apply to his own prophecies. He understood seventy years to mean seventy years, and not twenty-five thousand two hundred years. Thus, this very chapter of Daniel, from which some (even though it is a prophecy free from all symbol) would draw a proof for their theory, supplies decisive evidence against it.26

Maitland expands on Tregelles’s perspective and the time element, and elaborates on the fact that there is no palpable evidence in the historical sources that the apostles, the primitive church, or the Jewish and Christian believers who lived in the first centuries knew and used the YDP in their prophetic interpretation:

Familiarly as even the most superficial readers have now learned to talk of the “prophetic style” of a “day for a year,” I believe that any such interpretation of the prophetic period of Daniel (or of any other period) was altogether unknown by the Jewish church before the Christian era—by the Apostles of our Lord—by the primitive church—by the Fathers—in short, that no man ever thought of interpreting the days mystically, or that any period of 1260 years was marked out, during (to say the very least) the first twelve centuries of Christianity.27
In his book *Horae Apocalypticae*, an eschatological work on the Book of Revelation that is considered one of the most elaborate treatises on the topic due to its comprehensive documentation, Elliot, an enthusiastic historicist, confirms Maitland’s statement and states that in the first four centuries the Christian interpreters did not know or use the YDP. Elliot makes this definite statement after he has “made [his] own research to ascertain the correctness of his [Maitland’s] assertion” about the YDP use in prophetic interpretations:

*The novelty of the year-day principle of interpretation; as having been unknown in the Christian Church from the days of Daniel to those of Wycliffe.* The statement thus broadly made, was a little, though but little, qualified in a later publication of Mr. Maitland: with the which however I was unacquainted, till after I had made my own researches to ascertain the correctness of his assertion. This qualification, and the modified yet still strong assertion of the novelty of the year-day principle in Mr. M’s latest publication on the subject, shall in due course be noticed. For the present I think it best to lay the facts of the case, as they presented themselves in the course of my enquiry, before the reader.

And, it is, I believe, the fact, that for the first four centuries, the days mentioned in Daniel’s and the Apocalyptic prophecies respecting Antichrist were interpreted literally as days, not as years, by the Fathers of the Christian church.\(^2\)

Burgh reiterates Elliot’s statement about the origins and application of the YDP in the first centuries, and argues for a literal prophetic interpretation at that time, while Tregelles states that the consensus among scholars is that the literal prophetic interpretation dominated the patristic interpretations in the first Christian centuries, while the figurative interpretation of the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation occurred later in the church. It also appears that the church theologians used the YDP after they had discarded a mystical approach hermeneutics:

It is admitted by the supporters of that theory [“the day-for-year system”] that for the first four centuries at least the “days” in Daniel’s and the Apocalyptic prophecies respecting Anti-Christ were interpreted literally by the Fathers of the Christian Church.\(^2^9\)

It is admitted that, for the first centuries, the days mentioned in the prophecies of Daniel and in the Apocalypse were interpreted literally by the Fathers of the Church; but from the fifth to the twelfth century, a mystical meaning came to be attached to the period of 1260 days, though not the true one. At the close of the fourteenth century, Walter Brute first suggested the year-day interpretation, which was fully espoused by the Magdeburg Centuriators, and applied to the Papacy. – (Elliot, vol. ii pp. 965-972).\(^3^0\)

Maitland argues that Josephus provides definite evidence that, indeed, the Jews and the Christians in the first centuries were not familiar with the YDP and never used the historicist principle as a hermeneutical tool because the scholar “understood the times of Daniel to mean literal years,” and interpreted the prophetic message included in Daniel chapter 8 in a literal manner. This could not have happened if Josephus had been familiar with the historicist principle:"

That he [Josephus] understood the times of Daniel to mean literal years, is evident from his application of the prophecy to the profanation of the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes. He says, “this desolation happened to the Temple in the 145th year, on the 25th day of the month Apelleus, and on the 153d Olympiad; but it was dedicated anew, on the same day, the 25th of the month Apelleus, on the 148th year, and on the 145th Olympiad. And this desolation came to pass according to the prophecy of Daniel, &c (Antiq. B xx. C.7 par. 6 Whinston Trans.).\(^3^1\)
Martin Luther, the great sixteenth century scholar and protestant reformer, should have known the YDP and should have used it in his prophetic interpretation work, but does not appear to have been familiar with the YDP or used the principle in his research. The case for Luther’s unintentional or intentional ignorance or disregard of the principle in his prophetic interpretation would be hard to make. States Barnes in the “Year-Day Principle” section of his book:

Meantime we shall only remark, that while Luther certainly had arrived at no definite conclusions regarding the Apocalyptic designations of time, his mind nevertheless was in search of some principle by which he should be enabled to extend the times beyond the literal sense. Nor need it in any way surprise us, that definite ideas on this subject should only have been obtained when the notion became settled and prevalent that the Popedom was the Apocalyptic Antichrist, and the interpretation of times on a scale suited to the duration of that system became, in consequence, imperative.32

Stuart, the theologian and scholar, examined the historicist time hermeneutic, and the investigation brought him to the conclusion that there was no evidence for such a principle in the Bible. He also wrote a lot about this matter. In his extensive arguments against the YDP as a time tool for prophetic interpretation, Stuart dates the first knowledge and usage of the YDP in the “first quarter of the seventeenth century” when Mede published his book on Revelation:

In the English world, this mode of reckoning [“making a day to be the representative of year”], in respect to the Apocalypse, became current principally in consequence of the publication of the Clovis Apocalyptica of Joseph Mede, in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. Counting upon the command given to the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek: 4:4-6), to reckon each day on which he lay upon his left or his right side, as the symbol or representative of one year’s punishment to be inflicted upon the houses of Israel and Judah; appealing also to Dan. 9:24, where seventy weeks seem to be reckoned as meaning weeks of years = 490 years; Mede and most of his followers seem scarcely to have pursued the inquiry, whether the same principle of reckoning could be justly applied to the Apocalypse. They have taken it for granted, at least most expounders in our churches have done so, that the principle of counting a day for a year is too plain to need special confirmation, or to admit of any reasonable contradiction.33

The Swedish SDA scholar Arasola is another historicist who does not seem impressed with Shea’s claim that the YDP was used as a hermeneutical time tool during the first Christian centuries. His perspective is that the year=day prophetic time calculation occurred much later:

Towards the dawn of the second millennium of the Christian era some Jewish scholars began calculating prophetic time by counting years for days. This device made it possible to date the eschaton close to the year 1000 when applied to the periods of 1260 days, 1290 days, or 1335 days as found in Daniel. Joachim of Fiore (1130-1202) is the first Christian who is known to have employed the year-day method. He applied it on the 1260 days of the Book of Revelation, and his imaginative play with cryptic numbers aroused widespread interest in apocalyptic figures.35 Without a change in the exegesis of the prophetic times it would have been difficult to reapply eschatological imagery and keep it relevant.34

Norman F. Douty has researched the YDP in relation to the SDA historicism, and has understood from his research that without this hermeneutical principle the SDA church would have no support to claim its existence as a “prophetic movement.” His statements on the origin and use of the YDP in prophetic interpretation seem to summarize the perspectives of the previous writers on the matter. The position he takes, based on the evidence he collected, is that the earliest time the YDP was used in the time interpretation of Daniel and Revelation was in the ninth century, and that there is no evidence for the use of the YDP in the first two centuries:
This refutation of its own contention about Dan. 9, on the part of Seventh-day Adventism, annihilates the case for the year-day theory. Nevertheless, Adventists infer that the pre-Christian Rabbis and the early Fathers adhered to it, because they understood “the seventy weeks” as seventy weeks of years. However, we have positive evidence from their own writings that the Fathers did not follow this line of interpretation. Justin Martyr, in his “Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew,” says: “He who Daniel foretells would have dominion for a time and times and an half, is even already at the door, about to speak blasphemous and daring things against the Most High. But you, being ignorant of how long he will have dominion, hold another opinion. For you interpret the ‘time’ as being a hundred years. But if this is so, the man of sin must, at the shortest, reign three hundred and fifty years” (Chap. XXXII). Irenaeus, the Apostle John’s spiritual grandson, says that the three and a half times mean “three years and six months” (Against Heresies, Chap. XXV. 3).

As a matter of fact, Questions on Doctrine itself shows that the early church could not have followed the year-day idea. On pages 467-8 we read: “Premillenialism was strong in the early Christian Church. The believers looked for a breakup of the Roman Empire and the coming of a malign anti-Christ who would persecute the saints for three years and a half, followed by the personal advent of Christ. They expected a literal first resurrection at the advent and the setting up of a thousand-year kingdom of the saints reigning with Christ… this belief they based on the N.T. prophecies together with the historical prophecies of Daniel, in which they found themselves under the fourth kingdom. They expected the further unfolding of these events in history soon after their day, for they looked for the Second Advent shortly. The millennial kingdom…was generally understood to be on earth with the saints reigning over the nations in the flesh.” This accurate account shows that the early Fathers could not have contemplated any prolonged period as preceding Christ’s return.

It was not until medieval times that Jewish and Christian teachers actually advanced year-dayism (cf. pp. 260, 310). It was first set forth by the former group in the ninth century, and by the latter three centuries later. Joachim of Floris, in Italy, at the close of the twelfth century, applied it as well to the 1290, 1335, and 2300 days found in Daniel. Joachim was one “whose object it was to exalt the Papacy on the ruins of the episcopacy” (Jas. H. Todd on Antichrist, p. 453). The writers who immediately followed him were defenders of extreme authority for the Pope.

It is true that most, though not all, of the Reformers, from Wycliffe down, applied the year-day principle to the interpretation of prophecy, but it is plain that they derived it from Rome. The remark of John Robinson, at the departure of the Mayflower Pilgrims from Holland in 1620, is appropriate here: “It is not possible the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick antichristian darkness, and that full perfection of knowledge should break forth at once.” It is plain, therefore, that “completing the work of the Reformation” involves discarding the year-day theory. Yet Seventh-day Adventism, which claims to be divinely called to this work of completion, has this very theory as its bedrock foundation, so that to discard it would be to destroy itself.

 Tradition Evidence Fabricated

The Jewish literature examined in this sub-section of the YDP document indicates that the SDA historicist claim that the time equation was used during OT times and in the first centuries B.C. is false. Daniel the prophet and John the Revelator provide no clue for this hermeneutical time rule in their books. The purported “evidence” collected from the second century Jewish interpreters supposed to have applied the principle in their works does not stand rigorous examination. It appears that the “proof” Shea, Moon, Pfandl, and other SDA historicists advance from the Jewish literature in support and defense for the prophetic time principle has been fabricated in order to meet the need of the SDA historicists to validate the YDP. Most scholars appear to agree that the earliest time the YDP was applied in the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation was during the ninth century.
Even if the evidence from the Jewish literature and tradition were true and factual, that still does not change the fact that such documentation “does not ‘prove’ that this [YDP] method of prophetic interpretation was applied by Daniel, nor does it ‘prove’ the correctness of such a method.” Such evidence corroborates that the YDP was used for prophetic time interpretation in the historicist circles, but does not demonstrate that the YDP is empirical and authentic and that it is an appropriate and effective interpretation tool for the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation and for the entire Bible. The arguments against the YDP as a time interpretation tool have been submitted in the previous sections of this document, and it is obvious that this hermeneutical principle does not stand the scientific test and has no empirical basis in the Bible or in the prophetic interpretation tradition of the first centuries.
V. Historicist Application of the YDP

We have shown in section II of this document that the historicist definition for the time principle limits its application to the symbolic and apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, although some SDA theologians have extended the YDP application to some other biblical text categories or have been vague about its application (Moon, for example, makes the ambiguous and evasive claim that the YDP applies to “certain time prophecies”). Because the SDA historicists have drawn all biblical support and defense for the YDP from non-symbolic and non-apocalyptic texts but have limited the YDP’s application to symbolic and apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, this unscientific data generalization and application limitation and restriction has made the historicist time principle questionable as a prophetic time interpretation method.

The restrictive and selective YDP application becomes obvious when one considers the total number of biblical texts to which the traditional historicists have applied the claimed principle. Tregelles states that, from all accounts, the number has never been more than ten, and mentions eight of those texts in the quote below:

And now, to consider the principal statements of time to which this supposed canon is applied: — they are—
I. —The time, times, and a half, Dan. vii. 25 and xii.7.
II. —The two thousand three hundred days, Dan. viii.14.
III. —The twelve hundred and ninety days, Dan. xii.11.
IV. —The thirteen hundred and five and thirty days, Daniel. xii. 12.
V. —The five months, Rev. ix. 5, 10.
VI. —The hour, and day, and month, and year, Rev. ix. 15.
VII. —The three days and a half, Rev. xi. 9, 10.

The SDA historicist theologians have also applied the YDP to a small and selected number of texts – less than 20, it seems – although the specific applications of the time principle differ to a certain degree from theologian to theologian. Later in this document the readers will encounter evidence that the number of texts to which the SDA historicist have applied the principle is almost insignificant when one considers the total number of time expressions that occur in the entire Bible. The same is the case with the principle’s application to Daniel and Revelation. In this section of the document we will review and examine the texts to which the SDA historicists have applied the YPD, in order to establish whether or not the time rule application to those texts follows the definition parameters:

Genesis 29:27

The Glacier View scholars make the absurd and frivolous claim that the patriarchs have applied the YDP for routine mathematical operations that did not require more than common sense and fingers. This is the case, for instance, with the marriage deal between Laban and Jacob in the historical narrative of Genesis 29:27:

Genesis 29:27 indicates that Jacob’s period of service to Laban in return for his coveted bride Rachel must have been computed on the year-day principle. Quoting the words of Laban, this verse reads: “Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years.”
Besides the fact that to strike such a simple number deal was a “no brainer” for two men who had to count their large herds all the time and who never had to use a mathematical “principle” or “rule” in order to accomplish the task, if indeed Laban had used the time principle in order to explain to Jacob that he would have to serve seven more years for Rachel, then either the historicist YDP definition is incorrect when it restricts its application to the symbolic and apocalyptic texts, or the Glacier View scholars’ application of the YDP to the above historical narrative text is inappropriate because Genesis 29:27 is not a prophetic, symbolic, or apocalyptic passage. The SDA historicists seem to be expert in contradictions and misstatements about the YDP, and this situation is another example of the confusion and disorientation that plague the SDA perspective on the time principle.

Leviticus 25:1-7

Shea claims that the agrarian law passage in Leviticus 25:1-7 “reflects” the YDP, and in order to establish his case the theologian proposes an assumed and undefined relationship between the “sabbatical day” and the “sabbatical year.” This phenomenon happens, claims the SDA historicist, because the second time expression is “modeled” from the first:

This is the earliest biblical text in which the year-day principle is reflected. In this piece of Levitical legislation an institution which has come to be designated as the sabbatical year was established for the Israelite agricultural economy. 4

It is clearly implied in Leviticus 25:1-7 that the sabbatical year is modeled from the sabbatical day, that is, from the weekly Sabbath. Six days of labor were followed by the seventh day of Sabbath rest; six years of farming were to be followed by a seventh year of sabbath rest for the land. The seventh-day Sabbath was to be a Sabbath of “solemn rest” (Lev 23:3); and the seventh year, the sabbatical year, was likewise to be a sabbath of “solemn rest” for the land (Lev 25:4, 5).

Thus there is a direct relationship between the “day” and the “year” since the same terminology was applied to both, and the latter sabbatical year was patterned after the former sabbatical day. This relationship becomes clearer quantitatively when the next piece of legislation in Leviticus 25 pertaining to the jubilee period is considered. 5

What Shea means when he states that the YDP is “reflected” in the texts above is not clear, but the fact that he offers no explanation for the YDP application to the above texts leaves the reader confused. Shea also claims in categorical terms that “it is clearly implied in Leviticus 25:1-7 that the sabbatical year is modeled from the sabbatical day,” but this is just an assumption on his part, and nothing more. He does not present any textual evidence to support his claim, and the Leviticus 25:1-7 passage contains no direct implication that the Hebrews derived the “sabbatical year” from the “sabbatical day.” His claim seems to rest on his personal opinion, and has no empirical weight. When we also consider that the biblical texts, as he clearly states, are not part of symbolic, apocalyptic, or even classical prophecy, but include “Levitical legislation,” then our confusion grows because the YDP definition that Shea himself has approved and sponsored restricts the YDP application to apocalyptic prophecies. Such flagrant logical contradictions and unprofessional assumptions from a theologian like Shea who is considered one of the best SDA scholars and apologists are hard to understand and accept, and reveal the weakness that characterizes the SDA theological perspective. Here again, then, we find another
example of SDA poor theological scholarship that has led to an illogical and inconsistent application of the YDP to the Bible.

Leviticus 25:8

For this text, Shea continues to expand and elaborate on the claim that he has made for the Leviticus 25:1-7 texts that the passage “reflects” the YDP, or that the YDP “operates” in the same manner in verse 8 as it “operated” in the previous verses, although the theologian had submitted no evidence for such an “operation.” The confusion about what it means that the principle is “reflected” in Leviticus 25 still remains because it has never been cleared, and leaves doubt about the proper application of the principle. States the SDA historicist:

Even though this is a legislative passage, the day-year principle operates the same way here as it does in Daniel – the use of “days” (extended into the future) to mark off the “years” of the future...6

The explanation of the first numerical expression, as given in the second phrase of the same clause, indicates that a “sabbath of years” is to be understood as a period of seven years. The Sabbath was the seventh day of the week. In this passage the seventh day has been taken to stand for a seventh year. As the seventh and concluding day of the week, the Sabbath has been taken over here to stand for the seventh year of a period of seven years. Thus each day of the “weeks” that end with these “Sabbaths” in the jubilee cycle stands for one year.7

This is another absurd claim Shea makes while he ignores the obvious adverse evidence contained in the biblical passage. The Leviticus 25:8-55 texts refer to the Hebrew Jubilee legislation, and nothing else, and in them the Hebrews are taught how to calculate and observe the Jubilee time. All this Jubilee legislation is written in literal Hebrew language that includes no symbolism. The Leviticus 25:8-55 texts are not part of a symbolic or symbolic-apocalyptic message, and do not require the YDP for their interpretation. It appears that Shea’s intellectual vision has become so much affected with historicist assumptions and distortions that he now sees the YDP application inside texts where there is no evidence for it.

Numbers 14:34

Shea claims that the text in Numbers 14:34 is an example of “specific biblical use of the year-day principle,”8 but does nothing to explain how a classical prophecy passage could be the main linguistic background for a principle that will be applied exclusively to apocalyptic prophecies. No matter how hard the SDA historicists work to make this issue look of little importance or relevance, the fact remains that rules are generalizations that derive from the sample pools that establish the parameters for the later applications. Just as in the previous situations, the Numbers 14:34 text is literal in intention and content, and the text’s interpretation is also literal, and not symbolic.

Ezekiel 4:6

Shea states that “Ezekiel 4 describes an acted parable,”9 which means that the passage does not include a symbolic prophecy, but a symbolic action. The time expressions in the text are literal, not symbolic, and the explanation for the symbolic action is also literal and included in
the text. There is no suggestion in the text that the passage should be used as a rule or equation with general application to the Bible, or that it is a universal rule with general application. This appears to be another example of flagrant disregard for the historicism’s own YDP definition.

Daniel 9:24

Concerning this text, Shea claims that “all commentators on Daniel agree that the events prophesied in Daniel 9:24-27 could not have been completed within a literal 70 weeks or one year and five months.” While this is true, it is also true that Daniel 9:24 does not need the YDP in order to be interpreted. The SDA historicists base their case on their preferred and tendentious rendition for the term (sabu’a) as “week” and not “seven.” Here, though, opinions among scholars are divided. While most scholars, as shown in section III of this document (Historicist Defense of the YDP), believe that (sabu’a) should be read as “seven,” the SDA theologians continue to insist that the Hebrew term should be rendered as “week.” Heppenstall and the revised SDABC on the other side, agree that the term’s definition should be “seven” or “heptade.” The empirical facts show that the SDA historicists do not have a solid case for the rendition “week,” and that Daniel 9:24-27 does not require the YDP for its interpretation.

Daniel 8:14

This text is perhaps the most important for the SDA historicist theologians in connection with the YDP application because their most essential and peculiar theological dogma, the “sanctuary doctrine,” depends on the unique SDA historicist interpretation of the text. The time principle’s application to Daniel 8:14 allows for a prophetic explanation of Daniel chapter 8 that has enabled the SDA historicists to insist on their unbiblical and absurd theological contention that “the heavenly sanctuary is to be cleansed from the sins of the professed people of God.”

The matters, though, are not so simple for the SDA theologians and their unique interpretation of Daniel 8:14. When one examines the context of the passage it becomes clear that verse 14 in chapter 8 is not part of the symbolic and apocalyptic prophecy but part of the literal explanation of the vision in Daniel 8:1-12, which means that according to the time principle’s definition that restricts its application to apocalyptic prophecies, the principle should never be applied to this literal text. The application of the YDP to Daniel 8:14 is not legitimate and scientific, and could not be the basis for the SDA peculiar interpretation of the vision in Daniel chapter 8. States Tregelles:

The second passage (Dan. viii.14) is literally “unto two thousand three hundred evenings mornings,” referring to the offering of the daily sacrifice each morning and evening. This also occurs in an explanation [emphasis added]; so that the symbolic theory (even if it had any true foundation, instead of being, as it is, a gratuitous assumption), would avail nothing. The expression seems such as intentionally to exclude all thought of other than real days.

Tregelles’ statement is rather short, but because the issue is too important, an expanded comment on Daniel 8:14 seems to be appropriate here so that the readers will have a complete perspective on what the Hebraist means in the counter-argument he submits against the historicist YDP. The SDA scholars have stated for quite a long time that Daniel 8:14 is the “standard text” for the application of the YDP because of its linguistic characteristics. The usual
SDA historicist claim is that the text is part of a symbolic and apocalyptic prophecy, and that, therefore, the YDP application to it cannot be more appropriate. A closer look at the entire context in Daniel chapter 8, though, shows that the SDA historicist claim for the above text is not based on rigorous linguistic evidence, but on a superficial look at the biblical text.

Most theologians divide Daniel 8 into two parts: (1) the vision, and (2) the interpretation or explanation to the vision. The first part of the prophetic chapter is contained in verses 1-12 and describes the vision of the ram, goat, and the little horn, while the second part of the chapter, verses 13-26, includes the angelic interpretation or explanation of the vision and begins with verse 13:

13 YLT And I hear a certain holy one speaking, and a certain holy one saith to the wonderful numberer who is speaking: Till when [is] the vision of the continual [sacrifice], and of the transgression, an astonishment, to make both sanctuary and host a treading down?

In this prose or literal verse, a “holy one” asks the other “holy one” for how long the events related to the little horn’s transgression and desolation will last, and the answer to the question, which is part of the vision’s literal interpretation or explanation, is provided in verse 14. This exchange between the two “holy ones” occurs after the vision had been completed and while Daniel tried to understand the prophetic message he had received:

14 YLT And he saith unto me, Till evening – morning two thousand and three hundred [days], then is the holy place declared right.

The content organization of Daniel chapter 8 and the significant difference between the symbolic-apocalyptic or vision section of the chapter and the prose or literal section can be understood better if the symbolic-apocalyptic section, that is, (1) the vision, and the prose-literal section, that is, (2) the interpretation or explanation to the vision are included in a table such as the one below:

### Daniel Chapter 8 – The Two Sections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section in Daniel</th>
<th>Full Text in Daniel</th>
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| **Section 1:** Daniel 8: 1-12 | **Daniel 8: 1-12**  
Young's Literal Translation (YLT)  
8 In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king, a vision hath appeared unto me -- I Daniel -- after that which had appeared unto me at the beginning.  
2 And I see in a vision, and it cometh to pass, in my seeing, and I [am] in Shushan the palace that [is] in Elam the province, and I see in a vision, and I have been by the stream Ulai.  
3 And I lift up mine eyes, and look, and lo, a certain ram is standing before the stream, and it hath two horns, and the two horns [are] high; and the one [is] higher than the other, and the high one is coming up last.  
4 I have seen the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward, and no living creatures do stand before it, and there is none delivering out of its hand, and it hath done according to its pleasure, and hath exerted itself.  
5 And I have been considering, and lo, a young he-goat hath come from the west, over the face of the whole earth, whom none is touching in the earth; as to the young he-goat, a conspicuous horn [is] between its eyes.  
| The symbolic-apocalyptic section of the chapter: |  
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The Divine vision.

6 And it cometh unto the ram possessing the two horns, that I had seen standing before the stream, and runneth unto it in the fury of its power.
7 And I have seen it coming near the ram, and it becometh embittered at it, and smiteth the ram, and breaketh its two horns, and there hath been no power in the ram to stand before it, and it casteth it to the earth, and trampleth it down, and there hath been no deliverer to the ram out of its power.
8 And the young he-goat hath exerted itself very much, and when it is strong, broken hath been the great horn; and come up doth a vision of four in its place, at the four winds of the heavens.
9 And from the one of them come forth hath a little horn, and it exerteth itself greatly toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the beauteous [land];
10 yea, it exerteth unto the host of the heavens, and causeth to fall to the earth of the host, and of the stars, and trampleth them down.
11 And unto the prince of the host it exerteth itself, and by it taken away hath been the continual [sacrifice], and thrown down the base of his sanctuary.
12 And the host is given up, with the continual [sacrifice], through transgression, and it throweth down truth to the earth, and it hath worked, and prospered.

Section 2: Daniel 8:13-27

The Prose or Literal Section Of The Chapter:

Daniel 8:13-27
Young's Literal Translation (YLT)

13 And I hear a certain holy one speaking, and a certain holy one saith to the wonderful numberer who is speaking: Till when [is] the vision of the continual [sacrifice], and of the transgression, an astonishment, to make both sanctuary and host a treading down?
14 And he saith unto me, Till evening -- morning two thousand and three hundred, then is the holy place declared right.
15 And it cometh to pass in my seeing -- I, Daniel -- the vision, that I require understanding, and lo, standing over--against me [is] as the appearance of a mighty one.
16 And I hear a voice of man between [the banks of] Ulai, and he calleth and saith: Gabriel, cause this [one] to understand the appearance.
17 And he cometh in near my station, and at his coming in I have been afraid, and I fall on my face, and he saith unto me: Understand, son of man, for at the time of the end [is] the vision.
18 And in his speaking with me, I have been in a trance on my face, on the earth; and he cometh against me, and causeth me to stand on my station,
19 and saith: Lo, I -- I am causing thee to know that which is in the latter end of the indignation; for, at the appointed time [is] the end.
20 The ram that thou hast seen possessing two horns, [are] the kings of Media and Persia.
21 And the young he-goat, the hairy one, [is] the king of Javan; and the great horn that [is] between its eyes is the first king;
22 and that being broken, stand up do four in its place, four kingdoms from the nation do stand up, and not in its power.
23 And in the latter end of their kingdom, about the perfecting of the transgressors, stand up doth a king, fierce of face, and understanding hidden things;
24 and his power hath been mighty, and not by his own power; and wonderful things he destroyeth, and he hath prospered, and wrought, and destroyed mighty ones, and the people of the Holy Ones.
25 And by his understanding he hath also caused deceit to prosper in his hand, and in his heart he exerteth himself, and by ease he destroyeth many; and against the prince of princes he standeth -- and without hand he is broken.
26 And the appearance of the evening and of the morning, that is told, is true; and thou, hide thou the vision, for [it is] after many days.'
27 And I, Daniel, have been, yea, I became sick [for] days, and I rise, and do the king's work, and am astonished at the appearance, and there is none understanding.

The Angelic Explanation or Interpretation of The Vision.
It is obvious, then, that the Hebrew time expression רָאָה בּוֹקֶר (e·rev bo·ker), translated into English as “evening – morning two thousand and three hundred” is not symbolic but literal, that is, part of the interpretation or explanation the “saint” delivers to Daniel about the vision. There is no reason, if we consider the SDA historicist definition of the YDP, for the application of the principle to this text. In truth, the SDA interpretation of Daniel 8 is not based in actual facts. The historical Jewish events and the historical Jewish witness accounts have been discarded and replaced with a fabricated narrative that matches the SDA pre-established historicist interpretation conclusions for Daniel 8.

The Historical Evidence Denied

Those who are acquainted with the ancient Jewish historical records have no doubt that the little horn who desecrates the temple in Daniel 8 and persecutes the Jews is the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The first book of Maccabees, an accurate historical narrative based on factual witness reports, describes in detail Antiochus’s cruel exploits, the aggressive suppression of the Jewish religion, the desecration of the temple, and the Maccabean rebellion that ended in the restoration of the temple and the resumption of the Jewish ritual sacrifices. Josephus, the famous scholar and historian, also describes in precise and accurate statements the Seleucid king’s attempt to annihilate the Jewish religion, the utter desecration of the Jewish temple, and its restoration. To ignore the historical narrative and the true application of the prophetic vision and to create a fictional record in which Rome is the little horn in Daniel 8 seems to be nothing less than to interpret the chapter from a futurist and not a historicist perspective. Stuart summarizes the historical events that are the factual basis for the prophetic vision in Daniel chapter 8 in these words:

In the year 168 A.C. [Ante Christum – “Before Christ”], in the month of May, Antiochus, on his way to make an attack upon Egypt, detached Apollonius, one of his military officers, with 22,000 men, to subdue and plunder Jerusalem. This was accomplished. A horrible slaughter was made of the men, and the women and children were made captives, and multitudes of them sold as slaves. The Jews were soon compelled to eat swine’s flesh, and to sacrifice to idols. In December of that same year, the temple was profaned by introducing the statue of Jupiter Olympius, and on the 25th of that month, sacrifices were made to this idol upon the altar of God. Just three years after this, i.e. in 165 A. C. Dec 25th, the temple was expurgated by Judas Maccabaeus, and the worship of Jehovah restored. Thus three years and six months, if not to the day, yet very nearly so, marked the period of desolation in the holy city and temple as predicted by Daniel.*

McHarg also makes a detailed and effective 12 point case based on Jewish historical evidence that Antiochus IV Epiphanes is the little horn in Daniel 8, and demonstrates that Antiochus meets the prophetic criteria for the little horn. In order to provide more factual support for his arguments, McHarg also includes a dramatic quote from William Barclay about what the Jews suffered at the Seleucid king’s hands:

Eighty thousand Jews were either slaughtered or sold into slavery. To circumcise a child or to possess a copy of the Law was a crime punishable by death. History has seldom seen such a deliberate attempt to wipe out the faith and religion of a whole people. He desecrated the Temple. He erected an altar to Olympian Zeus in the Holy Place and on it he sacrificed swine’s flesh. He turned the rooms of the Temple into public brothels … To the Jews, Antiochus was the incarnation of all evil; he is the blasphemous little horn of Daniel; he is the nearest approach to Antichrist in human form [emphasis added].\(^1\)
No Genuine Historical Event

The issue that seems to escape the SDA historicists is that no genuine historical event occurred in 1844, and that the “2300 year” prophecy seems to be based in fiction. In the first place, the SDA theologians have not been able to determine the *terminus a quo* (start point) for this 2300 years prophecy. The date is claimed to be 457 B.C., but there is no biblical evidence for it. As for the *terminus ad quem* (end point), well, the SDA historicists claim that something happened in heaven in 1844, but there is no genuine historical evidence for such an event because the “heaven event” is not a historical incident but a celestial non-event “created” on the basis of on a sum of historicist assumptions and nothing more. The SDA Church members must believe it or they cannot remain members of the church, although no pastor or theologian can provide them with evidence that indeed something happened in heaven in 1844. In fact, it is claimed that 1844 is just another *terminus a quo* (start point) for an imaginary “investigative judgment.” It seems that the 2300 year prophecy does not have a *terminus ad quem* (end point) date because apparently it is not known in the SDA historicist circles when the “investigative judgment” will end. How is that for “prophecy verification”?

Inconsistent Parallel Applications

The SDA historicist theologians have interpreted Daniel 2, 7, 8, and 10-13 in parallel columns in order to show that a common prophetic thread runs through all of them and that the later chapters expand on the previous ones. Inconsistent, though, in the SDA interpretation is the claim that the little horn in Daniel 8 does not describe Antiochus IV Epiphanes and has nothing to do with the Seleucid king, while Daniel 11 appears to include him as the one who made the attempt “to force the Jews to give up their national religion and culture and to adopt in its place the religion, culture, and language of the Greeks.” States the SDABC:

Beginning with this verse [14], interpretations of the remainder of the chapter differ widely. One group of commentators considers that vs. 14–45 continue to narrate the subsequent history of the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kings. Others hold the view that with v. 14 the next great world empire, Rome, enters the scene, and that vs. 14–35 sketch the course of that empire and of the Christian church.

Here or at some point later in the chapter many commentators find reference to Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), who ruled from 175 to 164/163 B.C., and to the national crisis that his policy of Hellenization brought upon the Jews. It is, of course, an undeniable historical fact that the attempt of Antiochus to force the Jews to give up their national religion and culture, and to adopt in its place the religion, culture, and language of the Greeks, is the most significant event in Jewish history during the entire intertestament period [emphasis added].

The threat posed by Antiochus Epiphanes confronted the Jews with a crisis comparable to the crises precipitated by Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Haman, and Titus. During his brief reign of 12 years **Antiochus very nearly exterminated the religion and culture of the Jews** [emphasis added]. He stripped the sanctuary of all its treasures, plundered Jerusalem, left the city and its walls in ruins, slew thousands of Jews, and carried others into exile as slaves. A royal edict commanded them to abandon all rites of their own religion and to live as heathen. They were forced to erect pagan altars in every Judean town, to offer swine’s flesh upon them, and to surrender every copy of their Scriptures to be torn up and burned. Antiochus offered swine before a pagan idol set up in the Jewish Temple. His suspension of the Jewish sacrifices (either 168–165 or 167–164 B.C., by two methods of reckoning the Seleucid Era; see Vol. V. p. 25n) endangered the survival of the Jewish religion and the identity of the Jews as a people.
Eventually the Jews rose in revolt and drove the forces of Antiochus from Judea. They even succeeded in repelling an army sent by Antiochus for the specific purpose of exterminating them as a nation. Free once more from his oppressive hand, they **restored the Temple** [emphasis added], set up a new altar, and again offered sacrifice (1 Macc. 4:36–54). Entering into an alliance with Rome a few years later (161 B.C.), the Jews enjoyed nearly a century of comparative independence and prosperity under Roman protection, until Judea became a Roman ethnarchy in 63 B.C. Those who hold that Antiochus Epiphanes is mentioned in vs. 14, 15 see the “robbers” as those Jews who turned traitors to their own countrymen and assisted Antiochus in the execution of his cruel and blasphemous decrees and policies. For a detailed account of the bitter experiences of the Jews during this evil time, see 1 Macc. 1 and 2; Josephus *Antiquities* xii. 6, 7; *Wars* i. 1.

It is possible that the crisis occasioned by the policies of Antiochus Epiphanes is referred to in ch. 11, though there is considerable difference of opinion as to which part of the prophecy takes notice of him. To recognize that the activities of Antiochus Epiphanes are referred to in ch. 11 does not require that he be considered the subject of prophecy in chs. 7 or 8, any more than the mention of other Seleucid kings requires that they be considered the subject of prophecy in those chapters [emphasis added].

Such a perspective on the interpretation of the prophetic chapters in Daniel is not in line with the textual evidence. If the prophecies in Daniel 2, 7, 8, and 10-12 are parallel and chapters 10-12 in Daniel expand on chapters 7 and 8, then Antiochus IV Epiphanes must be the evil and repressive horn described in one of the chapters. Most Bible interpreters, indeed, find the Seleucid king in chapter 8:8-13. Wilson makes an exceptional case for Antiochus IV Epiphanes as the prophetic little horn, in his research book on Daniel:

**THE IMPORTANCE OF ANTONIOCHUS EPIPHANES**

The time has now arrived to grapple with the most insidious and treacherous attack that has been made upon the Book of Daniel. It is insidious because it claims to be philosophical and scientific. It is treacherous in so far as it is made by professing Christians. A philosopher who believes that God wound up the universe, like a clock, and then let it run its course without any interference, must refuse to accept the Book of Daniel as true. So, also, must one who thinks that nothing contrary to the ordinary course of human or natural events can be proved by testimony. A scientist (or shall we say sciolist?) who thinks he knows that the laws of nature are binding on their Creator and that a modern chemist or psychologist or animal trainer can manipulate the elements, or the minds of men, or of lions, better than the Almighty, will not hesitate to reject Daniel because of the extraordinary events recorded there as having been wrought by God. But a Christian who necessarily accepts the principles of theism, and who consequently believes in God's intervention in the affairs of men, and in predictive prophecy as well as miracle, cannot refuse to accept the Book of Daniel as historical and reliable, as authentic, genuine, and veracious, simply because of the character of its predictions.

Now, in works already published and elsewhere in this volume we have endeavoured to show, that the objections against Daniel based upon the alleged inaccuracy of its statements about the age of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus are unfounded, that the argument from silence as illustrated in Ecclesiasticus and other cases is fallacious, that the argument from Daniel's place in the present Hebrew Bible has no basis to rest on, and that the origin and influence of its ideas and its background including its language are in harmony with its claims to have been written in the sixth century B.C in a Babylonian environment.

There remains but one important obstacle standing in the way of the Christian who desires to follow Christ and the apostles in their apparent acceptance of the Book of Daniel as being what it purports to be. It is the fact that Antiochus Epiphanes looms so high in the mind of the prophet. It is difficult to account for the prominence given to this "contemptible" monarch in the midst of a narrative that opens with an account of Nebuchadnezzar the king of great Babylon that he had built, that thinks Cyrus the founder of the Persian empire to be worthy of the merest reference, and that alludes to Alexander the Great in the most cursory
fashion. Why should Epiphanes be selected from all the successors of Alexander, the Ptolemies, the Seleucids, Perdiccas, Eumenes, Antigonus, Demetrius Poliorcetes, and the rest?

Why should he be given forty verses, or more, of a book which barely squints at the Persian kings, and never gives but a glimmering intimation that the Roman fleets and legions were to become in his time the masters of the world? Why should a vision predicting with such accuracy and detail the campaigns of the kings of the North and the South never allude to that unequalled family of heroes who were to begin at Modin the liberation of God's people and scatter like the leaves of Vallombrosa the numerous and frequent hosts of deadly enemies who were to desolate the homes and attempt to suppress the religion of that Jehovah in whose name the prophet spoke? Why above all was his detailed vision to cease with the renovation of the temple and fade off into dim outlines when it passed beyond that time into the more distant vistas but the more glorious hopes of the Messianic kingdom? Why especially should he describe the true course of events in Epiphanes' expedition against Egypt till the year 169 and then picture another campaign which according to the critics never occurred at all?

These and similar questions have vexed the righteous souls of many who would like to believe in the real Daniel and who have no prejudices against the possibility of the kind of predictive prophecy alleged to be found in the book. They can accept the first six chapters which record the striking occurrences in the lives of Daniel and his companions. They can accept the principle of the possibility and the fact of divine revelation of future events. But they hesitate at accepting the whole, at least, of Daniel, because they see no good and sufficient reason why he should have narrated with such length and clearness the history of the Seleucids up to the death of Epiphanes and have given so much emphasis to the deeds of this tyrant while barely mentioning such superlatively and relatively important events as the resurrection, the judgment, and the kingdom of the Messiah.

Now, in order to remove this hesitation, it may seem to some sufficient to affirm our belief that these predictions might have been made by God through Daniel, even though we could perceive no good reason for them. We think, however, that we can perceive a good and sufficient reason for them, one at least that justifies them in our estimation, and we shall proceed to state it, in order that if possible we may make the ways of God appear just to the men of little faith.

It appears to us, then, that the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes was one of the most important events in the history of the church. It can be rivalled only by the call of Abraham, the giving of the Law, the Captivity, and the Incarnation. Among all the crises to which the people of God have been subjected, it can be compared only with the dispersion in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. The return of the exiles had been definitely foretold by Jeremiah, and Jeremiah's prediction was known and pondered by Daniel. He was not needed, nor was it given to him, to supplement the work of his great predecessor. But he performed a greater and more lasting service for the church. He showed clearly that all the tyrants of the earth were under the control of the God of heaven, that the kingdoms of this world were foreordained by Him and should at last be superseded by the Kingdom of the Messiah and his saints, and he encouraged the people not merely of his own time but of all time to be steadfast in the midst of fiery trials and deadly perils of all kinds in view of the certainty that God could and would eventually circumvent or crush the tyrants and deliver the innocent for time and for eternity.

Now, the deadliest peril that the church has ever confronted was the attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes to suppress it utterly. For reasons of state, and perhaps also of religion, he determined to enforce conformity of worship throughout his dominions. His plan of operations was the most astute that has ever been devised. He ordered the cessation of circumcision, the sign of the covenant between the people and their God and that which held them together as a race. He stopped the services in the temple and instituted in their stead the worship of Jupiter. He set up idol altars in every city and demanded that every Jew should sacrifice according to the heathen ritual which he had introduced. He commanded that the holy writings should be destroyed so that the laws and customs and institutions might be gradually but surely forgotten and eliminated. And for all who refused to accept these severe and stringent regulations and requirements he pronounced the penalty of death; whereas he crowned with honours and emoluments all who apostatized and renounced the God of their fathers. The result of his well calculated machinations was almost complete
enough to equal the most sanguine expectations. Most of the Jewish people seem to have cast away without any apparent qualm the hereditary claims of race and country and religion, and to have grasped with eagerness the proffered hand of the subtle enemy of their faith. The blood-thirsty tyrant executed his threats of death upon all who opposed his will. Men, women, and children were ruthlessly slaughtered. Whole families were extirpated for the guilt of one of their number. The chosen people were on the point of being annihilated and the promises and the hopes of the covenant of being annulled for ever.

There never was, before or since, such a period of desperation and despondency in the history of the church. Pharaoh's aim had been to destroy the race, but the promise to Abraham had been fulfilled through Moses and Joshua. Nebuchadnezzar had carried the people captive and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple; but the sacred books had been preserved, apostasy was rare, and through God's servants, the kings of Persia, the people and the temple were at length restored to their former worship, as it had been foretold by the prophets. But, now, under Epiphanes, was attempted what had never been proposed by Babylonian conqueror or Persian friends, the entire destruction of people and religion at one fell blow. Prophecy had ceased. The tribes of Israel were scattered over the earth, some foreign cities like Alexandria and Antioch having more Jewish inhabitants than Jerusalem. The Holy Land was largely in possession of the Gentiles. The Jews themselves had become indifferent to the Law. The High Priests were murdering each other and one of them when deposed at Jerusalem built a rival temple in Egypt. The whole polity of the Jews was disintegrated, all their fortresses and cities were in the hands of the enemy, they had no army and no leaders, and all seemed lost.

Then it was that one man stood up and defied the haughty king. His name was Mattathias. He lived at a village named Modin. The heathen had constructed an altar. The priest was ready to sacrifice the victim, when Mattathias slew him and made a fiery appeal to his fellow citizens to take arms against the tyrant. To hearten them, he called to mind the great deeds of their fathers and the faith that had inspired them. In the climax of his speech he referred to the fiery furnace and to Daniel in the den of lions. This recalled to them that their God could and would save those who put their trust in Him. The they rallied round Mattathias and his five noble sons, the most valiant and able of them all. The pious sprang to arms and after many a hard fought fight the Syrians were overcome and the kingdom of the Jews was reestablished under the Asmonean rulers. Had the attempt of Antiochus succeeded, the preparation for the coming of the Messiah could not have been completed. A people waiting for his appearing would not have been existent. A Diaspora eager to receive and disseminate the gospel would not have been ready. In short, the continuity of the church would have been destroyed, the records of the Old Testament might have disappeared as utterly as the archives of Tyre and the memoirs of Hannibal, the New Testament could not have been written, the life of Jesus would have been entirely different, the method of the early propagation of the gospel must have been altered and the whole plan of salvation changed.

But, it will be said, how did the time when these alleged predictions of Daniel were written affect all this? Only in this respect, that it affords sufficient reason for their having been made so many years before. Just as the deliverance of the three children from the fiery furnace and of Daniel from the lions’ den on account of their faith in Israel’s God gave Mattathias a fitting climax in his speech inciting the people to steadfastness in their trials, so the knowledge that their evil condition had been foretold nearly four hundred years before would strengthen the hearers’ confidence that the rest of the prediction would be fulfilled in the overthrow of the oppressor and in the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God. The stupendous crisis justified the prediction; the prediction justified the expectation of deliverance.

Because the hearers of Mattathias knew about the three children and Daniel, they were incited by Mattathias’ speech to emulate their conduct and to imitate their faith. Because the learned leaders of the Jews believed that the visions were really those of Daniel, they accepted the book as true and received it as canonical. Had the history been fictitious, Mattathias would not have cited from it and the people would not have been roused by it. Had the visions not been considered genuine, the educated church of that day would not have acknowledged the book as holy and its teachings as divine. Had the book not been deemed authentic, it would have been condemned as a forgery and would have failed in that purpose of consolation and encouragement to which all critics ascribe the reason of its existence. Because both people and rulers
and literati esteemed the book to be authentic, genuine, and veracious, they placed it among those holy writing for whose preservation they willingly gave up their lives.\textsuperscript{19}

Translation of the Hebrew \textit{Nitzdaq}

The application of the YDP to Daniel 8:14 is also problematic when one considers that the traditional SDA historicist rendition of \textit{nitzdaq} as “cleansed” has no historical and contextual basis and that the exegetical articles written to support the above translation are substandard and flawed. One does not need to examine more than a few SDA publications that discuss the translation of the term \textit{nitzdaq} in order to notice that the SDA theologians have never moved above lexical and morphological studies in their quest for “evidence” that would favor the reading “cleansed” as opposed to “restored,” or “vindicated,” although linguistics provides ample empirical evidence that the writer’s intent and the text’s content are revealed much better at the discourse level in the prophetic passage.

One representative paper on the “meaning” of the word \textit{nitzdaq} in Daniel 8:14 is that written by Davidson.\textsuperscript{20} After he mentions that the translations of the Hebrew \textit{nitzdaq} fall into three large categories, 1. “restored,” 2. “cleansed,” and 3. “vindicated,” the SDA theologian acknowledges that “there is no consensus on the best English translation for \textit{nitzdaq} in Daniel 8:14,” and then proceeds to search for the “right rendition” of the word into English. He looks first for the “semantic range” of the Hebrew term and incorrectly refers to the lexical definitions of the term \textit{nitzdaq} as “meanings” instead of “denotations” or “senses” – the appropriate linguistic metalanguage terms – and then claims to investigate the meaning of \textit{nitzdaq} “in the immediate context.” This “research,” though, is all done at the lexical level and in isolation from the context in which the Hebrew term \textit{nitzdaq} is embedded with the result that while the author claims to look for the word’s meaning he in fact scrutinizes various lexical definitions or senses that are entered under the Hebrew word. The conclusion of the paper is that:

If we were forced to choose a single English translation of nitsdaq probably the general basic meaning of “made right” or “put right” would be the most inclusive. But here is a case when a collage of the various modern translations is a blessing, encompassing all three extended meanings of restore, cleanse, and vindicate, which appear to be implied in the text. Perhaps—and I suggest this somewhat tongue in cheek—this should be an instance where the word becomes an untranslated technical Hebrew term like “Amen” or “Hallelujah.” We would then have the reading: “Unto 2300 evenings-mornings, then shall the sanctuary be nitzdaqued!”\textsuperscript{21}

Davidson seems to attempt to superimpose a full “semantic range” [in fact, multiple senses or denotations] that includes “cleansed,” “restored,” and “vindicated” on the Hebrew term. When he does so, though, he commits two fallacies. The first one is the root fallacy, committed when the exegete “presupposes that every word actually has a meaning bound up with its shape or its components; In this view, meaning is determined by etymology; that is, by the root or roots of a word.”\textsuperscript{22} The second fallacy Davidson commits in his paper is the “illegitimate totality transfer,” or the “supposition that the meaning of a word in a specific context is much broader than the context itself allows.”\textsuperscript{23} That Davidson’s approach does not work is obvious when one attempts to extend his method to all the words in Daniel chapter 8, the entire prophetic book, and even the entire text of the Bible. Under such exegetical parameters the interpretation
of the book of Daniel or the Bible would become a nightmare. Davidson’s suggested “semantic cluster” interpretation of the meaning of *nitzdaq* in Daniel 8:14 must, therefore, be vetoed.

There is also no need to explore numerous “extended meanings” (that are in fact “denotations” or “senses”) of the term *nitzdaq* in Daniel 8:14 and then decide that the best solution to the problem that faces the scholars in the translation of the Hebrew term into English is a lexical cluster of possible “meanings” (never examined in the context) because the discourse fragment that includes Daniel 8:14 delivers sufficient linguistic clues for the clarification of the term’s meaning in its immediate context. We can assume that Daniel had in mind a specific semantic value (“denotation” or “sense”) for the Hebrew verb in Daniel 8:14, and not a lexical mixture bowl. The discourse fragment in which *nitzdaq* has been embedded is as follows:

**YLT**

And from the one of them come forth hath a little horn, and it exerteth itself greatly toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the beauteous [land];

10 yea, it exerteth unto the host of the heavens, and causeth to fall to the earth of the host, and of the stars, and trampleth them down.

11 And unto the prince of the host it exerteth itself, and by it taken away hath been the continual [sacrifice], and thrown down the base of his sanctuary.

12 And the host is given up, with the continual [sacrifice], through transgression, and it throweth down truth to the earth, and it hath worked, and prospered.

Historical accounts provide indisputable empirical evidence that Daniel 8:8-13 deals with Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his attack on the Jewish religion. This also means that the English rendition “cleansed” of the Hebrew word *nitzdaq* would not indicate well the remedial work that should be done after the little horn’s vicious actions against the “host of the heavens,” “the stars,” “prince of the host,” “the continual sacrifice,” the “sanctuary,” and the “truth.” Temple “purification” might not be the sufficient action for adequate and complete redress. While “vindicated,” could also be suggested, there is no hint in the biblical text that the expected reparations for the little horn’s damage should include an act of “pardon” or “exculpation.” The affected religious entities seem to be for the most part physical bodies and temple rituals, and what is needed is their restoration to their original undamaged and immaculate condition.

The evident and explicit historical narrative that forms the background for the little horn vision in Daniel 8, that refers to the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, its religious servants, and the Jewish worshippers and not, as the SDA historicists claim, to Rome, makes it obvious that the vision in Daniel 8 could not be a prophetic text that describes millennium-long time spans, and that an application of the *assumed* historicist day=year formula has no place in the interpretation of the time expression in Daniel 8:14. The most appropriate rendition, therefore, for the term *nitzdaq* in Daniel 8:14, given the specific context, appears to be the term “restored to its rightful state (RSV)” because it suggests well the restorative actions that needed to be performed in order to terminate and revoke the damage of the little horn on the temple and its services and on those who performed the sacred work in its precincts.
The Historicist “Prophetic Year”

In order to connect selected texts in Daniel and Revelation, historicists use the “prophetic year,” a theoretical, calculated time period that runs for 360 days and not for 365 days as the natural astronomic year does. The theological explanation for this “prophetic year” is delivered in the SDABC to Daniel 7:25 through statements so convoluted and strained that they are almost impossible to understand. The support for the fictional 360 day year is in the fact that the apocalyptic prophecies interpreted through this abstract calculation appear to match certain historical events “adapted” and “improved” through the SDA historicist perspective.

Daniel 7:25

Chapter 7 in Daniel includes the divine vision of the four beasts (verses 1-7), the judgment of the little horn that defies God and oppresses the saints for “a time, times, and half a time” (verses 8-14), and the angelic explanation to the vision (verses 15-28). The SDABC scholars claim that the interpretation of the expression “a time, times, and half a time” requires “comparison with parallel prophecies” in Daniel and Revelation, and the use of the fabricated historicist “prophetic year:”

A comparison with parallel prophecies calling attention to this same time period, but by other designations, enables us to calculate the length of time involved. In Rev. 12:14 the period is denominated “a time, and times, and half a time.” The same period is referred to earlier in the chapter by the designation “a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (Rev. 12:6). In Rev. 11:2, 3 the expression “a thousand two hundred and threescore days” is equated with “forty and two months.” Thus it is clear that a period of three and a half times equals 42 months, which in turn equals 1260 days, and that a “time” represents 12 months, or 360 days. This period may be denominated a prophetic year. However, a prophetic year of 360 days, or 12 30-day months, must not be confused either with a Jewish calendar year, which was a lunar year of variable length (with both 29- and 30-day months), or with a solar calendar year of 365 days (see Vol. II, pp. 111, 112). A prophetic year means 360 prophetic days, but a prophetic day stands for a solar year.

This distinction may be explained thus: A 360-day prophetic year is not literal, but symbolic; hence its 360 days are prophetic, not literal, days. By the year-day principle, as illustrated in Num. 14:34 and Eze. 4:6, a day in symbolic prophecy stands for a literal year. Thus a prophetic year, or “time,” represents 360 literal, natural years, and similarly a period of 1260 or 2300 or any other number of prophetic days means as many literal, actual years (that is, full solar years as marked off by the seasons, which are controlled by the sun). Although the number of days in each lunar year was variable, the Jewish calendar was corrected by the occasional addition of an extra month (see Vol. II, p. 104), so that for Bible writers—as for us—a long series of years always equaled the same number of natural solar years. For the historical application of the year-day principle see pp. 39–76.24

This convoluted SDA historicist interpretation of the prophetic vision in Daniel 7 extends to the chapters 11 and 12 in Revelation that also need, from the SDA historicist perspective, the “prophetic year” in order for the time periods in those chapters to be calculated:

Revelation 11:2, 3

One passage in Revelation implies a year-day relationship, and that is Revelation 11, which deals with the fate of the “two witnesses.” The two witnesses “prophesy for one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sack cloth” (verse 3), and at the same time the holy city is trampled for “forty-two months”
Then the two witnesses are slain and their bodies lie as carcasses unburied “for three days and a half” (verse 9). The relationship between the 3 1/2 years and the 3 1/2 days appears to be more than coincidental. Here we have an exact year-day ratio. If the 3 1/2 days are interpreted figuratively as being years, then the 3 1/2 years, or the 42 months, of the previous verses should be viewed figuratively as 1260 years. The only way this passage can be interpreted harmoniously is through the use of the year-day principle.25

Revelation 12:6

This period of 1260 days is referred to seven times in the books of Daniel and Revelation. As 1260 days it appears in Rev. 11:3; 12:6; as 42 months in Rev. 11:2; 13:5; and as 3 1/2 times in Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14. For the calculation of this period see on Dan. 7:25. Adventists generally date this period as from A.D. 538 to A.D. 1798. During this period God’s hand was over the church, preserving it from extinction.26

One wonders whether or not the “360-day prophetic year” calculation should be extended to other biblical passages that mention the time expression “year” within their content. To the argument that this prophetic time is exclusive to the symbolic and apocalyptic prophecies, the adequate retort might be that there are no statements in the cited texts that the “360-day prophetic year” should be limited to symbolic and apocalyptic texts, and that even the YDP has been applied to texts that are not part of the symbolic and apocalyptic prophecies, such as historical narratives and classical prophecies.

Problems in the Interpretation

There are multiple problems related to the manner in which the above biblical passages are read and interpreted from the SDA historicist perspective. To postpone a resolution to those problems, or even worse, to ignore them is unacceptable. Some of the SDA historicist interpretation problems related to Daniel 7:25 and its “parallel prophecies” are the following:

(1) As is the case with Daniel 8:14, Daniel 7:25 is part of the explanation the angelic messenger delivers to Daniel concerning the vision, and not part of the specific apocalyptic prophecy. Daniel 7:2-14 presents the vision, while Daniel 7:15-27 contains the angelic explanation, in literal language, of the vision that Daniel had just received. According to the YDP conventional definition, the principle should not be applied to literal time expressions in the apocalyptic prophecies. This means that the YDP application to Daniel 7:25 is illogical and inaccurate. Therefore, the interpretation of this passage should be revised and corrected.

(2) The “prophetic year” is an abstract historicist calculation, not a natural astronomic phenomenon or a direct and explicit biblical concept, and it finds no factual equivalent in the real world. It is a historicist invention needed in order for the SDA theologians to interpret some prophetic sections in Daniel and Revelation in agreement with pre-established historicist conclusions. To interpret the biblical prophecies in such a manner would entail the conviction that the Bible has not been written for the common people but only for theologians and scholars because few or no “untrained” individuals would be able to elucidate on their own the prophetic 3 ½ days puzzle.

(3) The unproven claim the SDA historicists make that their peculiar interpretation of Daniel and Revelation is the only correct one is exclusivist and presumptuous when we consider that there
have been numerous scholars in the church history who have dedicated their lives to the interpretation of the two prophetic books, and that most theologians have again and again read into Daniel and Revelation their times and events. The recognition that the SDA historicists are also in danger to read into the prophetic books their presuppositions, assumptions, and biases would help them to take another look at the texts in order to make sure that their interpretation is aligned with the prophetic intent and content.

Time Expressions in the Bible

In 2003, *Adventist Today* published a critical paper — written from a linguistic perspective — on the YDP, in which I had included ten objections to the SDA historicist “principle.” The paper also contained the quantitative tabulation of all the time expressions in the KJV Bible, including Daniel and Revelation, and evidence that the SDA historicists had applied the YDP only to a selected fraction of those time expressions. Fisel stated that the time expressions data that I had submitted in the above paper was “less than accurate,” because I had included “many passages in which time periods refer to ongoing historical events, and would not normally be subject to the application of the formula.” The truth, though, is that the tabulated data on the time expressions in the KJV Bible submitted in the above-mentioned paper has been accurate and quite relevant to a critical evaluation of the YDP for the reasons included below:

(1) The biblical texts which the SDA historicists have proposed in support for the time principle are for the most part from five categories of biblical texts: (a) historical narratives, (b) poetical passages, (c) agrarian legislation, (d) Jubilee legislation, and (e) classical prophecies. Because generalizations are drawn from the data collected, one cannot exclude the collected data from the generalization process and the application of the rule. In this case, to restrict the YDP application to apocalyptic prophecies and disregard all the other text categories that were considered when the generalization was produced is illogical and unscientific.

(2) As Ouro has stated in his critical paper about the APP — a statement that also applies to the YDP, — “if [the APP] is indeed a fundamental principle of interpretation and a scientific methodology, then it should apply to prophetic texts throughout the Bible.” From a scientific viewpoint, we cannot afford to be selective in the YPD’s application. The YDP is either applied to all the time expressions in the Bible or it is not applied at all. A selective application of a rule is no rule application at all, and disqualifies the YDP as a legitimate time hermeneutic for the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation.

(3) We need to know the total count of time expressions in the Bible in order to determine whether or not the historicists have applied the YDP in a consistent manner “to prophetic [and other] texts throughout the Bible,” or whether they have applied the YDP in a selective, preferential manner. For this reason, it is also important to include the tabulated time data here again, and reevaluate the YDP application to the time expression in the Bible within the context of all the data included in this document in order to reassess the empirical value of the historicist time hermeneutic and then also compare its application with the APP’s application.
(4) If the YDP cannot be held to the same evaluation criteria to which Ouro holds the APP, then we must concede that Ford is right when he states that the YDP cannot be defended from the Bible and the SDA historicists are wrong when they claim that the YDP has a biblical foundation. Either both YDP and APP pass the criteria test, or neither of them is a “fundamental principle of interpretation and a scientific methodology.” To favor the YDP over the APP for non-empirical, subjective reasons is incorrect, inconsistent, and unscientific, and shows that the historicist time principle is not based in the Bible or in linguistic evidence but in deductive theological speculations without a factual basis.

Time Expressions Computed

In order to obtain a count of all the time expressions in the Bible, I performed a search on the KJV Bible text with the Bible Works search engine. The results indicate that time expressions occur rather often in the entire KJV Bible and also in the prophetic books – Daniel and Revelation. The search showed 4138 time expressions in the entire KJV Bible, with 98 time expressions in Daniel, and 55 time expressions in Revelation. The numerical values obtained in this search are not absolute, as search results depend on the biblical text used in the search process. Searches on the Greek and Hebrew language texts will produce different results than those obtained for the English or other language translations. Certain time expressions in the KJV Bible do not match the time expressions in the original Greek and Hebrew texts.

Both the multiples and submultiples of the “day” as standard chronological time mentioned in the Bible (second, minute, hour, week, month, year, etc.) are included in the time tables in accord with the SDA historicist approach to the interpretation of the time expressions that occur in the biblical text. State the Glacier View scholars:

A dismissal of Daniel 8:14 and 9:24 as non-applicable to a year-day equation simply because the Hebrew word for "day" (yom) does not appear in either is superficial reasoning. It is like saying that if an item in the store is marked as costing 50 cents, then one cannot purchase it for half a dollar, or if it is marked as half a dollar, then one cannot use 50 pennies in purchasing it.

Time Expressions in Daniel

In the KJV translation, the text in Daniel appears to include 98 time expressions: (1) hour(s) – 5 verses, (2) day(s) – 30 verses, (3) week(s) – 6 verses, (4) month(s) – 2 verses, (5) year(s) – 14 verses, (6) season(s) – 2 verses, and (7) time(s) – 39 verses. Some of these time expressions are English renditions of certain Hebrew idiomatic expressions, and therefore the translated English words are not relevant to our research on the YDP. In the examination of the time expressions in Daniel, we will attempt to match the KJV Bible time expressions with the Old Testament Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS) time expressions in order to obtain a more accurate count of the time expressions in the prophetic book. We will examine only those time expressions that are relevant to our discussion and that will allow us to decide whether or not the SDA historicists have used the YDP in a scientific and consistent manner all through the scriptural text in the book of Daniel.
### Time Expressions in the KJV Daniel

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### Daniel Chapter 1

Chapter 1 in Daniel, a historical narrative section of the book, contains the time expressions שנה (shana), “year,” in verses 1 and 5, and יום (yom), “day,” in verses 12, 14, 15, and 18. The YDP is not applied to these texts, although the SDA historicists have applied the YDP to historical narrative texts such as Genesis 5:1-32 and 29:27. The application of the principle to the letter of its definition should include the above texts. The fact that the YDP has not been applied to these texts is an obvious application failure on the part of the SDA historicists. As a linguistic rule, the principle should be applied in a scientific and consistent manner to all the biblical texts in the chapter, both literal and non-literal, that contain time expressions.

### Daniel Chapter 2

Chapter 2 in Daniel contains Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and its interpretation. The section is a symbolic prophecy. This chapter contains the term שנה (shana), “year,” in verse 1, the term יומ (yom), “day,” in verses 28 and 44, the term עון (iddan), “time,” in verses 8 and 21, and the term זמנה (zeman), “time,” in verses 16 and 21. In verse 28, Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that God had revealed to him “what shall come to pass in the end of days,” which the SDA theologians consider a clear reference to the historicist “time of the end,” while in verse 44 the OT prophet remarks that, “in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom,” another reference to the historicist “time of the end.” The YDP has not been applied to time expressions in this chapter because it does not to fit the SDA historicist interpretation perspective – another SDA historicist failure to apply the YDP to symbolic and apocalyptic prophecies.
Daniel Chapter 3

Chapter 3 is a historical narrative portion of the prophetic book. The time expressions used in the chapter are ידנן (iddan), “time,” in verses 5 and 7, and זמנה (zeman), “time,” in verse eight. The term ידנן (iddan), “time,” that occurs in verses 5 and 7, is also used in Daniel 7:25 in the time expression, “time, times, and half a time.” The YDP is applied to Daniel 7:25, but it is not applied to Daniel 3:5 and 7:

The Aramaic ידנן, here translated “time,” occurs also in ch. 4:16, 23, 25, 32. In these passages the word ידנן undoubtedly means “a year” (see on ch. 4:16). The word translated “times,” also from ידנן, was pointed by the Masoretes as a plural, but scholars generally agree that it should have been pointed as a dual, thus denoting “two times.” The word translated “dividing,” פלע, may also be translated “half.” Hence the more acceptable translation of the RSV, “a time, two times, and half a time.”

If ידנן (iddan), “time,” means “year” in Daniel 7:25, then it should also mean “year” in Daniel 3:5 and 7, and the YDP should be applied to both terms. The specific reason for which the SDA historicists have not applied the YDP to this term is that it does not fit their interpretation for Daniel chapter 3.

Daniel Chapter 4

Daniel chapter 4 contains a symbolic prophecy: Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a tree, its interpretation, and the fulfillment of the prophecy included in that dream. The first part of the chapter (verses 1-18), contains the prophetic dream, the second part (verses 19-27) includes Daniel’s explanation of the prophecy, and the third part (verses 28-37) describes the fulfillment of the prophecy. The time expressions used in this chapter are ירanchise (yerach), “month,” in verse 29, יומ (yom), “day,” in verse 34. ידנן (iddan), “time,” in verses 16, 23, 25, and 32, and זמנה (zeman), “time,” in verse 36. The phrase that is repeated in verses 16, 23, 25, and 32 is שבעה ידננים (shivah idanin), “seven times.” In verse 34, king Nebuchadnezzar testifies that “at the end of the יומ (yom), “day,” (verse 34), and ידנן (iddan), “time,” (verses 16, 23, 25, and 32) do not refer to a calendar day, but a much longer period of time. Shea states about such short time periods in symbolic, apocalyptic prophecies, that “not only do apocalyptic time periods appear in symbolic contexts, but they are expressed on occasion in unusual time units.”

The SDABC interprets the time expressions in verses 16, 23, 25, and 32 as literal years, not as prophetic years as it does for Daniel 7:25, and ignores the term זמנה (zeman), “time,” in verse 36.

Daniel Chapter 5

Chapter 5 in Daniel is another symbolic prophecy. An angel comes to warn Belshazzar about an imminent disaster, and does the warning through symbolic language. The time expression used in this chapter is יומ (yom), “day,” and occurs in the verse 11 phrase, “the יומ (yom), “day,” (verse 11) of your father.” It is obvious that longer periods of time are indicated here rather than regular “days,” and, again, the YDP should also be applied here, but it is not. The SDABC scholars offer
no explanation at all for their refusal to use the YDP in order to interpret the symbolic time expression in verse 11 of the chapter.

Daniel Chapter 6

Chapter 6 in Daniel returns to the historical narrative and describes the faith trial which Daniel’s friends experience at the hand of king Darius. The time expressions that occur in the chapter are יָמָה (yom), “day,” in verses 7, 10, 12, and 13, and זֶמַן (zeman), “time,” in verses 10 and 13. The SDA historicists have not applied the YDP to these time expressions, although the words “thirty days” and “three times a day” appear to be the right kind of time expressions to be used with the historicist principle. Again, the evident reason for their exclusion from the YDP application is that if the YDP were to be used in chapter six no SDA historicist “events” could be linked with these texts.

Daniel Chapter 7

Daniel 7 is one of the most important chapters for the SDA historicists, and one of the most misinterpreted prophetic sections in the Bible. The chapter is considered a basic symbolic and apocalyptic prophecy, and the SDA historicists interpret it as such. Daniel 7 contains as time expressions שנה (shana), “year,” in verse 1, אדן (iddan), “time,” in verses 12 and 25, and זֶמַן (zeman), “time,” in verses 12 and 22. The SDA historicists have applied the YDP to the time expression in verse 25 אָדָן וַאָדָן וַאָדָן (idan veidanin ufelag idan), “a time, times, and half a time,” but have ignored the fact that the verse is located in the explanation portion of Daniel chapter 7, and not in the symbolic, prophetic section. The same term אדָן (iddan), “time,” occurs in verse 12 of the chapter, in the expression “appointed [period of] time,” but the SDA historicists have ignored the time expression (the SDABC has no comment on the term), which shows one more time how selective is the SDA historicist application of the YDP to Daniel.

Daniel Chapter 8

Chapter 8 in Daniel is the core of the SDA historicist prophetic interpretation. It contains the argued about and disputed verse 14 time expression עַדָּבָה בּוֹקֵר (e-rev bo-ker), “evenings [and] mornings,” which is claimed to be the main support text for the SDA historicist doctrine called “the investigative judgment.” The time expressions in Daniel 8 are, שנה (shana), “year,” in verse 1. יומ (yom) “day” in verse 27, and עַדָּבָה בּוֹקֵר (e-rev bo-ker) “evenings [and] mornings,” in verses 14 and 26. While all the SDA historicist time and efforts have been expended on verse 14 and its interpretation according to the YDP, an important matter has been missed again, the fact that verse 14 is in the literal explanation part of the chapter, and not in the prophetic section, and, according to the YDP definition, the literal עַדָּבָה בּוֹקֵר (e-rev bo-ker) “evenings [and] mornings” should not be read as “years.” If, though, historicists read עַדָּבָה בּוֹקֵר (e-rev bo-ker) “evenings [and] mornings” as “years,” then the term יומים (yamim), “days,” that occurs in the verse 26 phrase, “it [pertain] to many days [in the future]” should be read in the same manner.

Daniel Chapter 9
Chapter 9 in Daniel is as important for the SDA historicists as chapter 8. The two chapters are claimed to be linked together through a common theme – the time expression that occurs in chapter 8. Chapter 9 contains the following time expressions: הָעַשָּׁה (shana), “year,” in verses 1 and 2, and יומ (yom), “day,” in verses 9 and 15. We have shown that the preferred translation among scholars for the term שַבִּיעִים (shabuim) in verses 24, 25, 26, and 27 is “sevens” (a heptade that draws its meaning from the context), and not “weeks,” and therefore the YDP is not required for the interpretation of verses 24-27 in chapter 9. In a chapter which the SDA historicists consider both symbolic and prophetic, יומ (yom), “day,” in verses 7 and 15 should be read as “year,” but the SDABC has no comment on these verses and no YDP application for them.

Daniel Chapter 10

Concerning the genre in which Daniel 10 is written, the SDABC states that because the chapter is part of the last revelation in the prophetic book and the angel’s explanation, the section is written “largely in literal language” and not in symbolic and apocalyptic language:

In contrast with the three other visions (chs. 2; 7; 8–9), which were couched in highly symbolic terms, this final revelation was given largely in literal language. The angel stated specifically that he had come to make Daniel “understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days” (ch. 10:14). This is the subject matter of chs. 11 and 12. It is not until near the end of this vision (ch. 12:8) that Daniel encounters a revelation concerning which he confesses, “I heard, but I understood not.”

This comment, again, is not too useful because it is too vague. What means, “largely in literal language,” and who determines which part of chapters 10-12 should be interpreted as “literal” and which part should be interpreted as “symbolic” is left, we can assume, to the SDA historicists to decide. And although the chapters 10-12 in Daniel are written “largely in literal language,” we should remember that Moon, Shea, and the Glacier View scholars applied the YDP to biblical texts that belong to literal, narrative portions in Genesis. One wonders how this works for a consistent approach in the SDA historicist application of the YDP.

The time expressions included in Daniel 10 are הָעַשָּׁה (shana), “year,” that occurs in verse 1. יומ (yom), “day,” that occurs in verses 2, 3, 4, 12, 13, and 14, and שַבִּיעִים (shabuim) “sevens,” that occurs in verses 2 and 3. The literal translation for verse 2 in Daniel 10 is, “in those days, I, Daniel had been mourning for three heptads of days,” and the word “heptad” is again translated from the Hebrew שַבִּיעִים (shabuim) “sevens,” just like in Daniel 9 verses 24, 25, 26, and 27. If the YDP is applied in Daniel 9:24, then the correct approach would be for the principle to be also applied to the verses in Daniel 10:2 and 3. The SDABC, though, has no comment on these two verses and no suggested application for the YDP, which is another blatant case of principle misuse in the SDA prophetic interpretation of the book of Daniel.

Daniel Chapter 11

The SDA historicists claim that this chapter in Daniel is also written “largely in literal language.” The prophetic time expressions that transpire in this apocalyptic section of the book of Daniel are הָעַשָּׁה (shana), “year,” in verses 1, 6, 8, and 13, and יומ (yom), “day,” in verses 20
and 33. In this “literal language” chapter, though, הנקְשָׁ (shana), “year,” in verse 8, seems more than appropriate, from an SDA historicist perspective, for the application of the historicist YDP because it refers to apocalyptic time.

Daniel Chapter 12

Written, again, “largely in literal language,” this chapter contains as time expressions יומ (yom), “day,” in verses 11, 12, and 13, et (et), “time,” in verse 1, and מְשִׁר יָמִים (moeid), “time,” in verse 7. Most time references are connected to prophetic time events. Such is the case, for instance, with the יומ (yom), “day,” in verse 11 (“1260 days” and “1335 days”), and the מְשִׁר יָמִים (moeid, movadim, vachetzi), “time, times, and half [a time],” in verse 7. The SDA historicists mention verse 7 in relation to Daniel 7:25 (“the 1260-year period, A.D. 538-1798, which is first introduced in ch. 7:25”31, but find no relevant historicist occurrence at the end of the 1, 290 years period:

This time period [1290 days] is mentioned in close connection with the “time, times, and an half” (v. 7), or 1260 days, and the events to occur at the end of these periods are presumably identical. It seems reasonable to understand, then, that these two periods cover approximately the same historical era. The excess of the 1290 over the 1260 is probably to be understood in view of the fact that the beginning of the 1290 days is focused on the taking away of the “daily sacrifice,” preparatory to the establishment of the “abomination.”

Those who hold to the view that the “daily” represents “paganism” (see on ch. 8:11) subtract 1290 from 1798 and arrive at the date 508. They see in the events surrounding this date, such as the conversion of Clovis, the king of the Franks, to the Catholic faith, and in the victory over the Goths, an important stage in the establishment of the supremacy of the Catholic Church in the West.

Those who hold to the view that the “daily” refers to the continual priestly ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary and to the true worship of Christ in the gospel age (see on ch. 8:11) find no satisfactory explanation of this text. They believe that this is one of those Scripture passages on which future study will shed further light.37

Inconsistent Application to Daniel

The above review has shown that the SDA historicists have applied the YDP in an inconsistent and selective manner to the time expressions in Daniel. Out of the 63 texts that contain time expressions, the YDP has been applied to 7 texts. The approximate application rate is about 11%, or 1 in 9 texts, and that makes the texts to which the YDP has been applied the exception, and not the rule in the application of the principle. The biblical texts selected for the YDP application have been those for which the SDA historicists could have shown some historicist event fulfillment. On the other hand, the passages for which the SDA theologians could not show a connection between the prophetic revelations and certain historical events have been ignored or discarded because they were inconvenient to the SDA historicist interpretation of the book of Daniel.

YDP Application to Time Texts in Daniel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Text(s)</th>
<th>YDP Applied</th>
<th>YDP Not Applied</th>
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<td>Daniel Chapter 1</td>
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<td>Daniel Chapter 2</td>
<td>2:1; 2:8; 2:16; 2:21; 2:28; 2:44</td>
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In the KJV translation, the text in Revelation appears to contain 55 time expressions: (1) half an hour – 1 verse, (2) hour(s) – 10 verses, (3) day(s) – 21 verses, (4) month(s) – 6 verses, (5) year(s) – 7 verses, (6) season(s) – 2 verses, and (7) time(s) – 8 verses. Some of these time expressions are English renditions of certain idiomatic Greek expressions, and therefore the translated English words are not relevant to our research on the YDP. In the examination of the time expressions in Revelation we will attempt to match the KJV Bible time expressions with the New Testament Novum Testamentum Graece, Nestle-Aland 28th edition (NA28) time expressions in order to obtain a more accurate count of the time expressions in the prophetic book. We will also review only those time expressions that are relevant to our discussion and that will allow us to decide whether or not the SDA historicists have used the YDP in a scientific and consistent manner all through the scriptural texts in the book of Revelation.

**Time Expressions in the KJV Revelation**

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<th>Bible Texts</th>
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Revelation Chapter 1

Chapter 1 in Revelation is a symbolic, prophetic section of the book. The time expressions contained in this chapter are ἡμέρα (ēmera), “day,” in verse 10, and καιρός (kairos), “time,” in verse 3. The SDA historicists have not applied the YDP to this chapter, although the word καιρός (kairos), “time,” could be interpreted as indicating a specific time period in the future. Because the SDA historicists view the Bible as a Time Almanac, and understand the prophetic books, Daniel and Revelation, to contain time outlines with historical landmarks until the Second Coming, the phrase “[for the] time [καιρός, (kairos)] is near” should indicate to them at what “landmark” the world is at this time. No specific eschatological event could be manufactured, though, for Revelation 1:3, and the escape was to interpret the text as a vague reference to the end times. Comments the SDABC:

Gr. kairos, “time,” in the sense of a particular moment of time, an auspicious season, a time designated in advance for some particular event (see on Mark 1:15). The “time” here referred to as being “at hand” is the time for the fulfillment of “those things which are written,” the “things which must shortly come to pass,” of Rev. 1:1 (see comment there). It is the imminence of these events that provides motivation for observing closely “the words of this prophecy.” Accordingly, the Revelation is of particular moment for those who believe that “the time” of Christ’s coming “is at hand.” Compare Additional Note on Rom. 13.

Since we are living in the last moments of time, the prophecies of the Revelation are of particular import to us. “Especially should Daniel and the Revelation have attention as never before in the history of our work” (TM 112). “The solemn messages that have been given in their order in the Revelation are to occupy the first place in the minds of God’s people” (8T 302).

“The book of Daniel is unsealed in the revelation to John” (TM 115). Whereas the book of Daniel speaks in broad outline of last-day events, the book of Revelation gives vivid details concerning these events, which are now declared to be “at hand.”

Revelation Chapter 2

Chapter 2 contains part of the messages to the churches, and the time expressions in this chapter are ἡμέρα (ēmera), “day,” that occurs in verses 10 and 13, and χρόνος (chronos), “time,” that occurs in verse 21. Verse 10 contains the sentence “ye shall have tribulation ten days,” and the SDA historicists have applied the YDP to this text. States the SDABC:

This expression has been understood in two ways. On the basis of the year-day principle of reckoning prophetic time periods (see on Dan. 7:25), it has been interpreted as a period of ten literal years and applied to the period of the most severe imperial persecution (A.D. 303–313), begun by Diocletian and continued by his associate and successor Galerius. This was an attempt to wipe out Christianity by burning the Scriptures, destroying church buildings, and imprisoning the leaders. These rulers believed that the church had grown to such dimensions of strength and popularity in the empire that unless Christianity should be promptly stamped out the traditional Roman way of life would cease to exist and the empire itself would disintegrate. Consequently they inaugurated a policy designed to exterminate the church. Diocletian’s first decree against Christians was issued in the year 303, banning the practice of Christianity throughout the empire.

The same term, ἡμέρα (ēmera), “day,” occurs in Revelation 2:13, in the phrase, “the days in which Antipas [was]...” The SDABC makes no comment on the term “days” in Revelation 2:13 because the SDA historicists have not applied the YDP to this verse. This is inconsistent
with the definition and application of the principle, as verse 13 in Revelation 2 is a prophetic statement in a symbolic and apocalyptic context.

Revelation Chapter 3

This chapter continues the message to the seven churches. The time expression in this chapter is ὧρα (hora), “hour,” which occurs in verses 3 and 10. The first instance of the term ὧρα (hora), “hour,” in verse 3, is in the phrase “what hour I will come upon thee,” while the second instance is in the phrase “the hour of the trial.” The SDABC does not comment on the first time expression, but comments as follows on the second one:

Here not a specific length of time, whether literal or prophetic, but a “season,” or “time.” “Hour” is here used in the same sense as in ch. 3:3. In harmony with the repeated references in the Revelation to the imminence of Christ’s return (see on ch. 1:1), the “hour of temptation” doubtless refers to a great time of testing preceding the second advent.  

The term ὧρα (hora), “hour,” though, occurs in a prophetic message that is both symbolic and apocalyptic in verse 10, and the YDP should be applied to it. The fact that the principle is not applied to this text indicates one more time that the SDA historicists have applied the YDP in an inconsistent manner in Revelation. Because ὧρα (hora), “hour,” cannot be linked with a specific SDA historicist event that would validate the principle, the term is ignored and dismissed because it is “not a specific length of time.”

Revelation Chapter 6

Chapter 6 in Revelation describes the opening of the scroll’s seals. The time expressions in this chapter are χρόνος (chronos), “time,” that occurs in verse 11, and ἡμέρα (êmera), “day,” that occurs in verse 17. The time expression in verse 11 is prophetic, and the YDP should be applied to it because, as mentioned, the SDA historicists look at the Bible as a Time Almanac that includes historical landmarks. States the SDABC about “time” in the above verse:

The time was not to be indefinitely delayed (see on ch. 1:1; cf. ch. 12:12). The great controversy with evil must be fought out to a glorious climax. Sin must be allowed to demonstrate its ugly character so fully that never again will there be a question as to God’s righteousness and justice (see on ch. 5:13).  

Revelation Chapter 8

Chapter 8 in Revelation presents the seventh seal, the golden censer, and also the first four trumpets together with the events associated with their sounds. There are two time expression in this chapter, ἡμίώριον (hemiórion), “half an hour,” that occurs in verse 1, and ἡμέρα (êmera), “day,” that occurs in verse 12. The term ἡμέρα (êmera), “day,” is not considered for the YDP application, but the SDA historicists have applied the YDP to the term, ἡμίώριον (hemiórion), “half an hour.” Other scholars, though, hold the perspective that the time expression that occurs here designates a non-specific time period:

Some interpreters have understood this in terms of the prophetic time formula of a day representing a literal year (see on Dan. 7:25). On this basis “half an hour” would be equal to about one literal week (cf. EW 16).
Others hold that there is no clear warrant in Scripture for taking as prophetic time any period less than a whole day, and so have preferred to understand “for the space of half an hour” as signifying simply a short period of unspecified length. Seventh-day Adventists have generally favored the first view.  

Revelation Chapter 9

The SDA historicists have used chapter 9 in Revelation as a reference that would authenticate the YDP and the SDA historicism because the chapter, in the SDA historicist perspective, seems to provide textual evidence for the YDP’s “pragmatic text of historical fulfillment,” the claimed indisputable “proof” that the principle is biblical and that it works. Three time expressions occur in the chapter, μηνός (mēnos), “month,” in verses 5 and 10, ὡραν καὶ ἡμέραν καὶ μῆνα καὶ ἐνιαυτόν (ōran ēmeran mēna eniauton), “hour, day, month, year,” in verse 15, and ἡμέρα (ēmera), “day,” in verse 6.

The term ἡμέρα (ēmera), “day,” is ignored by the SDABC as not significant, but μηνός (mēnos), “months,” in verses 5 and 10, and ὡραν καὶ ἡμέραν καὶ μῆνα καὶ ἐνιαυτόν (ōran ēmeran mēna eniauton), “hour, day, month, year,” in verse 15 are considered from the SDA historicist perspective. Both William Miller and Josiah Litch applied the YDP to the texts in verses 5, 10 and 15. For a time, the SDA historicists believed that Litch was successful in his prediction about the fall of the Ottoman Turks, but the historical records could not confirm his position. Some SDA theologians have also disputed his claim and have shown that nothing happened in 1840. States the SDABC about the process through which Litch went in order to make his failed prophetic forecast:

In 1832 William Miller made a new approach to the dating of these trumpets by connecting them chronologically (in the fifth of a series of articles in the Vermont Telegraph). On the basis of the year-day principle (see on Dan. 7:25), Miller calculated the five months of the fifth trumpet (Rev. 9:5) to be 150 literal years, and the hour, day, month, and year of the sixth to be 391 years and 15 days. Many expositors before Miller had adopted these same calculations, but they had not connected the two periods chronologically. Miller set forth the view that the time period of the sixth trumpet followed immediately upon that of the fifth, so as to make the entire period one of 541 years and 15 days. This period he dated from A.D. 1298, when he considered the first attack by the Ottoman Turks on the Byzantine Empire occurred, to 1839. Thus, according to his view, both trumpets represented the Ottoman Turks, the fifth, their rise and the sixth, their period of domination.

In 1838 Josiah Litch, one of Miller’s associates in the second advent movement in America, revised Miller’s dates to A.D. 1299 to 1449 for the fifth trumpet, and 1449 to 1840 for the sixth. Litch accepted the date July 27, 1299, for the battle of Bapheum, near Nicomedia, which he took as the first attack by the Ottoman Turks on the Byzantine Empire. He saw the date 1449 as significant of the collapse of Byzantine power, for toward the end of 1448 a new Byzantine emperor, Constantine Palaeologus, had requested permission of the Turkish sultan Murad II before daring to ascend his throne, and he did not, in fact, receive the crown until January 6, 1449, after such permission had been granted. Litch believed that this 150-year period constituted the time during which the Ottoman Turks “tormented” (see v. 5) the Byzantine Empire.

As already stated, Litch set 1299 as the beginning of the fifth trumpet, to be more exact, July 27, 1299, his date for the battle of Bapheum. He gave to this fifth trumpet a period of 150 years. This brought him to July 27, 1449, for the beginning of the sixth trumpet. Adding on 391 years brought him to July 27, 1840. The 15 days carried him over into the month of August of that year. He predicted that in that month the power of the Turkish Empire would be overthrown. However, at the outset he did not fix on a precise day in August.
A short time before the expiration of this period he declared that the Turkish Empire would be broken August 11, which is exactly 15 days beyond July 27, 1840.44

Revelation Chapter 10

Chapter 10 in Revelation presents the vision of a mighty angel with a scroll. The time periods that occur in the chapter are ἡμέρα (ēmera), “day,” in verse 7 and χρόνος (chronos), “time,” in verse 6. The SDA historicists have dismissed ἡμέρα (ēmera), “day,” in verse 7 as not relevant, but have described χρόνος (chronos), “time,” in verse 6 as a reference to the end of the “2300-day prophecy.” States the SDABC:

Some commentators have taken “days” here [Revelation 10:7] as prophetic year-days. Whether these are to be understood as days or years seems to make little difference, for the expression itself is general, and coming after the declaration of v. 6, they cannot specify a measurable time period (see on v. 6). The sense of the passage is that at the time of the seventh trumpet the mystery of God is to be completed. In God’s plan this event was to follow upon the proclamation that “there should be time no longer” (v. 6). Compare the declaration under the seventh plague, “It is done” (ch. 16:17).45

Gr. khrónos ouketi estai, “time no more shall be [Revelation 10:6].” This cryptic declaration has been variously interpreted. Many expositors have understood it to mark the end of time, as such, and the beginning of eternity. Others have taken the word “time” in the sense of the time that elapses before the final events of history, and so have translated, “there shall be no more delay.”

Seventh-day Adventists have generally understood these words to describe particularly the message proclaimed in the years 1840–1844 by William Miller and others in connection with the close of the 2300-day prophecy. They have understood the “time” to be prophetic time, and its end to signify the close of the longest time prophecy, that of the 2300 days of Dan. 8:14. After this there is to be no further message bearing on a definite time. No time prophecy extends beyond 1844.46

Revelation Chapter 11

Chapter 11 in Revelation describes the two witnesses. The time expressions in this chapter are μήνος (mēnos), “month,” in verse 2, ἡμέρα (ēmera), “day,” in verses 3, 6, 9, and 11, ὥρα (ōra), “hour,” in verse 13, and καιρός (kairos), “time,” in verse 18. The SDA historicists have applied the YDP to the time expression μήνας ΤΕΣΣΕΡΑΚΟΝΤΑ [ΚΑΙ] ΔΔΟ (menas tesserankonta kai duo), “forty [and] two months,” that occurs in verse 2, to the time expression “1260 days,” that occurs in verse 3, and to the time expression ἡμέρας ΤΡΕῖΣ ΚΑΙ ἩΜΙΣΥ (treis ēmisu ēmeras), “three days and a half,” that occurs in verses 9 and 11. The YDP has not been applied to verses 6, 13, and 18:

This period [42 months] is clearly identical with the “time and times and the dividing of time” of Dan. 7:25 (see comment there).47

A comparison with parallel prophecies calling attention to this same time period, but by other designations, enables us to calculate the length of time involved. In Rev. 12:14 the period is denominated “a time, and times, and half a time.” The same period is referred to earlier in the chapter by the designation “a thousand two hundred and threescore days” (Rev. 12:6). In Rev. 11:2, 3 the expression “a thousand two hundred and threescore days” is equated with “forty and two months.” Thus it is clear that a period of three and a half times equals 42 months, which in turn equals 1260 days, and that a “time” represents 12 months, or 360 days. This period may be denominated a prophetic year. However, a prophetic year of 360 days, or 12 30-day months, must not be confused either with a Jewish calendar year, which was a lunar year of variable
length (with both 29-day and 30-day months), or with a solar calendar year of 365 days (see Vol. II, pp. 111, 112). A prophetic year means 360 prophetic days, but a prophetic day stands for a solar year.

A period [1260 days] identical with the “forty and two months” of v. 2 (see comment there).

In harmony with the principle of prophetic interpretation, that a day stands for a year, “three days and an half” would be equivalent to three years and a half. Seventh-day Adventists, who generally understand the beast of v. 7 to represent the First French Republic (1792 to 1804), especially in terms of its antireligious bias, find this prophecy fulfilled during that brief period in French revolutionary history when atheism was at its height. This period may be reckoned from November 10, 1793, when a decree, issued in Paris, abolished religion, to June 17, 1797, when, it is held, the French government removed restrictions against the practice of religion.

Revelation Chapter 12

Chapter 12 in Revelation presents the symbolic, prophetic narrative of the pregnant woman and the dragon that wants to devour the soon to be born child. The time expressions that occur in this chapter are: ἡμέρα (ēmera), “day,” in verse 6, and καιρός (kairos), “time,” in verses 12 and 14. The historicists have applied the YDP to verse 6, and verse 14, but not to verse 12. States the SDABC:

This period of 1260 days is referred to seven times in the books of Daniel and Revelation. As 1260 days it appears in Rev. 11:3; 12:6; as 42 months in Rev. 11:2; 13:5; and as 3 1/2 times in Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14. For the calculation of this period see on Dan. 7:25. Adventists generally date this period as from A.D. 538 to A.D. 1798. During this period God’s hand was over the church, preserving it from extinction.

Revelation Chapter 13

Chapter 13 describes the beast with ten horns and seven heads, and the beast with two horns like a lamb. There is one time expression in this chapter, μῆνος (mēnos), “month,” that occurs in the phrase μῆνας τεσσεράκοντα καὶ δύο (menas tesserankonta kai duo), “forty [and] two months,” in verse 5. The SDA historicists have claimed that this period is identical with the one in Revelation 11:2, and have applied the YDP to the text.

Revelation Chapter 14

Revelation chapter 14 contains the narrative of the 144,000 saints and the harvest of the earth, and contains one time expression, ὥρα (ōra), “hour,” that occurs in verses 7 and 15. Verse 7 contains the sentence, “the hour of His judgment has come,” and verse 15 includes the sentence, “for the hour to reap has come.” The SDA historicists have not applied the YDP to the above verses because, according to the SDABC, the time expression refers to “the general time when the judgment will take place” and not to a precise point in time or specific historical time event, and cannot be quantified:

Hour, or “time,” not a literal hour. Compare this use of “hour” in John 4:21, 23; 5:25, 28; Rev. 14:15. Conceived of in this way, it is possible to understand the phrase “hour of his judgment” as referring to the general time when the judgment will take place and not as necessarily referring to the precise moment when the judgment begins. Thus it is possible to say that the first angel’s message was proclaimed in the years preceding 1844 even though the actual work of judgment had not yet begun (see below on “judgment”).
Revelation Chapter 16

This chapter describes the seven bowls of God’s wrath and their effect on the inhabitants of the earth. There is one time expression in this chapter, ἡμέρα (ēmera), “day,” in the phrase, “the great day of God, the almighty” that occurs in verse 14. The SDABC does not comment on this time expression, and the YDP is not applied to it, although this passage is part of a symbolic and apocalyptic context, and meets the parameters for the YDP application.

Revelation Chapter 17

Chapter 17 in Revelation includes the narrative of the woman dressed in purple and scarlet who sits on a scarlet beast. The time expression in this chapter is ωρα (ōra), “hour,” and occurs in verse 12. The SDABC makes a desperate effort to “prove” that the term should not be interpreted in a literal manner, although in other Revelation passages the SDA historicists have interpreted it so (Revelation 8:12, 9:15). The reason, I assume, is the lack of a convenient historical event that would define the “hour.” This is another text which the SDA historicists have chosen to exclude out of the pool of texts to which they have applied the YDP:

Gr. ωρα, “season,” “daytime” (in contrast with nighttime), “a day,” “an hour [a twelfth of the daylight hours],” and a definite point of “time.” In Matt. 14:15 ωρα is translated “time,” meaning daytime. Other instances of such translation are Matt. 18:1; John 16:2, 4, 25; 1 John 2:18; Rev. 14:15. ωρα is translated “day” in Mark 6:35, “instant” in Luke 2:38, “season” in 2 Cor. 7:8 and Philemon 15, “short time” in 1 Thess. 2:17, “high time” in Rom. 13:11, and “eventide” in Mark 11:11. Obviously, the meaning of ωρα in any particular instance must be determined by the context.

Some have taken the “one hour” of ch. 17:12 as prophetic time, according to which it would represent a period of about two weeks of literal time. However, the context seems to imply otherwise. It is generally recognized that ch. 18 gives a more detailed explanation of events described in ch. 17:12–17. But the period of time designated as “one day” in ch. 18:8 is also called “one hour” in vs. 10, 17, 19, the obvious intent of Inspiration being to indicate a brief period of time without specifying its exact length. Accordingly, it seems preferable to take the expression “one hour” in ch. 17:12 in the same sense, as indicating a brief but unspecified period of “time.”

Revelation Chapter 18

This chapter describes the fall of Babylon. There are two time expressions in it, ωρα (ōra), “hour,” that occurs in verses 10, 17, and 19, and ἡμέρα (ēmera), “day,” that occurs in verse 8. The SDA historicists have not applied the YDP to these four texts, although, they are part of a symbolic and apocalyptic prophecy, in opposition to the historicist principle’s definition that stipulates that the YDP should be applied to all symbolic and apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation:

[One day]. Some take this to be prophetic time, and thus to represent one literal year. Others consider that the angel here either stresses the suddenness and unexpectedness of the “plagues” upon mystical Babylon, particularly in view of her false sense of security (v. 7), or speaks of an indefinite period of time. In view of the fact that the same event is also said to take place in “one hour” (vs. 10, 17, 19), the second explanation appears preferable (see on Rev. 17:12: cf. Jer. 50:29, 31). Furthermore, the Greek form of the words here translated “day” and “hour” (Rev. 18:10) suggest a point—rather than a period—of time, and thus appear to stress suddenness and unexpectedness rather than duration. Compare Isa. 47:9, 11; 50:31; 51:8.
Revelation Chapter 20

Chapter 20 in Revelation narrates Satan’s future imprisonment and doom, and the judgment of the dead. The time expressions in this chapter are ἐτος (etos), “year,” that occurs in verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, and χρόνος (chronos), “time,” that occurs in verse 3. The SDABC has not applied the YDP to the phrase “1000 years” that occurs in verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, or to “time” in verse 3. The SDABC states about this time period:

Some commentators take this [thousand years] to be prophetic time, that is, 360,000 literal years, basing their interpretation on the fact that these verses are symbolic, and that therefore the time period must be symbolically interpreted. Others point out that this prophecy contains a mixture of literal elements, and that therefore it is not necessary to understand the expression symbolically. This commentary takes the position that the thousand years are literal. 55

Revelation Chapter 22

This chapter describes the river of the water of life and the tree of life, and includes the promise that Jesus would come soon. The time expressions in this chapter are μῆνος (mēnos), “month,” that occurs in verse 2, and καιρός (kairos), “time,” that occurs in verse 10. The SDABC readers are not told whether or not the month mentioned in verse 2 is the chronological month of our calendars, or it is a non-literal, symbolic month to which the YDP should be applied. The SDABC is silent about this matter as it is silent about the “time [which] is at hand.”

Inconsistent Application to Revelation

This review has shown that the SDA historicists have applied the YDP in an inconsistent and selective manner to the time expressions that occur in Revelation. Out of the 45 texts that contain time expressions, the YDP has been applied to 13 texts. The approximate application rate is about 28.9 %, or 1 in 3.5 texts, and that makes the texts to which the YDP has been applied the exception, and not the rule in the application of the principle. The biblical texts selected for the YDP application have been those for which the historicists could have shown some historicist event fulfillment. On the other hand, the Bible texts for which the SDA historicists could not show a connection between the prophetic revelations and certain historical events have been ignored or discarded because they were inconvenient to the SDA historicist interpretation of the book of Revelation.

YDP Application to Time Texts in Revelation

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Text(s)</th>
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<th>YDP Not Applied</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Revelation Chapter 9</td>
<td>9:5; 9:6; 9:10; 9:15</td>
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Time Expressions in Entire KJV Bible

To examine all the time expressions in the KJV Bible in order to establish to which texts the SDA historicists have applied the YDP and to which they have not applied the principle would require too much time and space and would be less useful than the evaluation of time expressions in Daniel and Revelation. For this reason, we have included below a total of the time expressions in the KJV Bible, and we will leave it to the readers to pursue further the investigation at their own convenience. The Bible texts produced in the search have not been included in the table because of their excessive numbers, but could be obtained from searches on the Internet or from Bible applications on the computer.

Time Expressions in the Entire KJV Bible

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Some Absurd YDP Applications

More useful than an examination of the time expressions in the entire Bible and the manner in which the SDA historicists have applied the YDP to them would be to learn about some application issues from the scholars who have examined the historicist time principle and its various applications and have drawn expert conclusions about how the historicists have applied the YDP to the Bible. These scholars have also attempted the application of the principle to random biblical texts with disastrous and outrageous results. Among such theologians and scholars we can mention Terry, Tregelles, and Stuart, who have good insights into the YDP and have evaluated the principle in a critical manner. Terry has the following arguments against the historicist principle and some possible absurd applications:

If the two passages now noticed [Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6] were expressive of a universal law, we certainly would expect to find it sustained and capable of illustration by examples of fulfilled prophecy. But examples bearing on this point are overwhelmingly against the theory in question. God’s word to Noah was: “Yet seven days, I will cause it to rain upon the land forty days and forty nights” (Gen. vii, 4). Did any one ever imagine these days were symbolical of years? Or will it be pretended that the mention of nights along with days removes the prophecy from the category of those scriptures which have a mystical import? God’s word to Abraham was that his seed should be afflicted in a foreign land four hundred years (Gen. xv, 13). Must we multiply these years by three hundred and sixty to know the real time intended?

Isaiah prophesied that Ephraim should be broken within threescore and five years (Isa. vii, 8); but who ever dreamed that this must be resolved into days in order to find the period of Ephraim’s fall? Was it ever sagely believed that the three years of Moab’s glory, referred to in Isa. xvi, 14, must be multiplied by three hundred years and sixty in order to find the import of what Jehovah had spoken concerning it? Was it such mathematical calculation as this that Daniel “understood in the books the number of the years, which was a word of Jehovah to Jeremiah (comp. Jer. xxv, 12) the prophet, to complete as to the desolation of Jerusalem seventy years” (Dan. ix, 2)? Or is it supposable that the seventy years of Jeremiah’s prophecy were ever intended to be manipulated by such calculations? In short, this theory breaks down utterly when an appeal is taken to the analogy of prophetic scriptures.

If the time, times, and a half of Dan. vii, 25 means three and a half years multiplied by three hundred and sixty, that is, twelve hundred and sixty years, then the seven times of Dan. iv, 16, 32, should mean seven times three hundred and sixty, or two thousand five hundred and twenty years. Or if in one prophecy of the future, twelve hundred and sixty days must, without any accompanying qualification, or any statement to that effect in the context, be understood as denoting so many years, then the advocates of such a theory must show pertinent and valid reason why the forty days of Jonah’s prophecy against Nineveh (Jon. iii, 4) are not to be also understood as denoting forty years.

The advocates of the year-day theory rest their strongest arguments, however, on the necessity of such a theory for what they regard [to be] the true explanation of certain prophecies. They affirm that the three times and a half of Dan. vii, 25, and the twelve hundred and sixty days of Rev. xii, 6, and their parallels, are incapable of a literal interpretation. And so, carrying the predictions both of Daniel and John down in to the history of modern Europe for explanation, most of these writers understand the twelve hundred and sixty year-days as designating the period of the Roman Papacy. Mr. William Miller, famous in the last generation for the sensation he produced, and the large following he had, adopted a scheme of interpreting not only the twelve hundred and sixty days, but also the twelve hundred and ninety, and the thirteen hundred and thirty-five (of Dan. xii, 11, 12) so that he ascertained and published with great assurance that the coming of Christ would take place in October, 1843. We have lived to see his theories thoroughly exploded, and yet there have not been wanting others who have adopted his hermeneutical principles, and named A.D. 1866 and A.D. 1870 as “the time of the end.”
Tregelles is as confident as Terry that the YDP is not a general principle that applies to all the texts in the Bible, and states that “in the case before us [the YDP] we possess ample and absolute evidence against that theory, the supposed proofs of which have been discussed.”

His extensive theological knowledge and his expertise in the Hebrew language make him a reliable source of critical information on the principle. Some of his arguments against the YDP and its application are as follows:

In Dan. iv., 16, 23, and 32, king Nebuchadnezzar was told that he should be driven from men, etc., “till seven times should pass over him.” This on the year-day theory would be a period of two thousand five hundred and twenty years, – longer than from the time of Nebuchadnezzar to the present day. And the term “seven times” occurs both in the symbolic part of the chapter and in the literal, so that the force of words cannot be avoided by any such distinction. Nebuchadnezzar, however, says (verse 28), “All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.” The prophecy related to literal years, and in literal years was accomplished. If, then, in chapter iv., seven times are seven actual years, of course the period in chapter vii. is half that number. Thus King Nebuchadnezzar is an exceptional witness that prophetic Scripture does not admit the year-day theory.

The next witness is Daniel the prophet himself. In chapter ix. 2, he tells us that he understood by books, the prophecy of Jeremiah, that the Lord would accomplish seventy years in the desolation of Jerusalem. Daniel did not understand the period spoken of by Jeremiah, according to the arbitrary canon which some would now apply to his own prophecies. He understood seventy years to mean seventy years, and not twenty-five thousand two hundred years. Thus, this very chapter of Daniel, from which some (even though it is a prophecy free from all symbol) would draw a proof of their theory, supplies decisive evidence against it.

The prediction of our Lord as to his own resurrection on the third day, is also of importance. It is useless to evade the application of this and similar passages by saying that they do not occur in symbolic prophecies; the answer is simply, “Neither do some of the passages to which you apply the year-day theory; they, too, are in simple statements.” Thus, if, in the case of our Lord’s burial, the third day meant day, and not year, then we may plainly see that the canon, which assigns the meaning of year to the word day, is used in prophecy, utterly fails in its application.

Instances might be multiplied, – such for example as the four hundred years in Genesis xv. Foretold to Abraham as the limit of the bondage of his descendant in Egypt; – but it is needless to accumulate proofs, when the point is established, according to the Scripture rule, at the mouth of two or three witnesses.

The strongest criticism against the YDP comes from Stuart, a professor at the Andover Theological Seminary, who writes a whole chapter in his book, The Apocalypse, with the purpose to examine the YDP and its applications. On page 460 of the book, he mentions 11 Bible texts to which the YDP should be applied according to its definition, but cannot be applied because such application would produce absurd results:

I may remark, first of all, that I know not why one solitary case, viz. that in Ezek. iv. or at most only two, if we reckon Dan. 9:24 among the class, should be appealed to with so much confidence, as establishing a rule for the interpretation of all prophecy where time is specified. In Gen. 6:3, God announces, in the way of prediction, that the days of men shall be 120 years, before the flood comes upon them. The rule in question, i.e. one day for a year, would make a respite for the antediluvians of 43,200 years; so that their disregard to Noah’s threats of a flood would be no very strange matter. So in Gen. 7:4, God declares that, after seven days, he will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days, and forty nights. Did any one ever dream of making this the same as saying, that after seven years it shall begin to rain, and shall continue to do so for forty successive years?

In Gen. 15:13 it is predicted, that Abraham’s posterity shall be bondmen in Egypt, 400 years. Does this mean 144,000 years? Gen. 41:1 seq. predicts seven years of plenty and seven of famine to Egypt; can this
mean 2520 years of each? In Num. 14:33 it is declared, that Israel shall wonder in the wilderness forty years, before they reach the promised land; and are these wanderings to last 14,400 years? Or does not actual history settle the question what forty years in this case mean? So in Ezek. 29:11, 12, there is a threat of forty years’ wasting to the Egyptians; in Jonah 3:4 it is declared, that Nineveh shall be overthrown in forty days; in Is. 7:8 it is said, that Ephraim shall be broken within threescore and five years; in Is. 16:14, that the glory of Moab shall be contemned within three years; in Jer. 25:11, 29:10, that the Jews shall be exiles in the land of Babylon for seventy years; and did any one ever think, in those respective cases, of any other than the literal and obvious sense of the words which designate the respective periods? 67

Many other instances of the like nature, from various parts of the Scriptures, might easily be added; but these surely are sufficient to show what common usage is, with respect to the declarations of the prophets. If any one doubts still, then let him interpret Dan. 4:32 in accordance with the principle of a day for a year. According to this, Nebuchadnezzar must have been mad and eat grass 2520 years – discipline enough to humble a king even as insolent as he was. 68

Some Eccentric YDP Applications

Some hardened historicists, such as Elliot, have applied the YDP even to biblical passages that the more tempered SDA historicist theologians have never considered for an application. Elliot’s range of textual applications for the YDP is much wider than the one from other general or historicist theologians, and his tolerance for some absurd and eccentric results that might follow the historicist time principle’s application is much higher than that of the other historicists. States Tregelles:

Mr. Elliott [sic!] has recently brought forward Heb. vii. 27, as another passage to support the year-day system: “Who needeth not daily as those high-priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s.” Mr. Elliot supposes (following Macknight) that the high-priest offered sacrifice but once in a year, and therefore daily must mean yearly. On this mistake (for a simple mistake it is) the supposed argument, drawn from this passage, entirely rests. On this point, I need only refer to Mr. Newton’s “Aids to Prophetic Inquiry” (First Series, 2nd edit.), pp. 176 and 177. 69

Elliot’s non-traditional or non-standard application of the YDP extends also to other biblical texts to which the SDA historicists have never applied the principle. Two more examples of such biblical interpretation are submitted below. The informed readers will notice that these unusual applications of the historicist rule are based on the theologian’s position that the principle should be applied to all the biblical texts in which Biblical time expressions occur because the support and defense data for the YDP definition and generalization has been drawn from numerous genres and texts in the Bible:

There is one prophecy which to a reader of our English translation only might seem an exception to the rule of the observance of chronological proportion between the symbol and the thing symbolized, viz. that in Isa. xx. 2, 3, “The Lord spake to Isaiah, Go loose the sackcloth from thy loins, and put off the shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And the Lord said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years, for a sign on Egypt, so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners.” Now it appears that it was in three years that the Assyrians were to conquer and enslave Egypt. Therefore it might be thought that the symbolic man Isaiah walked three years barefoot, to signify a reduction to similar destitution in the empire symbolized after the same space of time. – If however the reader will consult Vitringa or other learned critics (e.g. those in the Critici Sacri) on the passage, he will find that the meaning of verse 3 may be, that Isaiah walked barefoot for a sign of three years, or of what was to happen in three years in Egypt. And Vitringa makes the suggestion, (in which Dr. A. Clarke follows him) that Isaiah may probably have walked three days (as on the year-day principle) in symbol of the three years. 70
If *day* mean *year* in one *miniature symbolic* vision it seems reasonable so to construe it in all. – Accordingly I do not except the “seven times” of the vision just referred to [Daniel 4:16] in the Note preceding. But in this point of view, the tree itself symbolized Nebuchadnezzar: and, as there was nothing of a *miniature scale* in the symbol, as compared with that it symbolized, the *seven years*, even if predicted on the *tree* in the first instance, which seems doubtful,* might yet, without any violation of propriety, symbolize an equal period of desolation to the *monarch*. But the question still remains, Did Nebuchadnezzar experience this most extraordinary judgment and recovery simply in his *individual* character, or as a *symbolic man*; (see my Vol. I, p. 268) i.e. as the mystical representative of the Assyrian empire and Babylon, governed by him? For my own part, considering the extraordinary nature of the judgment, – the fact of its being so fully recorded by Daniel, – the circumstances of Nebuchadnezzar being addressed on occasion of another prophecy as the representative of his nation (“Thou art the head of gold,”) – and that of the symbolic tree, when cut down, being bound with a band of *brass and iron*, the metals significant of the *Greek and Roman Empires*, which for ages held sway over the prostrate region of Babylon, – all these considerations, united with that of the prediction that *Assyria* specifically is to recover in the latter day from its apostacy, (see Isa. xix. 24, 25) induces me to believe that Nebuchadnezzar’s insanity and degradation typified that of his *empire* in its apostacy from God, and the *seven times 360 days* that past over him in that state, the *seven time 360*, or 2520 years, that would have to be completed ere Assyria’s recovery to a sound mind at the termination of the *times of the Gentiles*.71

Such fantastic applications of the YDP to biblical texts should not fail to cause utter confusion among the readers of this document. This seems to be the case for an inverted *reductio ad absurdum* in which the application of the YDP principle corners the SDA historicists into an unscientific, untenable, or absurd theological condition that follows not because the assumed historicist time principle is denied, but because it is affirmed and applied, as its definition should require, almost in full generalization, to a larger and diverse number of biblical texts. Such an application of the YDP would be consistent and scientific, but the results would provide incontrovertible evidence that the time equation does not work because in its universal application it produces for the most part absurd and bizarre interpretation results.

**Historicism Bars Second Coming**

In his arguments against the YDP, De Burgh disputes the historicist school’s position that explains all the apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation “as being fulfilled through the course of human history beginning at the time of the prophets who wrote them,”72 and “intended by its ancient author[s] to reveal information about real, in-history events in the time span between his day and the eschaton [emphasis in the original].”73 His perspective is that the historicist school places an artificial, unbiblical restriction on the fulfillment of those prophecies and schedules Christ’s second coming at the convenience of the historicist theologians:

Presumptive against such a period as one thousand two hundred and sixty years being the subject of the prophecy, is the fact that it would have effectually prevented that expectation of the Lord’s coming which the church is continually exhorted to cherish, and which is said to be the attitude of the faithful servant: that is, unless the Prophecy were to remain wholly unintelligible, and therefore useless. For it would, if at all understood, be an infallible and positive information to the Church that the coming of the Lord could not take place for 1260, or a thousand, or so many hundreds of years and remain unexpired of the period. And, that the *Lord has* not come for so long is one thing; but that he should have told his Church he would not, is quite another. It will be found, however, that the Scripture interposes no period between any existing generation of men and the Lord’s coming, which does not admit the possibility of his coming to that generation.74
That the Second Coming is an event that the SDA historicists have the singular privilege to schedule and that, therefore, Christ could not have come before the “2300 day” prophetic period had ended is an absurd and ludicrous notion even to some dedicated SDA theologians and scholars. Don Neufeld, an associate editor of the SDABC, writes:

If the events of Matthew 24 are supposed to apply both to the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 and to the events preceding Christ's second advent, why does Jesus say specifically, addressing the disciples who asked Him about end events, “I tell you this: the present generation will live to see it all” (verse 34, N.E.B.)? Obviously He knew that the 2300-day prophecy needed to be fulfilled before His return.

Verse 34 in the King James Version reads, “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.”

It seems obvious that if we had been one of the disciples who had asked the question, “Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (verse 3) we would have interpreted Jesus’ response as The New English Bible states it. The “you” we would have applied to ourselves and the “this generation” we would have thought as designating the generation in which we were living.

The problem presented in this question has troubled many people, and many solutions have been proposed. For myself I like best the solution hinted at by Ellen White in Selected Messages, book 1, pages 66 and 67. In this passage Ellen White defends herself against the charge that she was a false prophet because she had indicated years ago that Christ's coming was at hand. She says, “Am I accused of falsehood because time has continued longer than my testimony seemed to indicate?” Her response is, “How is it with the testimonies of Christ and His disciples? Were they deceived?” She then quotes the following passages: I Corinthians 7:29 and 30; Romans 13:12; Revelation 1:3; and 22:6 and 7, in all of which the writers set forth the coming of Jesus as very near in their day. Although she does not quote Matthew 24:34, she refers to the Revelation passages as “Christ” speaking “to us by the beloved John,” and since her general question is, “How is it with the testimonies of Christ and His disciples?” we see no problem in including Matthew 24:34 in the same category, since it presents the coming of Jesus as occurring in “this generation,” most obviously the one represented by His hearers.

In view of the fact that some 1,900 years later Christ has not yet come, she proceeds with her argument in this way: “The angels of God in their messages to men represent time as very short. Thus it has always been presented to me. . . . Our Saviour did not appear as soon as we hoped. But has the word of the Lord failed? Never! It should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional.” Thus she represents the promises concerning the time Jesus would return as being conditional. This means that if certain conditions had been met, Jesus would have come earlier, seemingly as early as the generation specified in Matthew 24:34.

Neufeld then offers a perspective that seems to contradict and repudiate the traditional SDA historicist interpretation of Daniel and Revelation on the fulfillment of the “long term prophecies, the 1260 days and the 2300 days.” His interpretation perspective, though, makes a lot more sense than the SDA historicist notion that the Second Coming would have had to wait until the “long term prophecies” had been fulfilled:

If this explanation is accepted, and Jesus had come long ere this, what would have happened to the long term time prophecies, the 1260 days and the 2300 days?

It should be noted that these prophecies were not understood as referring to long periods of time until many centuries after the birth of Christ. According to the researches of Leroy Froom, the year-day principle (a day in prophecy represents a solar year in fulfillment) was not understood until about the ninth century A.D. Therefore no one would have detected any breaking of prophecy if Jesus had come earlier.
It should also be noted that these prophecies were expressed in terms such as “days” (Dan. 8:14; Rev. 12:6), “times” (Dan. 7:25), "months" (Rev. 13:5). There is no indication in the prophecies themselves that any scale measure ought to be applied to the “days,” “months,” or “times.” The Holy Spirit gave directions to do this only after the time was postponed. At whatever time the fulfillment would have come, the Holy Spirit could have provided the appropriate scale.  

What the YDP Application Shows

The collected data on the manner in which the SDA historicist theologians have applied the YDP to the prophetic passages in Daniel and Revelation and to other texts in the historical and poetical sections of the Bible provides ample evidence that the SDA application of the time principle has been selective, inconsistent, and unscientific and has often produced illogical, bizarre, and even absurd results. The data also indicates that the time equation has been applied at random and in an inconsistent manner, often in direct opposition to the SDA historicist definition for the principle, and that an across-the-board or universal YDP application to all the time expressions in the Bible would produce the most extreme and unwanted results. 

Some readers of this document might argue that the YDP definition limits its application to symbolic, apocalyptic prophecies, and that, therefore, the inclusion of biblical texts that belong to other genres is not correct in the arguments against the YDP. The response to this contention is that the limitation placed on the application of the YDP is not justified as long as most of the support for the principle comes from historical narratives, poetical passages, agrarian and Jubilee legislation, and classical prophetic texts. In the scientific world it is axiomatic that the generalizations or rules derive from the interpretation of the data that will support the generalization. To develop support for a generalization or universal rule from one data pool and then apply that generalization or rule to a completely different, unrelated, and disconnected data is not only unscientific, but illogical.

Moreover, an examination of the manner in which the SDA historicists have applied the YDP to symbolic and apocalyptic prophecies shows the same selective and inconsistent approach. There are symbolic and apocalyptic texts to which the time hermeneutic has not been applied, although the YDP definition parameters would require a time rule application to the texts, and the SDA historicists have failed to provide an intelligent and scientific explanation for the exclusion of those texts from the application. There are other Bible texts in historical narratives, poetical passages, and agrarian and Jubilee legislation to which the time rule has been applied, although the historicist YDP definition bars the application of the time principle to such texts, and again the SDA historicists have no good explanation for the application of the time principle to those texts. The overall perception is that the historicist “principle” is a simple convenience that allows the SDA historicists to rationalize an interpretation of Daniel and Revelation that ignores the prophetic intent of the messages and exegetes into the texts preferred doctrinal perspectives and theological positions.
VI. The APP and YDP Compared

In 2000, Ouro published a sharp criticism of the Apotelesmatic Principle [APP], in which he questioned its value as a legitimate hermeneutical method and described it as an unscientific and inconsistent interpretation tool. What is ironic, though, is that the same pointed criticism also applies to the Year-Day Principle [YDP], the hermeneutical “rule” or “equation” that the SDA historicists consider indispensable for the interpretation of the symbolic and apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. States Ouro:

The purpose of this article, is to show the lack of validity of both the apotelesmatic principle and Ford’s axiom, explicitly or implicitly, because with both presuppositions the author affirms that what is affirmed in all prophetic interpretations of the four most important schools of biblical hermeneutics—preterist, historicist, futurist, or idealist—is correct, which is a logical and theological contradiction. Since the models of prophetic interpretation are so distinct and dissimilar in their origin, development, and conclusions, their affirmations cannot all be valid and correct at the same time. What is more, this principle and its axiom cannot be falsified or verified by applying a scientific methodology to the study of the prophetic interpretation. We will try to demonstrate what was just said in a precise and exact way.

The APP is the solution Ford has proposed in his manuscript, Daniel 8:14, to the multiple theological issues that have confronted the SDA historicists due to their peculiar and questionable prophetic interpretations. Both Ford and the SDA historicists accept and use the APP in their interpretation of the Scriptures – Daniel and Revelation included. Their disagreement is about application details, that is, to which texts should the APP be applied, and to which texts it should not be applied.

APP and YDP – Theological Roots

As historicists, both Ford and the SDA theologians interpret the Bible as a Time Almanac that covers the historical timeline from the creation to the end of the world, and includes historicist time reference points or “historical landmarks.” The SDA historicists claim the singular expertise to match or pair the prophetic messages in Daniel and Revelation with past, current, and future historical events and to know at what prophetic “landmark” or historical point in time the world would be. This unique “aptitude” is considered to be, in the SDA historicist circles, a special prophetic gift with which the “remnant [SDA] church” has been endowed from above. State Shea and Vetne:

Through the ages several different methods of interpreting Daniel and Revelation have been proposed. The historicist method sees these prophecies as being fulfilled through the course of human history beginning at the time of the prophets who wrote them.

Here is my proposed definition of historicism: Historicism reads historical apocalyptic as prophecy intended by its ancient author to reveal information about real, in-history events in the time span between his day and the eschaton.

The APP and YDP Definitions

Embedded in the definitions for both the APP and YDP is the selective, inconsistent, and unscientific manner in which the two “principles” will be applied – that not all the Bible but some prophecies in Daniel and Revelation might be interpreted through these hermeneutical
methods. The text selection is the prerogative of the SDA historicist interpreter. Ford defines the APP in these terms:

> The apotelesmatic principle is a convenient term for referring to the concept that a particular prophecy [emphasis added] in outline or as regards a dominant feature may have more than one application in time.⁷

The same restriction on the principle’s application, this time phrased as “in certain time prophecies,” is also obvious in Moon’s definition for the YDP, and expresses the SDA historicist approach to the interpretation of the prophetic passages in Daniel and Revelation:

> The year-day principle is one of the distinguishing features of historicist prophetic interpretation as contrasted with preterism and futurism. Historicists hold that in certain time prophecies [emphasis added], a “prophetic day” represents an entire year of “actual calendrical time.”⁸

Ouro, though, argues that a selective application of Ford’s APP (and, therefore the SDA historicist YDP also) would be inconsistent and unscientific – in other words, an application failure, – and makes it clear that scientific rules must be universal in their application spans and effects. He states:

> One of the main problems we have found with Ford’s application of the apotelesmatic principle is the lack of coherence and internal consistency. If it is indeed a fundamental principle of interpretation and a scientific methodology, then it should apply to prophetic texts throughout the Bible.⁹

We have shown in section V of this document (Historicist Application of the YDP) that the SDA historicist theologians have applied the YDP to Daniel and Revelation in the same selective, inconsistent, and unscientific manner for which Ouro blames Ford in his unique application of the APP. We conclude from Ouro’s paper that it is much easier to tear apart theological positions in which we are not invested rather than to do the same with theological positions into which we are immersed and on which our worldviews and beliefs depend.

**The APP and YDP Defenses**

That the SDA historicist theologians have used dual application hermeneutics for some Old Testament prophecies and the prophetic passages in the Gospels is no secret, and is obvious from the extensive dual application comments to various biblical texts in the SDABC. For this obvious reason Ford supports and defends the APP with numerous quotations from the SDABC in order to demonstrate that the difference between him and the SDA theologians is in the selection of the biblical texts for the APP application, and nothing else. Below are the first and second paragraphs of Ford’s seven paragraph quotation from the SDABC in support for the dual application method:

> Those that have a dual application – first, to a local, historic situation; second, to the Messiah and to His kingdom. It is the prophecies of this fourth category that are most likely to be misunderstood and thus misapplied. Often this is because of a failure to realize that certain prophecies do have a dual aspect. The Scriptures abound with illustrations of prophecies having dual application. The promise to Abraham of a “seed” (Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 22:18) clearly pointed forward to Christ (Matt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16) but met also a real and true fulfillment in the birth of Isaac (Gen. 13:16; 15:4, 5; 17:7; 18:10; 21:3). In fact, the earlier fulfillment in Isaac was a type of, and preparatory to, the ultimate fulfillment in Christ. A similar
promise made to David is manifestly a prophecy concerning Christ (2 Sam. 7:12, 13; Matt. 1:1; Acts 2:30), yet it applied also to the birth of Solomon (1 Kings 8:20).

The SDA support and defense for the YDP has been discussed in Section III of this document, and the research has provided ample factual evidence that the numerous arguments the SDA historicists have submitted in order to support and defend the YDP are inadequate and drawn from misread and misinterpreted texts. The truth is that the YDP has no solid foundation in the Bible and no basis in linguistics because it is an assumed hermeneutical principle, and not a scientific rule established through empirical research. This conclusion becomes more than obvious when one considers how limited and restrictive is the definition and how selective is the application of the historicist “principle.”

The APP and YDP Applications

Ouro holds firm to the scientific, empirical position that if the APP were “a fundamental principle of interpretation and scientific methodology,” then it would be applied “to prophetic texts throughout the Bible.” The research he has conducted, though, delivers evidence that Ford’s “principle” has been applied in an inconsistent and unscientific manner to a selected group of biblical texts. States Ouro:

Ford applies the apotelesmatic principle to Daniel but not to Christ’s apocalyptic prophecy in Mark 13. What is more, he uses it only in selected portions of Daniel. In his commentary on this book, Ford does not apply it to Daniel 2 or 7, but he does apply it to Daniel 8, 9 and 11. We will look at some examples of these problems.

Daniel 7. For the four beasts and the little horn of Daniel 7, Ford has followed the traditional historicist Adventist interpretation of: (1) Babylon, (2) Medo-Persia, (3) Greece, (4) pagan Rome, and (5) papal Rome. He has combined it, however, with aspects of the preterist interpretation, stressing the importance of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The preterist interpretation of these symbols is that they represent: (1) Babylon, (2) Media, (3) Persia, (4) Greece, and (5) Antiochus IV Epiphanes. (This school of interpretation, which is the dominant scholarly view on this subject at the present time, also holds that Daniel was written in the second century B.C.)

Since Ford accepts both of these interpretations (preterist and historicist) for the little horn in Daniel 8, he could just as well have applied the apotelesmatic principle to the little horn in Daniel 7, but he did not. Thus his application of this principle, as Shea points out, is very arbitrary. What it finally proves is that it is not a principle at all.

Daniel 9. In the preface to his interpretation of the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, Ford has noted that preterism, “by far the most prominent school today, because of its dating of the book in Maccabean times, sees in these verses a description of events that transpired in connection with Antiochus Epiphanes and his attack on the Jewish faith.”

In his evaluation of this point of view, however, Ford rejects it: “The evidence is overwhelming that the New Testament teaches that 9:24-27 was not accomplished in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes.”

Furthermore, Ford applies the Messianic prophecy of Dan 9:24-27 to Jesus’ time in the first century and to what will be accomplished at the end of the age. He rejects the preterist interpretation that applies these events to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and he rejects the dispensationalist (or futurist) interpretation that splits off the 70th week and transfers it down to the end of time. Since this is something Ford denies, and the interpreters are right in what they affirm and wrong in what they deny, Ford is inconsistent in disagreeing with their rule.
Thus, Ford defends a syncretist method of prophetic interpretation, mixing aspects of the preterist, futurist, idealist, and historicist methods. This leads, however, to an easily observable internal incoherence and inconsistency, so evident that it precludes consideration of the apotelesmatic principle as a universal principle of prophetic interpretation, useful in a methodologically scientific approach to the study and interpretation of the biblical text.\footnote{12}

The same inconsistent and unscientific dual fulfillment hermeneutics is evident in the SDA historicist application of the APP to various biblical texts, as the SDABC shows. For instance, the SDA historicists have applied the apotelesmatic rule to the seven churches in Revelation from the perspective that the seven local churches also represent the “seven consecutive periods of church history.”\footnote{13} State the SDABC commentators:

Its [the Ephesus church] central location with respect to the Christian world as a whole makes all the more understandable the fact that its spiritual condition could well be characteristic of the whole church during the apostolic period, the era of Christian history reaching approximately to the end of the 1st century (c. A.D. 31–100; see Additional Note at end of chapter). It may well be called the Age of Apostolic Purity, an attribute highly desirable in God’s sight.\footnote{14}

The application of the various messages to the seven churches to seven consecutive periods of church history (see on ch. 2:1) naturally suggests the utility of a series of transition dates to facilitate the coordination of the several messages with their respective historical periods. In attempting to assign such dates, however, it is well to remember that: (1) The prophecy of the seven churches is not a time prophecy in the usual sense of the term, for no specific chronological data accompany it. It is concerned primarily with successive experiences of the church, and differs considerably from such prophecies as those concerning the 1260 days of Dan. 7:25, the 2300 days of ch. 8:14, and the 70 weeks of ch. 9:25. (2) Major eras of history can hardly be marked off by exact dates. So used, dates are at best convenient landmarks of a rather general sort, not exact boundary markers. Actual transition from one period to another is a gradual process. Nevertheless it is well to select approximate dates as an aid to correlating the messages with the corresponding events of history. Some would suggest different dates from those given below and use different phrases to describe the various periods. However, these variations in dates and names do not materially affect the over-all message found in the letters to the seven churches.\footnote{15}

The SDA historicists, though, do not recognize a dual prophetic application to the prophetic vision in Daniel 8:8-14 that would consider both Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Rome as candidates for the little horn role. Such an interpretation would not be acceptable because 1. “the only consistent method of interpreting the prophetic chapters of Daniel is that suggested by the historicist school,” and because 2. “since the little horn of chapter 7 cannot be Antiochus IV the little horn in chapter 8 should not represent him either.” State Ferch and Shea:

Once we accept the unity, exilic origin, and apocalyptic nature of the book of Daniel, the only consistent method of interpreting the prophetic chapters of Daniel is that suggested by the historicist school. Historicism . . . suggests that the prophetetic portions of the book of Daniel take the reader from Daniel’s own day, in the sixth to fifth centuries B.C., to the ultimate setting up of God’s eternal kingdom at the end of the world. Modes of interpretation that consider the fulfillment of these chapters to have occurred totally in the past (such as the historicocritical [preterist] interpretation), or that apply their fulfillment entirely or primarily to the future (such as futurism), or that see in these chapters no more than the eternal confrontation between the forces of good and evil (such as idealism) fail to do justice to the thrust of these chapters.\footnote{16}

The historicist position that interprets the four beasts of Daniel 7 as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome has been adopted above. The attempt by scholars to identify the second and third beasts as Media
and Persia appears incorrect, because: (1) It requires making a distinction not made by the prophet in his own time (sixth century B.C.). (2) It necessitates the rejection of the most obvious historical application of the imagery of the second beast that makes full allowance for the dual nature of that kingdom. (3) The historicist alignment of the prophecy is reinforced by its parallels with the beasts and their explicitly stated identifications in chapter 8.

This means that the little horn (issuing from the fourth beast in chapter 7) came out of Rome. Therefore, the little horn of chapter 7 cannot represent Antiochus IV Epiphanes who belonged to one of the divisions of the Greek kingdom represented by the third beast (four-headed leopard).

Since the last earthly figures in the prophecies of Daniel 7 and 8 are both represented by a little horn, and since a comparison of the activities of these little horns indicates that they are quite similar, the probabilities are that both prophecies describe the same historical entity. Since the little horn of chapter 7 cannot be Antiochus IV the little horn in chapter 8 should not represent him either.\textsuperscript{17}

The historicist application of the YDP has been discussed at length in section V of this document. The conclusion of that extensive investigation has been that the SDA historicists have applied the YDP in a selective, inconsistent, and unscientific manner to the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, and that the SDA theologians have no reasonable explanation for their repeated failure to apply the principle to texts that clearly belong in the symbolic or symbolic and apocalyptic categories to which the YDP should have been applied according to the definition parameters. The conclusion was also that the SDA historicists cannot provide a consistent biblical and scientific support and defense for the principle’s limited and restrictive definition and its selective application.

The APP and YDP Comparison

The table below summarizes the similarities between the APP and the YDP in relation to their theological backgrounds, definitions, support and defense arguments, and application:

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<tr>
<td>Theological Roots</td>
<td>Historicist – Time Almanac and historical landmarks</td>
<td>Historicist – Time Almanac and historical landmarks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Imprecise, inconsistent, unscientific</td>
<td>Imprecise, inconsistent, unscientific</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support and Defense</td>
<td>No biblical texts or linguistic evidence support the principle</td>
<td>No biblical texts or linguistic evidence support the principle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Selective, inconsistent, unscientific</td>
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Principle Application as Exception

Ouro’s criticism of the APP has been focused on two methodological issues that are essential for a correct data generalization and rule application: 1. text pool (the texts to which the
YDP will be applied), and 2. principle application parameters (how the YDP will be applied to the texts). His research on the APP provided evidence that the principle suffers from (1) limited application (the application text range is too small), and (2) selective application (the principle is applied to selected or preferred texts only). He states:

One of the main problems we have found with Ford’s application of the apotelesmatic principle is the lack of coherence and internal consistency. If it is indeed a fundamental principle of interpretation and a scientific methodology, then it should apply to prophetic texts throughout the Bible [emphasis added].

Ford applies the apotelesmatic principle to Daniel but not to Christ’s apocalyptic prophecy in Mark 13. What is more, he uses it only in selected portions of Daniel [emphasis added]. In his commentary on this book, Ford does not apply it to Daniel 2 or 7, but he does apply it to Daniel 8, 9 and 11.

Neufeld makes also his case against the YDP as a hermeneutical principle and shows that the SDA traditional application of the method to the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation has always been inconsistent and selective, and that some Bible texts have been arbitrarily excluded from the YDP application pool:

Some have felt that Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 establish the year-day principle as needing to be applied to all time prophecies. But a careful examination of these passages shows that the principle is applied only to specific cases and that there is no general statement in these passages suggesting that a universal principle is set forth [emphasis added]. In fact, Seventh-day Adventists do not apply the principle consistently to all time prophecies. For example, the length of the millennium is stated in Revelation 20:3, 5, and 7 as being a “thousand years.” This is accepted literally. If the year-day principle were applied, the length would be 360,000 or as much as 365,000 years.

The YDP – Irregular and Selective

The two application issues confront both the APP and the YDP. In response to Ouro’s criticism that (1) Ford has not applied the APP throughout the Bible, and (2) Ford has applied the APP in a selective manner to biblical texts, we have presented the conclusions of our research in the application of the YDP to Daniel and Revelation, and have shown that,

(1) The SDA historicists have not considered the entire text in Daniel and Revelation as the YDP’s application pool. For both prophetic books, the texts selected for the YDP application have been those for which the SDA historicists could show some presumed historicist event fulfillment. On the other hand, the texts that could not show a connection between assumed prophetic revelations and certain historicist event fulfillments have been ignored or discarded because they were not convenient to the SDA preferred historicist interpretation of the prophetic books, Daniel and Revelation. When we add to the application pool issue the fact that some claimed historical events seem to have been distorted to fit the SDA fulfillment expectations and that other events appear to have been invented, we have a case of evidence fabrication.

(2) The SDA historicists have applied the YDP in a selective manner to the texts in Daniel and Revelation. Out of the 63 texts that contain time expressions in Daniel, the YDP has been applied to 7 texts. The approximate application rate is about 11%, or 1 in 9 texts, and that makes the texts to which the YDP has been applied the exception, and not the rule in the application of the
principle. The case is similar with the application of the time principle to Revelation. Out of the 45 texts that contain time expressions, the YDP has been applied to 13 texts. The approximate application rate is about 28.9%, or 1 in 3.5 texts. This, again, makes the texts to which the historicist time equation has been applied the exception, and not the rule.

(3) The fact that the YDP is not applied in a regular and consistent manner to all the prophetic texts in the entire Bible and in Daniel and Revelation, but only to a selective range of texts indicates that the SDA historicists deal in exceptions. This, though, is not what rules do. Rules do not deal in exceptions, although they allow exceptions. Exceptions are those cases that do not follow the rules or deviate from the rules. Rules that deal in exceptions are no rules at all because generalizations, by their very definition, have a general application breadth. An exceptional application of the YDP is inconsistent, illogical, and unscientific and provides evidence that shows that the YDP is not a rule or generalization but a theological convenience that enables the SDA historicists to interpret Daniel and Revelation at will.
VII. True Rules and YDP Contrasted

Language – Its Modular Structure

Because “we live in a world of language,”¹ the importance of language research cannot be overstated. The more we learn and understand matters related to the human language, the better we use this human aptitude that, according to Brown and Yule, performs two essential functions in human communications, transactional and interactional. These language functions are defined as follows: “That function which language serves in the expression of ‘content’ we will describe as transactional, and the function involved in the expressing of social relations and personal attitudes we will describe as interactional [emphasis added].”²

Empirical language research has produced important linguistic information about language in general, and how language works in particular. One such piece of data is that the linguistic apparatus is modular. State Fasold and Connor-Linton:

Most linguists believe that language is a modular system. That is, people produce and interpret language using a set of component subsystems (or modules) in a coordinated way. Each module is responsible for a part of the total job; it takes the output of other modules and its input and distributes its own output to those other modules…

Some modules have been central to linguistics for a long time. Phonetics is about production and interpretation of speech sounds. Phonology studies the organization of raw phonetics in language in general and in individual language in particular. Larger linguistic units are the domain of morphology, the study of structure within words – and of syntax, the study of the structure of sentences. Interacting with these modules is the lexicon, the repository of linguistic elements with their meaning and structural properties. In recent decades, philosophers have developed the formal study of semantics (the detailed analysis of literal meaning), and linguistics has incorporated and added to semantics as another module of language. Still more recently, discourse – organization of language above and beyond the sentence – has been recognized by most linguists as another important subsystem of language.³

Biblical research and textual interpretation have been concerned for the most part with the first language function, the transactional, as this is “the function which language serves in the expression of ‘content’” because while the exegetes examine the Scriptures in order to interpret them, content is the feature scrutinized the most. So far, in their search for meaning in the Bible most theologians have dealt with the lexical, morphological, and syntactical modules, but have shown little interest in the semantics, pragmatics, and discourse modules. Such limited approach to biblical interpretation is antiquated and unscientific.

Language Research and Data

Cruse mentions that rigorous language research implies collection of reliable factual data that should not be open to question or dispute: “Any empirical study (a category to which lexical semantics, as outlined in this book, undoubtedly belongs), must rest, at some point, on a body of primary data, whose factuality is not questioned, and which is not subjected to further analysis [emphasis added].”⁴

The preferred investigation method in empirical linguistic research is descriptivism, which is defined as “the approach to language description in which the observed facts of the usage of native speakers are described as they are found to exist,” and, therefore, “almost all
serious linguistic work is descriptive [emphasis added]. This scientific approach to language work is based, therefore, on data collection and interpretation, and must be performed within specific and definite theoretical and empirical work parameters:

All research should be theory or model-based, and most research involves testing, by such means as experiment or observation, a prediction of the theory or model. Observational work, interviews, experiments, and case studies must be all underpinned by some theory or model upon which they will shed light.

Data collection and interpretation must also be done based on adequate standards in order for the research results to be dependable, and so that the evaluation of the compiled data will allow for reliable conclusions:

Because each piece of research builds on what has gone before, care has to be taken that the results at every stage are trustworthy. **Thresholds are therefore maintained below which an observed phenomenon, however interesting, is not considered reliable** [emphasis added]. Normally the threshold relates to how consistently the phenomenon is found or how big the difference is between the pattern observed and one that you could get by chance [emphasis added]. **Statistical tests can tell you** [emphasis added] if a measurement is significant at an acceptable level of potential error.

Principles, Rules, and Maxims

From this kind of rigorous research, linguists have accumulated reliable empirical data that shows that all languages function according to specific language **principles, rules, and maxims** that are most evident and observable in certain language modules. This section will discuss some linguistic rules and maxims that control the phonetics, morphology, syntax, and discourse modules of the English language:

1. Allophones and Phonetic Rules

   In the phonetic module of the English language, for example, linguists have noticed that certain specific rules govern “English consonant allophones (variants making up a single phoneme, or sound unit).” States Ladefoged:

   A good way of summarizing (and slightly extending) all that I have said about English consonants so far is to list a set of formal statements or rules describing the allophones. These rules are **simple descriptions of language behavior** [emphasis added]. They are not the kind of rules that prescribe what people ought to do. Like most phoneticians, I would not presume to set myself up as an arbiter of fashion and declare what constitutes “good” speech. But phonetics is part of an exact scientific discipline, and that means [that] we should be able to formalize descriptions of speech in terms of a set of precise statements.

   Data collected through the observation of English language consonant pronunciation has allowed the phoneticians to process and organize the information into nineteen rules that govern the allophone feature of the English phonetics. The English allophone rules that Ladefoged lists are **generalizations**. Their application is universal, and their effects on the English allophones are all-inclusive.

2. Inflection and Morphological Rules

   Although English is a rather analytical or isolating language, that is, “a language in which every word consists of a single morpheme” and words seldom inflect, the verbs still undergo
certain transformations from one form to another or from one case to another. The preterit tense, for instance, “is formed in various ways,” similar to one another, and regular, and Jespersen explains in his English language grammar how this phenomenon occurs:

In all regular verbs—a great many old ones, and all recently formed or recently borrowed from other languages—the Preterit and the (second) Participle are formed by the addition of the ‘weak’ ending, which has three phonetic forms according to the final sound of the base (4.6): [id] after [d] and [t]: ended, rested; [d] after voiced sounds other than [d]: gathered, called, screwed, managed; [t] after voiceless sounds other than [t]: locked, hopped, kissed, coughed, wished.

3. Sentence Structure and Rules

Other language rules control the manner in which words are strung together or linked in the English language in order to form appropriate syntactic structures such as phrases and sentences. State Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams:

The rules of syntax combine words into phrases and phrases into sentences. Among other things, the rules specify the correct word order for a language. For example, English is a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) language. The English sentence in (1) is grammatical because the words occur in the right order; the sentence in (2) is ungrammatical because the word order is incorrect for English. (Recall that the asterisk or star preceding a sentence is the linguistic convention for indicating that the sentence is ungrammatical or ill-formed according to the rules of grammar).

1. The President nominated a new Supreme Court justice.

2. *President the new Supreme justice Court a nominated.

A second important rule of syntax is to describe the relationship between the meaning of a particular group of words and the arrangement of those words. For example, the “Rose is Rose” cartoon illustrates that the word order of a sentence contributes significantly to its meaning. The sentences in (3) and (4) contain the same words, but the meanings are quite different.

3. He burps what he means.

4. He means what he burps.

The authors then continue to describe the various and complex functions syntax rules perform in sentences concerning “the grammatical relations of a sentence,” and “other constraints that sentences must adhere to.” All these rules are generalizations derived from language research that was done through natural language observation and empirical data collection. The rules also point to large and important language patterns that define communication in English and have an across-the-board application.

4. Conversation Maxims or Rules

We have provided so far examples of patterns and rules or generalizations that are from three English linguistic modules, (1) phonetic, (2) morphological, and (3) syntactic. Our next and last example will be from the discourse module, and will concern the rules or maxims people have to follow in linguistic interaction or language communication. These rules, called Maxims of Conversation, and which are a “set of rules governing the behavior of speakers in conversation,” were “proposed by Grice in the William James lectures delivered at Harvard in 1967.” States Levinson about these maxims:
These principles are expressed as follows:

(13) The co-operative principle: make your contribution such as is required, at the state at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

(14) The maxim of Quality: try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically: (i) do not say what you believe to be false; (ii) do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

(15) The maxim of Quantity: (i) make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of exchange; (ii) do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

(16) The maxim of Relevance: make your contribution relevant.

(17) The maxim of Manner: be perspicuous, and specifically: (i) avoid obscurity; (ii) avoid ambiguity; (iii) be brief; (iv) be orderly.

These maxims of conversations are not deductive philosophical axioms invented at the desk and assumed to govern the human language interaction, but “rational means for conducting cooperative exchanges” that have been obtained through linguistic research. States Levinson:

But what is the source of these maxims of conversational behavior? Are they conventional rules that we learn as we learn, say, table manners? Grice suggests that the maxims are in fact not arbitrary conventions, but rather describe rational means for conducting cooperative exchanges…

This suggests that the maxims do indeed derive from general considerations of rationality applicable to all kinds of cooperative exchanges, and if so they ought in addition to have universal application [emphasis added], at least to the extent that other, culture-specific, constraints on interaction allow.

Language Rules Are Universal

We have reviewed in the above examples linguistic principles, rules, or maxims that function in four language modules, (1) phonetic, (2) morphological, (3) syntactic, and (4) discourse. All these examples have provided empirical evidence that the rules that govern the above-mentioned modules originate in direct and empirical language observation, and that the generalizations are made on raw empirical data that validates these rules. The practical application of these principles, rules, and maxims is universal, with some predictable exceptions.

The universal character of these principles, rules, or maxims derives from the high phenomenon occurrence percentage or statistical incidence that meets or exceeds the research standards proposed by Wray, Trott, and Bloomer in their discussion on the scientific rigor essential to all the dependable language research work. The application “thresholds” the three scientists mention are important empirical indicators that provide verification and validation for the theoretical perspectives. State the linguists:

Because each piece of research builds on what has gone before, care has to be taken that the results at every stage are trustworthy. Thresholds are therefore maintained below which an observed phenomenon, however interesting, is not considered reliable [emphasis added]. Normally the threshold relates to how consistently the phenomenon is found or how big the difference is between the pattern observed and one that you could get by chance [emphasis added]. Statistical tests can tell you [emphasis added] if a measurement is significant at an acceptable level of potential error.
The YDP and Linguistic Rules

The empirical language data submitted in this section provides ample evidence that the YDP does not behave like a universal language principle, rule, or maxim. While the linguistic rules are scientific, inductive, empirical, and universal, the historicist time rule is unscientific, deductive, non-empirical, and limited because it is a theological construct or philosophical assumption. While the rules and maxims described above have a high incidence rate and their application is across-the-board in specific language modules, the historicist time principle is applied at random, in an inconsistent manner, and in a short and limited series of exceptional events – no more than 20 applications in the entire Bible, including Daniel and Revelation.

YDP and Linguistic Rules Compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Linguistic Rules</th>
<th>The YDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Nature</td>
<td>Data Generalization</td>
<td>Philosophical Assumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical Nature</td>
<td>Inductive Origin</td>
<td>Deductive Origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical Nature</td>
<td>Empirical Data</td>
<td>Non-empirical - No data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Limited (local)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comparison table above provides irrefutable evidence that the YDP – a deductive theological construct or philosophical speculation – cannot compare, and does not compare with the empirical language rules that have been described in this section. While those linguistic rules are legitimate generalizations derived from large and appropriate data pools, the YDP has been obtained through an unscientific and illegitimate generalization from inappropriate and inadequate data pools that cancel rather than validate this time calculation. When its selective and random application is added to the above facts, the conclusion is that the YDP is flawed and unreliable – a scientific, logical, and theological failure of the highest degree – and should never be used for the interpretation of the prophetic messages in Daniel and Revelation.
VIII. Conclusion

We have shown in this document that the YDP is not a consistent, reliable and scientific method of prophetic interpretation, but a theological assumption or philosophical speculation without a biblical foundation and empirical linguistic support invented in order to authenticate an unbiblical interpretation of the apocalyptic prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. This conclusion is based on the empirical evidence submitted. The evidence is summarized below:

Failed, Unscientific Definition

The historicist definition of the YDP is not a descriptive linguistic rule but a prescriptive theological invention with multiple, dissimilar labels and vague application parameters. The data sample is drawn from non-apocalyptic biblical texts, but the definition limits and restricts the YDP application to apocalyptic prophecies – which is illogical, unempirical and unscientific because a generalization or rule cannot be drawn outside the reference pool. Certain definition formulations contain ambiguous and discordant application parameters that reveal the weakness of the principle.

Fabricated Defense Evidence

The SDA historicist support and defense for the YDP is based on the concurrence of the terms “day” and “year” in certain biblical texts. The SDA theologians interpret this rhetorical concurrence as a “day-year relationship” claimed to be the precursor of a “year-day principle,” rule, or equation, in willful ignorance of the empirical evidence that this “day-year” tandem concurrence is due for the most part to the translation of certain Hebrew idiomatic expressions into English and from poetic parallelism. These rhetorical and translation language features cannot be generalized into principles or rules.

Selective Application of the Principle

The YDP has been applied in a selective, inconsistent and unscientific manner to the Bible as a whole and also to the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. Some SDA interpreters have restricted the YDP application to apocalyptic prophecies, some have included historical narratives and poetic passages in the application pool, some have extended the application to classical prophecies, and some have declared that the YDP should be applied to “certain time prophecies.” These vague and inconsistent YDP application parameters confuse the readers and reduce their confidence in the YDP as a reliable method of prophetic interpretation.

Bizarre, Absurd Text Interpretations

Because of the illogical, inconsistent, and confusing YDP definition parameters, the principle’s application to the Bible texts has generated a wide assortment of results. Some results have been strange, some bizarre, and some altogether absurd. The more the SDA historicist exegetes follow the YDP definition, the worse the results of the principle’s application to biblical texts become. The SDA historicist applications of the YDP and the dogmas that have resulted from these peculiar applications have become notorious in numerous theological circles and have discredited the SDA historicist theologians.
YDP is Not a Linguistic Rule

When we compare the phonetic, morphological, syntactic, and discourse rules or maxims that occur in the English language with the claimed “year-day” event that is assumed to occur in the Bible, we notice that the YDP does not function in the same manner as the above rules. In fact, there is no universal “year-day” linguistic pattern in the Bible that could be generalized as a “year-day” rule or law because as a whole the “year-day” tandem concurrences are rare in the biblical text. As shown in the discussion on the YDP application in Daniel and Revelation (section V in the document), the rate is less than 30% for each book, which indicates that the statistical average is too low for a generalization. This means that the “year-day” concurrence pattern is random and could not be formulated into a rule or maxim. The logical inference, based on established linguistic evidence, is that there is no empirical support for a “year-day” time principle or rule in the Bible.

The Unavoidable Conclusion

The ample empirical data submitted in this document has provided the evidence for the unavoidable conclusion that the YDP – as an SDA historicist hermeneutical method of prophetic time interpretation – is not a divine rule, biblical principle, empirical linguistic rule, or scientific method of prophetic interpretation, but a theological assumption that is not grounded in the Bible and cannot be defended with the Bible. The SDA theologians have no legitimate support for the YDP. All the claimed evidence proposed in support and defense of the principle is unbiblical, unempirical, and unscientific, and therefore untenable. The proposed support for the time principle in the SDA historicist circles appears to derive from misread and misinterpreted biblical texts. The principle is unsound, and unreliable, and must be discarded as a hermeneutical method of prophetic time interpretation.
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