

Liberty to Differ on Daniel 11

The Hermeneutic Principles I Use to Interpret the Bible and Daniel 11 in Particular

Christ built the Seventh-day Adventist church largely from lay-people who were humble of heart, who challenged the interpretations of their day and who sought to interpret the scriptures according to their obvious meaning. They sought to draw the truth out of what they read in the Bible rather than insert their preconceived ideas into the Bible:

“The Bible was not written for the scholar alone; on the contrary, it was designed for the common people. The great truths necessary for salvation are made as clear as noonday; and none will mistake and lose their way except those who follow their own judgment instead of the plainly revealed will of God. We should not take the testimony of any man as to what the Scriptures teach, but should study the words of God for ourselves”¹

“The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed. Christ has given the promise: ‘If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.’ John 7:17. If men would but take the Bible as it reads, if there were no false teachers to mislead and confuse their minds, a work would be accomplished that would make angels glad and that would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error.”²

“With intense interest he [William Miller] studied the book of Daniel and the Revelation, employing the same principles of interpretation as in the other scriptures, and found, to his great joy, that the prophetic symbols could be understood. He saw that the prophecies, so far as they had been fulfilled, had been fulfilled literally; that all the various figures, metaphors, parables, similitudes, etc., were either explained in their immediate connection, or the terms in which they were expressed were defined in other scriptures; and when thus explained were to be literally understood. ‘Thus I was satisfied,’ he says, ‘that the Bible was a system of revealed truth so clearly and simply given that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.’ Link after link of the chain of truth rewarded his efforts, as step by step he traced down the great lines of prophecy. Angels of Heaven were guiding his mind and opening the Scriptures to his understanding.”³

I am a Seventh-day Adventist, not because that is what my church teaches, but because that is what the Bible teaches and the Seventh-day Adventist church strives to agree with the

¹ EGW, *Steps to Christ*, 89, emphasis supplied

² EGW, *The Great Controversy*, 598. emphasis supplied

³ EGW, *The Great Controversy* (1888 edition), 320, emphasis supplied

Bible. The Seventh-day Adventist church arrived at our understanding of scripture using the afore mentioned methods. I take this approach to Daniel 11—let the Bible explain itself and let the evidence lead to where it may regardless of my preconceived ideas. Many of my faithful brethren have told me that they cannot accept any literal interpretation of Daniel 11 because it would not fit their understanding of last day events as taught in Revelation. Also, they say that we cannot follow the same hermeneutic of interpreting it literally because that would mean that Daniel 11 would teach the same thing as futurists teach. I agree that Daniel and Revelation should be studied together and that we should be careful not to be deceived by futurism; but I also believe that our understanding of these things should not lead us to impose interpretations on the scriptures. The truth should be drawn out from the scriptures rather than inserted into them.

I remember a time that I was watching my daughter in a store as my lovely wife looked at children's clothes. We found a simple jigsaw puzzle and had fun playing with it. After my daughter lost interest, a little boy came over to play with it. He knew the pieces belonged together but he couldn't figure out how. He solved his dilemma by pounding together any pieces that didn't easily fit.

Jigsaw puzzles are made in such a way that each piece has its own place. You figure out where each piece of the puzzle goes by looking at the big picture of the puzzle on the box. It needs to match and fit with all the other pieces next to it. Sometimes a piece looks like it fits with another one but the fit is not smooth. Have you ever been tempted to "pound" the pieces together because they looked like they might fit?

Could it be that in studying the Bible we think some things fit yet they don't really fit as well as we thought? Could it be that what we feel is a hermeneutical principle is only a

“pounded” fit? Could it be that we may focus too much on one aspect that has the façade of a fit, all the while ignoring the fact that if this piece really goes where we think, it would be out of line with the big picture and the pieces next to it?

I believe that the most popular view of Daniel 11, which I refer to as the modern symbolic views (“views” plural because there are many variations, but the uniting link between them is a mostly spiritual interpretation of the latter portion of Daniel 11), are a pounded fit. I believe that they use a completely different set of hermeneutics than we use in any other portion of Daniel or anywhere in the Bible for that matter. The whole notion of abruptly switching from a literal interpretation to a purely spiritual interpretation has no parallel in Daniel or anywhere in the inspired texts of which I am aware. Having said that, the whole point of my paper is not to argue my view of Daniel 11 or to attack anyone else’s view. My whole point is to share my deep concern that while we may disagree on prophetic interpretations, yet I believe that we should be united in our mission to preach the Three Angels Messages to the world. No matter how your interpretation may differ from mine—that to me is a small matter—I feel that we can show mutual respect and brotherly love that will reveal itself by not trying to remove books containing views different from mine or objecting to evangelism using a different approach to Daniel 11. To me, our attitude is more important than our particular views on Daniel 11.

I strongly believe in a principle of Biblical interpretation I learned from the late W.D. Frazee (founder of Wildwood Sanitarium and author of *Ransom and Reunion*). Elder Frazee taught that the Bible is *infallible* but our understanding and interpretation of it are *fallible*. In order to be infallibly interpreted, scripture must be explained by the same source which inspired its writing—through another inspired writing or a living prophet.⁴ Since Daniel 11 is a very unique prophecy with very little interpretive commentary elsewhere in the Bible or in the

⁴ W.D. Frazee, Sermon #0934, January 25, 1980

writings of Ellen White, all *our* interpretations of it are fallible. As such, we may still have our own views, but since our views are not inspired we can still have differing opinions about its interpretation and at the same time be loyal to the fundamental teachings of the Bible and of Adventism. Both of which are founded upon infallible interpretations of the infallible Word of God. Therefore, there should be no need to feel that we must object to evangelism or the carrying of books which contain a different interpretation than we have of Daniel 11.

Testimony

I first became acquainted with the differences of interpreting Daniel 11 while in college. I found for every different person there was a different interpretation. One student was very confident in his view that the “King of the North” was Turkey while most of the other students made fun of him. I too thought that Turkey sounded farfetched. What did they have to do with prophecy? But the other interpretation didn’t appeal to me very well either. How can you start out by saying that Daniel 11 is literal and then all of a sudden, without any indication within the chapter, switch to a symbolic interpretation? That reminded me of a new theological term I learned while in college—eisegesis. While the interpretation of the “King of the North” as the Papacy made more sense to me than did Turkey, yet I could not agree with what seemed to me as a forced interpretation without any internal indications in Daniel 11 (or in any of Scripture for that matter) to justify such a claim.

Therefore, for many years I left Daniel 11 on the back burner and took what my teachers taught on the subject with a grain of salt. My fellow class mates loved to debate about the interpretation of the “Holy Mountain” and tried to drag me into their discussions. I had no interest. To me, it was something that was not well understood and not worth debating.

I must have unintentionally offended my friends when I didn't share their enthusiasm over the "new light" they discovered in Daniel 11. One classmate came up with a theory that did briefly catch my attention. He was from Malaysia and had a longing to reach his Moslem neighbors with the Gospel. He claimed that the nations who escaped the King of the North from verse 41 were not representing those from all nations who would come out of Babylon, as we were taught in class, but that they represented Islam. He claimed that Islam would play an important role in the last days and that before Christ can come back the Gospel must be taken to nations that are predominately Moslem. This made sense to me since the Gospel has been carried to all of the world but one of the greatest challenges has been to reach Moslems. It made sense that one of our biggest barriers to fulfilling Matthew 24:14 should be mentioned in prophecy. I further was inclined to believe my friend's new interpretation as I had become (and remain to this day) convinced that trumpets five and six of the Seven Trumpets of Revelation chapter 9 represent the rise and progression of Islam.

Not everyone agreed with my friend's "new light" and while it did interest me, I again had no desire to study it further or to "take a view" on Daniel 11. Several years later I came across the book *Islam, God's Forgotten Blessing* by Stephen Dickie. This book solidified what I had already believed about Revelation chapter 9. It took me a step farther and convinced me that Islam was indeed one of the greatest barriers to our mission and that something must happen within Islam to open it up for the gospel. Islam through the centuries has been the "thorn in the flesh" to the Papacy and helped to limit the extent of the rule of Catholicism. During the Reformation it was Islam, through the Turkish Empire, which diverted the attention of Rome and gave the reformation an opportunity to gain a foothold. The prophecy of Revelation 9:15,

regarding the reign of the Turkish Empire, was fulfilled on the very day prophecy had predicted and gave credibility to the Adventist's interpretation of prophecy.⁵

This convinced me that Islam indeed was not only mentioned in prophecy but that it played a vital role in the establishment of the Reformation and of the Advent Movement. This further convinced me that just maybe my friend—whom many laughed at—while maybe incorrect that Turkey was important in last day events, perhaps was correct that Islam would yet play a role in future events. It just seemed that it had to if Matthew 24:14 was ever going to be fulfilled.

More recently I attended the General Conference Session in San Antonio, TX. While visiting the various booths in the exhibit hall of the convention center, a man gave me a flyer of his ministry about Islam in prophecy. At first I was greatly interested. I thought that maybe he was affiliated with Stephen Dickie and that his ministry was to try to reach Moslems for Christ. I grew greatly disappointed and even a little disgusted when he further explained that his ministry was mostly about a new (seemingly new) interpretation of Daniel 11 that he assured me was the truth. Adding insult to injury he went even further to explain that he used this interpretation of Daniel 11 in an evangelistic-type setting to witness. He assured me that people were very interested in this topic and that it as a more natural and appropriate way to share our distinctive doctrines. I had heard about all I could take. I thought “Oh boy, another one of these people has come up with yet another interpretation of an already overly pluralistically interpreted portion of the Bible!” I tried to be polite and took his flyer and told him I would look at it. I was still in the mindset that Daniel 11 was too confusing to be worth studying and I was not interested in more debate on the issue. But I believed that I should keep my word and at least look at it before I threw it in the trash.

⁵ EGW, *The Great Controversy*, 334-335

After coming home from the General Conference I decided it was time to fulfill my word. With great skepticism I opened the pamphlet of Islam in Prophecy and looked at it, intending to spend as little time as possible reading it and throw it away as quickly as possible. Yet, when I started to read it I immediately became interested. I did not feel that this was just another overconfident man's view of Daniel 11. It made sense. I liked what I was reading and actually finished the whole pamphlet. Instead of throwing it away as quickly as possible, as I originally intended, I went to the website listed on the pamphlet and watched one of this man's videos. My skepticism changed to intense interest. This was the first time in my life that Daniel 11 made sense to me. Even my wife, who doesn't enjoy complicated theology like I do, found his lectures to be biblical, simple, interesting and consistent. I have since watched everything that I could find from this man on the internet and had the privilege of questioning him personally. In that process, I have become convinced that this is the most consistent and biblical interpretation of Daniel 11 yet.

I do still believe that Daniel 11 is not and should never be a test question or something worth heated discussions. I always take everything I hear with a grain of salt and don't believe that Pastor Roosenberg's interpretation is beyond modification. Nevertheless, I am more fully convinced than ever that it was the Holy Spirit leading my mind through all those years that Islam is one of Matthew 24:14's main obstacles and that prophecy should say something about it.

When I began to share these things with my church family, most seemed as skeptical as I was when I first received the pamphlet. But so far, many who have watched his videos have agreed with me that this is valuable information. So much so, that among lay people this view may be on the fast track to becoming the most popular interpretation of Daniel 11. This has obviously created quite a stir amongst those who have believed and taught the modern symbolic

views. Everyone has the right and even the duty to try every new (or seemingly new) theory by the Bible and reject it if it is false. I have read and heard many presentations attempting to show how the Islam interpretation of Daniel 11 is false. While I respect anyone's rights to disagree, I must disagree with their disagreement because the reasoning used to teach and defend the modern symbolic views I find to be very different from the reasoning that led to the formation of this movement. I originally wrote this paper for churches and individuals considering Pastor Roosenberg's evangelism yet hesitant because of all the intense criticism. I had no intention of coming to this symposium, yet when a friend shared my earlier version of this document with a friend of his it eventually ended up with Conrad Vine and he invited me to come.

We Can Disagree without Being Disagreeable

I would like to reiterate that I don't believe that it is anything that we need to waste time in a heated debate. However, I think it permissible to study controverted passages of scripture and that it can be done without the un-Christ-like-debating spirit which too often attends such discussions.

Though I have never accepted the popular modern symbolic views, yet I have no burden to "re-educate" someone who disagrees with me. I am willing to study with anyone who is open minded and would not feel it a loss if after our study we still see things differently. This is not a "liberal-pluralistic approach to Bible study" but this is simply what we are supposed to do:

***"Differences of opinion will always exist,* for every mind is not constituted to run in the same channel. Hereditary and cultivated tendencies have to be guarded, lest they create controversies over minor matters."⁶**

⁶ EGW, *Letter 183*, 1899, Emphasis Supplied

“In Wesley's time, as in all ages of the church's history, men of different gifts performed their appointed work. They did not harmonize upon every point of doctrine, but all were moved by the Spirit of God, and united in the absorbing aim to win souls to Christ. *The differences between Whitefield and the Wesleys threatened at one time to create alienation; but as they learned meekness in the school of Christ, mutual forbearance and charity reconciled them.* They had no time to dispute, while error and iniquity were teeming everywhere, and sinners were going down to ruin.”⁷

I feel that Sister White’s counsel concerning righteousness by faith is also applicable when studying Daniel 11:

“Many commit the error of trying to define minutely the fine points of distinction between justification and sanctification. Into the definitions of these two terms they often bring their own ideas and speculations. Why try to be more minute than is Inspiration on the vital question of righteousness by faith? *Why try to work out every minute point, as if the salvation of the soul depended upon all having exactly your understanding of this matter?* **All cannot see in the same line of vision.** You are in danger of making a world of an atom, and an atom of a world.”⁸

I pray that neither I or anyone else may fall into the trap mentioned in the following quote:

Our ministers must cease to dwell upon their peculiar ideas with the feeling, ‘You must see this point as I do, or you cannot be saved.’ Away with this egotism. The great work to be done in every case is to win souls to Christ. Men must see Jesus on the cross, they must look and live. It is not your ideas they must feed upon, but it is the flesh and blood of the Son of God. He says, ‘My flesh is meat indeed’ (John 6:55). ‘The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life’ (John 6:63).”⁹

Taking the preceding counsel to heart, I humbly and respectfully share why I disagree with the objections to the Islamic interpretation. I am not so burdened in this paper to share why I believe the Islamic interpretation, as that it not my point. I think that Doctor Gane and others explain that better than I could. My point is tolerance and respect for minority views—of which the Islamic and Civil interpretations are—and I know of no other way than to directly address a few of these objections. There are entire books filled with objections and I have no burden to

⁷ EGW, *The Great Controversy*, 257-25, Emphasis Supplied

⁸ EGW, *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 9, 30, Emphasis Supplied

⁹ EGW, *Selected Messages*, Book 1, 178, Emphasis Supplied

address every point. There are other great resources that may be obtained to meet those objections. I will only address five of the major points of concern and disagreement.

1. Islam in the headline news is the reason that some want to see Islam in Daniel 11.

The objection is raised that the view of Islam in Daniel 11 is nothing more than hype generated from trying to force what has recently been in the news with Al Qaeda and ISIS into an interpretation of Daniel 11. I too felt that way before I became better acquainted with the history of interpreting Daniel 11. We would do well to consider how wrongly we can misjudge the motives of others.

It should be noted that Roosenberg did not originate this view. He came up with his view a result of studying the Bible and history before he was even aware that some in our church used to teach this view. My compilation on the progression of beliefs on Daniel 11 clearly shows that most reformers believed that Islam had something to do with the last powers of Daniel 11. Almost a hundred years before Roosenberg wrote his book on Islam in the 11th of Daniel, H.C. Lacy at the Bible Conference of 1919 stated: "The king of the south is, of course, the Mohammedan powers."¹⁰

I found it interesting that the modern spiritual view of Daniel 11:40-45 is actually the interpretation which came about as a reaction to the headline news. I found an interesting note regarding the history of interpretation of Daniel 11 in the forward to the Book *The King of the North* by Heidi Heiks. William Shea, Ph.D. who wrote the foreword, states that:

“Adventists favored this view [the view of Turkey as the king of the north in the last five verses of Daniel 11] until the end of World War I when the British and the Turks fought a battle at Megiddo (Armageddon), but Christ did not come after it... This failure led to the

¹⁰ <http://www.adventistarchives.org/docs/rbc19190716>, 360

development of the second view, what may be called the spiritual or symbolic interpretation.”¹¹

That to me sounds very much like the news influencing an interpretation of prophecy! Doctor Shea seems to be saying that this new view came after something didn't happen in the Middle East. So, events (or lack of expected events) in the Middle East have actually been the cause for this reinterpretation. I find it interesting that it was right around this same time that Atheism via Communism came to power in Russia. Communism steadily gained more power and world attention until at the end of World War II, and the beginning of the Cold War. It was in the headlines of the news and in the headlines of the symbolic view of Daniel 11. I have looked and have not yet found anyone who interpreted the king of the south to be Atheism/Secularism/etc until Atheism as expressed through communism had become more popular in the news. This is exactly the thing of which some are now accusing Tim Roosenberg. We would do well to be more careful that we don't accuse others of things that we are doing ourselves!

Furthermore, as we trace the history of prophetic interpretation we find further evidence that the modern symbolic views were mostly direct reactions to the headline news of the day. George McCready Price, along with Raymond F. Cottrell and Louis F. Were may have been the first ones to identify the King of the South with Atheism. Their views were published during the cold war when Cottrell published a paper called: “The Pioneers on Daniel Eleven and Armageddon” (1949). This was right when Atheism was gaining ground via communism and the temptation to interpret prophecy by the headline news may have been too great to resist. Price's views have greatly influenced many other students of prophecy: Robert Brinsmead (1960),

¹¹ Heidi Hieks, King of the North: An Exposition of Daniel 11:40-12:1, forward by William Shea.

Desmond Ford (1978) and Mervyn Maxwell (1981) built off of Price's doctrines of the Papacy being the King of the North and Atheism being the King of the South.¹²

I am glad for anyone who may be able to furnish more historical material on the emergence of the modern symbolic views. Its history is turning out to be much more complex than I or others have thought. However, the evidence is on the side of the accusation of interpreting prophecy by the headline news applying to the modern symbolic views. The recent events in North Korea further demonstrate this, as many of my good friends feel that these events vindicated their belief in the modern symbolic views. There is an area in which I feel we can all agree however—both secularism/atheism/etc; Islam, Turkey and Egypt will succumb to the Papacy because the Bible teaches that “all the world wondered after the beast”¹³. So, we can expect to see more of North Korea, Russia, China, Cuba; Syria, Iraq, and Israel featured in the headline news as they and almost everyone else will eventually bow to the beast.

2. Great unity before Tim Roosenberg

Another objection to Islam in Daniel 11 is that before Tim Roosenberg's teachings there was great unity among the majority of expositors of Daniel 11. Most believed the symbolic interpretation; albeit a multitude of variations within that view. I have met very few in my lifetime who still hold to the Turkey interpretation. This new (or seemingly new) interpretation by Tim Roosenberg is seen by many as intrusive and disruptive to the unity of prophetic understanding.

Some have gone so far as to say that Roosenberg should not use his views in his evangelistic series. That is the main reason I spent any time writing this paper; otherwise I would rather be doing other things. I am glad that thousands of lay people, pastors and conference

¹² Donn Leatherman, Adventist Interpretation of Daniel 10-12: A Diagnosis and Prescription, appeared in the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 7/1 (Spring 1996)

¹³ Revelation 13:13

leaders don't accept that notion but continue to invite him into their conferences and churches to present his views to win souls for Christ.

I fully agree that we should be careful not to needlessly cause further division. We have enough points of disagreement within our ranks already. It can make us appear divided and weak to non-Adventists to have some of our great preachers and teachers promoting conflicting views.

However, it is also true that truth should not be tucked into a corner simply because many are comfortable with their current understanding of things. This became a major problem in 1888 when Uriah Smith, G.I. Butler and many others felt that Dr. Waggoner's new interpretation of the "law in Galatians" subverted the unity that the church had enjoyed on the subject for over 30 years at the time. They saw Dr. Waggoner's explanation of "the law in Galatians" as sounding far too much like the common understanding of the evangelical world who was opposing them and the Sabbath.¹⁴ Sunday laws were making matters difficult for Adventists in the south United States and national Sunday legislation was being agitated in congress at the time. Smith and those who accepted the modern conservative view of their day, regarding the law in Galatians, felt very strongly that this was no time for questioning matters upon which that they had enjoyed relative unity when the church was being faced with a great crisis.¹⁵ Waggoner, his friend A.T. Jones and others felt that because of the agitation for Sunday laws, Adventists would be brought more into the national spotlight. As such, their positions would be scrutinized. Why cling to incorrect interpretations just for unity sake with the conservative view of their day when it endangered their credibility before non-Adventists, they felt.

I have many studies on 1888 and the history behind it. I will sum up my mention of this history to make this point for our understanding of Daniel 11. While we should be careful to

¹⁴ Gorge Night, *From 1888 to Apostasy* (1887), 23-27

¹⁵ Gorge Night, *From 1888 to Apostasy* (1887), 30

maintain unity, we also should be willing to change our minds about things if we receive clearer light. Ellen White did not get into the debates about the law in Galatians in 1888 or for many years afterward. Yet, she did support open Bible study and adamantly opposed the idea that it was somehow disloyalty to the “pillars” of Adventism to question the popular Adventist explanation of the law in Galatians. She upheld Jones and Waggoner in their right to question the established view and rebuked those who tried to silence them.

“The truth can lose nothing by close investigation. Let the word of God speak for itself, let it be its own interpreter, and the truth will shine like precious gems amid the rubbish.”¹⁶

“All who have the truth can afford to be fair in discussion, for truth will bear away the victory. This is the only way the word of God can be investigated with any success. If self is brought in there will not be an investigation of truth in the spirit of Christ all phariseeism is to be put aside. All assumptions and pre-conceived opinions are to be thoroughly tested by the standard of truth.”¹⁷

“If a brother differs with you on some points of truth, do not stoop to ridicule, do not place him in a false light or misconstrue his words, making sport of them; do not misinterpret his words and wrest them of their true meaning. This is not conscientious argument. Do not present him before others as a heretic, when you have not with him investigated his positions, taking the Scriptures text-by-text in the spirit of Christ to show him what is truth. You do not yourself really know the evidence he has for his faith, and you cannot clearly define your own position. Take your Bible, and in a kindly spirit weigh every argument that he presents, and show him by the Scriptures if he is in error. When you do this without unkind feelings, you will do only that which is your duty and the duty of every minister of Jesus Christ.”¹⁸

3. Before AD 34 prophecy is literal, after AD 34 it is symbolic

I still would like to see a quote or text that actually says that. So far I have not found one. I realize that there are many variations of this view but the common denominator is the idea that the latter portion Daniel 11 cannot be interpreted to actually mention the literal land of Israel or literal wars in the Middle East. Futuristic teachings place great emphasis on the role of the old-

¹⁶ EGW, *1888 Materials*, 38

¹⁷ EGW, *1888 Materials*, 46

¹⁸ EGW, *1888 Materials*, 98

literal land of Israel in the Middle East and upon modern Jews. To combat these false teachings, perhaps some have overstressed the point that:

“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God”¹⁹

Andrews University theologian and professor, Hans LaRondalle, emphasized this point in his teaching to our churches’ pastors and leaders during the 70s and 80s. His teachings have impacted the way many interpret prophecy to this day. As one extreme can often lead to an opposite but no less harmful extreme, perhaps while combating the errors of futurism some have gone to an extreme which ignores clear biblical facts. While it is true that certain prophecies concerning Israel will not be fulfilled by them because of their rejection of the Messiah and are instead fulfilled by the church;²⁰ yet that fact does not preclude any possibility of prophecy mentioning the Middle East after the time of the cross. It certainly does not preclude the Mount of Olives from being taken literally.²¹ So, even a few millennia after 34 AD, there can be prophecies which involve some geography in the literal land of Palestine!

To impose a purely spiritual interpretation to all place names in the Middle East after AD 34 is obviously stretching the scriptures beyond what they really say. For example, the Bible predicted that Babylon would never be built up again.²² The supposed hermeneutic that prophecy after 34 AD cannot mention literal lands in the Middle East obviously doesn’t fit this prophecy in Isaiah, because the Babylon mentioned in this prophecy is the same historical city Babylon that was mentioned in Daniel. After 34 AD it has not become symbolic, Babylon is still not restored to its former glory just as the prophecy predicted. That theory simply doesn’t stand

¹⁹ Romans 2:28-29; see also the Old SDA Bible Commentary,

²⁰ 1 Peter 2:9, 10; Hosea 2:23

²¹ Zechariah. 14:4; EGW, *The Great Controversy*, 662-663

²² Isaiah. 13:19-22

the test of scripture. The same is true of Tyrus²³ Sodom and Gomorrah.²⁴ After AD 34, are those prophecies to be reinterpreted to mean something symbolic? These prophecies which dealt with literal cities in the Middle East will be just as true in the end of time as they were before 34 AD. As a matter of fact, Babylon was not completely desolated until after 34 AD—Islamic Arabs officially dissolved Babylon as a province and the city eventual became totally desolate sometime after 1,000 AD.²⁵

Perhaps the greatest evidence that this supposed “hermeneutic” is an example of eisegesis, is Daniel 9:26 and Matthew 24:15, 16:

“And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof [shall be] with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.”

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains”

These passages clearly are predictions of the destruction of literal Jerusalem and the literal old Jewish Temple. The problem is that that happened in AD 70, 36 years after anything concerning the literal land of Israel should have been predicted in prophecy according to the modern symbolic views!

Interestingly, Christ’s prediction of the destruction of literal Jerusalem comes immediately after Christ had told the Jews “Your house is left unto you desolate.”²⁶ Notice

²³ Ezekiel 36

²⁴ Isaiah 13:19-20; Jeremiah 49:18; 50:40

²⁵ Babylon, Legend, History and the Ancient City by Michael Seymour (2014) page 83; Also see this very thorough and interesting article on ancient Babylon at this website:
<http://ourancientworld.com/Settlement.aspx?id=38&culture=173>

²⁶ Matthew 23:38; Luke 13:35

Christ called it “your house” and not “My house,”²⁷ inferring that a change had come and that the old literal Herod’s Temple was no longer God’s house. Yet, right after that He called a literal lot of geography in the Middle East “the holy place.” Was Christ implying that the Temple was still holy in AD 67 or was He just using language with which His listeners were familiar? Most scholars agree that Matthew wrote his gospel after the destruction of Jerusalem, yet he twice refers to it as “the holy city.”²⁸ So, could it be that Gabriel in Daniel 11 might be mentioning the literal lands of the Middle East and even use terms like “glorious land” and “glorious holy mountain” not to imply that the land is holy, but simply to use language with which his hearer (Daniel) was familiar?

The easiest way out of this conundrum would be for the modern symbolic view advocates to simply update their “hermeneutic” chart to state that everything after AD 70 is symbolic instead of after AD 34. However, I would find such an update to be too convenient.

On the other end of this chart, everything concerning prophecy before AD 34 is supposed to be literal. This also is an exaggeration. For instance, both Isaiah 14, and Ezekiel 28 start out addressing the literal kings of the literal Middle Eastern cities of Babylon and Tyrus. The context makes it clear that both these prophecies concern more than the literal kings of these literal cities. They concern Satan²⁹, the real king behind the pagan kingdoms of the pre-AD 34 world (and the real king of the pagan/secular world after AD 34 for that matter). I have yet to meet a single Adventist expositor who believes that these prophecies are literal throughout. There are other examples. David uses the term “Jerusalem” in the Psalms to symbolize more than just a literal city in the Middle East.³⁰ This supposed literalism pre-AD 34 seems to ignore the fact that Israel

²⁷ Matthew 21:13

²⁸ Matthew 4:5; 27:23

²⁹ See *The Great Controversy, 503-504; Patriarchs and Prophets, 35*

³⁰ Psalms 51:18, 19; 116:18, 19; 122; 125:1, 2; 135:21

was not only a literal nation but was to be a spiritual one, whose significance reached beyond geography and ethnicity.³¹ Many of the Messianic Psalms are contextually speaking of David but they also have a broader spiritual application to Christ.³² This exaggerated all-literal or all-symbolic approach, to me at least, resembles dispensationalism.

The one-size-fits-all approach to understanding prophecy seems to ignore prophetic diversity. In Daniel, Revelation and Ezekiel, prophecies contain days that are symbolic for years. Jeremiah had predicted that Israel would be in captivity for 70 literal years. That was literally fulfilled; it did not represent 25,200 years! In Revelation the Lion of the Tribe of Judah represents Jesus³³ but in Daniel 7:4 the lion represents the king of Babylon. In several prophecies, water represents peoples, nations and tongues;³⁴ but the river from the throne is understood to be literal water³⁵ and at the end of the same chapter water is a symbol of salvation.³⁶ The same symbol can be used for different things depending on the context.

So, perhaps the distinguishing factor of whether a prophecy is to be taken literally or symbolically is not a matter of whether it covers time before or after AD 34. Maybe it is within the context of each prophecy and comparing them with other similar texts that can tell us if it should be literal or symbolic or a mixture of both. Tim Roosenberg, by the way, is not a strict literalist of Daniel 11. The strict literalists would be the Adventist Pioneers, Millerites and modern Civil Ruler advocates. Roosenberg teaches that the later portion of Daniel 11 has both a literal/local application and a larger spiritual/global implication. This fits well with the fact that throughout scripture, there are literal stories of actual historical events yet have broad spiritual

³¹ Isaiah 56:6-8; Hosea 1:10; 2:23

³² Psalms 16:8-11; Acts 2:25-28 this is just one of several examples

³³ Revelation 5:5

³⁴ Revelation 17:15

³⁵ Revelation 22:1, 2

³⁶ Revelation 22:17

implications. Take Song of Songs for example. It is a very literal love story filled with romantic detail but there are unmistakable implications of something more deep and broad—like the love of Christ for His church.³⁷ The same was true of the afore mentioned examples of Ezekiel 28, Isaiah 14, Psalms 125, and Jesus’ prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem³⁸. They all had literal and local interpretations with broad, deep and global spiritual implications. This is one great reason that I object to the entirely literal interpretation of Daniel 11.

4. 1798 and the Time of the End

Some have used the expression “at the time of the end” to prove that the King of the South is Atheism because, they claim, that Atheistic France gave the Papacy a deadly wound in 1798 which they feel is the year for the expression “at the time of the end.” This assumes several things. First, that the expression “at the time of the end” is limited to the year 1798. Second, that France was still acting on behalf of Atheism (or the spirit of atheism) in 1798. Third, that we can interpret an entire passage of scripture based on a single quote from Ellen White without studying how she uses the expression “the time of the end” in other instances.

I find this a very interesting point of agreement between the modern symbolic view and the civil ruler view—both place much emphasis on interpreting the expression “at the time of the end” to mean “in the year 1798.”

If that is how we are to interpret this expression it would be unique as it is never limited to the year 1798 in any of its other uses:

“So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end [shall be] the vision.”³⁹

³⁷ EGW, *Acts of the Apostles*, 91

³⁸ EGW, *The Desire of Ages*, 628

³⁹ Daniel 8:17

“The vision” or the 2300 day prophecy, reached to 1844. And it uses the expression “at the time of the end.”

“And [some] of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make [them] white, [even] to the time of the end: because [it is] yet for a time appointed.”⁴⁰

This text appears to be pointing to the end of Papal persecution which officially ended in 1773.⁴¹ This was prophesied by Jesus who said that the days of persecution would be shortened.⁴²

“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, [even] to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”⁴³

“And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words [are] closed up and sealed till the time of the end.”⁴⁴

Both these texts refer to the unsealing of the sealed portion of Daniel which was the 2300 day prophecy (Daniel 8:26). William Miller first discovered the light on the 2300 day prophecy in the year 1818.⁴⁵ But though Miller understood (partially) the timing of the 2300 days, yet the correct understanding of what would actually happen at the close of this prophetic period was sealed until October 23, 1844. Further light on this subject was “unsealed” in the early 1850’s has the church began to equate the antitypical Day of Atonement with the Day of Judgment and the phrase “investigative judgment” was coined.⁴⁶

“And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and

⁴⁰ Daniel 11:35

⁴¹ *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*, Review and Herald Publishing House, 1888 edition, 38

⁴² EGW, *The Great Controversy*, 266-267

⁴³ Daniel 12:4

⁴⁴ Daniel 12:9

⁴⁵ EGW, *The Great Controversy*, 357

⁴⁶ The Ellen G. White Estate, Inc., *The Ellen G. White Letters and Manuscripts with Annotations: Vol. 1*, page 824

with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.”⁴⁷

We have seen that every other time the expression “the time of the end” is used it does not refer to the exact date of 1798 but *to the period of time starting in 1798 and extending to the final crisis*. This is in agreement with the Hebrew word for “time” in this expression “time of the end.” The word is “ayth” which is also translated in the KJV in some places as “season.” A season is a certain period of time rather than a particular date. Psalms 1:3 is an example:

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; (Hebrew “ayth” same word as is translated as “time” in Daniel 11:40) his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Ellen White clearly backs up this understanding of the phrase “the time of the end”

“Honored by men with the responsibilities of state and with the secrets of kingdoms bearing universal sway, Daniel was honored by God as His ambassador, and was given many revelations of the mysteries of ages to come. His wonderful prophecies, as recorded by him in chapters 7 to 12 of the book bearing his name, were not fully understood even by the prophet himself; but before his life labors closed, he was given the blessed assurance that “at the end of the days”--in the closing period of this world's history--he would again be permitted to stand in his lot and place. . .”⁴⁸

To attempt to insert the thought that the “the time of the end” here must refer to the exact year of 1798 and therefore this must refer to the Papacy’s deadly wound, or to the Egyptian campaign of Napoleon Bonaparte, does not follow the consistent usage of the phrase. In light of the above evidence I feel it is an eisegenical interpretation of a single SOP quote (GC 355-356) used to attempt to support the modern symbolic views of Daniel 11. Furthermore, trying to eisegete the deadly wound in this scripture would put an about 200-year gap between when the King of the South pushes and by the time that the King of the North responds. I realize that some

⁴⁷ Daniel 11:40

⁴⁸ EGW, *Prophets and Kings*, 547 Emphasis Supplied (See also DA 235; 5T 9-10; RH, December 15, 1904 par. 1)

papers presented here try to explain this very obvious discrepancy but even with these explanations, to me this gap theory breaks the clearly consecutive flow of the text.

Moreover, it was the French empire which inflicted the deadly wound. Do we expect the Papacy to come against France “like a whirlwind”? Most all modern symbolic views proponents change the power in verse 40 from the literal empire of Napoleon to the spiritual force of Atheism/Communism/Secularism/Paganism/etc. Some here have even stated that it means everything other than the Papacy. That is quite a change of powers within the same verse! Furthermore, how is it that France is supposed to represent Atheism delivering the deadly wound to the Papacy, when 1798 comes after France had already reversed many of their Atheistic laws?⁴⁹ That would take some serious reading into the verse things that it does not say. I do believe that Pastor Witcome has done a thorough and excellent job in his paper of showing that Atheism was not what gave the deadly wound.

This limiting of the “time of the end” to the year 1798 was officially rejected by some leaders in the church in 1954:

“It was the considered opinion of the committee that the expression in verse 40 [Daniel 11:40], “at the time of the end,” need not refer to a specific date at the beginning of “the time of the end,” but could refer with equal accuracy to any time in or during the “the time of the end.” Therefore, we need not necessarily look for the fulfillment of verse 40 and following texts in 1798, but rather to events subsequent to the beginning of “the time of the end.” and yet prior to the close of probation or the standing up of Michael in Daniel 12:1.”⁵⁰

5. Biblical Research Institute and Book Review Papers on Islam in Daniel 11

Some of our Adventist Scholars from the Biblical Research Institute have published papers which run contrary to Tim Roosenberg’s views. I have to admit that they present some

⁴⁹ EGW, *The Great Controversy*, 287

⁵⁰ *Report on the Eleventh Chapter of Daniel*, by the Committee on Biblical Study and Research, published in *Ministry Magazine* in 1954

good points. Some of the mistakes pointed out by Pfandle in particular were simply typos that were missed in the earlier editions of his book. Roosenberg has since fixed those typos in his recent edition. I find it surprising that those who object to Roosenberg use these papers because Gerhard Pfandel's paper, when taken as it reads, also presents significant challenges to the modern symbolic view.

For example, Dr. Pfandl states, in his book review of Pastor Roosenberg's book, that there are only 5 points with which are exegetically certain. He states that beyond those five points we should be careful not to be dogmatic because this chapter has been variously interpreted by many people. He points to several variations of interpretation among different authors and uses those as an example of why we should be careful about "claiming that a particular interpretation is the only valid one." I totally agree. The only issue is that view is a sword which cuts both ways. It also means that the proponents of the modern symbolic should be more careful about being dogmatic about their views. As we study Daniel 11 together, may we all (the Civil Ruler View, the Islam View and the Modern Symbolic Views) treat each other with respect and be slower to criticize those that have opposing views from ours. Some that I have met feel so strongly against Mr. Roosenberg's views that they speak of him as they would a heretic. I find that very sad and lacking in proper Christian love and respect. I encourage us all to take heed to Dr. Pfandl's admonishment to be careful about being dogmatic about this passage.

I agree with Dr. Pfandl observations that Mr. Roosenberg has a typo when he states that the temple was rebuilt in 457 BC. It should be the restoration of political authority of Jerusalem, not the rebuilding of the temple which was completed in 515BC. Pastor Roosenberg, to his credit has never believed that the temple was rebuilt in 457 BC, this was simply a typo which has been corrected it in his latest edition of his book.

I also think Dr. Pfandl has a valid point about how Mr. Roosenberg appears to confuse the descendants of Ishmael with the Midianites, Ammorites and Moabites. Roosenberg has also clarified this in his new edition.

As for the apparent inconsistency in chronology which Pfandle claims in point 2e, I would have to say that both William Shea and Roy Gane see Daniel 11 verses 30-39 as a topical rather than chronological section in the prophecy. I am not completely sure about this yet.

It should be noted that Dr. Pfandel does speak positively of the evangelistic emphasis in the book. In his paper he gave no recommendations that Roosenberg stop his evangelism simply because he disagrees with his views regarding Daniel 11.

However, as much as I appreciate Dr. Pfandl's scholarship, I disagree with him on several points in his paper:

His first point of major objection is that Roosenberg states that Daniel 11 prophesies three wars between Islam Christianity. Dr. Pfandl feels that it was Mr. Roosenberg's idea that the first major war between Christianity and Islam mentioned in Daniel 11 was the crusades, seems off to him because, as Dr. Pfandl claims, that the most important wars between Islam and Christianity were the wars of Islamic conquest in the 7th and 8th centuries. Dr Pfandl feels these wars were the greatest wars because they "wiped out Christianity in the Middle East." That is a historical inaccuracy which Moslems love to point out. Unlike the Papal controlled portion of Europe, where for a time, practicing anything else than the established Christian religion was a death sentence; pockets of Christians exist to this day in those territories where Islam conquered. As a matter of fact, Lebanon is about 35-40% Christian and not from modern missionaries but

from Christians who continued to practice their religion despite the Arab conquests!⁵¹ I am quite surprised that Dr. Pfandl, being a scholar, seems to be unaware of those facts. Furthermore, Roosenberg's point is that these wars are wars primarily between the Papal led Christianity and Islam, not just Islam against groups of Christians in the Middle East.

Dr. Pfandl also brings up the main bone of contention—that the prophecy switches from literal to symbolic after the cross. I have already given my objections to this view and will not repeat them here.

Sadly, Dr. Pfandl judges Mr. Roosenberg's views as being “another attempt to interpret the Scripture with the newspaper.” I have explained above why I disagree with that opinion.

As for Dr. Angel Rodriguez's views. His parallel which he attempts to draw between the Exodus and the last five verses of Daniel 11 are interesting. His connections of Daniel 11 with the book of Revelation are convincing. But I would agree with Dr. Pfandl again that we should be careful not to be too dogmatic about Daniel 11. There have been several Adventist scholars who have drawn parallels which seem to fit yet they all have different interpretations and obviously are not all correct. While Dr. Rodriguez may have many good research papers found in the Biblical Research Institute, these views are simply that—views and not anything to be dogmatic about.

Both seem to conclude that Daniel 11 is more complicated than Tim Roosenberg thinks. I agree that it is complicated. I also believe that it is more complicated than the modern symbolic views advocates believe.

Some have sadly used these research papers by Pfandle and Rodriguez to try to promote the idea that the modern symbolic view is the official view of the church and Tim Roosenberg,

⁵¹ <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2009/06/arab-christians/> This website gives a good explanation of history the struggles of Christians and Muslims in the Middle East and though Christians are in the minority, they were never wiped out by the Islamic conquests or persecutions.

Dr. Roy Gane, Doug Batchelor, Kenneth Cox, Dr. E.T. Stoddart and a growing list of others who see Islam in the latter portion of Daniel 11, are somehow out of line with the “official” Adventist doctrine.

As time passes, we are seeing more and more people abandon the modern symbolic views and I personally believe that it is only a brief amount of time before the modern symbolic views will go the way of the Turkey view—as outdated and out of touch with guiding light of prophecy. Though I disagree with their conclusion, the research paper “The Quo Vadis Problem and Solution in Historicism of Daniel 11” by professors Koot van Wyk and Sook-Young Kim (published in 2015), prove that church scholars are starting to see that there is much more eisegesis than exegesis in the modern symbolic views. This research paper is the best I have yet seen at exposing the inconsistencies of any attempt to impose a purely spiritual interpretation to Daniel 11:40-45.

So Who Is The King of the South?

Since the whole point of my paper is not to prove this point but rather to promote respect and tolerance of Roosenberg’s evangelism, I will not take up much space for it. However, answering this question is one of the requirements for papers submitted to this symposium so I will address it now. I believe that when we seek to draw out the meaning that God placed in Daniel 11 and take it just as it reads that the answer is most likely radical Islam. I have read many arguments about how it cannot be Islam because Islam is not a “king” and so forth. These arguments make no sense to me because Islam has always had its Caliphs and Sultans and those who at least think that they rule on behalf of Islam. But just like the Papacy encompasses more than any one Pope, so Islam encompasses more than any one Caliph or Sultan. Daniel 2 is a

general outline of prophecy from Daniel's time to ours. Daniel 7 follows the same outline but expounds on the Papacy and the judgment. Daniel 8 follows the same outline except it skips Babylon and it places much emphasis on the sanctuary. Daniel 11 follows the same outline but it focuses very much on the military aspect of the same kingdoms as Daniel 8 but adds a tremendous amount of detail found nowhere else in the Bible—particularly the kings of the north and the south that show up throughout the whole chapter. Daniel 11 does not follow the typical structure as other prophecies of Daniel where you have a vision and then an interpretation. The whole of Daniel 11 is not a vision of an image, beasts or trees but rather a dictation by Gabriel to Daniel and uses mostly literal language (the same language as is used when the earlier visions were interpreted which have thus far always been mostly literal) and since there is no indication anywhere in the chapter to suggest that we should now interpret things in a purely spiritual way, we should take the Bible just as it reads and interpret it literally. However, as mentioned before, though there may be a local literal interpretation there can also be a global spiritual implication. Many at this conference agree with Ellen White and Uriah Smith that at least verses 30-36 apply to the Papacy and the Papacy rules over both literal geography (Vatican City today and the Papal States in Italy for centuries) and over the realm of the greatest false religious system. Then we are dealing with both literal wars as elsewhere in the chapter but also there is a strong undertone of false religious conquest. If we understand the expression “at the time of the end” not to be limited to any one year in history but a period of time extending from 1798 and reaching to the Second Coming, then we can expect some great war in the literal Middle East in the “time of the end”—in the times in which we are living. Since 1798, if you were going to have a war in the Middle East, what power would you have to confront? The answer is Islam. Islam, like the papacy, is both a religion and can be a state power. Islam originated from Arabia—south of

Jerusalem and south of most any of the other nations mentioned in Daniel (excepting Ethiopia). It took political control over Egypt and the geographical domains of the old Ptolemaic Empire (king of the south in the first portion of Daniel)⁵² and those lands remain in Muslim hands to this day. This was the logical conclusion of H.C. Lacy at the Bible Conference of 1919 and it is the simplest and most logical conclusion that many of the common people of the church are accepting.

Summary

In conclusion, Pastor Tim Roosenberg has upset the Price, Ford and Brimsmead interpretation of Daniel 11 which I have referred to as the modern symbolic views. It is largely because of the controversy surrounding Roosenberg's evangelism that we are here at this conference. While forgetting that the modern symbolic views were likely a reaction to the "headline news" many have used that phrase as the scapegoat for objecting to Mr. Roosenberg's views. While I do feel that his views are subject to improvement, yet I feel they are the most consistent with scripture and in explaining how Matthew 24:14 can be fulfilled. He uses his views to win souls for Christ like Uriah Smith used his book, *Daniel and the Revelation*, to bring many to a knowledge of the present truth. While I and most Adventists today may disagree with many of Uriah Smith's views of prophecy—particularly his views on Daniel 11—yet should we not all agree with Sister White?

"Daniel and Revelation, Great Controversy, Patriarchs and Prophets, and Desire of Ages should now go to the world. The grand instruction contained in Daniel and Revelation has been eagerly perused by many in Australia. This book has been the means of bringing many precious souls to a knowledge of the truth. Everything that can be done should be

⁵² <https://www.britannica.com/place/Egypt/From-the-Islamic-conquest-to-1250>, this is a link to an excellent article dealing with the history of Islam in Mid-Evil Egypt. It states: "During the Mamlūk period, Egypt became the unrivaled political, economic, and cultural centre of the eastern Arabic-speaking zone of the Muslim world."

done to circulate *Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation*. I know of no other book that can take the place of this one. It is God's helping hand."⁵³

Obviously from the above quote, Sister White did not see Uriah Smith's interpretations of Daniel 11 or his many other peculiar ideas expressed in his book as hindering the great evangelistic blessing that it was. Whatever we may feel is the best interpretation of Daniel 11, may that not in any way detract from the souls whom Roosenberg is winning through his book and evangelistic series.

Perhaps the following Bible story has some wise counsel for us in this situation:

“And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part.”⁵⁴

⁵³ EGW, *Manuscript 76*, 1901

⁵⁴ Mark 9:38-40