

MINIATURE SYMBOLIZATION AND THE YEAR-DAY PRINCIPLE OF PROPHETIC INTERPRETATION

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Introduction

A basic hermeneutical component of the historicist school of prophetic interpretation is the so-called “year-day principle.” Those who advocate this hermeneutical principle argue that the prophetic time periods connected with the apocalyptic prophecies of Scripture have to be understood not as literal days, but rather as *symbolic days* that represent the same number of *literal years*. So, e.g., the 70 weeks of Dan 9:24-27 are usually interpreted as 490 years; the 1,260 days of Rev 11:3 and 12:6 (cf. Dan 7:25; Rev 11:2; 12:14; 13:5) as 1,260 years; the 1,290 days of Dan 12:11 as 1,290 years; the 1,335 days of Dan 12:12 as 1,335 years; and the 2,300 evenings and mornings of Dan 8:14 (also NASB, NIV)¹ as 2,300 years.²

But several critics have blamed the historicist school for applying inconsistently the year-day hermeneutical principle to some specific Bible prophecies and not to other ones. In 1842, Moses Stuart, professor at Andover Theological Seminary in Massachusetts, inquired ironically why historicists did not use their year-day principle to also interpret the 120 years of Gen 6:3 as “43,920 years”; the “forty days and forty nights” of Gen 7:4 as “forty years”; the 400 years of Gen 15:13 as “144,000 years”; the seven years of plenty and seven of famine of Gen 41:25-36 as “2,529 years of each in succession.”³

Historicists have generally replied that those criticisms fall short by

¹Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible references are from the RSV.

²The most comprehensive treatment of the historical development of historicism is found in Le Roy E. Froom’s *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946-1954).

Insightful scholarly expositions supporting the historicist year-day principle are provided in William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1982), 1:56-93; idem, *Daniel 7-12: Prophecies of the End Time* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1996), 40-45, 55-60, 214-223.

³M[oses] Stuart, *Hints on the Interpretation of Prophecy* (Andover, MA: Allan, Morrill and Wardwell, 1842), 81-82.

disregarding the basic hermeneutical distinction between *classical* prophecies (worded in literal language) and *apocalyptic* prophecies (portrayed in symbolic language). Uriah Smith argued that “in the midst of symbolic prophecy” “the time is not literal, but symbolic also,” in which a day “stands for a year” (cf. Num 14:34; Ezek 4:6).⁴ William H. Shea has demonstrated that, first, the endpoint of each apocalyptic prophecy reaches beyond “the immediate historical context of the prophet” to a more distant “end of time when the ultimate kingdom of God will be set up”; and that, second, “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.⁵

Yet, it seems that contemporary historicism is lacking convincing answers to the following questions: Why should Num 14:34 and Ezek 4:5, 6 be used as a hermeneutical principle to interpret the time elements of the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation?⁶ Would not such a use be simply another example of the so-called proof-text approach? Why is the year-day principle applied to the expression “a time, two times, and half a time” of Dan 7:25 in which the word “time” is taken as a synonym of “year” (cf. Dan 4:16, 23, 25, 32; 11:13 [lit., “at the end of times, years”]),⁷ and why is that same principle not applied to the equally apocalyptic “thousand years” of Rev 20:1-10?⁸

⁴Uriah Smith, *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Books of Daniel and the Revelation* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1885), 144, see also 202, n.

⁵Shea, *Selected Studies*, 59-61.

⁶W[illia]m Miller states: “The scripture rule for reckoning a day for a year will be found in Numbers 14:34, and Ezeiel [sic] 4:6, also in the fulfil[ment] of Daniel’s seventy weeks” (*Evidences from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ about the Year A.D. 1843, and the Personal Reign of 1000 Years* [Brandon, VT: Vermont Telegraph Office, 1833], 11).

⁷William H. Shea states: In Daniel 4, “a ‘time’ refers to a year. Seven ‘times’ were to pass over Nebuchadnezzar until he regained his sanity (4:16, 23, 25, 32). The ‘time, times, and half a time’ of Daniel 7:25, then, equal three and a half prophetic years. Each year is made up of 360 days, making a total of 1,260 days. The year-for-a-day principle gives us 1,260 actual years (see Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34)” (*Daniel 1-7: Prophecy as History*, 176).

⁸In regard to the interpretation of the “thousand years” of Rev 20:1-10, the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* simply says: “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” (rev. ed. [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980], 7:880).

The present article explores briefly the concept of “miniature symbolization” in nineteenth-century Protestant literature. This concept can provide helpful hermeneutical insights for the process of responding to these questions from a historicist perspective. Only the actual lengths of the various prophetic time periods are considered, without any attempt to settle the starting and ending points of each period.

Miniature Symbolization in Nineteenth-century Protestant Literature

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.

Frederic Thruston

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).⁹

George Bush

In 1843, George Bush, professor of Hebrew and Oriental Literature at New York City University, elaborated on the concept of “miniature symbolization.”¹⁰ 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

⁹Frederic Thruston, *England Safe and Triumphant; or, Researches into the Apocalyptic Little Book, and Prophecies, Connected and Synchronical* (London: Coventry, 1812), 1:145.

¹⁰George Bush, “Prophetic Designations of Time,” *The Hierophant; or Monthly Expositor of Sacred Symbols and Prophecy* 11 (April 1843): 241-253.

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).¹¹

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).¹²

A large extract of Bush's article, "Prophetic Designations of Time," from which these quotes came, was reprinted by Joshua V. Himes in the Millerite periodical *The Advent Herald and Signs of the Times Reporter* (March 6, 1844). Himes described the article as a "triumphant argument in proof that the prophetic days are symbols of years."¹³

T. R. Birks

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," 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."¹⁵

¹¹Ibid., 244-245.

¹²Ibid., 246.

¹³George Bush, "Prophetic Designations of Time," *The Advent Herald, and Signs of the Times Reporter*, March 6, 1844, 33-35. A short extract of this article appears also in P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 72 n. 114.

¹⁴T. R. Birks, *First Elements of Sacred Prophecy: Including an Examination of Several Recent Expositions, and of the Year-Day Theory* (London: William Edward Painter, 1843), 308-419.

¹⁵Ibid., 311, 375, 416.

Discussing the so-called “*systematic employment of MINIATURE in hieroglyphical symbolization*”¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

E. B. Elliott

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 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).¹⁹

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,”

¹⁶Ibid., 375. Birks also mentions that George S. Faber, in a work called “Provincial Letters,” speaks about “the symbolic employment of MINIATURE in hieroglyphical symbolization” in his short but lucid defense of the year-day theory. Unfortunately, I was unable to locate any remaining copy of that work.

¹⁷Ibid., 339.

¹⁸E. B. Elliott, *Horæ Apocahptice; or, A Commentary on the Apocahypse, Critical and Historical*, 3d ed. (London: Seeley, Burnside, and Seeley, 1847), 3:224.

¹⁹Ibid., 227 n. 4.

such as in Isa 54:4, 6; Jer 2:2; 48:11; Ezek 23:3; and Hos 2:15,²⁰ where a person symbolizes Israel or a single human lifetime symbolizes the span of Israel's national history.

Elliot 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,—'O navis referent, &c;' where the *brief* storm represents the *longer* civil commotions (emphasis original).²¹

The above-mentioned definitions of the concept of miniature symbolization provide some basic guidelines for studying the passages of Scripture to which historicists apply the year-day principle. The following section considers briefly how this concept can be identified in those passages.

The Concept of Miniature Symbolization in Specific Bible Passages

Historicists have usually regarded the expressions "for every day a year" (Num 14:34) and "a day for each year" (Ezek 4:6) as the hermeneutical keys to the time elements which occur in several passages of Daniel and the Revelation. The discussion that follows tries to show how the presence of a miniature symbolization in Num 14 and Ezek 4, on one hand, and in some apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation, on the other, provides a basic thematic correlation between that expression and those prophecies.

Numbers and Ezekiel

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

²⁰Ibid., 224 n. 1.

²¹Ibid. (emphasis original).

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.”²²

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

²²Birks, 338-339.

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).²³

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 a similar miniature symbolization.

The discussion attempts now to verify how this principle can be applied consistently to the apocalyptic time prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation.

Daniel

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

In the apocalyptic prophecy of Dan 7, all main entities are portrayed in

²³Bush, *Hierophant*, 246.

²⁴Cf. Birks, 319-324.

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

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

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

²⁵See Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vols. 1-4, passim (references in the "Index" of each volume).

²⁶The original Hebrew of Dan 8:14 actually reads 2,300 "evenings and mornings." For further study of this expression, see S. J. Schwantes, "'*Ereb Böqer* of Dan 8:14 Re-examined," *AUSS* 16 (1978): 375-385.

²⁷See Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vols. 1-4, passim (references in the "Index" of each volume); Samuel Nuñez, *The Vision of Daniel 8: Interpretations from 1700 to [1900]*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, 14 (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1987); Alberto R. Timm, *The Sanctuary and the Three Angels' Messages: Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series, 5 (Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society, 1995), 19-36, 64-79, 151-174.

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

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.

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

²⁸For a more detailed study of the meaning and interpretation of the “seventy weeks” of Dan 9:24-27, see Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24-27,” supplement to *Ministry*, May 1976; William H. Shea, “The Relationship between the Prophecies of Daniel 8 and Daniel 9,” in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1981), 228-250; Jacques B. Doukhan, “The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9: Exegetical Study,” in *ibid.*, 251-276; William H. Shea, “The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27,” in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 3, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1986), 105-108; Clifford Goldstein, *1844 Made Simple* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1988), 43-55; Jacques B. Doukhan, *Daniel: The Vision of the End*, rev. ed. (Berrien Springs, Andrews University Press, 1989), 31-44, 172 n. 65; Brempong Owusu-Antwi, *The Chronology of Dan 9:24-27*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series, 2 (Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society, 1995).

²⁹See n. 6, above.

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.

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 12.³⁰ 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.

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 “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 ($7 \times 360 \text{ days} = 2,520 \text{ days-years}$).³¹ There

³⁰Shea, *Daniel 7-12*, 217-218. See also idem, “Time Prophecies of Daniel 12 and Revelation 12-13,” in *Symposium on Revelation: Introductory and Exegetical Studies—Book 1*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, 6, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 327-360.

³¹See, e.g., Elliott, 227-228 n. 4. This interpretation is still upheld today by the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

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,³² this period can be easily accommodated within 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.

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 symbolism. Thus, the “seventy years” of Dan 9:2 have to be understood as a literal period of time.

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.

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

³²Cf. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 4:790: “The majority of ancient and modern interpreters explain the Aramaic *‘iddan*, ‘time,’ here (also in vs. 23, 25, 32; chs. 7:25; 12:7 [this last text is not in Aramaic but in Hebrew]) to mean ‘year.’ The original LXX reads ‘seven years.’ Among the earlier expositors supporting this view are Josephus (*Antiquities* x. 10.6), Jerome, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Jephth. Most modern expositors also agree with this view.”

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 discussion turns now to the book of Revelation, with special attention to the presence of prophetic time periods within a miniature-symbolization setting.

The Revelation

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 11:9, 11); 1,260 “days” (Rev 12:6); “a time, and times, and half a time” (Rev 12:14); and 42 “months” (Rev 13:5).³³

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

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

³³Cf. Birks, 321-324.

³⁴An insightful description of Smyrna is provided in Fatih Cimok, *A Guide to the Seven Churches* (Istanbul, Turkey: A Turizm Yayinlari, 1998), 54-61. See also W. M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia and Their Place in the Plan of the Apocalypse* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963), 251-280.

³⁵*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:746.

³⁶See *ibid.*, 747-748.

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. 1449³⁷—then the “five months” can only be taken as 150 years.

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.”³⁸ 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. 1840.³⁹

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).⁴⁰ This implies, just by itself, that the miniature

³⁷J[osiah] Litch, *The Probability of the Second Coming of Christ about A.D. 1843* (Boston: David H. Ela, 1838), 153-157. Cf. Damsteegt, 26-29.

³⁸Some authors seem to favor the notion that the expression “the hour, the day, the month, and the year” should be understood as a specific moment in time rather than a time period. See, e.g., R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), 1:252; J. Massyngbaerde Ford, *Revelation*, AB 38 (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 153-154; G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 508. Yet, historicists tend to see that expression as alluding to an actual time period.

³⁹Litch, 157-158. Cf. Damsteegt, 26-29.

⁴⁰Cf. David E. Aune, who states: “The period of forty-two months (also mentioned in Rev 13:5, where it is the period during which the beast exercises authority . . .) is a

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). Despite the widespread tendency of reducing the two witnesses to two literal prophets (such as Moses and Elijah),⁴¹ some authors argue in favor of a broader corporative understanding of the two witnesses.⁴² Kenneth A. Strand argues that they actually represent the larger prophetic witnesses comprised by “the word of God” (the OT prophetic message) and the “testimony of Jesus Christ” (the NT apostolic witness).⁴³ This confirms the already-established notion that the 42 months and the 1,260 days of Rev 11:2, 3 have to be understood from a year-day perspective as 1,260 years.

symbolic apocalyptic number for a divinely restricted period of time (often a limited period of eschatological tribulation), ultimately derived from Dan 7:25; 12:7. Forty-two months is equivalent to three and one-half years, a period of time that the author expresses differently elsewhere as 1,260 days (11:3; 12:6) and as ‘a time, times, and half a time’ (12:14). He uses the number three and one-half for the number of days between the death and the ascension of the two witnesses (11:9, 11)” (*Revelation 6-16*, WBC 52B [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998], 609).

For Millerite/Seventh-day Adventist expositions of this interrelationship of time prophecies, see, e.g., William Miller, *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ, about the Year 1843: Exhibited in a Course of Lectures* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), 78, 96, 112, 215-216; Josiah Litch, *Prophetic Expositions; or A Connected View of the Testimony of the Prophets Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Time of Its Establishment* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), 1:92-93; *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 4:833-834; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 2, *The Message of Revelation* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1985), 326; Shea, “Time Prophecies of Daniel 12 and Revelation 12-13,” 327-360.

⁴¹A partial listing of different individuals who have been considered as the “two witnesses” is provided in Massynbaerde Ford, 177-178.

⁴²See, e.g., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:801; Kenneth A. Strand, “The Two Witnesses of Rev 11:3-12,” *AUSS* 19 (1981): 127-135; Beale, 572-579.

⁴³Strand, 127-135. Cf. Ellen G. White, who states: “Concerning the two witnesses, the prophet declares further, ‘These are the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of earth.’ ‘Thy word,’ said the psalmist, ‘is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.’ The two witnesses represent the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament. Both are important testimonies to the origin and perpetuity of the law of God. Both are witnesses also to the plan of salvation. The types, sacrifices, and prophecies of the Old Testament point forward to a Saviour to come. The Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament tell of a Saviour who has come in the exact manner foretold by type and prophecy” (*The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* [Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1911], 267).

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.⁴⁴

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 church⁴⁵ confirms the already-settled year-day interpretation of each of those periods as 1,260 years.

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.

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. 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

⁴⁴*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:803.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 807.

additional month added as necessary to synchronize with the solar year (about seven times in nine years). That the idealized “prophetic” year contains 360 prophetic days is confirmed by the use of the terms three and one-half years, 1,260 days, and 42 months as synonymous designations for the same period (Rev 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5; cf. Dan 7:25; 12:7). No more convincing is the argument that a “year” can be interpreted from a year-day perspective only when designated by the symbolic term “time.” If this were the case, then serious problems would be created in regard to the apocalyptic expression “the hour, the day, the month, and the year” (Rev 9:15), in which the words “day” and “year” are used in the same symbolic time expression. In this case, should the year-day principle be used because the word “day” is mentioned or should it not be used because the term “year” is also present? But if the notion of miniature symbolization is a valid hermeneutical principle of prophetic interpretation, then the nature of the 1,000 years can be defined more easily by considering the presence or absence of a miniature symbolization in that context.

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.

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

⁴⁶The meaning of this sealed “book” is discussed in Ranko Stefanovic, *The Background and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5*, Andrews University Seminary Dissertation Series, 22 (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1996).

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. But this is a discussion that goes beyond the purpose of the present study.

Conclusion

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.

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.

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,

⁴⁷See, e.g., Joseph Bates, *Second Advent Way Marks and High Heaps, or a Connected View, of the Fulfillment of Prophecy, by God's Peculiar People, from the Year 1840 to 1847* (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1847), 43; E[lon] Everts, “The Seventh Seal,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 15, 1857, 85; Uriah Smith, *Thoughts, Critical and Practical on the Book of Revelation* (Battle Creek: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1865), 139; *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:787. Cf. Ellen G. White, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views* (Saratoga Springs, NY: James White, 1851), 11-12.

⁴⁸See *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:798, 971.

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 miniature-symbolization 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, tangential 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).

The relevance of the year-day principle of prophetic interpretation is dependent not only on the concept of miniature symbolization. Rather, sound scholarly studies of the Scriptures have demonstrated the internal (exegetical) and external (historical) need for a year-day interpretation of some apocalyptic time periods.⁴⁹ But I am personally convinced that the concept of miniature symbolization can strengthen the inner consistency of that principle of prophetic interpretation. Besides this, it also provides convincing answers to crucial questions in regard to the rationale to be used in defining when the year-day principle should or should not be used.

This article presented only a limited, general overview of how the concept of miniature symbolization can be consistently applied to the main symbolic time periods of Daniel and Revelation. I hope the preliminary concepts provided here will be refined and deepened by future investigations of this relevant topic for a historicist understanding of Bible prophecy.

⁴⁹See Shea, *Selected Studies*, 25-93.