

The Lost 1,335-Year Prophecy: A Case Study of an Erroneous William Miller Interpretation

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Personal Quest for Truth

My quest to comprehend the historical and empirical facts about Ellen White began about fifty years ago. Shortly after being baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church at age twelve, (Ellen Harmon’s age when she personally encountered William Miller and his fifteen biblical proofs), I vaguely sensed that the community consensus concerning White’s “Gift of Prophecy” that I had unconsciously absorbed seemed “not quite right.” Then, in undergraduate and graduate education I encountered historical, empirical, and scientific facts which could not be harmonized with (seemingly authoritative) White assertions. In contrast, I had also been greatly influenced by White statements that truth could stand rigorous examination; that individuals should not be reflectors of other men’s thoughts; and that the greatest need of the world was for persons who would stand for the truth regardless of circumstances. But what was the truth? I suspected that the creedal, old-time religion truth of what morphed into the 28 Fundamental Beliefs was not “present truth.”

Although White formally disavowed being inerrant, she also made statements claiming immense authority. She was more than a prophet. She was eyewitness to pre-Creation events in heaven, the Creation, and Noah’s Flood. She not only claimed to “see” the hue of Adam’s skin, she claimed she was “shown” the evolution of Satan’s skull bones. Before he rebelled, his “forehead was high and broad” but centuries later the frontal bone

of his cranium had changed in shape. “His forehead commenced from his eyes to recede backward.” All his previously good qualities had become “debased.”¹ This meticulous, eyewitness quality of her visions led the Adventist community to accord her an authority that rivaled that of the canonical prophets. Simultaneously, these very “I saw” assertions are sometimes contradicted by biblical texts and empirical and historical facts.

Eventually, by the time I had spent about five years of post-graduate education in theology and biblical languages, I could not harmonize the then currently reigning orthodoxy with empirical truths. Thus, I relinquished my goal of teaching Semitic languages in a Seventh-day Adventist higher education institution, changed careers, and became a Family Nurse Practitioner. Then, after an hiatus of about thirty years, I returned to the question: What are the historical and empirical facts concerning White? Or, to put it in another way: *Did Ellen G. White always see what she thought she saw?*

The answer to this question cannot properly be based on *a priori* theological lenses through which the empirical facts must be interpreted. Rather, empirical facts must be analyzed on their intrinsic merits, and the relative weight of the evidence should determine the conclusions reached. In the case of “the daily sacrifice” and the 1,335-day-year prophetic period, there is no reasonable doubt that she derived her “I saw” information from William Miller, and that the 1,335-day-year calculation was not fulfilled in 1844 because the

Resurrection simply did not occur—as Millerites had so confidently announced to the world.

The Authority of Ellen G. White’s “I Saw” Statements

Ellen G. White made frequent use of the literary form “I was shown” or “I saw.” It implied that she had special eyewitness insight. Her 1858 *Spiritual Gifts* is chock-full with scores of “I saw” statements. She begins chapter one, “The Fall of Satan” with: “The Lord has shown me that Satan[s] . . . forehead was high and broad.” She begins chapter two with “I saw.” “I saw” begins chapter five. “I saw,” “I was shown,” “I then viewed,” and other equivalents such as “I then viewed that” recur with monotonous predictability.² She presented herself as an eyewitness to the Creation and claimed to know Adam’s height. She even “saw” the hue of his skin, which was “neither white, nor sallow, but ruddy.”³ Adam may not have been white, but Ellen White claimed that in heaven “all will be as white as Christ himself.”⁴ The dominant interpretation of such statements within the Seventh-day Adventist community is that they are not only reliable, factual, and true assertions, but that they are a distinctive mark of her prophetic authority, no matter what the topic might be, whether historical, biological, geological, physiological, hermeneutical, or exegetical. For many scholars, White’s “I saw” statements have been considered authoritative despite empirical or historical evidence to the contrary. Their default position is that these “I saw” statements should be presumed to have more epistemological value than scientific evidence. Such consensus is illustrated in the article “Twelve Controversial Statements,” in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, specifically White statements “largely or wholly rejected by current scientific opinion.”⁵ The consensus of “orthodox” Seventh-day Adventist scholars and administrators is that when Ellen White says “I saw,” she is speaking analogously to the pope in the Catholic Church when he speaks *ex cathedra* on doctrine and morals. Twenty essays produced in a collective work demonstrate this. For example, Mueller concedes that although White may have made some trivial “historical inaccuracies,” these are insignificant because they are all trifling.⁶ Rodriguez argues that Ellen White’s assertions exhibit only “some minor discrepancies and difficulties.”⁷ Lake asserts that White’s Gift of Prophecy equipped her

with a filter that screened out errors. He asserts that she was not really dependent on fallible, extrabiblical sources for “getting information and ideas.”

When Ellen White read her sources, she was not dependent on them for getting information and ideas as in reading-directed thinking. Rather, she came to her sources with a preunderstanding as in thinking-directed reading. . . . The common knowledge Ellen White obtained from reading the Protestant religious authors was always subordinate to her inspired understanding.⁸

Moskala rhetorically asks: “Can a biblical author mislead in doctrine . . .? My answer is categorically no; prophets do not make doctrinal mistakes. . . . there are no examples that would convincingly demonstrate that prophets made mistakes in doctrines.”⁹ This essay will demonstrate the contrary. Ellen White did make a significant error in regard to a purportedly key, divinely revealed eschatological prophecy; one that in 1844 was on a par with the 2,300-day-year prophecy. She had no filter that eliminated erroneous concepts; she did not have an accurate “preunderstanding as in thinking-directed reading”; she was literarily and intellectually dependent on the fallible William Miller for erroneous assertions that she *thought* she “saw” in vision. This is the case concerning White’s explanation of “the daily” in conjunction with the 1,335-year prophecy of Daniel 12:12. “Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.” (KJV)

This paper will offer unambiguous textual and historical evidence that when Ellen White reports that she “saw” an explanation concerning a “Midnight Cry” prophetic interpretation, what she “saw” actually originated from a textually and historically erroneous teaching of William Miller. The New York farmer had convinced himself that he was merely allowing the Bible to interpret itself. He had not consulted any commentary or other interpreter. He had just used a concordance.¹⁰ The implicit inference was that Miller’s interpretation was not merely *his* interpretation; it was *the* Bible interpretation. White reinforced Miller’s authority and endorsed his method of studying the Bible when she



A Millerite Prophetic Chart, 1843. Wikimedia Commons.

explained that God had provided him regular angelic guidance in reaching his interpretations of Daniel and Revelation. She likened him to Elijah and John the Baptist.¹¹

Like other Protestants, Adventists consider that the special revelation found in the canonical scripture is more authoritative than general revelation.¹² They recognized the same inspiration in Ellen White and concluded that she too was gifted with direct revelation, (after a hiatus of almost two millennium since John

of Patmos). Having thus reached this conclusion, they have found it difficult to acknowledge that White could err in her communication or in her prophetic exegesis.

Miller had asserted that the 1,335-year prophecy commenced when “the daily” was removed and dated this to 508 AD, and thus the period ended exactly in 1843–44.

This prophecy figured prominently on the famous 1843 Millerite chart, the design of which, according to Ellen White, had been “directed by the Lord.”¹³ The numerals “1335” are printed in large, bold, capital letters, and are centered on the chart just below a ten-horned beast captioned “PAGAN ROME,” with Daniel 12:11 cited. The 508

+ 1,335 calculation appears again on

the lower right of the chart. Daniel 12:11–13 is cited with the caption: “Daniel will stand in his lot at the Resurrection, end of the [1,335] days.” The 1,335-year calculation shares equal billing with the 2,300-year calculation of Daniel 8:14. Miller taught that the 1,335 years could not begin until the Roman Empire was shattered into ten kingdoms/kings in 490 AD, and that this would make way for papal Rome to replace pagan Rome in 508. The 1,335-years would end with Daniel standing in his lot at the First Resurrection in 1843.

A Multi-Layered Calculation

The 1,335-day-year prophecy, like the 2,300-day-year prophecy, was one of nine mathematical-biblical calculations that Miller had figured would all end in 1843, which he took to be the year of the Second Coming. Miller had six other “prophetic periods” with their calculations ending on exact dates, like 1798. This made up a total of “fifteen proofs.”¹⁴ The fact that “prophetic periods” like $508+1,290 = 1798$ and $538+1,260 = 1798$ had allegedly already been fulfilled with exactitude, proved to him that the 1,335-year and 2,300-year would also end exactly in 1843–44. Even the respected dean of Seventh-day Adventist apologists, Francis D. Nichol, concluded that several of these “so-called proofs that 1843 was the climax year of prophecy are plainly fanciful.” He also characterizes them as “begging the question,” “hoary with age,” and “farfetched.” Nichol believed that Miller started with 1843 and arbitrarily back-dated events to commence his prophetic intervals.¹⁵ Two of the most fanciful were where Miller applied his rule that a day equals a thousand years in Hosea 6:2 and Luke 13:32–33.¹⁶ Miller’s “farfetched” reasoning can also be seen in his use of the KJV language of Hosea 6:2—“After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.” Miller asserts that the “two days” equal 2,000 years, beginning 158 BC with the Roman-Jewish league and reaching to 1842; then the “third day” will start the Seventh Millennium, when Christ “will raise us up” in the First Resurrection. The identical methodology was the foundation for all Miller’s fifteen proofs. It was known as the historicist method but is a system more accurately designated as the allegorical-typological-historicist method.

To appreciate the significance of the 1,335-year proof, it is helpful to have a general conception of Miller’s other “biblical” proofs that so impressed Ellen White. Miller’s fifteen proofs included the claim that exactly 6,000 years after creation, (which he dated to the year 4157 BC), Christ’s Second Coming would commence the seventh millennium. Subtracting 4,157 years from 6,000 equaled 1843 exactly. This was his Millennial Sabbath proof. A second of Miller’s biblical proofs was his Seven Times of the Gentiles, which he asserted lasted 2,520 years (7×360 , assuming a day

for a year and that each “time” contained a 360-day year.) He started this in 677 BC and ended it precisely in 1843. A third Miller proof was his Jubilee prophecy, which lasted 2,450 years (49×50 , or 50 Jubilees, each of 49 years) from exactly 607 BC to 1843. A fourth Millerite prediction was a 1,290 day-year interval that he derived from references to the “daily sacrifice” in Daniel 8:11–13; 11:31; and 12:11. These dates all featured on the complex 1843 chart, which pictorially summed up Miller’s theories concerning “definite time.”¹⁷

Ellen White Encounters William Miller

During William Miller’s March 11–23, 1840 lecture series in Portland, Maine, Ellen Harmon’s hometown, Miller convinced the twelve-year-old Ellen Harmon that he had discovered fifteen mathematical-biblical proofs that Christ’s Second Coming would occur “about 1843.”¹⁸ By January 1843, he announced that he had evidence of a precise date, no later than March 21, 1844.¹⁹ When this date failed, S. S. Snow reinterpreted Miller’s predictions, and surpassed Miller in influence, in a date-setting movement known as The Midnight Cry. Ellen Harmon characterized Miller’s period of leadership as fulfilling the first two angels of Revelation 14, considered that God was “in” Snow’s Midnight Cry, and “saw” that God repeatedly and angelically guided Miller’s mind to novel insights into prophetic periods.

I saw that God sent his angel to move upon the heart of a farmer who had not believed the Bible, and led him to search the prophecies. Angels of God repeatedly visited that chosen one, and guided his mind, and opened his understanding to prophecies which had ever been dark to God’s people.²⁰

However, Miller’s interpretive method and results have been demonstrably falsified. The more well-known 2,300-year prediction from Daniel 8:14 was merely one alongside fourteen other proofs. It was the multiple, simultaneously ending calculations that indelibly impressed Ellen Harmon. When nine of them concerning 1843–44 failed on March 21, 1844, a Millerite lay-preacher, Samuel S. Snow, argued that Christ’s Second Coming was still very near, that Christ

was merely “tarrying” for a short but *indefinite* period, and that Miller’s failed March 21, 1844 date had also actually been predicted. Snow stated that Miller’s March 21, 1844 date had to fail in order to fulfill prophecies in Habakkuk 2, Ezekiel 12:22–24, and Jeremiah 51:45–46.²¹ In the summer of 1844, Snow originated and promoted the “Midnight Cry,” which reasserted a new definite date of October 22, 1844, replacing the indefinite, and less motivating, “tarrying time.” But when October 22, 1844 also passed without a Second Coming, Millerism suffered its greatest crisis. The movement split into two broad opposing camps: the “open-door” Adventists, including Miller and Joshua V. Himes, and the “shut-door” Adventists, whose most influential adherent was Ellen Harmon. Within this group, Joseph Turner and O. R. L. Crosier originated a new explanation for Christ’s delay, which Ellen Harmon said her visions endorsed. Then, in late 1850, Harmon, now married to James White, claimed divine inspiration for a new and improved chart that incorporated Miller’s and Snow’s revised prophetic intervals.²²

It was in connection with this new chart that Ellen White “saw” in a vision an explanation of the biblical expression “the daily.” She understood that the phrase referred to pagan Rome. In her vision she claimed to have seen that in the KJV’s translation of the expression “the daily sacrifice” in Daniel 8.13, the word “sacrifice” had been incorrectly *supplied* by the translators.

Miller’s Problem with “The Daily”

William Miller originated the confusion regarding “the daily.” He stated that he could not find the term “daily” in his concordance outside of Daniel, and that it was not until he read through his Bible and reached Thessalonians that its true meaning dawned on him in a divine eureka moment. After puzzling over the term “the daily” in Daniel 8:11–13, Miller recounted:

I read on and could find no other case in which it [the daily] was found, but in Daniel.²³ I then [by the aid of a concordance] took those words which stood in connection with it, “take away;” he shall take away, “the daily”; “from the time the daily shall be taken away, &c.” I read on, and thought I should find no light on the text; finally, I came to 2 Thess. 2:7, 8. “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way, and then shall that wicked be revealed,” &c. And when I had come to that text, oh! how clear and glorious the truth appeared! There it is! That is “the daily!” Well now, what does Paul mean by “he who now letteth,” or hindereth? By “the man of sin,” and the “wicked,” popery is meant. Well what is it which hinders popery from being revealed? Why, it is paganism; well, then, “the daily” must mean paganism.²⁴

Miller, however, was factually incorrect in his concordance research. (Uriah Smith himself noted that the “word here rendered daily, occurs in the Old Testament, according to the Hebrew concordance, one hundred and two times.” Smith still asserted that “sacrifice is a word erroneously supplied.”²⁵)

The original historical and biblical context of Daniel reveals a fatal flaw in Miller’s interpretation. Daniel was deeply concerned about a literal Jewish people, a literal Jerusalem, a literal Temple, and a literal divinely prescribed system of sacrifices that had been outlined in Numbers 28 to 29. The Jerusalem location of these sacrifices had been desecrated and destroyed. Daniel was most anxious to learn when these literal entities would be restored or cleansed. “The daily sacrifice” was actually the *cornerstone* of the entire Old Testament sacrificial system.

It was crucial to Miller’s calculations that “the daily” have nothing to do with the literal Jewish sacrifices that

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so vitally concerned Daniel and his readers. It especially could not refer to the literal actions of Antiochus Epiphanes, who captured Jerusalem in 167 BC and desecrated the Temple by offering the sacrifice of a pig on an altar to Zeus. Miller assumed, by a process of circular reasoning, that the “the daily” was not “taken away” until well into the Christian Era, in 508–538. In short, Miller’s interpretation was fatally flawed because the original context of Daniel clearly indicated a literal “sacrifice,” and because the textual evidence of Numbers 28–29 and Exodus 29:38–39 demonstrates that the word “sacrifice” was appropriately supplied by the KJV translators. Thus, we come to White’s two “I saw” assertions concerning the identity of “the daily” as pagan Rome.

“I Saw the ‘Daily’”

In an October 23, 1850, vision, White made the first of her celebrated assertions:

Then I saw the “daily,” that the Lord gave the correct view of it to those who gave the first angel’s message. When union existed before 1844, nearly all were united on the correct view of the “daily,” but since, in the confusion, other views have been embraced and darkness has followed. I saw that God had not made a test of time since 1844, and that time never again will be a test.²⁶

Writing out the same material in a variant wording a few weeks later, Ellen White says:

Then I saw in relation to the “daily,” that the word “sacrifice” *was supplied by man’s wisdom, and does not belong to the text*; and that the Lord gave the correct view of it to those who gave the judgment hour cry. When union existed, before 1844, nearly all were united on the correct view of the “daily”; but since 1844, in the confusion, other views have been embraced, and darkness and confusion has followed.²⁷

But Millerites manifestly did not have a “correct view” of “the daily.”

In 1850, some of White’s associates recalled that the 1,335-year period had been predicted to close with the First Resurrection, which had not yet occurred; therefore, they concluded, it must be future and imminent. White insisted that its fulfillment was past.

White twice repeated her assertion that she “saw” the “correct view” of the daily. She asserted that 1) prior to October 22, 1844 the Millerites had been unanimous in their interpretation of the daily, and 2) the word “sacrifice” was a translation error “supplied by man’s wisdom.” Indeed, the Millerites were unanimous in their assertion that the “daily” represented pagan Rome. They asserted that the last pagan rituals took place in Rome in 508 and that two exact prophetic periods began in 508. The first was the 1,290-year prophecy, which extended to the “time of the end,” defined as lasting from 1798–1843; the second was the 1,335-year prophecy, which reached “to the resurrection.”

Miller described how he concluded that the “daily” must be pagan Rome that was replaced by Papal Rome in 508. He then said to himself, “well, then, ‘the daily’ must mean paganism.”²⁸ In contrast, he concluded that the KJV translation “daily sacrifice” “cannot mean the Jewish sacrifices.” However, the KJV translators had translated the Hebrew term (*hatamid*) in question as “daily sacrifice” and thus he was obligated to deny that they had accurately translated it passages in Daniel.²⁹ Miller buttressed his interpretation of “the daily” by linking it to actions of the ten kings of Revelation. He believed that “the daily” prophecies could not be fulfilled until *after* “the conversion of the pagan kings to Christianity, which happened as soon as A. D. 508.”³⁰

On January 1, 1843, in “Synopsis of Miller’s Views,” Miller summarized his interpretation, emphasizing that it was “exactly fulfilled,” as follows:

The number 1335 days, from the taking away of Rome Pagan, A. D. 508, to set up Rome Papal, and the reign of Papacy, is 1290 days, which was *exactly* fulfilled in 1290 years, being fulfilled in 1798. This *proves*, the 1335 *days to be years*, and that Daniel will stand in his lot in A. D. 1843. For proof texts, see Dan. xi. 31.³¹

An Overwhelming Millerite Consensus: “Sacrifice” Not in the Original

White was correct when she wrote that before 1844 the Millerites were unanimous in asserting that “sacrifice” was illegitimately “supplied by man’s wisdom and does not belong to the text.” Indeed, her literary and intellectual dependence on their writings for this view is overwhelming. The Millerites here were breaking their critical principle of presuming that a commonsense, literal interpretation is preferred. A literal equivalent to “the daily sacrifice” is roasted lamb, not pagan Rome.

In about a dozen Millerite books and periodicals, such as *The Second Advent Manual*, *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, *The Midnight Cry*, and others, Millerite stalwarts such as S. S. Snow, J. V. Himes, Apollos Hale, Charles Fitch, George Storrs, Sylvester Bliss, and others, claimed that the word “sacrifice” was “supplied by man’s wisdom,” and that “the daily” referred to pagan Rome. Several went farther and charged their opponents with dishonesty and using “a species of deception to represent this word in either of these passages [of Daniel] as referring to Jewish sacrifice at all, for the original Hebrew makes no illusion to sacrifices of any sort.” The word sacrifice “is only the unreal offspring of the translators’ imagination.” They all linked the 1,335-day prophecy to the 2,300-day prophecy and said they expected “a perfect fulfillment” of all their details [plural] in 1843. They insisted that “The daily refers to Pagan Rome.” N. Hervey, for example, cited Gibbon as his authority for claiming that the “altar of paganism” was “taken away in 508 by Vitalian, with an army of Huns and Bulgarians.” Josiah Litch said papal Rome could not become supreme “until the conversion of the Ostrogoths to Christianity, about A. D. 508.” Charles Fitch and Apollos Hale wrote that the conversion of Clovis in 496 was critical. They wrote that the conversion of the remainder of the ten kings happened shortly thereafter. They reckoned “from the year 508, 1335 years, and [said] we are brought again to the year 1843, the precise point to which we are brought by reckoning 2300 years.” George Storrs wrote that adding 1,335 to 508 carries “us [the Millerites] down to 1843, when Daniel, with all the saints, will stand in their lot, i.e., will be raised from the dead.” J. V. Himes concluded, “The 1335 days commenced A. D. 508, and

will end in 1843. We are therefore on the threshold of eternity.” However, the 1,335-day as well as the 2,300-day prophecy both failed.³²

S. S. Snow originated the “Midnight Cry” movement, which in mid-1844 focused attention on the date of October 22. This was a date and a movement that Ellen Harmon explicitly endorsed in her First Vision. Thus, it is highly significant that, included in Snow’s series of articles outlining his autumn dating for the “Midnight Cry,” he also included the 1,335-year prophetic interval in his series of proofs. In his February 22, 1844 letter to *The Midnight Cry*, he asserted that the “1290 and 1335 days of Daniel 12” must “of course begin together.” He dated the first period from 509 to 1799. He dated the 1,335 period as “ending in the autumn of 1844,” simultaneously with the 2,300-day prophetic interval.³³

1851 White/Nichols Chart Predicted in the Bible

White claimed an “I saw” basis for a new and improved 1851 White/Nichols chart to replace the 1843 Millerite chart. White wrote in a June 2, 1853 letter a vision given at Jackson, Michigan:

I saw that God was in the publishment of the chart by Brother [Otis] Nichols. I saw that there was a prophecy of this chart in the Bible.³⁴

This is a *stunning* claim that the 1851 White/Nichols chart was foreseen and predicted in the Bible. Remarkable as this may be, it is consistent with the historicist Millerite mentality. Virtually every symbol in Revelation is chronologically linked to a historical event—thus the label historicist. Critically, Millerites envisioned themselves in the years 1837–1844 as being exactly predicted. They claimed that Revelation 14:6–9’s three angels predicted three exact dates for three phases of Millerism. The Nichols/Ellen White 1851 chart perpetuates this historicist method by positing three specific dates for the three angels. The first angel on the 1851 chart was dated 1837; the second angel was dated 1843; and the third angel was dated 1844. Writing on November 27, 1850, to the Hastings’s house she also asserted:

On our return to Brother Nichols', the Lord gave me a vision and shewed me that the truth must be made plain upon tables and it would cause many to decide for the truth by the three angels' message with the two former being made plain upon tables.³⁵

Just a few days earlier, November 1, 1850, she had written:

There [in Dorchester Massachusetts where Nichols lived] in the night God gave me a very interesting vision, the most of which you will see in the paper. God shewed me the necessity of getting out a chart.³⁶

Similarly striking, she endorsed the 1843 and 1851 charts in their smallest detail, said the figures were exactly as God wished them, and that “not a peg” of them “should be altered without [presumably her] inspiration.” White’s intimate involvement in the 1851 chart is evidenced by her criticism of the artwork of “other charts” as compared to her own. She criticized other charts because she believed they depicted their angels “more like fiends than beings of heaven,” whereas she found that her chart’s angels were “light, lovely, and heavenly in the representation of the angels.”³⁷ In this new chart “the daily” is explicitly linked to pagan Rome and to the dates 508–509. Both Daniel 8 and 11 are cited in favor of this interpretation, and pagan Rome is said to rule from 457 BC to 508 AD, or 965 years. Ten kings must precede (ending about 490 AD) papal Rome’s suppression of pagan Rome. The league with Rome and the Jewish state is still dated to 158 BC. In short, *multiple* elements of the 666-year calculation, the 1,335-year calculation, and the 2,520-year prophetic period are still endorsed as late as this 1851 chart. For a number of years thereafter this chart served as the foundation for Seventh-day Adventist evangelism, much like the 1843 Millerite chart had summed up Millerism.³⁸

I saw that the truth should be made plain on tables, that the earth and the fullness thereof is the Lord’s, and that necessary means

should not be spared to make it plain. I saw that the angels’ messages, made plain, would have effect. I saw that the old [1843] chart was directed by the Lord, and that not a peg of it should be altered without inspiration. I saw that the figures [plural] on the chart were as God wanted them, and that His hand was over and hid a mistake in some of the figures so that none could see it until His hand was removed.³⁹

EGW Asserted That “1335 Days Were Ended” in 1844—Yet No Resurrection Had Occurred

The 1851 White/Nichols chart expresses various key Millerite dates, such as 508–509, 538–9, and 1798–1799.⁴⁰ With the delay in the Second Coming from 1843 to 1844, White’s new and improved chart attempted to adjust some ambiguous dates by one year. The centrality of the 1,335-year prediction is made manifest by the fact that White’s endorsement of Snow’s date-setting “Midnight Cry” included the 1,335-year calculation. On November 17, 1850 she states she had a vision correcting a Brother Hewitt from Dead River, Maine, informing him that the “1335 days were ended” in 1844, and could not be future.⁴¹

With this literary and historical context, let us review what White wrote:

Then I saw in relation to the “daily,” that the word “sacrifice” was supplied by man’s wisdom, and does not belong to the text; and that the Lord gave the correct view of it to those who gave the judgment hour cry. When union existed, before 1844, nearly all were united on the correct view of the “daily”; but since 1844, in the confusion, other views have been embraced, and darkness and confusion has followed.⁴²

The phraseology here clearly shows a literary and intellectual dependence on the many Millerite theorists who claimed that the translation “daily *sacrifice*” was a deceptive, illegitimate translation “supplied by man’s wisdom, and does not belong to the text.”

“The Daily Sacrifice” the Foundation of Jewish Temple Worship

To the contrary, the Hebrew term “the daily” is a noun preceded by a definite article and occurs in this form many times in the Old Testament. This noun preceded by a definite article is the typical form.⁴³ Numbers 29:6 uses the phrase “the daily burnt offering,” directly juxtaposing “daily” and “burnt offering.”

Numbers 28 begins a section regulating routine “daily sacrifices,” followed by stipulations for specific annual feast sacrifices. It is clear from this organization of the text that in addition to the “daily sacrifices,” each special feast day has its own supplementary sacrifices.

1. According to the KJV of Numbers 28:3, “two lambs of the first year without spot *day by day [daily]*, for a *continual burnt offering*⁴⁴ [*sacrifice*]” are demanded by Yahweh. One lamb in the morning and the second lamb in the evening. Numbers 28:6 specifies that this daily sacrifice is to be “a continual burnt offering . . . a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD.”
2. Numbers 28:9–10 specifies supplemental stipulations for *Sabbath* sacrifices.
3. Numbers 28:11–15 specifies the additional sacrifices for the *New Moon* holiday.
4. Numbers 28:16–25 outlines the supplemental sacrifices for the *Passover* holiday.
5. Numbers 28:26–31 regulates the sacrifices that are to supplement the routine daily sacrifices for the *First-fruits holiday*.
6. Numbers 29:1–6 regulates the sacrifices that are to supplement the *Feast of Acclamation*.
7. Numbers 29:7–11 regulates the sacrifices that are to supplement *continual burnt offering* made during the *Day of Atonement*.
8. Numbers 29:12–39 regulates the sacrifices that are to supplement the *Feast of Tabernacles*. The term *continual burnt offering* is used with monotonous repetition throughout. Or, as in Numbers 29:6, the phrase “the daily burnt offering” is utilized.

In short, the biblical text demonstrates that Miller, his associates, and White were mistaken when they asserted that the Hebrew term translated “daily sacrifice” in Daniel had nothing to do with Jewish sacrifices, was “supplied” in error by the KJV translators, and did

not occur outside of Daniel. It is ironic that Miller, who theoretically depended only on the Bible and a concordance, originated the erroneous teaching based on faulty concordance work. Yet, *after* reading the Millerite mistranslation meta-narrative in scores of articles, Ellen (Harmon) White adopted this meta-narrative and subsequently claimed that she “saw” it in visions. This raises the question: *Did Ellen G. White always see what she thought she saw?*

Implications of Erroneous “I Saw” Statements

The fact that White’s “I saw” statements regarding “the daily” and the 1,335-day-year interval are erroneous augurs poorly for her other assertions that are “largely or wholly rejected by current scientific opinion.” A particularly salient example is her repeated statements that life on earth must only be about 6,000 years old. One reason that she repeatedly insisted on a 6,000-year chronology was that Miller’s Millennial Sabbath prediction asserted that Creation occurred in 4157 BC and the Seventh Millennium would start in 1843–44.⁴⁵ Snow, in the February 22, 1844 *The Midnight Cry*, went so far as to assert that Creation must have begun in autumn of 4157 because fruit in Eden would be ripe at this season for Adam’s consumption.⁴⁶

Seventh-day Adventist young-earth creationists are critically dependent on Ussher’s, Miller’s, and White’s chronological assertions, presuming that because of White’s direct revelations, Genesis must be interpreted literally as a scientific and historical account. This is their *a priori*, major premise. Thus, they conclude that multiple, independent, scientific data that demonstrate life on earth to have been much older must be false because Genesis is literal.⁴⁷

Indeed, it could be argued that White, via the medium of George McCready Price, is responsible for the current popularity of young-earth creationism.⁴⁸ In any case, the predominate, authoritative view of White’s authority has functioned as a theological, hermeneutical, historical, and scientific straight jacket on Seventh-day Adventist thinkers. Like the Pope when speaking *ex cathedra*, when White speaks in her “I saw” mode, church administrators like Arthur White and scientists like Leonard Brandt consider her to be practically infallible, even if not formally

innocent. Apologists like this presume that White's statements regarding everything from masturbation, amalgamation, the nature of volcanos, the history of the French Revolution, the exegesis of eschatological biblical passages, and the development and chronology of life on earth must be completely reliable. Only scientific and historical data that fit this presumption can be considered. Overwhelming scientific evidence contrary to whatever White "saw" must be rejected or, at best, indefinitely held in abeyance until future data, presumably, confirms whatever she "saw."

For over a century, Seventh-day Adventist apologists have been in an analogous position to the historical role played by Jesuits in regard to the discoveries and writings of Galileo and Copernicus. For centuries they defended what they imagined to be a literal (geocentric) interpretation of the Bible and insisted that special revelation ruled out the new heliocentric model of the solar system. In so doing, the Catholic Church inflicted an almost "deadly wound" to the intellectual credibility of Christianity. By defending the thesis that anything which Ellen White "saw" is authoritative, Seventh-day Adventist apologists risk defending the indefensible today.

Endnotes

1. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 3 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishers Association, 1864), i-v of preface and 17, 27: The "great facts of faith . . . have been opened to me in vision." When Ellen White wrote this description, "scientific" craniology considered that the more intelligent Caucasians had skulls with Satan's prelapsarian form while the less intelligent Negroid skulls had Satan's fallen, receding frontal bone. See Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996) and Stephen Jay Gould, *The Flamingo's Smile: Reflections in Natural History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), 187–190 for a brief discussion of polygeny and monogeny. Furthermore, women had brains smaller and inferior to men. Paul Broca (1824–1880), a famous French physician who in 1861 discovered Broca's area, said: "Men of the black races have a brain scarcely heavier than that of white woman," according to Stephen Jay Gould, *The Panda's Thumb* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980), 158.
2. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Review & Herald, 1858). "I saw" occurs 108 times, "I was shown" occurs 15 times, "shown me" occurs 2 times.
3. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, 34.
4. Ellen G. White, "Trust in God," *The Gospel Herald*, March 1901: 22.
5. Jud Lake and Jerry Moon, "Current Science and Ellen White: Twelve Controversial Statements," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013), 214–240. For a similar apologetic, see Alberto Timm and Dwain N. Esmond, eds., *The Gift of Prophecy in Scripture and History* (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2015).
6. Ekkehardt Mueller, "The Prophetic Voice in the New Testament: An Overview," in *The Gift of Prophecy*, eds. Alberto R. Timm and Dwain N. Esmond (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2015), 36.
7. Angel M. Rodriguez, "Revelation/Inspiration and the Witness of Scripture," in *The Gift of Prophecy*, eds. Alberto R. Timm and Dwain N. Esmond (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2015), 84–104.
8. Jud Lake, "Ellen G. White's Use of Extrabiblical Sources," in *The Gift of Prophecy*, eds. Alberto R. Timm and Dwain N. Esmond (Silver Spring, MD: Review and

Herald Publishing Association, 2015), 326.

9. Jiri Moskala, "The Prophetic Voice in the Old Testament," in *The Gift of Prophecy*, eds. Alberto R. Timm and Dwain N. Esmond (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2015), 40.
10. Miller, followed by White, believed that in the "time of the end," defined as starting in 1798, biblical knowledge would increase, and "the wise," the Millerites, would be privy to eschatological, apocalyptic truths regarding "definite time" that were never revealed to previous generations. Therefore, although in 1845 Miller acknowledged his error, he could comprehend how and why he had erred.
11. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, 128–29, 131, 133–35.
12. See Alden Thompson's *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers*, 2nd ed. (Gonzalez, FL: Energion Publications, 2016), 50–53 for a discussion of special and general revelation.
13. In Ellen G. White, *Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts With Annotations: 1845–1859* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2014), 242–244, she asserted: "I saw that the old [1843] chart was directed by the Lord," and "I saw that the figures on the chart were as God wanted them."
14. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, 128, 132, 133, 135, 137, 138, 139. There are seven references to "prophecies" or "prophetic periods" [plural] that Miller claimed would be fulfilled in 1844—not merely a single 2,300-year period. These "prophetic periods" refer to Miller's fifteen proofs, one of which was the 1,335-year period.
15. Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*, facsimile reproduction, (Ringgold, GA: Teach Services, 2013), 507–510 and Appendix L. He made an exception for the 2,300-day interval but not the 1,335-day interval.
16. This was his tenth rule, on a par with his day = year rule. Miller wrote: "Figures sometimes have two or more different significations; as day is used in a figurative sense to represent three different periods of time. 1. Indefinite. 2. Definite, a day for a year. 3. Day for a thousand years [emphasis added] (Ecclesiastes 7:14; Ezekiel 4:6; 2 Peter 3:8)." Miller only gives a short list of three citations here—without the actual texts. He and Snow regularly fortified their assertions with *wholesale catalogues of citations*, often without the actual text. For example, see "Synopsis of Miller's Views," cited elsewhere. This wholesale citation of scripture "proof-texts" made an immense impression on Ellen Harmon, even when the cited texts had little or no relationship to their assertions.
17. Exceptionally, the 4157 BC creation date is not on the 1843 chart.
18. See Kai Arasola, *The End of Historicism* (Siguna, Sweden: Datem Publishing, 1990) for a description of Miller's fifteen proofs and his textual and historical basis for these intervals.
19. William Miller, "A Synopsis of Miller's Views," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy* 4, no. 19, (January 25, 1843): 145–150.
20. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, 128. How God guided Miller's mind to the wrong conclusions on multiple "lost" prophecies while "opening his understanding" accurately to only the 2,300-year prediction is a conundrum.
21. See Theodore Turner, *The Three Angels' Messages Source Book*, n.d., 72–86 https://www.academia.edu/34595991/The_Three_Angels_Messages_Source_Book.pdf for a series of letters by S. S. Snow. In his June 27, 1844 letter Snow states: "I had been previously quite strong in the belief with Adventists generally, that the 6000 years of this world or age—the 7 times of the Gentiles, the 2300 days of Dan. 8, and the 1335 days of Dan. 12, must end within the Jewish year 1843." This is an internet compilation of Millerite documents whose table of contents on pages iii and iv includes about twenty articles concerning "the correct view of the daily" on pages 137–172, https://www.academia.edu/34595991/The_Three_Angels_Messages_Source_Book.pdf.
22. Ellen G. White, *The Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts*, 253–54, 358.
23. This is Miller's fatal, factual error. It is an inexplicable mystery as to how and why Miller missed such obvious evidence. Additionally, Exodus 29: 38–39 (KJV) refers to the same sacrifices: "Thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even."
24. Apollos Hale, *The Second Advent Manual* (Boston: J. V. Himes, 1843), 66. Brackets in original and in J. N. Andrews's citation of the same text. See J. N. Andrews, *The Sanctuary and the 2300 Days* (San Bernardino, CA: Waymark Press, 2012), 40.
25. Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Company, 1897), 156, 254.
26. White, *Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts*, 246–47. Gilbert M. Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005), 215, documents that the "old view" of the "daily" around which "nearly all were united" was the assertion that the "daily" was a prophetic symbol for pagan Rome. He states that "Joseph Bates, J. N. Andrews, and James White had all followed Miller in adopting the view [that the 'daily' was pagan Rome], and Uriah Smith had set the interpretation in concrete . . . in his book *Daniel and Revelation*."

27. White, *Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts*, 246, footnote 17. Note below that this italicized phrase [emphasis not original] is almost copied verbatim from multiple Millerite commentators. It is clear that Nichols took White's comment seriously in constructing the 1850–1851 chart. He eliminated the word "sacrifice" when quoting the KJV text. What would later be called the "old" view of "the daily" was concretized in this chart.

28. Hale, *The Second Advent Manual*, 66.

29. Several independent indications that this is not merely an English or King James Version mistranslation is the fact that scores of English translations also supply the word sacrifice. Not only this but French, German, and Spanish translations also translate the Hebrew with their equivalent of sacrifice. For example, French is "le sacrifice perpétuel," German is "das tägliche Opfer," and Spanish is "el continuo sacrificio."

30. Theodore Turner, *The Three Angels' Messages Source Book*, 141–42.

31. Emphasis added. Turner, *Three Angels' Messages*, 143. This is an example of Miller's extensive biblical citations that so impressed Ellen Harmon. S. S. Snow's "Behold The Bridegroom Cometh: Go Ye Out to Meet Him," *True Midnight Cry*, August 22, 1844, was also replete with biblical citations, but they were largely irrelevant to his argument.

32. Turner, *Three Angels' Messages*, 144–160.

33. Turner, *Three Angels' Messages*, 76–77. Note that in the 1851 White/Nichols chart, 509–1799 is also given as an equal alternative to 508–1798.

34. White, *Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts*, 358. Roland Karlman, the annotator of these documents, notes that this chart "depicted prophetic symbols from Daniel and Revelation together with time calculations. In October 1850 Ellen White had received instruction in vision that a prophetic chart should be published. During the next few months Otis Nichols supervised the publication of a chart that was advertised for distribution and sale in January 1851." This chart is often entitled the Nichols chart. It might better be labelled the 1851 Nichols/White chart since it was her inspiration that prompted it. Ellen White was its intellectual author; Nichols was the engraver.

35. White, *Ellen G. White Letters*, 253–254.

36. White, *Ellen G. White Letters*, 249.

37. White, *Ellen G. White Letters*, 358–59.

38. White, *Ellen G. White Letters*, 358–59.

39. White, *Ellen G. White Letters*, 242–244. It was not merely a singular figure or prophetic period such as 2,300-years that "were as God wanted" it, but multiple

"figures," including 1,335-years, 1,290-years, and 2,520-years that "were as God wanted them." This White assertion is the basis of the concept that God deliberately obscured from everyone's view their error in not accounting for the fact that there was no zero year in the transition from BC to AD. This is the basis for the fact that in the 1851 White/Nichols chart in the lower right corner's "Explanation of the Time," White and Nichols have equivocated on many of the "figures." Mrs. White said not a "peg" of the 1843 chart should be changed without "inspiration." Thus, Nichols does not engrave simply 508, 538, or 1798 but rather 508–9, 538–9, and 1798–9. This reveals some uncertainty about the exact dates and events that were to have occurred on these dates. Was the "daily" removed in 509, the papacy set up in 539, and did the "time of the end" begin in 1799?

40. I strongly recommend that interested readers obtain a copy from <https://adventistheritage.org/heritage-shoppe/bible-church-history/1850-prophetic-chart/>. This is really a case when a picture is worth a thousand words.

41. White, *Ellen G. White Letters*, 252–255.

42. White, *Ellen G. White Letters*, footnote 17.

43. It occurs in Numbers 4:7; 4:16; 9:16; 28:3; 28:6; 28:10; 28:15; 28:23–24; 28:31; 29:6; 29:11; 29:16; 29:19; 29:22; 29:25; 29:28; 29:31; 29:34; and 29:38. William Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 556 specifically notes that this means a "daily (morning and evening) burnt-offering," citing the five instances in Daniel, and taking notice of those in Numbers, as well as a Talmudic use of the plural form.

44. The English phrase "continual burnt offering" is a regular KJV translation for the Hebrew term translated "daily sacrifice" in Daniel.

45. To obtain 4157 BC, Miller had to dispute Ussher's date of 4001 BC. Yet this arcane and convoluted chronological dispute with the world-renowned chronologist did nothing to shake Ellen Harmon's assurance that even a child could easily follow Miller's calculations.

46. Turner, *The Three Angels' Messages*, 211. Snow wrote: "Man at his creation was to subsist upon the fruits and seeds. Gen. 1:29. It does not appear reasonable that these were ripe at any other season than autumn."

47. Leonard Brandt and Arthur Chadwick, *Faith, Reason, & Earth History: A Paradigm of Earth and Biological Origins by Intelligent Design* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2016), chapter 12. Brandt and Chadwick prefer biblical interpretations to scientific evidence because "The Bible long ago predicted that certain things would happen. When the predictions of the prophecy are fulfilled, our confidence in biblical reliability is strengthened." "We can check whether the events occurred as the prophecy declared." As demonstrated here, the 1,335-year prophecy, (and about a dozen others), were not fulfilled as predicted.

48. Ronald Numbers, *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2006).

49. See a version of *The Book of Jasher* (New York: M. M. Noah & A. S. Gould, 1840), particularly chapters three and four, which have parallels with White's extrabiblical description of Enoch and Noah. In 4:18, in a reference to amalgamation, it is said of the antediluvians, "the sons of men in those days took from the cattle of the earth, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and taught the mixture of animals of one species with the other, in order therewith to provoke the Lord." This was the crime that caused Noah's Flood.


50. Recently, Terrie Dopp Aamodt, "The Hardest Question," *Spectrum* 49, no. 2: 63–72, published an excellent analysis of White's assertions concerning the "base crime of amalgamation of man and beast."

51. See an accessible copy at <https://whiteestate.org/legacy/issues-shutdoor-html/>, where on April 11, 1982, Robert Olson, Secretary of the White Estate conceded this. He stated that after her First Vision, "She concluded incorrectly that the door of mercy was closed on that day [October 22, 1844] for everyone in the world." Nonetheless, Olson concludes: "While Ellen White's personal beliefs underwent a gradual modification during this period, I find no evidence that she at any time taught theological error in her shut door writings." She is incorrect but not in error?

52. Ron Graybill, "The Last Secrets of The White Estate," *Spectrum* 49, no. 2: 75–76.

53. Graybill, "The Last Secrets," 75–76.

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DONALD E. CASEBOLT has written three articles for *Spectrum*. The latest was: "It Was Not Taught Me by Man": Ellen White's Visions and 2 Esdras," in Volume 46, Issue 1 of 2018. He recently published a book entitled *Child of the Apocalypse: Ellen G. White*, reviewed in this *Spectrum*. A second book, *Father Miller's Daughter*, will be published by Wipf & Stock in 2022.