

Seventh-day Adventism's
Upstart Doctrine of Deter-
minism in the Books of
Daniel and Revelation
– a Selective Appraisal

by Fred Mazzaferri

November, 2000

© Fred Mazzaferri, 2000.

General Information

1. Copyright Issues

The author retains complete copyright of **all** original material within this document. However, no prior permission is required for regular, non-commercial use. I do specify, however, that if copied and/or distributed, the **entire** document, with cover pages, is included.

2. Scripture Citations

Unless otherwise specified, I employ the New International Version (NIV), 1990 British edition, throughout for all such citations, with all emphasis supplied.

3. DARCOM Series

Reference to the seven volumes of the Daniel and Revelation Committee's apologia for exclusive Seventh-day Adventist dogma is facilitated by the designations *DARCOM 1-7*. The "full" bibliographies are as follows, sharing these details – ed. F. B. Holbrook (Washington [2, 3]/Silver Spring [1, 4-7]: Biblical Research Institute):

DARCOM 1: Shea, W. H., *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, 1992².

DARCOM 2: *Symposium on Daniel: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, 1986.

DARCOM 3: *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, 1986.

DARCOM 4: *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, 1989.

DARCOM 5: *Doctrine of the Sanctuary: a Historical Survey (1845-1863)*, 1989.

DARCOM 6: *Symposium on Revelation: Introductory and Exegetical Studies, Book 1*, 1992.

DARCOM 7: *Symposium on Revelation: Exegetical and General Studies, Book 2*, 1992.

Seventh-day Adventism's Upstart Doctrine of Determinism in the Books of Daniel and Revelation – a Selective Appraisal

Decade after decade, one confident Seventh-day Adventist evangelist after another has stood before his audience with a selection of striking visual aids, proclaiming precisely the same interpretation of Dan. 2. Four colossal empires – Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome – would rule the whole world in turn. Then Rome would give way to the ten concurrent nations which would eventually fashion modern Europe. Yet try as humans might, “They will never be united!” Finally, God would overthrow them all in our very day and establish his eternal kingdom over the entire world.

Likewise, decade after decade, such evangelists have endorsed the one reading of Rev. 13. By A.D. 538 the Pope would dominate Europe, then rule for 1,260 years, often persecuting true Christians. But in 1798 would come his mortal wound – ignobly taken captive by Napoleon's secular troops.

However, this mortal wound would soon heal! A New-world power would rule, finally demanding false worship. Sunday sanctity, the Papacy's very badge, would be enforced on pain of privation and death. Jesus would return to a world wholly “Christian”. By far the majority would be worshipping the Papacy, nominally, at least, having received the mark of the beast. Yet a remnant, all Seventh-day Adventists in effect if not in fact, would still be serving God, having been sealed with his seal.

There is far more to the matter, though, than only the decoding of last-day events through Bible forecast. What one is today depends much on one's origin. And nothing has more shaped Seventh-day Adventism's sectarian psyche than its roots in the striking 19th-century Millerite movement:

It was through the study of Daniel 8:14 as a point of departure that Adventism came into existence as a historical movement, developed its doctrinal identity, and identified its mission. We are confronted here with a foundational and vital aspect of Adventist thought... [emphasis supplied].

... Daniel 8:14 provides... Adventists with a historical identity. The Adventist movement is not a historical accident, but the result of God's special intervention in human affairs. The fulfillment of Daniel 8:14 in 1844 validates, even legitimizes, its presence in the world and particularly among the Christian community.¹

No wonder, then, that, after the Ford fiasco, DARCOM (Seventh-day Adventism's **Daniel and Revelation Committee**) should launch its sevenfold apologia of distinctive dogma, produced volume by volume over more than a decade at a cost of \$millions, with this very frank editorial admission:

It is sometimes asked, “What is a Seventh-day Adventist?” A common reply is, “A Seventh-day Adventist is a Christian who observes the seventh-day Sabbath and who is preparing for the Saviour's second coming.” But the perspective is larger than this.

A *more significant* frame that holds together the picture of biblical truth as taught by Seventh-day Adventists is their understanding of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. In these prophecies the Adventist people have found their **times**, their **identity**, and their **task** [emphasis supplied].²

Indeed, the typical Seventh-day Adventist evangelist will not close his series of meetings until he explains that John's sweet-bitter experience in swallowing the scroll, Rev. 10, depicts the Great Disappointment of 1844, when the Millerites painfully refined their concept of the Investigative Judgment's timing. Here the Bible's final great prophecy enlightens Seventh-day Adventists about their **times** in world history. Their loyal evangelist will equally instruct his audience that the remnant of Rev. 12:17 is the very Church he serves, **identified** by its respecting God's Ten Commandments, including the fourth, and Ellen White's prophetic ministry. He will also maintain that his denomination's urgent, God-given **task** is preaching the climactic Three Angels' Messages of Rev. 14:6-11.

It follows that no cogent assessment of the Seventh-day Adventist movement will avoid a careful evaluation of its interpretations of Daniel and the Revelation, especially when both the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons practise like mirror theology here.³ The sectarian landscape has often been fashioned by appeals, especially in formative years, to mere proof-texts, normally in KJV verbiage, prised clear of their defining contexts. However, my task in this restricted space must be far more modest. I can only give limited attention to the historicist ideology of prophetic exposition which is the very *sine qua non* of virtually all Seventh-day Adventist interpretations of these books.

Historicism

DARCOM's Editors speak well for their denomination in explaining the import, as they view it, of the philosophy which occupies the vast bulk of its protracted apologia, right at its very outset:

Adventists arrive at their interpretations of Bible prophecy by employing... the historical "school" of prophetic interpretation. The historicist view... sees the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation unfolding in historical time from the days of these respective prophets until the establishment of God's eternal kingdom...

Reformation preaching of the... prophecies... tended to center on the Christian apostasy... symbolized in the little horn (Dan 7), the leopard beast (Rev 13), and the woman seated on the scarlet beast (Rev 17).

In the... Counter-Reformation, Rome... sought to divert the thrust of these applications. The result was... two distinct but diverse methods of prophetic interpretation: the futurist and preterist systems.

The futurist system wipes the Christian era clean of prophetic significance by removing the bulk of the prophecies of Revelation (and certain aspects of Daniel) to the end of the age for their fulfillment. The preterist system accomplishes the same objective by relegating the prophecies of both books to the past...

With the passage of time these distinctive counter-interpretations began to penetrate Protestant thought... Preterist interpretations of the prophecies have now become the standard view of liberal Protestantism. Futurism... has... developed into the system... currently followed by most conservative Protestants.

Today Seventh-day Adventists stand virtually alone as exponents of the historicist principles of prophetic interpretation.⁴

Three interpretive principles have particular prominence in historicism. First, thousands of years would *inevitably* separate Jesus' First and Second Advents.⁵ Secondly, scattered, lesser *applications* do not negate the fact that each prescient detail has a *single* fulfillment in history.⁶ And thirdly, most of the time periods of Daniel and the Revelation are *symbolic*,⁷ a prophetic day denoting a literal year.⁸ Indeed, here is "a basic diagnostic difference between the historicist school of interpretation... and the preterist and futurist schools"⁹ To these should be added the contention that historicism may be traced right back, via the Protestant Reformation, to John himself. This emotive surmise greets the reader right at the outset of L. E. Froom's monumental study, in fact, in vivid artistic form.¹⁰

Not surprisingly, then, DARCOM's apologia is consumed with interpreting the time forecasts of Daniel and the Revelation through its year-day nexus, although the details cannot detain us here.¹¹ Yet tragically, case after weary case, cogent exegesis affirms that *such prophetic time periods are strictly literal*. Above all, John's trumpet septet is quite an embarrassment to historicism's minions!¹² Nor do most appreciate that this apologia masks its own struggles here, as graphically demonstrated in this personal communication to me from a trusted pastor present at the relevant discussions:

The Daniel and Revelation Committee met as part of their on going work... Due to the demand from both staff and students the committee agreed to have a Q&A session on the Sabbath afternoon. Over the week they had been discussing the 7 trumpets. The outcome was that there was still no consensus among the eminent theologians at that time (I doubt that there is today either). The likes of Shea, Maxwell, Reid, Paulien all took quite distinctive and somewhat opposing views. What was true of Adventist theologians a hundred years ago still seems to be true today! When one reads DARCOM's reports... one has the distinct idea that there is unanimity, or close to it. I think this just a manoeuvre on the part of the Church's administration to give the appearance of unity and strength to wavering members. You are aware, I think, of how some administrators dealt with the crises of the early '80s. Closing the ranks rather than holding open debate in honesty does more harm than good.

The limits of a typical fulfillment likewise expose the fallacy of historicism. The Sardian Church is supposed to portray genuine Christians being awakened by the Protestant Reformation.¹³ However, there is no mistaking its *primary* focus, which should be historicism's **sole** interest. For Christ threatens his slumbering Sardians: "if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you", 3:3. And there is absolutely no disputing the specific arrival he has in mind. He chose the parousial simile *thief* himself, Mt. 24:43, and his apostles reiterated it, 1 Thess. 5:2, 4; 2 Pet. 3:10. As abundantly evident in Rev. 16:15, its import is still precisely the same for John. Likewise, the familiar caveat *you will not know at what time* is clearly eschatological, Mt. 24:44, 50; 25:13. Why should it vary in Rev. 3:3, especially when *grēgorein*, the Greek verb behind *keep watch*, Mt. 24:42, 43; 25:13, surfaces alone in John's entire book in 3:2, 3 as *wake up* and in 16:15 as *stays awake*?

Therefore, historicism has scant credence to claim that the *prime* fulfilment of the Sardian era is such that Christ *cannot* return until the following Philadelphian era gives way to the Laodicean! In fact, one almost hears the historicist rebuke his Lord here, like Peter before him, Mt. 16:22: “Not so, Lord! You **cannot** mean to return to the ‘Sardians’. The ‘Laodiceans’ are the final Christians!”

Worst of all, though, if Seventh-day Adventists must condemn preterists, they censure *every* NT eschatologist, including the three **eyewitnesses** to Jesus’ Olivet Discourse, Mk. 13:3. For *every* NT author was *divinely inspired to expect his Return in his day!* I start with these paramount eyewitnesses.¹⁴

For example, Peter explained Pentecost’s display of God’s Spirit by citing Joel 2:28-32: “‘*In the last days... I will pour out my Spirit*’”, Acts 2:17. This is explicable only if he thought he truly was in the last days. Passing time did not alter his conviction. Jesus “was revealed *in these last times*”, 1 Pet. 1:20. And his reply to the mocking, “Where is this “coming” he promised?”, 2 Pet. 3:4, was quite decisive: “*in the last days* scoffers will come”, 3. Compare his bare “the end of all things is *near*”, 1 Pet. 4:7.

James chided the greedy thus: “You have hoarded wealth *in the last days*”, James 5:3. More striking is his basic appeal: “Be patient... until the Lord’s coming... and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is *near*... The Judge is standing *at the door!*”, 7-9. Maybe he had Jesus’ words in Mt. 24:33 in mind, even if “all these things” were not evident. Yet at least, his basic message is unequivocal *imminence*.

John, the third of Christ’s favourites, displayed the tenacity of his faith, too, with the one simple assertion, “**this** is the last hour”, 1 Jn. 2:18, in the context of the many antichrists who had **already** come, with Mt. 24:23f. clearly in mind. Note, too, that the noun *hour* does not readily connote *era*.

I repeat, not one of the disciples who audited Jesus’ Olivet Discourse was other than a **preterist!**

Paul equally warned: “The night is *nearly over*; the day is *almost here*”, Ro. 13:12. Again, “the time is *short*... For this world in its present form is *passing away*”, 1 Cor. 7:29, 31. Compare 10:11. And, in advising Timothy personally,¹⁵ he cautioned: “There will be terrible times *in the last days*”, 2 Tim. 3:1.

One passage merits separate scrutiny. In the earliest NT literature, Paul faced a unique pastoral problem. His Thessalonian flock grew alarmed when some of their fellows died, 1 Thess. 4:13. This dashed their belief that they would all live until Jesus’ Return. Had their deceased forfeited eternal bliss? Through the resurrection, Paul consoled them: “[W]e who are *still alive*, who are *left* till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep”, 15. Rather, “the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are *still alive* and are *left* will be caught up together with them... to meet the Lord in the air”, 16f. In fact, the passage closes as the topic of solace, 18, recurs in 5:11. Between, Paul stressed just one theme, diligence because of the *imminent*, punitive Parousia.

The pastoral crisis that spawned the epistle to the Hebrews was much more serious. The Jewish converts were on the verge of losing their very salvation, as 2:1-4 and 3:7-4:11 all too clearly confirm. Fearful cautions like 5:11-6:12 and 10:26f. say it all! Trying to avert the tragedy, the apostle reminded his flock of their former stalwart hope, 10:32-34. Beyond quibble, then, these words were addressed to his *contemporaries*: “[I]n just a **very little while**, ‘he who is coming will come and *will not delay*’”, 37.

Per se, this is as clear a token as we will find that pristine Christians were **taught** that Jesus would return in their day. They did not just **assume** it! Yet there is far more to the matter than that. Back of *delay* is the Greek verb *chronizein*. The fact that it occurs just four more times in the entire NT, always in the Gospels, is very significant. In Mt. 24:48 this is the very verb permitting a delay in Jesus’ Return. In 25:5 we note exactly the same nuance. Compare 19, where the cognate noun *chronos* serves like function. Lu. 12:45 parallels Mt. 24:48 and adds nothing. In Lu. 1:21 the verb merely details Zechariah’s delay in the temple, confirming that it has no inherent sense of millennia of deferral.

The apostle’s mindful, inspired choice of the rare verb *chronizein* in Heb. 10:37 means one thing and only one, even though it occurs in Hab. 2:3, Septuagint, which he “cited”. In reapplying it Messianically, he was **interpreting** Christ’s intent. *The delay was meant to be almost over in the author’s very own day.* He expected mere **decades**, not centuries let alone millennia, of unfulfilled expectations.

Apocalyptic Literature?

Of utmost concern to the present appraisal, however, is DARCOM’s repeated claims that both Daniel and the Revelation belong with the apocalyptic genre of literature. This is not novel.¹⁶ The

tragedy, though, is that, neither in its “definition” of this genre,¹⁷ nor in its “demonstrations” that Daniel¹⁸ and the Revelation¹⁹ are apocalyptic, has DARCOM displayed much generic aptitude. In fact, it makes the *a priori* assumption, then employs these books to exemplify the genre! Rather, it should first define generic criticism,²⁰ then the rival genres of apocalyptic and prophecy. After that, and **only** after that, will these books take their obvious place, if any, within one genre or the other.

DARCOM’s neglect in not even defining prophecy as a *possible* option is all the more culpable in view of repeated conservative scholarly caveats. For example, R. H. Mounce warns: “While there can be no doubt that Revelation shares certain characteristics common to the apocalyptic genre, it would be wrong to overlook all the ways in which it resists being placed without qualification in that category.”²¹ R. L. Thomas concludes that “the best overall characterization... is to call it prophetic.”²² A. F. Johnson is even adamant that “any identification of the Apocalypse with the writings of the extrabiblical apocalyptists must be severely qualified. Indeed, the reader would do well to reexamine every method of interpreting Revelation that rests on this assumed similarity.”²³

Above all, John calls his book “the words of this prophecy,” 1:3. To Johnson, he therefore “sets off his writing from the late Jewish apocalyptic literature... and... puts himself on a par with the OT prophets.”²⁴ L. Morris agrees: “John is clear that this book is a prophecy. We should beware of classifying it otherwise.”²⁵ John’s revealing angel also refers to “the words of the prophecy of this book”, 22:10, RSV, just as Jesus does himself, 7, 18. Jesus also mentions “the words of the book of this prophecy,” 19, RSV. That is, John is at great pains to emphasise that *his every single word is prophetic*.²⁶

DARCOM is just as lax at least twice even with apocalypticism. On one hand, it is almost silent about imminence, a *crucial* trait of the true genre.²⁷ On the other, it cites *liberal* preterists like A. J. Collins that Daniel and the Revelation are apocalyptic,²⁸ though they do not use this generic term like DARCOM, and would be mortified to learn that they had *any* part in “defending” historicism!

Worse, it is especially important to observe that, whatever else may be said about DARCOM’s generic apologia, it has introduced a disturbing new element – determinism – into this entire discussion. This serious development is the primary motivation for this whole selective critique.

Determinism?

For decades official Seventh-day Adventist literature was happy to depict the Book of Daniel in these broad terms: “The historical section... reveals... the true philosophy of history... By providing a detailed account of God’s dealings with... Babylon, the book enables us to understand the meaning of the rise and fall of other nations in the prophetic portion of the book.”²⁹ Commenting likewise on 4:17: “God’s dealings with Babylon and its king were to be an illustration to other nations and their kings of the results of accepting or rejecting the divine plan with respect to nations.”³⁰

The astute reader will also observe that the anonymous author(s) who penned these sentiments actually borrowed them from Ellen White. Her stance is summarised in these unequivocal words:

Every nation that has come upon the stage of action has been permitted to occupy its place on the earth, that it might be seen whether it would fulfill the purpose of “the Watcher and the Holy One.” Prophecy has traced the rise and fall of the world’s great empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. With each of these, as with nations of less power, history repeats itself. Each had its period of test, each failed, its glory faded, its power departed, and its place was occupied by another.³¹

In a word, the classical, sweeping perspective of the Book of Daniel accepted without quibble by Seventh-day Adventist authorities in prior generations was that it recorded *conditional* prophecy.

With perfect consistency, official Seventh-day Adventist literature had long agreeably characterised the Book of Revelation in like sweeping terms, with the assistance once more of Ellen White:

Encouraged by inspired counsel, the Advent movement, after 1844, expected Christ to come very soon. When, toward the end of the century, Jesus had not appeared, the Advent believers were repeatedly reminded that the Lord might have come “ere this” (see 6T 450; 8T 115, 116; 9T 29; DA 633, 634; GC 458). When challenged as to why time had continued longer than her earlier testimonies seemed to indicate, Ellen G. White replied, “How is it with the testimonies of Christ and His disciples? Were they deceived? ... The angels of God in their messages to men represent time as very short. ... It should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional” [ISM 67, elisions *sic*].

Thus... the repeated statements of Scripture that the coming was imminent were conditional on the response of the church to the challenge of finishing the work of the gospel in their generation...

Thus the statements... [1:1] concerning the imminence of Christ's return... are to be understood as an expression of divine will and purpose. God has never purposed to delay the consummation of the plan of salvation, but has ever expressed His will that the return of our Lord be not long delayed.

These statements are not to be understood in terms of the foreknowledge of God that there would be so long a delay, nor yet in the light of the historical perspective of what has actually taken place in... history ... To be sure, God foreknew that the coming of Christ would be delayed some two thousand years, but when He sent messages to the church by the apostles He couched those messages in terms of His will and purpose with regard to that event, in order to make His people conscious of the fact that, in the divine providence, no delay was necessary. Consequently, the seven statements of the Revelation concerning the nearness of Christ's coming are to be understood in terms of God's will and purpose, as promises conditionally set forth, and not as utterances based on divine foreknowledge...³²

That is, the classical, broad perspective of the Book of Revelation held without quibble by prior generations of Seventh-day Adventist leaders was that, like Daniel, it revealed *conditional* prophecy.

In stark contrast, DARCOM's scholars have uniformly rejected this sweeping perspective! It is impossible to acknowledge let alone respond to their every detail within the narrow confines of a brief study like this. But typical enough are the confident claims of these key DARCOM authors.

First, K. A. Strand insists that the prophetic forecasts of the Book of Daniel are not

subject to conditionality. The events are fixed and the prescribed time periods are definite and invariable. These elements fit the patterns of what Daniel said to King Nebuchadnezzar: "God has made known to the king what *shall be* hereafter. The dream is *certain*, and its interpretation *sure*" (Dan. 2:45).³³

A. J. Ferch also speaks at length in this regard in parallel to the DARCOM series:

Daniel's surveys of history suggest that God preordained the course of events... For Daniel, that which "has been determined must take place" (Dan. 11:36, NIV).

This cosmic sweep and unfolding of history distinguish Daniel from the classical prophets, whose messages were couched mainly in the conditional language of the covenant. The classical prophets offer occasional glimpses of the distant future but do not unfold the perspectives of history in the manner of the apocalypses. While the classical prophets communicated conditional threats or promises, neither explicit nor implicit conditions are found in the major time lines of Daniel. Although no human decisions can alter the course of events determined by God, individuals remain free to make a decision within the context of God's overall scheme and triumph within the divine plan and purpose.³⁴

Secondly, with reference to the Book of Revelation, W. G. Johnsson claims that "John is told to write 'the things which are, and the things which *shall be* [not may be] hereafter' (1:19, KJV...)"³⁵ And Strand claims that John's book is deterministic because God foretells what

"*must* shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:1, KJV). There is, for example, no question whether the four horsemen of Revelation 6 are going to ride; they will *indeed* go forth in the progression indicated. The same holds true with the trumpet warnings, the plagues of doom, the destruction of Babylon, etc. These are all things that John is shown and told *would* happen. There simply is no element of contingency involved!

... [H]owever... there is an element of conditionality in the letters to the seven churches... as an underlying frame of reference. But this particular conditionality *does not relate to the historical portrayal* of the church's situations, but to how the churches and individuals in them will respond to Christ's appeal...

... The fact that the book of Revelation is a letter as well as an apocalyptic prophecy gives it a certain flavor of exhortation. But this exhortation... is limited to *appeals*... and does not apply to the specific type of prophetic forecast that is part and parcel of the nature of apocalyptic literature...

However, in neither Daniel nor Revelation is the prophetic forecast itself subject to conditionality. The events are fixed and the prescribed time periods are definite and invariable... "God has made known... what *shall be* hereafter. The dream is *certain*, and its interpretation *sure*" (Dan 2:45).³⁶

Here, then, is a very curious anomaly. In zealously defending the very *raison d'être* of its sectarian sponsor, the DARCOM apologia is resolute in supporting Ellen White's crucial prophetic ministry.³⁷ Yet in defending its Church's equally crucial historicism, it spurns one of her consistent interpretive principles for both books where it claims to see itself as in a mirror! In fact, the one DARCOM scholar can strive to defend both of these conflicting sectarian assertions simultaneously!³⁸

Prophecy's Universal Principle of Conditionality

Before I give attention to some of the relevant details in Daniel and the Revelation, it is important to notice God's very own universal principle of prophetic interpretation. Ferch is quite correct that the OT prophets spoke in conditional terms. But he certainly should not restrict their conditionality to God's covenant with Israel. For his paramount principle of conditionality, Jer. 18:7-10:

If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it

is perfectly general. It covers **all** nations at **all** points in time under **all** moral conditions. All that it takes to "change" God's mind is a reversal in the moral position of the specific nation in view.

For instance, Jonah warns, "Forty more days and Ninevah will be overturned", Jon. 3:4. Yet when the *pagan* nation repents from its king down, 5-10, God "relents", *just as Jonah always feared he would, and had fled from his call*, 4:1-3! Likewise, Daniel's repentance over Jeremiah's temporal forecast, Dan. 9:1-19, only makes sense if he really did fear that the promised restoration could well be delayed, 19.

Especially relevant here is that the major OT seers predict Babylon's fall in consistently *conditional* terms, as in Isa. 47:6-11 and Jer. 25:12-14. Above all, this contingent caveat appends the latter: "I will repay them *according to their deeds and the work of their hands.*" Compare 50:29; 51:56, among others.

That is, the DARCOM revision of Seventh-day Adventist doctrine spawns a major contradiction by which its veracity is readily assessed. The OT prophets consistently predict Babylon's demise in strictly *conditional* terms. She will fall through her rebellion and wickedness. In stark contrast, Daniel predicts her demise in strictly *deterministic* terms. She **must** fall, they assert, even if every last citizen from king to pauper were faithfully serving God, like the reformed inhabitants of Ninevah!

The DARCOM revision is therefore a major affront to the very character of God! To the repentant Ninevites he stood tall as a paradigm of mercy and justice. To the equally repentant Babylonians he would appear as a quite capricious tyrant, were DARCOM's prophetic philosophy accurate.

Regardless, a deduction from God's universal dictum of conditionality that DARCOM's revision is errant does not relieve the critic of his duty to evaluate it in fine detail within Daniel's and John's books. Nor does this complete his task. For many an older generation of loyal Seventh-day Adventist scholars who defended their Church's prophetic dogmas did so on the consistent surmise that they invite the Reformers' year-day equivalence.³⁹ It must suffice here, however, to make a decision on the DARCOM revision in terms alone of the authors' own obvious purposes for their books.

A BROAD EVALUATION OF THE DARCOM POSITION

The Fundamental Purpose of the Book of Daniel

At first sight Daniel does seem deterministic. Not only does it reveal "what is going to happen", 2:29, but "what has been **determined** must take place", 11:36. However, this is not as decisive as it seems. For back of *determined* here and behind *decreed* in 9:26f. is the Hebrew verb *hāraṣ*, which is also rendered *decreed* in Isa. 10:22f. and 28:22. There it is no more than pseudo-deterministic within the bounds of classical OT prophecy, which Seventh-day Adventism readily concurs is conditional.

More importantly, it is crucial that Daniel be allowed to speak for himself in this matter. And to begin, Nebuchadnezzar's first dream merits close enough inspection here to clarify the monarch's *personal* part in it. For it offers us the primary evidence that Daniel's forecasts are all conditional.

"Nebuchadnezzar, you are..."

Daniel advises Nebuchadnezzar, 2:37f., with his dream-statue in mind, that God has given him dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made them ruler over all. *You are that head of gold.*

Compare the primary detail of the dream of 4:10-17, the tree “providing food for all, giving shelter to the beasts of the field, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air”, 21:

you, O king, are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches to the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.

If ever there were any doubt that *Daniel specifically nominates Nebuchadnezzar as Babylon's final king*, it is removed completely in the manifestly parallel symbolism of the tree. Notably, too, the noun *melek*, 37, does not recur till 44, singling out this one king. Indeed, we miss much unless we realise that *Daniel's ministry is the most striking example in the entire OT of God seeking to save a prominent gentile*. He captures his attention in a crucial yet elusive dream, only to learn that it details his demise. He rebels, 3, only to be confronted by a startling display of divine authority, 4. Nebuchadnezzar would lose his sanity for seven “times”, 20-26. Nevertheless, Daniel closes with the pointed directive: “Renounce your sins”, 27. The reason is obvious: “It may be that then your prosperity will continue.”

Manifestly, then, this extremely fearful dream was by no means deterministic. It need never have been fulfilled. However it was, tragically – but only because of the king's utter intransigence, 29-31.

Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar

Nor is this sure case of conditionality trivial. For one thing, its evident clash with the main detail of 2:39, “[a]fter you, another kingdom will rise”, hints that it is conditional, too. For another, when Belshazzar quails before the supernal writing, 5:5f., Daniel rebukes him sharply with Nebuchadnezzar's chronicle, 18-21. The clear inference, 22f., is that he should have copied the latter's lofty example. The greater inference still is that *Babylon's very fall depended on Belshazzar's response to God's patent-will*. This idolator could have been purged in various ways. Yet the handwriting specifically arrests his depravity, 24. And its climax is: “Your kingdom is divided and *given to the Medes and Persians*”, 28. Above all, then, this is not just Belshazzar's own nemesis but the fall of his very empire. That need never have occurred, at least, till God's kingdom obsolesced it. In saving mercy he extended Nebuchadnezzar's noble reign. Yet his patience was finally exhausted by Belshazzar's drunken sacrilege.

But what about those other three kingdoms, let alone the ten, or the Little Horn tyrant? Simply stated, if Babylon had not fallen, they may never have added to history's protracted panorama!

Here some careful Bible student may object. Jeremiah forecast that Judah's neighbours would be enslaved by “Nebuchadnezzar... and his son and his grandson”, Jer. 27:6f., till Babylon was routed. The clear implication, in context, is that Judah would serve them all, too. Then do I stray seriously in claiming that Daniel informed Nebuchadnezzar that he would be Babylon's final monarch? The answer to that valid question lies in another: What did God really plan for his people's captivity?

Jeremiah's basic prediction was that “[t]his whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years”, 25:11. The purport is manifest in 2 Chr. 36:21, RSV. “All the days that it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfil seventy years.” The inference, clearly, is that the sadly abused land should have been completely desolate for the whole 70 years.

This finds strong support in God's original covenant caveat. The land should have rested every seventh year, Lev. 25:1-7. Otherwise: “Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate”, 26:33f. This important warning is repeated in 35 and in 43. Then did the land enjoy the full ten sabbaths of the 70 years?

Babylon's captivity actually occurred in three clear stages. First, Jerusalem was besieged in Jehoiakim's third year, and Daniel was taken to Babylon with other nobles, Dan. 1:1-5. This can be dated 605 B.C., as Nebuchadnezzar's reign began. Secondly, in his eighth year, 597 B.C., he again besieged Jerusalem, taking all except the paupers from the land. He also plundered the temple, 2 Ki. 24:8-17. Finally, in his 19th year, 587 B.C., he razed the city itself, 25:8-21.⁴⁰ Then when do the 70 years begin?

The final phase would “fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah,” 2 Chr. 36:21, RSV. Yet the captives were freed in 538 B.C., Cyrus' first year, Ezra 1:1-4. If a few years pass for his decree to succeed, there are fully 70 years from the first assault, which did not clear the land. So we face a choice. A full count of years is possible. Yet in content terms, the exile was short by some 20 years.

Another problem, too, if Jeremiah's forecast is literal is its mere two kings after Nebuchadnezzar, 27:7. In fact, there were five: Evil-Merodach, Neriglissar, Labashi-Marduk, Nabonidus, Belshazzar.

So history's realities do not deny the fact that Daniel expected Nebuchadnezzar to be Babylon's last king. As one expects in conditional prophecy, his contrition prolonged his nation's supremacy.

Other Evidence of Conditionality

More can be said about the precision of Daniel's other predictions, especially his final vision, 10-12. This stands quite apart, totally spurning symbolism. Yet I do not know a single exegete who has credibly meshed even its many major details with history. This is a clear caveat *per se* that Daniel is not deterministic, even if we cannot know all of the conditional details setting it on another track.

Likewise, it is edifying to step back further to see the Book of Daniel in the broadest context of Scripture as a whole. Daniel's final vision closes with the edict: "close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge", 12:4. He begs perception, 8, but his rebuff is decisive: "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end... None of the wicked will **understand**, but those who are wise will **understand**", 9f. The clear inference is that *the Book of Daniel could not be understood until unsealed*.

Jesus' own words *to his contemporaries* in Mt. 24:15 are therefore especially crucial to our grasping the true nature of Daniel's book: "when you see... the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader **understand**". The patent inference is that *Daniel's book was wide open for total comprehension in Roman times*, almost two full millennia ago. It definitely did not remain sealed until around 1844, as Seventh-day Adventism necessarily teaches.⁴¹ This should not surprise us when at least twice Daniel watched pagan Rome's demise *at the Eschaton*.⁴²

Likewise, in stark contrast to Daniel, John the Revelator is directed: "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near", Rev. 22:10. One must ask, then, if Seventh-day Adventism has really thought very carefully through its confident claim that the latter's book, never sealed from its first-century genesis, is founded on the former's, sealed till the 19th century. This is a contradiction as utterly ludicrous as it is devastating to Seventh-day Adventist credibility!

The Fundamental Purpose of the Book of Revelation

John's prologue, 1:1-3, states God's purpose – "to show his servants what must soon take place", 1. The key word is the adverb *soon*, which also refers to Jesus' Return, 2:16; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20. This can denote either imminence or speed. One occurs in the NIV in the verse cited. The other explains the KJV reading of 22:12, "behold, I come *quickly*". However, John warns his contemporaries that "the time is *near*", 1:3. This is strong evidence that this Return was looming in **his** own day. Likewise, his epilogue, 22:6-21, echoes God's urgent objective "to show his servants the things that must *soon* take place", 6. But this time it includes the stark embargo, leaving not a single word of this entire book off the list: "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is *near*", 10.

It is quite impossible to miss John's point here. This heavenly directive contrasts starkly with the one Daniel is given. He would die before the End, Dan. 12:13, so he must seal up his prophecy, 4, 12. The manifest inference is that *John's generation were intended to live to see all his prophetic words fulfilled*.

Another significant clue to John's intent is that when Satan is hurled out of heaven, he is furious, for "he knows that his time is *short*", 12:12. This adjective eloquently bespeaks imminence, despite this pitiful Seventh-day Adventist attempt to deny the utterly obvious. Although it may seem that

the 2,000 years since the crucifixion, during which Satan has been actively at work against the church, is hardly a "short time"... this expression should be understood against the background of the whole tenor of the book of Revelation. If Jesus is coming "quickly," then the time for Satan to work is "short."⁴³

Regardless, at first the Book of Revelation still appears deterministic. For it reveals "what **must** soon take place", 1:1. Yet this ignores the fact that Scripture interprets itself. The Greek verb back of *must* is *dein*. It denotes obligation, but not necessarily total certainty. It often occurs in the form bespeaking *unfulfilled* duty, as in Acts 27:21: "[Y]ou **should** have taken my advice". So this verb cer-

tainly is not *inherently* deterministic. In fact, *it even appears in the Greek subjunctive mood, inherently of doubtful assertion* (the very **converse** of determinism!), as in Mt. 26:35: “**if** I *have* to die with you”.

In fact, the historicist destroys his own structure if he insists that the verb *dein* is deterministic in prophecy. Above all, John uses it in Rev. 1:1 to state God’s purpose for his book. Here it does not bound the bare verb *take place*. For the latter is specifically qualified by the adverb *soon*. And the expression *the words of this prophecy* and the clause *what is written in it* are both all-inclusive. Therefore the historicist who insists that here John employs the verb *dein* deterministically faces an impenetrable barrier to his credibility. If even the major prophetic details of John’s book **must** occur, they must do so **soon**. And beyond quibble, this imminence applied to his first reader and his audience.

My point is very simple. Since all even of John’s prime predictive details did not occur **soon**, his entire book’s summary clause “what must soon take place”, Rev. 1:1, was **never** deterministic.

Turning to some of those details, it is striking that, in his “letters”, Jesus calls his errant churches to repent under threats of the dire retribution facing the wicked. Most spectacular is the sword of slaughter, 19:15, hanging over the Pergamene offenders, 2:16. A Christian should rejoice in salvation full and free, but never at the cost of obedience. To this extent salvation is conditional, and every believer is cautioned repeatedly: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”, 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22. Neglect can forfeit salvation! Hence the arresting beatitude of 16:15.

Regardless, is this conditional prophecy, or just the typical appeal of a letter, as Strand suggests?

Simply stated, the Parousia itself is imminent since the wicked threaten the saints.⁴⁴ If converts renege, they must suffer with them, as Jesus’ spectacular threat to the Pergamenes clearly affirms. That is, his “letter” appeals have nothing whatever to do with the fact that the Revelation has the cursory form of a letter, but everything to do with its manifest identity as a conditional prophecy.

In this light, the cardinal point of the entire septet is Christ’s treatment of Jezebel. She leads his people astray, 2:20. He gives her “time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling”, 21. So she must be punished together with those she deludes, “unless they repent of her ways”, 22. This is obviously a forceful warning to all the churches that all believers will be rewarded according to their deeds, 23. Nevertheless, the clear inference is that even Jezebel’s nemesis is likewise conditional.

Notably, the relevant Greek verb *metanoein* occurs in just two more contexts in the entire book. One is 9, predicting the first two woes. Above all, their septet attests God’s crescent effort to pressure the wicked to repent.⁴⁵ Only as the second woe ends is the full scope of their iniquity paraded. They “did not *repent* of the work of their hands...”, 20f. In the other context, the bowls, plague follows plague. For the initial sores, 16:2, still inflict the wicked at the fifth, 11. Twice, “they refused to *repent*”, 9, 11. The careful choice of verb is significant because the trumpets precede the bowls.⁴⁶ So these two septets actually comprise a continuum of theodicy, especially in light of 16:4-7, urging the persecuting wicked to repent right until the final possible moment, the seventh-bowl Parousia.⁴⁷

The verb has precisely the same nuance, then, as for Jezebel. Her experience was a microcosm of that of God’s enemies abroad! Repentance is desirable and possible, even for the dissolute at large.

All that remains to demonstrate that the Book of Revelation majors in conditional prophecy, at least beyond all rational doubt, is manifest evidence that Christ’s Return itself *could* be delayed.

John’s book is largely consumed from cover to cover with God’s judgment of the wicked, above all as they persecute his saints. Its first vision depicts Christ as the end-time Judge, 1:9-19.⁴⁸ It is applied, feature by feature, to the seven churches,⁴⁹ and end-time judgment is ever in view.⁵⁰ Accordingly, Jesus speaks to each church as the end-time Judge, scrutinising his people in the very shadow of his Advent,⁵¹ as even one gallant DARCOM scholar atypically comes quite close to confirming.⁵²

The seals also lead to the Parousia, 6:12-17. Divine wrath, 16f., ever end-time and punitive, dominates. The trumpet and bowl septets likewise climax in the Advent,⁵³ with special reference to the wicked. This is explicit, too, in equally juridical terms, in 14:14-20. Babylon the prostitute-city is destroyed in 17f., especially as Christ returns. Finally, 19:11-21 is completely consumed with overthrowing the wicked. Satan alone remains for special attention during and after the millennium, 20.

This survey amply demonstrates that the Book of Revelation majors in punishing the wicked, especially for persecuting God’s saints. This retribution occurs at or just before the Parousia. In fact,

scarcely a single passage devotes the Parousia to the saints alone! Their reward is often mentioned, but typically in contrast to the wicked's retribution, or to steel the saints in danger of declension. Likewise, even the snapshots of their bliss beyond the Parousia are typically coloured by their past trauma. For example, the great multitude comprises those who suffer *the* Great Tribulation, 7:14.

Above all, then, the Parousia delivers the saints from their tormentors. Moreover, it is imminent, for the crisis is looming, and God will tolerate oppression for only a short time. So, were the crisis to subside, the primary motivation in the book for the Advent would fade, and it *could* be delayed.

One salient question remains. Was persecution inevitable in John's day? If not, the Revelation is not deterministic. Only possibility, not probability, needs to be verified in answering this question.

If persecution were inevitable, the wicked would have no hope whatever of salvation, merely the prospect of certain doom. Two verses above all, 17:8 and 22:11, seem to support predestination. Yet the first does not limit the count of saints as names may be erased from the book of life, 3:5, with dire results, 20:15. The "letters" also emphasise that the wayward saints may forfeit their salvation. Again, all mankind must accept salvation to enter the eternal kingdom. So the vast weight of evidence most certainly refutes any notion that the list of the saved is either predestined or sealed.

This also casts light upon 22:11. If the saints' salvation is conditional, the directives, "let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy", cannot be absolute. Nor, then, can the converse command, "[l]et him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile". John's likely sources, Eze. 3:27 and Dan. 12:9, somewhat clarify this problem. Ezekiel was called to an apparently impossible task in view of the nation's obduracy, Eze. 3:4-9. Yet his prophetic message was still conditional. The Book of Daniel is equally conditional.

The immediate context of Rev. 22:11 is even more potent in resolving this enigma. Jesus' parousial pledge, 12, is available to everyone. The blessing of 14 has no evident limit, especially in light of the preceding promise. And the offer of limitless salvation of 17 must be for those still unsaved alone.

In view of all of this evidence, it is no passing act of grace that Jezebel is granted time to repent. **All** the wicked are urged to repent. Their refusal disappoints and outrage still menaces the saints. So God persists in threatening an imminent, punitive Parousia. Yet these wicked may still respond to his appeals. He therefore offers them salvation. If they accept, or the peril of persecution lapses for *any* other reason, all need for an imminent Parousia will have passed, and it **can** be delayed.

The "letter" septet also raises two important points which shield the above analysis from every naïve charge of mere surmise. Rather, here is impregnable grammatical/syntactical **proof positive** that the Book of Revelation is indeed entirely **conditional**, not deterministic! Lay readers may ignore this rare lapse into Greek technicalities, however, if they require no "cream" on my "cake".

Jesus gave Jezebel time to repent, 2:21. Here the Greek verb is in the subjunctive mood, that of **doubtful** assertion. My purpose is amply served if I limit my enquiry to just one aspect raised by this reference to Jezebel. John uses the conjunction *hina* 41 times in two distinct senses. The final clause, the most frequent, is the only relevant one. Jesus longs to bless believers, 3:11, 18 [*ter*]; 16:15, compare 18:4 [*bis*]; 22:14, just as God wishes to shield his church, 12:6, 14, compare 20:3. At the same time, Jesus menaces the wicked, 19:15, 18, compare 11:6, yet he is patient, 2:21, compare 7:1. Equally, Satan threatens believers, 2:10; 12:15; 13:15, 17, and even Christ himself, 12:4. The fact that this latter goal failed entirely, 5, suffices to prove that John does not inject determinism into his final clause!

Likewise, the **conditional** particle *ei* occurs 16 times. However, the special sense *except*, strictly *if not*, may be laid aside here. Twice over Jesus warns the churches: "If you do not repent, I will come to you", 2:5, compare 16. Here it is impossible to miss the construction's inherent conditionality. It is equally obvious in broader compass. Twice in close succession John warns that, if anyone tries to harm the two prophetic witnesses, he will be destroyed, 11:5. So John's conditionality is already *per-vasive*, covering **all** the saints and **all** the wicked alike. These come together in 14:9, 11, where dire punishment follows if anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark. The latter are mainly in view because all but the faithful succumb to intense deceptive pressure, 13. Yet this is also a potent caveat for converts not to yield, even in face of privation and death. Hence the counsel, familiar to the churches, if anyone can, he should listen, 9. Therefore *ei* covers both saint and

sinner **alike**. Just as pervasive is 20:15, warning that, in the last judgment, if anyone is not included in the book of life, he will be hurled into the lake of fire. This applies to wayward “Christians”, too, 3:5. Accordingly, the conditional particle *ei* serves its standard function, further confirming that, in stark contrast to Strand’s hasty limit, John’s book is **pervasively** conditional, not deterministic.

Conclusion

In brief, if DARCOM had applied its Church’s earlier, generally superb ideology consistently in Daniel’s and John’s books, it may never have mouthed the wholly extra-biblical word *determinism*.

Daniel was not penned as history in advance but initially as a record of God’s utmost, *conditional* effort to convert a renowned gentile. Babylon need **never** have fallen had Belshazzar emulated his forebear. Yet Daniel did not predict what God knew they would do. For one thing, Nebuchadnezzar was not Babylon’s last king. For another, history has lingered long past the fall of pagan Rome.

DARCOM also errs in taking the verb *dein* as deterministic, thereby imposing a shallow, distorting surmise upon John’s book. It would better have reaffirmed the classical Seventh-day Adventist stance that his forecasts are conditional. They would even better have recognised that *John is only a prophet as a shepherd*, striving to steel his flock for the looming crisis while appealing to their foes to repent. There is very good reason why his pastoral “letter” septet precedes his other predictions!

Seventh-day Adventists would also do well to walk through the door opened by their DARCOM scholar Herbert Kiesler. The doctrine of a pre-Advent judgment is scriptural. But it has nothing to do with 1844. Jesus was at the task, without opening books, in his “letter” septet, in John’s own era!

¹ A. M. Rodríguez, “Daniel 8, 9: the Sanctuary and its Cleansing”, insert, *RECORD*, February 15, 1997, 14.

² “To the Reader”, *DARCOM 1*, xi, virtually echoed in launching “Issues in Revelation: DARCOM Report”, *DARCOM 6*, 175.

³ JWs say that John spoke “primarily to anointed Christians [the 144,000]”, *Revelation: its Grand Climax at Hand!* (Brooklyn, 1988), 318. So it is “the congregation of anointed Christians [exclusively JWs]” that “is fulfilling this commission [Rev. 14:6f.]”, *ibid.*, 205. And SDA’s most prominent Editor, W. G. Johnsson, was shaken by a visit to Salt Lake City: “The parallels with Adventism are striking, almost eerie. Both arose in the northeast of the United States near the same time; both claim that the prophetic gift has been restored; both give America a prominent place in their teachings; both claim to set forth the true gospel after the apostasy of the Middle Ages; both direct attention to the sanctuary; both call for obedience to God’s commandments; both claim to be the true church of the last days before Christ returns. And both look to Revelation 14. I was shocked to hear Revelation 14:6, 7 quoted by the Mormon guide and then to be told that the prophet Moroni fulfilled these verses!”, “The Saints’ End-time Victory Over the Forces of Evil”, *DARCOM 7*, 6.

⁴ “To the Reader”, xif. This irresponsibly misrepresents preterism which, as I will demonstrate shortly, has the full weight of NT authority behind it! My conclusions, in due course, on the conditionality of biblical prophecy are also apropos.

⁵ E.g., “Anchored in the historical times of Daniel/John, the prophecies unroll... in a continuous sequence of events down through the centuries until the establishment of the eternal kingdom,” Leshner and Holbrook, “Daniel and Revelation Committee: Final Report”, *DARCOM 7*, 453. Cf. J. Paulien, “The Seven Seals”, *DARCOM 6*, 225, 233.

⁶ E.g., G. F. Hasel, “Fulfillments of Prophecy”, *DARCOM 3*, 312-322.

⁷ E.g., W. H. Shea, “Year-day Principle—Part I”, *DARCOM 1*, 74. A noteworthy exception is the thousand years of Rev. 20, e.g., R. M. Davidson, “Sanctuary Typology”, *DARCOM 6*, 111n.

⁸ G. F. Hasel, “The ‘Little Horn,’ the Heavenly Sanctuary, and the Time of the End: a Study of Daniel 8:9-14”, *DARCOM 2*, 433n. Cf. W. H. Shea, “Time Prophecies of Daniel 12 and Revelation 12-13”, *DARCOM 6*, 330.

⁹ Shea, “Year-day Principle”, 67.

¹⁰ *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers: the Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, I (Washington, 1950 [others dated 1948, 1946, 1954 respectively]), 2. I say surmise since, as C. O. Jonsson, *The Gentile Times Reconsidered* (Atlanta, 1986²), 13-16, has shown, Froom has done no more than attribute historicism to the twelfth-century Roman Catholic (!) Joachim of Floris. For the Jewish reading of the noun *week* in Dan. 9:24-27 specifically in year-day terms as seven years is too late to be attributable to Daniel, H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Minneapolis, 1949), 408, cf. 406.

¹¹ Typical is *time, times and half a time* of Dan. 7:25; 12:7, e.g., W. H. Shea, “Unity of Daniel”, *DARCOM 2*, 180; *idem*, “Time Prophecies”, 333f.

¹² E.g., those who escape the fifth trumpet’s torment, 9:4, can be only the 144,000 who receive the end-time seal, 7:1-8. For John applies the Greek verb *sphragizein* to people in 7 alone, and the cognate noun *sphragis* likewise in 7:2; 9:4. Moreover, both times *seal* is qualified with *of God*. Likewise, the seal is on the converts’ foreheads, 7:3; 9:4. Again, historicism has raked the history books in vain for credible events to bound the 150 years they must verify in 9:5,10. And even if the hour-day-month-year, 15, were a *period* not a *point* in time, where does history record a battle in which 200 million troops slay a third of mankind, 15-19? Worst of all, it masks the key fact that the trumpet-bowl continuum is a **theodicy** in which God’s end-time judgments pressure the wicked to repent before the climactic Parousia, as I briefly verify *infra* in nn. 45f.

¹³ E.g., *SDA Bible Commentary 7*, 754.

¹⁴ It is easily shown that Jesus taught preterism in his Discourse, too. But I can only touch on this here. It is also highly significant that DARCOM hardly mentions the imminence pervading the **entire** NT!

- ¹⁵ Greek grammar so demands. Paul is not looking 2,000 years into the future!
- ¹⁶ E.g., *SDA Bible Commentary* 7, 723f.
- ¹⁷ E.g., K. A. Strand, "Foundational Principles of Interpretation", *DARCOM* 6, 12-27.
- ¹⁸ E.g., A. J. Ferch, *Daniel on Solid Ground* (Washington, 1988), 77-82.
- ¹⁹ E.g., Strand, *art. cit.*, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18f.
- ²⁰ Botanists can teach DARCOM a thing or two! I **append** a sampling.
- ²¹ *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, 1998²), 7f.
- ²² *Revelation 1-7: an Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, 1992), 28.
- ²³ "Revelation", *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* 12 (Grand Rapids, 1981), 401f.
- ²⁴ *Art. cit.*, 418. So does his love of OT prophetic sources, by my estimate, tenfold more than the apocalyptic. Cf. *ibid.*, 402.
- ²⁵ *The Book of Revelation: an Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, 1987²), 251.
- ²⁶ DARCOM's appeal to John's initial Greek noun *apokalypsis* as giving the apocalyptic genre its title is specious. For one thing, in context, it has specific *prophetic* nuances. For another, it arrives far too late in genuine apocalypses for John to apply it to the genre. SDAs likewise protest at anachronistic applications of *Lord's day*, Rev. 1:10, to Sunday keeping!
- ²⁷ As, e.g., in 2 Bar. 20:1ff.; 81-83; 85:10ff. and 4 Ez. 4:26, 33f., 44-50; 5:55; 14:10-18.
- ²⁸ E.g., Ferch, *op. cit.*, 92f.
- ²⁹ *SDA Bible Commentary* 4, 750.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 790.
- ³¹ Ed 176f. Cf. PK 535.
- ³² *SDA Bible Commentary* 7, 729f. Here is much wisdom. On one hand, that John's time forecasts give an objective historicist no confidence has already been verified in reference to the trumpet septet with which he wrestles in vain. Likewise, two details typify the same deduction regarding Daniel's. First, the time, times and half a time, 7:25, are obviously terminated by the End, 21f., 25-27. There is no intermediate respite from the persecution! Secondly, the Little Horn of 8:23-25 is clearly a single individual. So the 2,300 evenings-mornings, 14, pass within his lifetime. For the clear inference is that the sanctuary is restored by his demise. On the other, that God did not always shape Daniel's forecasts to conform with the human decisions he foresaw is verified in the detail of 7:11. While absorbed by the Little Horn, 8, his attention is siezed by the judgment, 9f., which ushers in God's eternal Kingdom, 26f., only to return to the Little Horn, 11a. However, it is not the Little Horn alone that is then destroyed: "I kept looking until the **beast** was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire", 11b. And that fourth beast depicts pagan Rome, which has long otherwise departed history's stage.
- ³³ "Foundational Principles", 22. Emphasis is original.
- ³⁴ *Op. cit.*, 80.
- ³⁵ "Conditionality in Biblical Prophecy with Particular Reference to Apocalyptic", *DARCOM* 3, 282. Emphasis is original.
- ³⁶ "Foundational Principles", 21f.
- ³⁷ E.g., G. Pfandl, "The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy", *DARCOM* 7, 295-333.
- ³⁸ E.g., G. Pfandl wore twin hats as the South Pacific Division's Spirit of Prophecy Coordinator and Field Secretary. In the former rôle he diligently promoted Ellen White's ministry to the point of overkill. Yet in the latter, he marred an otherwise sound essay in backing determinism, "The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture", *RECORD* insert, April 26, 1997, 9a.
- ³⁹ Ellen White concurs, e.g., adopting Litch's completely impossible interpretation of Rev. 9, as in GC 334f.
- ⁴⁰ Absolute precision in such dates is not crucial to my polemic, so I need not quote authorities here.
- ⁴¹ E.g., W. H. Shea, "The Mighty Angel and his Message", *DARCOM* 6, 279-325. Froom's explanation that the Book of Daniel was only partly sealed in Jesus' day, *op. cit.*, I, 146, is much too bizarre to warrant any rebuttal.
- ⁴² I have already mentioned the end-time demise of Rome, 7:11b. I can likewise easily demonstrate that four empires alone occupy the dream of 2. The "statue" was therefore scheduled for destruction in pagan Roman not modern times.
- ⁴³ *SDA Bible Commentary* 7, 811f. Cf. n. 44. Historicists may suggest that time is short from Satan's perspective. Likewise, God "is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness", 2 Pet. 3:9a. For "[w]ith the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day", 8. But this will not wash. For one thing, John is emphatic that God gave the entire Book of Revelation "to **show** his servants what must soon take place", Rev. 1:1. It is inconceivable, then, that any of its temporal references are not in **human** terms. For another, Peter is not expounding a principle of prophetic interpretation. He is explaining God's temporal omniscience. Of course the apostle is addressing his flock's anxiety over an actual delay, 9b. Yet, as we have noted, in no way does this alter his strong conviction that he and they will live to see Jesus return, 3f. Hence his pastoral advice, 11-14, that they ensure that that day be one of their salvation, not destruction.
- ⁴⁴ E.g., when Satan is cast to the earth, he is furious, for "he knows that his time is *short*", 12:12. The eloquent little adjective chimes perfectly with all other evidence that John teaches his pristine readers sheer imminence. For context clarifies that, though we are not told how long heaven's war lasted, 7-9, it began as soon as Jesus returned to heaven, 5. Therefore, when Satan tries to persecute the woman for 1,260 days, 6, 13-16, he does so instantly. He does not delay for 500 long years, as historicism certainly implies! It follows that these 1,260 days must be **literal** in context. Nor is there room for more than one era of trauma in a forecast stressing imminence. So they equate with *the* Great Tribulation (the article is prominent in the Greek, and there is just one trauma greater than all before or since, Dan. 12:1; Mt. 24:21) from which the saints enter heaven, Rev. 7:14. Nor are the fifth-seal Christians the Middle-Age martyrs. There is good reason to site their massacre just before the Parousia. First, the sixth-seal Advent follows hard on the heels of the fifth-seal slaughter. Secondly, 6:10 records the only Christian prayer in the entire book, which launches the trumpets, 8:3-5. Thirdly, they are admonished to "wait a **little** longer," 9:11, for God to avenge their blood. His manifest response is the parousial judgment in view of the hymn of gratitude, 19:1f. They do not wait for the long centuries which have passed since the Middle Ages.
- ⁴⁵ The paramount feature of the entire trumpet septet is the constant waxing of its plagues. First, the first four afflict nature, 8:7-12. Although mankind suffers, even as far as death, 11, this seems rather incidental. In contrast, the other trumpets affect the wicked directly. Indeed, the locusts of the fifth must not hurt the grass, any plant or tree, "but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads", 9:4. This contrasts sharply with the first plague's result: "a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up", 8:7. Secondly, only the final plagues are called woes, heralded by the strident eagle, 8:13. And only they are formally counted off, 9:12; 11:14. Thirdly, the first four curses are inflicted by inanimate objects, but the next two by demonic hordes. Here, too, is marked movement. The locusts' authority is strictly curtailed. They must not kill. They can only torment for five months, 9:5. In contrast, at the second woe the four

angels are freed to slay a third of humans, 15. Fourthly, this plague is formally launched by as replete a title as John ever gives for “the golden altar before God”, 13, one of his symbols of God’s judgment, as in 16:7. Fifthly, the total report of the first four curses takes no more space than that of any single woe. Overall, finally, John’s frequent fraction, one-third, disappears at the last trumpet, which signals the time to destroy those destroying the earth, 11:18. This is scarcely confined to one-third. It is all-inclusive. In fact, so are the bowls, which actually embody the seventh trumpet, as I verify in n. 46.

⁴⁶ The parousial account in the trumpet septet is not as advanced even as that in the seals! Heaven praises God since his Kingdom has arrived. Yet it is only *time* for him to judge the world, 11:15-18. Parousial judgment is fully due, but it has not reached the earth, as it surely has at the sixth seal and seventh bowl. The exact link between the seventh trumpet and the bowl septet is exposed by a common detail, rich in covenant imagery implying God’s judgment, in the doublet 11:19; 15:5. These alone describe the very **act** of opening heaven’s temple. That they refer to the same event is obvious from John’s mindful choice of OT allusions. On one hand, *the ark of God’s covenant*, 11:19, is a common OT expression, as in Nu. 10:33, for in the ark were the two stone tablets, 1 Ki. 8:9, specifically called *the covenant of the LORD*, 21. The Decalogue was the prime moral basis of God’s covenant at Sinai, Ex. 34:27f. Noteworthy, too, the saints, under intense pressure to forsake God, are those “who obey God’s commandments”, Rev. 14:12. So 11:19 makes pointed reference not only to the covenant but equally to its Decalogue. Likewise, 15:5 terms the opened temple “the tabernacle of the Testimony”. This is rich in covenantal import, too. In John’s mind is “the tabernacle, the Tent of the Testimony,” Nu. 9:15. More typically and tersely, the first tabernacle is called *the Tent of the Testimony*, as in Nu. 17:7, or *the Tabernacle of the Testimony*, as in Ex. 38:21. Besides *the ark of the covenant*, the focus of the sanctuary is often termed *the ark of the Testimony*. The Decalogue itself is specifically termed *the two tablets of the Testimony*, or simply, *the Testimony*. This was placed within the ark. So the full sanctuary complex was labelled in its very terms! Even this limited evidence reveals that the seventh trumpet *per se* equates with the entire bowl septet. We are invited to see 11:19 in light of 15:5 as the preface to the bowl septet. Another signal detail sheds definitive light on the topic, too. The core feature of the proclamation of John’s commissioning angel is: “in the days of the sound of the seventh angel, when he will trumpet, then the mystery of God will be finished,” 10:7 (my translation). The verb *telein* behind *finished* is inherently eschatological, so the prior expressions seem to specify the time of the Parousia. The phrase *in the days* is lucid enough. A preposition with its dative noun has a durative or punctiliar sense. But as John utilises the construction unambiguously elsewhere, he may be credited with consistency. For example, in 9:6 the phrase *in those days* treats the five months of torment, 5, when men long for death, 6. So the time is durative in 10:7, not punctiliar. The clause *when he will trumpet* is ambiguous, too, but on another count. The verb *mellein* may denote imminence or certain future. However, the phrase speaks of the time during which the seventh trumpet sounds. And the temporal conjunction *when* demands consistency from the clause. The nuance of imminence would have precisely the opposite effect. So the sense must be certainty, and the clause simply stresses that the seventh trumpet will sound. It follows that this trumpet includes the entire bowl septet. The triumphal shout, “It is done”, 16:17, chimes clearly with *will be finished*, 10:7, especially since the latter verb recurs in this precise form in 15:1 alone.

⁴⁷ See my previous n., observing how *curse* sheds *not repent* at 16:21 after 9 and 11. It is now too late to repent!

⁴⁸ E.g., Jesus’ stark white hair, 14, mimics Yahweh’s as judge, Dan. 7:9. His golden sash, Rev. 1:13, recurs only on the judgment angels with the final plagues, 15:6. And even his foot-length robe, 1:13, denotes a judge. Commentators often note that in the LXX, the Greek noun refers to the High Priest’s robe, Ex. 28:4. Yet it also refers to the judgment angel’s garb, Eze. 9:2, 3, 11. This is significant since John’s favourite source among hundreds of OT references is the prophet Ezekiel.

⁴⁹ E.g., he who walks among the lampstands, 1:13; 2:1, may cast Ephesus from their circle, 5. He who mouths the sword, 1:16; 2:12, may use it on the Pergamenes, 16. He who died to rise again, 1:18; 2:8, has eternal life for the Smyrnans who are faithful till death, 10f. And he whose eyes burn like fire, 1:14; 2:18, uses them to probe Thyatiran hearts and minds, 23.

⁵⁰ Jesus explicitly mentions his Return to every church but Smyrna and Laodicea. The first “omission” is fully explicable, for the Smyrnans face a death threat, 2:10. Possibly, too, Jesus’ vow, “I will come in and eat”, 3:20, implies the Lamb’s Marriage Supper, 19:6-9. Whatever, even historicists agree that the Advent is near for the Laodiceans, last on the list. Jesus warns the Pergamenes, “I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth”, 2:16. The weapon is patently parousial, 19:15, 21. Likewise, Jesus’ bare pledge to the Philadelphians, “I am coming soon”, 3:11, echoes his sweeping parousial promise, 22:7, 12, 20. Significantly, the same Greek adverbial construction is utilised as in John’s statement of intent, to reveal what “must soon take place”, 1:1; 22:6, which he defines in his assertion, “the time is near”, 1:3. So at very least, these two churches have their Lord’s own assurance that he will return in their day. At Sardis he is most eloquent of all, as discussed. Again, when he punishes Jezebel at Thyatira, 2:22f., “all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will reward each of you according to your works”, 23. This clearly implies that her judgment begins while all seven churches still coexist, as an exemplary caveat to all the wayward. For instance, the sins she implants, 20, also trouble Pergamum, 14. Even the verb *to teach* recurs. Moreover, she suffers on the very verge, at least, of the Parousia. For the phrase, “according to your works”, is fully eschatological, 18:6; 22:12. And Jesus’ appeal, “hold on to what you have *until* I come”, 2:25, precludes all intervening death! He makes the clear distinction, in fact, when relevant, as at Smyrna. So Thyatira easily joins the long list of pre-Advent churches, too. As for the Ephesian church, even if one could show that Jesus’ caution, “I will come”, 2:5, treats a different advent than his Return in 16, 25; 3:3, 11; 16:15; 22:7, 12, 20, this would be a stark exception to the uniform evidence. The imminence of Jesus’ Return for all churches echoes in his vow to faithful Philadelphians: “I will... keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth”, 3:10. Scope and intent both deem this parousial, so such care goes beyond Philadelphia. In fact, all true worshippers are shielded for the 42 months, 11:1f. The woman eludes Satan, 12:13-16. Saints gain heaven from “the great tribulation”, 7:14. And all the sealed 144,000, 1-8, stand on Mt. Zion, 14:8. Generally, too, what Jesus says to one he says to all: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

⁵¹ To each church he says, “I *know*...”, 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15, and most details of praise or rebuke bespeak assessment. Still more forcefully, he informs the Sardians, “I have not *found*...”, 3:2. This certainly implies scrutiny. Above all, he explicitly identifies himself to all seven churches as “he who *searches* hearts and minds”, 2:23. Moreover, this has eternal import: “I will repay each of you according to your deeds”, a patent reference to his judicial Return, 22:12.

⁵² H. Kiesler, “Christ: Son of Man: Lamb”, *DARCOM* 7, 416, 417, 419, 427.

⁵³ See n. 47.

APPENDIX

Most Botanists are Much Better Genericists than Most Theologians!

It is a very humbling experience to take enough interest in Australian native flora to rub shoulders with the experts. Confident initial assertions about the “obvious” identity of this or that specimen become somewhat embarrassing memories as experience painstakingly matures judgment.

For example, almost every novice would include both these spiky red blossoms in the one genus:



Callistemon 'Peak Downs'



Melaleuca macronychia subsp. *macronychia*

However, there are excellent technical reasons why, despite striking superficial similarities, all of the experts have no hesitation in placing them in quite separate albeit closely related genera:

Family:	<i>Myrtaceae</i>			
Genus:	<i>Callistemon</i>		<i>Melaleuca</i>	
Species:	<i>C. citrinus</i>	<i>C. "Peak Downs"</i>	<i>M. citrina</i>	<i>M. macronychia</i>

Likewise, theologians are naïve to list Daniel, and even the Revelation, with apocalyptic literature merely in terms of the superficial similarities paraded by DARCOM. Indeed, well might they group 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra with prophecy, even though they exhibit the full complement of apocalyptic traits, simply because both begin with the distinctive, prophetic Word Event Formula, “the word of the Lord came to...”, and both employ other standard formulas of prophetic proclamation!

DARCOM also fails to grasp that, just as cogent generic research in botany sorts distinct species into hierarchical order, so also cogent generic literary research sorts distinct literature likewise:

Mode of writing:	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Drama</i>	<i>Epic...</i>
Class of writing:	<i>Revelations...</i>		
Type of text:	<i>Apocalypse</i>	<i>Prophecy...</i>	
Genre:	<i>Jewish apocalyptic</i>		<i>Gnostic apocalyptic...</i>
Individual texts:	<i>1 Enoch</i>	<i>4 Ezra...</i>	<i>Apocalypse of Adam...</i>

In brief, DARCOM has cast its net far too wide in unwittingly counting the traits of both books too high up the hierarchy. Even a *Superman* comic compares with the Bible at the top of the stack!