

THE MILLERITES AND THE SEVEN TRUMPETS OF REVELATION

Gerson Cardoso Rodrigues

PhD in Religion, by Andrews University. Seventh-day Adventist History professor (Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary – Bahia Adventist College)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6560-1080>

E-mail: gerson.rodrigues@adventista.edu.br

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to present the Millerite's growth, understanding and contribution on the interpretation of the seven trumpets of the book of Revelation. This research will be a documentary study based on published primary sources. Since many Millerites wrote articles and letters in which they mention their interpretation on the trumpets, it is above the scope of this research to comment on all of them. Therefore, the article will focus on William Miller (founder of the Millerite movement) and Josiah Litch (the "theologian" of the movement). Nevertheless, it does not exclude brief comments about other Millerites. Secondary sources will be used where appropriate to furnish information concerning historical context and background of perceptive insights. It is beyond the scope of this research, however, to either depict in detail the development of their interpretation or to analyze what was original from them and what they copied from contemporary expositors. Moreover, this research does not intend to examine every detail of the prophecy but only explore the dates and events they hold as the beginning and ending of the trumpets.

Palavras-Chave: Sete trombetas. Mileritas. William Miller; Josiah Litch

RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é apresentar o crescimento, entendimento e contribuição do movimento milerita sobre o tema das sete trombetas do livro do Apocalipse. Esta pesquisa será um estudo bibliográfico baseado em fontes primárias publicadas. Desde que muitos mileritas escreveram artigos e cartas nas quais eles mencionam suas interpretações sobre as trombetas, está além do objetivo deste estudo comentar sobre todos eles. Portanto, este artigo concentrará em William Miller (fundador do movimento milerita) e Josiah Litch (o "teólogo" do movimento). Entretanto, isto não exclui breves comentários sobre outros mileritas. As fontes secundárias serão utilizados sempre que necessário para fornecer informações sobre o contexto histórico. Está além do escopo desta pesquisa, no entanto, retratar em detalhes o desenvolvimento de sua interpretação ou analisar o que foi original deles e o que eles copiaram de expositores contemporâneos. Além disso, esta pesquisa não tem a intenção de examinar todos os detalhes da profecia, mas apenas explorar as datas e eventos que eles determinavam como o início e o final dos períodos das trombetas

Keyword: Seven trumpets. Millerite. William Miller. Josiah Litch.

INTRODUCTION

Millerism was a movement that spread in America during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, under the leadership of William Miller, a Baptist farmer.¹ The movement flourished under the strong waves of the nineteenth-century Awakening, and the Millerites began to develop

¹ Millerism is a term used to define the followers of William Miller, who were premillennialist, and maintained that the end of the world would take place about 1843–1844. The most significant works about Miller and the Millerites are, William Miller, *Wm. Miller's Apology and Defence* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1845); Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller, Generally Known as a Lecturer on the Prophecies, and the Second Coming of Christ* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1853); both works were reprinted in Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*; with an introduction by Merlin D. Burt (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2005); Isaac C. Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message and Mission, Doctrine and People* (Yarmouth, ME: Isaac C. Wellcome, 1874); reprint idem, *Second Advent History*; with an introduction by Gary Land (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2008); James White, *Sketches of the Christian Life and Public Labors of William Miller: Gathered From His Memoir by the Late Sylvester Bliss, and From Other Sources* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1875); Everett N. Dick, "The Advent Crisis of 1843-1844" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1930); a published version of Dick's revised dissertation is idem, *William Miller and the Advent Crisis, 1831-1844*, with a Foreword and Historiographical Essay by Gary Land, ed. Gary Land (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1994); Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry: A Defense of the Character and Conduct of William Miller and the Millerites, Who Mistakenly Believed that the Second Coming of Christ Would Take Place in the Year 1844* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1944); LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946-1954), 4: 429-876; David T. Arthur, "'Come Out of Babylon': A Study of Millerite Separatism and Denominationalism, 1840-1865" (Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 1970); idem, "Millerism," in *The Rise of Adventism*, ed. Gaustad, 154-72; David L. Rowe, "Thunder and Trumpets: The Millerite Movement and Apocalyptic Thought in Upstate New York, 1800-1845" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1974); idem, *Thunder and Trumpets: Millerites and Dissenting Religion in Upstate New York, 1800-1850* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985); Ruth Alden Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993); idem, *William Miller and the Rise of Adventism* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2010); Ellen G. White, *William Miller: Herald of the Blessed Hope* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994); David L. Rowe, *God's Strange Work: William Miller and the End of the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008); Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950), 287-321; Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler, eds., *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993). A popularly written history that though considering Miller "an honest and sincere man," tends to ridicule the movement is given in Clara Endicott Sears, *Days of Delusion: A Strange Bit of History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924). An insightful chronological review of works on Millerism is given in Gary Land, "The Historians and the Millerites: An Historiographical Essay," in Dick, *William Miller* (1994), xiii-xxviii; also in *ibid.*, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 32, no. 3 (Autumn 1994): 227-246.

a unique system of historicist premillennial prophetic interpretation.

The seven trumpets of Revelation 8–11 received considerable interest among Bible scholars in the nineteenth century. The Millerite movement, which emerged from deep study of biblical prophecies, developed its hermeneutic of the seven trumpets based on the historicist method of interpretation. The result of the identification of the figures symbolized in the trumpets reaffirmed the faith of the Millerites in awaiting an imminent return of Jesus. They saw in the seven trumpets of Revelation a historical description of the falling of nations that for centuries have oppressed the people of God.

The Millerites, basically, differed from others contemporary interpreters in the final fulfillment of the trumpets and world history. The nearness of the Second Advent, as it was understood by them, provoked a re-evaluation of biblical scholars' expositors on prophecies. In the nineteenth century, postmillennialism was a popular view.¹ The belief of the Second Coming taking place after the Millennium was held by many Bible scholars, especially those who were not Historicists in prophetic exposition.² According to Le Roy Froom, a slight majority of Historicists were premillennialists, "though almost as large a minority" were postmillennialists.³ The Millerites believed in the Second Coming of Jesus as an event prior to the millennium (Rev 20).

Le Roy Froom summarizes the position of the leading non-Millerite Historicists, "all who expound the trumpets have the first four as the Barbarian incursions; the fifth, the Saracens with

¹ A brief definition of what postmillennialism meant is given in the lectures prepared by James White and Uriah Smith, "The popular view of what is called the temporal millennium is that the gospel of Jesus Christ will yet so far control the minds and hearts of men that the whole world will be converted, and become holy by its influence, and that this happy state will continue one thousand years; and that during this time Christ will reign with his people spiritually, and that at the close of the millennium he will come the second time when the judgment will take place" ([James White and Uriah Smith], *The Biblical Institute: A Synopsis of Lectures On the Principal Doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists* [Oakland, CA: Pacific S.D.A. Publishing House, 1878], 1, cf. 26)

² John Cochran divided the commentators in the nineteenth-century into two great classes: the *historizers*, who were basically followers of Joseph Mede (1586-1638). They used the day-year principle as "the pole-star of their interpretation," and applied the prophecy to historical events. The second class were those "who either *spiritualize*" the prophecy, or "apply it to events occurring within a short space of time" (John Cochran, *The Revelation of John: Its Own Interpreter in Virtue of the Double Version in Which It Is Delivered* [New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1860], 68-69). For a summary of Joseph Mede's hermeneutic, see Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, 2:542-549.

³ See a chart with 48 non-Millerite expositors of the nineteenth-century in Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, 4:400-401.

their ‘five months’ (150 years), usually from 612–762; the sixth trumpet, the Turks with their 391 years, usually terminating in the seventeenth century, though a few run them from 1453 to 1844.”¹ Regarding the seventh trumpet, few commented on that, and those who did, believed in their majority that it meant the beginning of new earth.²

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this article is to present the Millerite’s growth, understanding and contribution on the interpretation of the seven trumpets of the book of Revelation. This research will be a documentary study based on published primary sources. Since many Millerites wrote articles and letters in which they mention their interpretation on the trumpets, it is above the scope of this research to comment on all of them. Therefore, the article will focus on William Miller (founder of the Millerite movement) and Josiah Litch (the “theologian” of the movement). Nevertheless, it does not exclude brief comments about other Millerites. Secondary sources will be used where appropriate to furnish information concerning historical context and background of perceptive insights. It is beyond the scope of this research, however, to either depict in detail the development of their interpretation or to analyze what was original from them and what they copied from contemporary expositors. Moreover, this research does not intend to examine every detail of the prophecy but only explore the dates and events they hold as the beginning and ending of the trumpets.

WILLIAM MILLER (1782-1849)

William Miller is the father of Millerism. Although he was born and raised as a Christian he became a Deistic rationalist. By the year 1816 he was converted to Christianity and decided to

¹ Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, 4:398. For charts about the expositors of the trumpets, see pages 394-395, 398-399, 1124-1125. For a chart on the fifth and sixth trumpets from the sixteenth century to 1934, which includes 124 Historicists, see L[e Roy] E[dwin] F[room], “Time Phase of Fifth and Sixth Trumpets,” *Ministry*, June 1944, 24-25.

² One expositor held it meant the American Revolution. See Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, 4:398-99.

diligently study the Bible. During the next fifteen years (1816-1831) he intensely studied the Scriptures giving special consideration to biblical prophecies.¹ In 1831, he publicly began preaching that the Second Coming of Jesus would occur about 1843. At the beginning of 1844, Miller claimed that he had “preached about 4,500 lectures in about twelve years, to at least 500,000 different people.”²

In 1822, Miller, a diligent Bible student, recorded his first articles of faith which consisted in twenty beliefs,³ but made no reference to his views of the prophetic trumpets of Revelation. He then formulated the fourteen “Rules of Interpretation” that guided him throughout his studies of the Bible and prophecies.⁴ His conclusions regarding the last events differed in some aspects from the popular and scholarly views of his time.⁵ The first exposition of Miller’s views in written form was published in a Baptist periodical, *Vermont Telegraph* in 1832.⁶ His first systematic interpretation on the trumpets, nevertheless, appeared in book-form in 1836.⁷

The basic hermeneutic principle used for Miller to unlock the meaning of the seven trumpets was, “In prophetic scripture the sounding of trumpets is always used to denote the downfall of some empire, nation or place, or some dreadful battle which may decide the fate of empires, nations or

¹ Miller, *Apology*, 2-16.

² W[illia]m Miller, “Address to Second Advent Believers,” *Signs of the Times*, 31 Jan 1844, 196.

³ Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, 4:466-67.

⁴ Miller, *Apology*, 70-72.

⁵ Miller saw in the seven trumpets of Revelation a historical description of the falling of nations that for centuries have oppressed the people of God. He, basically, differed from others contemporary interpreters in the final fulfillment of the trumpets and world history. Contrary to the popular belief of postmillennialism, Miller believed in the Second Coming of Jesus as an event prior to the millennium (Rev 20).

⁶ They appeared in a series of sixteen articles, the first one being published in 15 May 1832 (Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*, 99-100; Miller, *Apology*, 17).

⁷ William Miller, *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ about the Year 1843: Exhibited in a Course of Lectures* (Troy, [NY]: Kemble and Hooper, 1836), 89-98. This book was revised and enlarged and other editions were published in 1838, 1840, 1841, and 1842. In this article I will be giving the references of the 1836 and 1842 editions.

places.”¹ According to Miller, “The seven trumpets are a history of seven peculiar and heavy judgments sent upon the earth, or Roman kingdom.”²

The First Four Trumpets (Rev 8:7-12)

Miller describes his views on the first four trumpets in very few words. He simply summarize them by saying, “The four first had their accomplishment in [1st] the destruction of Jews and their dispersion, [2nd] the fall of imperial Rome, [3rd] the overthrow of the Asiatic kingdom and [4th] and the taking away of Pagan rites and ceremonies.”³ He calls to attention that all of them had their fulfillment under the Pagan Rome.

Fifth Trumpet (Rev 9:1-11)

Miller offers more details in his exposition of the last three trumpets. According to him, these woe trumpets “are a description of the judgments that God has sent and will send on [the] Papal beast, the abomination of the whole *earth*.”⁴ The details given by the apostle John on the fifth trumpet receive special attention from Miller.

The fifth trumpet was seen by Miller, as the “rise of the Turkish empire under Ottoman, at the downfall of Saracens.” This trumpet pointed out to “Mahomet” and his religion “which evidently came from the bottomless pit, for it fostered all the wicked passions of the human heart, such as war, murder, slavery and lust.” The image of the bottomless pit denoted “the theories of men or devils” with no foundation in the Bible.⁵

Using the Day-Year Principle, Miller concluded that the *Five Months* of the prophecy, represented 150 years. In this period, the Turkish armies (Mahometan followers) would not destroy the Papal powers but would make incursions in some nations under the Papal control. The period determined for this trumpet was from the foundation of the Turkish empire in Bythinia (A.D. 1298) until A.D. 1448.⁶ Later, Miller changed these dates based on Gibbon’s

¹ Ibid., 89; (1842), 115.

² Ibid., 143; (1842), 177.

³ Ibid., 89; (1842), 115. Brackets not in the original.

⁴ Ibid.; (1842), 116. Italics in the original.

⁵ Ibid., 90-91; (1842), 116-17.

⁶ Ibid., 91-93; (1842), 118-19.

history, concluding that it began in 1299 and ended in 1449.¹

Sixth Trumpet (Rev 9:13-21)

The sixth trumpet presents four angels being loosed to destroy the third part of men in a period of “an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year.” Miller saw it as “the four nations that had embraced the Mahometan religion,” which he believed were the Turks, Tartars, Arabs, and Saracens.² They would have the power to conquer and destroy the third part of the Roman Papal in a period of 391 years and 15 days.³ Initially, Miller concluded that the sixth trumpet would end in 1843.⁴ Later, he adopted 1839,⁵ and finally accepted Edward Gibbon’s chronology, concluding that the sixth trumpet had begun in 1449 and ended in 1840, lasting 391 years and 15 days.⁶

Froom points out that though Miller was not the first expositor to place the terminus of the 391 years in the nineteenth century, he, nevertheless, was the first to connect, consecutively, the 150

¹ William Miler, “Chronological Chart of the World,” *Signs of the Times*, 1 May 1841, 20-21; idem, “Synopsis of Miller’s Views,” *Signs of the Times*, 25 Jan 1843, 149. There is a misprint on the second date; it reads 1443, but definitely is meant 1449. This article was later published in a booklet by Joshua Himes (William Miller, *Synopsis of Miller’s Views* [Boston: Joshua Himes, 1843]).

² Miller, *Evidence*, 94; (1842), 121.

³ Applying the Year-Day Principle – 1 year (360) + 1 month (30) + 1 day (1) + 1 hour (15 days) = 391 years + 15 days.

⁴ Letter, Miller to Hendrix, 9 Aug 1831; cited in P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977; reprint, Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1988), 28, footnote 138.

⁵ Manuscript of an article for the *Vermont Telegraph*. Cited in Damsteegt, *Foundations*, 28, footnote 138. Damsteegt mentions no date, and I had no access to this periodical; William Miller, *Evidence*, 97; (1842), 124. Miller does not explain what happened in the beginning of the sixth trumpet. He just concludes it begins right after the end of the fifth trumpet. He, then, mentions the Turks conquest of Constantinople in A.D. 1453. It is interesting to note that although Miller revised his 1836 *Evidence from Scripture*, and had changed his views regarding the dates of this trumpet following Josiah Litch’s view, Miller does not change the wordings and just republish it verbatim till 1842 as it was in 1836. Nevertheless, in a re-print of this book in a series of articles in the *Signs of the Times*, the editor remarks that Miller had changed his views concerning the date of the beginning of the sixth trumpet (Editorial Remark, *Signs of the Times*, 16 Aug 1841, 73).

⁶ Miller, “Chronological Chart of the World,” 21; idem, “Synopsis of Miller’s Views,” 149.

years of the fifth trumpet with the 391 years, 15 days of the sixth trumpet.¹

Seventh Trumpet (Rev 11:15-19; cf. 10:7)

The first reference Miller makes regarding the seventh trumpet that I could find dates from 1826.

Written in poetry form, Miller included it in a letter sent to a friend.

Come, blessed Savior! Nor let time delay
The sacred morn of that expected day, . . .
When the seventh trump its solemn blast shall sound,
And Gabriel's voice shall shake the solid ground.
Then sleeping myriads from their graves shall rise,
And meet their Savior in those nether skies.²

In his interpretation developed years later, Miller concluded that with the sounding of the seventh trumpet the kingdoms of the earth and the anti-Christian beast would be destroyed, the powers of darkness chained, the world cleansed, the church purified, the mystery of God (the gospel) be preached everywhere, the door of mercy be closed, and the dead raised. He clearly identified the seventh trumpet with the “last trumpet” of 1 Cor 15:51, which he initially believed would sound in 1843.³

By 1840, Miller believed the seventh trumpet had already begun sounding, and would end in 1843.⁴ The sounding of the seventh trumpet was also connected with the close of the door of mercy which would happen in a short time, but Miller did not venture to define any period of time.⁵ After the Great Disappointment, however, Miller believed that the seventh trumpet would sound when Jesus returns, and definitely rejected any view that claimed that the seventh trumpet had begun to sound in 1844.⁶

¹ Froom, “Time Phase of Fifth and Sixth Trumpets,” 26. See charts in *ibid.*, 24-25, and Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, 4:394-95, 398-99, 1124-25.

² William Miller, “Letter I. On the Second Advent,” in Joshua V. Himes, ed., *Miller's Works. Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology, Selected from Manuscripts of William Miller; With a Memoir of His Life* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1841), 212.

³ Miller, *Evidence*, 97-98, 165; (1842), 124-26, 201.

⁴ Miller, “Synopsis of Miller's Views,” 149.

⁵ [William Miller], “Miller's Letters—No. 8,” *Signs of the Times*, 1 Sep 1840, 81. Cf. Damsteegt, 44.

⁶ Miller, *Apology*, 28.

RODRIGUES, G. C. The millerites and the seven trumpets of revelation. **Práxis Teológica (Ahead Of Print)**, volume 18, número 2, e-1698, 2022.

Miller's Contribution

Miller basically followed the historicist expositors of his time. Nevertheless, he did not concur in all details. One point that he differs in from most of them was the application of the first trumpet to the first century. He also differed regarding the dates for the beginning and ending of the fifth and sixth trumpets. His greatest contribution was to connect consecutively the periods of the fifth and the sixth trumpets.

JOSIAH LITCH (1809-1886)

Next to William Miller, the Millerite movement had in Josiah Litch, “the leading theologian of the movement.”¹ Litch, a Methodist minister, was the “first well-known minister in New England to take his stand with” Miller.² He accepted Miller's views in 1838. In the same year he publicized his position about the trumpets of Revelation.³ Later, he changed some of his views and published a systematic exposition about the seven trumpets in 1842.⁴

First Four Trumpets

The hermeneutic presented by Litch of the first trumpets was heavily dependent on Alexander Keith and historian Edward Gibbon.⁵ Litch interpreted the first four trumpets as the conquests of Rome by the Barbarians. It was not, however, his view in the beginning of his Millerite experience. Initially, he saw the trumpets as representing the people of God being persecuted. He

¹ Jerry Moon, “Josiah Litch: Herald of ‘The Advent Near’” (Term paper, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 1973), 1.

² *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996), s.v. “Litch, Josiah.”

³ Josiah Litch, *The Probability of the Second Coming of Christ: About A.D. 1843* (Boston: David H. Ela, 1838), 146-59.

⁴ Josiah Litch, *Prophetic Expositions; or A Connected View of the Testimony of the Prophets Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Time of Its Establishment*, 2 vols. (Boston: Joshua Himes, 1842).

⁵ Alexander Keith, *The Signs of the Times: As Denoted by the Fulfilment [sic] of Historical Predictions: Traced Down from the Babylonish Captivity to the Present Time*, 2 vols. (New York: Jonathan Leavitt, 1832); Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 7 vols. (London: Printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1776-88); cf. Litch, *Prophetic Expositions*, 2:67.

then adopted the view that the seven trumpets were “the instrumentalities by which the Roman empire was to be overthrown and subverted, and finally ruined.” In summary, he understood that “under the first four trumpets the two western divisions fell, and under the fifth and sixth the eastern empire was crushed; but under the seventh trumpet great Babylon entire will sink to rise no more at all.”¹

Initially, Litch believed the first trumpet sounded about A.D. 64, “when Nero commenced his persecutions against Christians,” and ended in A.D. 68.² Later, he readjusted his position and adopted the belief that it represented the invasion of Rome by Alaric [Goths] during beginning of the fifth century.³

The second trumpet was at first seen by Litch as the persecution of Christians from Domitian to Constantine (A.D. 94-312).⁴ Later, he assumed it portrayed the invasion and conquest of Africa, and afterward of Italy, by Genseric [Vandals] from A.D. 429 to 468.⁵

The third trumpet was held by Litch in 1838 as beginning with the appearance of the Arian heresy and ending in A.D. 538.⁶ He, then, changed his position and claimed that the sounding of the third angel represented the invasion of the Roman Empire by Attila [Huns], who died in 453.⁷

Concerning the fourth trumpet, Litch believed it begun in A.D. 538 when the “bishop of Rome obtained the supremacy in the church.”⁸ He does not comment on the end of the period for this trumpet. His first interpretation did not last long, because he soon accepted Keith’s view where the trumpet symbolized the “extinction of the western empire” (A.D. 476 or 479).⁹ The Roman

¹ Litch, *Prophetic Expositions*, 132-33; cf. [J. Litch], “The Woe Trumpets,” *The Trumpet of Alarm*, 24 April 1843, 11-12.

² Litch, *Prophetic Expositions*, 2:133-42.

³ Litch, *Probability*, 146-47.

⁴ Litch, *Probability*, 147-48.

⁵ Litch, *Prophetic Expositions*, 2:71-76, 142-45.

⁶ Litch, *Probability*, 148-49.

⁷ Litch, *Prophetic Expositions*, 2:145-54.

⁸ Litch, *Probability*, 149.

⁹ Litch, *Prophetic Expositions*, 2:154-61.

RODRIGUES, G. C. The millerites and the seven trumpets of revelation. **Práxis Teológica (Ahead Of Print)**, volume 18, número 2, e-1698, 2022.

Empire had survived the assaults of Goths, Vandals, and Huns, but could not endure the attack of Odoacer (Heruli) which ended the royalty succession to the throne of the empire. It, successively, led to the extinction of the consulship by Justinian in A.D. 541, and the end of the senate in 552.

Fifth Trumpet

Litch interpreted the fifth trumpet as divided into two periods: the first representing “the general spread and establishment of the Mohamedan religion,” and the second “to the wearing out and tormenting of the Greek kingdom, under Othman and his successors, but without conquering it.”¹

Initially, Litch adopted the view that the sounding of the fifth trumpet had begun “when Mahomedan imposture took place about A.D. 606.”² It was seen as the Saracens or Mohammedans invasions upon the eastern empire. The period of *Five Months*, was interpreted as 150 years, and having its beginning in 27 July of 1299, when Ottoman invaded the territory of Nicomedia (chief city of the eastern Roman Empire) and reaching to 1449, with the virtual end of Greek empire in which the Greeks acknowledged that they could not maintain their throne without the permission of the Mahomedans. Thus it was confirmed that the Christian government of Greece was under Turkish domination.³

Litch did not make major modifications in his exposition of the fifth trumpet. He seems to have later altered only his position on the time of the beginning of the trumpet to A.D. 622, the date of the Hegira or flight of Mahomet.⁴

Sixth Trumpet

Following the reasoning that the 150 years of the fifth trumpet were connected with the “an hour,

¹ [Josiah] Litch, “The Nations,” *Signs of the Times*, 1 Feb 1841, 161.

²Litch, *Probability*, 150.

³ Josiah Litch, *An Address to the Public and Especially the Clergy on the New Approach of the Glorious, Everlasting Kingdom of God on Earth, as Indicated by the Word of God, the History of the World and Signs of the Present Times* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), 114-15. Litch follows here Gibbon’s history and not the position held by William Miller at that time which accepted 1298-1448.

⁴ “Blow Ye the Trumpet in Zion; Sound an Alarm in My Holy Mountain,” *Signs of the Times*, 31 May 1843, 102-03. This article appears with no author’s name, but definitely represents the opinion of the editors of the periodical, Joshua Himes, Josiah Litch, and Sylvester Bliss.

a day, a month, and a year,” which Litch believed symbolized 391 years and 15 days, he originally concluded that it would end “some time in the month of August,” 1840.¹ He then elaborated these dates in more details, and putting together the two periods (150 years + 391 years, 15 days = 541 years, 15 days), which began with the first assault made upon the Greeks by the Mahometan power dated by Gibbon as 27 July 1299, he prophesied that something would happen at the end of the sixth trumpet, precisely on 11 August 1840.²

This attitude of setting a date created some uneasy reactions among the Millerites, for they feared that it would disturb their preaching “if it should not come to pass.” On the other hand, it generated interest even among infidels that if Litch were right it would establish “without a doubt that a day in prophecy symbolizes a year, and that twenty-three hundred days is so many years, and that they will terminate in 1844.”³

In several articles that Litch wrote after August 1840, he exposed the proofs that confirmed his predictions. Using extracts from contemporary newspapers, such as *Moniteur Ottoman* and *London Morning Chronicle*, he concluded that from 11 August 1840, the Ottoman power became impotent, and “could do nothing toward sustaining itself,” becoming “entirely under the dictation of the great christian [sic] powers of Europe” [England, Russia, Austria, and Prussia]. It supported his conclusion that the 391 years and 15 days had ended on 11 August 1840. Thus from that time, Litch declared he was “entirely satisfied” that on that precise date the Ottoman Empire “departed to return no more.”⁴

The fulfillment of Litch’s prediction impacted in a positive sense the Millerite movement. John N. Loughborough, an Adventist pioneer, notes that Litch received more than one thousand letters from infidels “in which they stated that they had given up the battle against the Bible, and had accepted it as God’s revelation to man.” Thus it brought a great stimulus to the mission of

¹ Litch, *Probability*, 157.

² L[itch], “Fall of the Ottoman Power in Constantinople,” *Signs of the Times*, 1 Aug 1840, 70.

³ J. N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement: Its Rise and Progress*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1909), 129-130.

⁴ [Josiah] L[itch], “The Nations,” 162; cf. Josiah Litch, “The Three Wo [sic] Trumpets,” *Signs of the Times*, 7 Sep 1842, 179-82; [J. Litch], “The Woe Trumpets,” 11-12. For a detailed explanation of his exposition, see Litch, *Prophetic Expositions*, 181-199.

Millerites' preachers and believers.¹

Seventh Trumpet

According to Litch, as it was for Miller, the seventh trumpet was linked to the last or resurrection trumpet.² The fulfillment of the sixth trumpet made Litch put great emphasis on the imminent and inevitable sounding of the seventh trumpet. The seventh angel clearly spells out that "there should be time no longer" (Rev 10:6). He believed the fulfillment of the previous trumpet as a convincing sign that the end was near.

Litch, nevertheless, did not agree with many of his contemporaries who preached that the seventh trumpet meant the conversion of the whole world. The woe of this trumpet, stated Litch, represented the destruction of the earth not its conversion.³ Neither did he advocate the idea that the sounding of the trumpet represented a mere spiritual reign over the kingdoms of this world. Those who followed these errors had turned their ears from the truth, Litch claimed. He earnestly appealed to his hearers and readers that they should be converted before the sounding of the trumpet.⁴ The seventh trumpet would happen before the millennium and all the saints who had died would be resurrected.

After 1844

After the Great Disappointment of October 1844, Litch continued holding his views for a while. In 1848, he re-affirmed his beliefs about the trumpets as the same as before 1844.⁵ Years later, nevertheless, he drastically modified his views of the trumpets, rejecting historicism, the year-day principle, and following a hermeneutic that implied a literal interpretation of the trumpets

¹ Loughborough, 132. For an insightful analysis of Litch's prediction and the stimulus it brought to the missionary zeal of the Millerites, see Damsteegt, 26-29.

² Litch, *Prophetic Expositions*, 199-200; idem, "The Three Wo [sic] Trumpets," 182.

³ [Josiah Litch], "The Two Witnesses," *The Trumpet of Alarm!* 24 Apr 1843, 13.

⁴ Litch, *Prophetic Expositions*, 199-200; idem, "The Three Wo [sic] Trumpets," 182; "Blow Ye the Trumpet," 103.

⁵ Josiah Litch, *The Restitution, Christ's Kingdom on Earth: The Return of Israel, together with Their Political Emancipation; The Beast, His Image and Worship; Also, the Fall of Babylon, and the Instruments of Its Overthrow* (Boston: Joshua Himes, 1848), 179-190.

applying them to some future time.¹

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Millerites gave important place to the study of the prophecies. The seven trumpets of Revelation received considerable attention from the leading theologians of the movement, William Miller and Josiah Litch. Following a historicist school of interpretation, they interpreted the apocalyptic trumpets as judgments upon those who were oppressing God's people. Using the year-day principle, they could date the beginning and ending of the trumpets that were marked by specific period of time (fifth and sixth). The Millerites dedicated most of their attention to the interpretation and explanation of the last three trumpets, the woes, since it was a *present truth* for them. The fifth was connected with the sixth to complete the period of 541 years and 15 days ending in 1840, and the seventh presented the imminent return of Jesus to this earth, which was expected in 1843-44.

Miller's greatest contribution was to connect consecutively the time period of the fifth (150 years) with the sixth trumpet (391 years and 15 days). Litch's greatest contribution was to predict the ending of the sixth trumpet as 11 August of 1840. This interpretation after his accepted fulfillment, though initially feared by some Millerites, brought a new impetus to the movement and stimulated the preaching of the near sounding of the seventh trumpet, which represented the literal coming of Jesus, resurrection of the saints, destruction of the wicked, and the beginning of the millennium.

This article dealt with the interpretation of William Miller and Josiah Litch about the seven trumpets. Its major purpose was not to expose all the details of the prophecy, but rather to outline the principal events and dates.

¹ Josiah Litch, *A Complete Harmony of the Daniel and Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1873), 35-37, 155-89. For a detailed description of the fall and decline of Litch regarding his Millerite positions, see Jerry Moon, "Josiah Litch," 29-32.

Table: Summary of Miller’s and Litch’s Interpretation of the Seven Trumpets

	William Miller		Josiah Litch		
	1836	1840s	1838	1840s	1870s
1st trumpet	Destruction of the Jews and Their Dispersion		Nero’s Persecution 64–68	Barbarian Invasions upon Western Empire	Literal/Future
2nd trumpet	Barbarian		Domitian-Constantine 94–312		Literal/Future
3rd trumpet	Invasions upon Imperial		Arian Heresy-Justinian 300s–538		Literal/Future
4th trumpet	Rome		Darkness on the Church 538 –		Literal/Future
5th trumpet	Rise of Turkish Empire Rome Papal weakens		Mahommedan Imposture 606–1449	Saracens/Turks invasions upon Eastern empire	Literal/Future
5 months	1298–1448	1299–1449	27 July 1299 — 1449	27 July 1299 — 1449	150 literal days
6th trumpet	Ottoman Turks		Ottoman Turks		Literal/Future
Hour-Day-Month-Year ¹	1448–1839	1449–1840	1449 – Aug 1840	1449 – 11 Aug 1840 ²	Time for their loosing not duration of their action
7th trumpet	Last Trump 2 nd Coming	1839–1843/44 [2 nd Coming] ³	Last Trump 2 nd Coming	Last Trump 2 nd Coming	Last Trump 2 nd Coming

¹ Miller, apparently, was the first one who connected consecutively the five months with the hour-day-month-year (150 years + 391 years, 15 days).

² Litch predicted this date two weeks before it happened.

³ By 1845, Miller discredited any reasoning that the seventh trumpet had sounded either in 1844 or any year before it.

RODRIGUES, G. C. The millerites and the seven trumpets of revelation. **Práxis Teológica (Ahead Of Print)**, volume 18, número 2, e-1698, 2022.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books and Pamphlets

Arthur, David T. "Millerism." In *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Edwin S. Gaustad, 154-172. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.

Bliss, Sylvester. *Memoirs of William Miller, Generally Known as a Lecturer on the Prophecies, and the Second Coming of Christ*. Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1853.

_____. *Memoirs of William Miller*; with an introduction by Merlin D. Burt (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2005)

Cochran, John. *The Revelation of John: Its Own Interpreter in Virtue of the Double Version in Which It Is Delivered*. New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1860.

Cross, Whitney R. *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950.

Damsteegt, P. Gerard. *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977; reprint, Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1988.

Dick, Everett. *William Miller and the Advent Crisis, 1831-1844*. With a historiographical essay by Gary Land. Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1994.

Doan, Ruth Alden. *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987.

Froom, Le Roy Edwin. *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers; The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, 4 vols. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946-1954.

Gibbon, Edward. *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. 7 volumes. London: Printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1776-1788.

Himes, Joshua V., ed., *Miller's Works. Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology, Selected from Manuscripts of William Miller; With a Memoir of His Life*. Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1841.

Keith, Alexander. *The Signs of the Times: As Denoted by the Fulfilment [sic] of Historical Predictions: Traced Down from the Babylonish Captivity to the Present Time*. 2 volumes. New York: Jonathan Leavitt, 1832.

Knight, George R. *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993.

_____. *William Miller and the Rise of Adventism*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2010.

Land, Gary. "The Historians and the Millerites: An Historiographical Essay." In Everett N. Dick, *William Miller and the Advent Crisis, 1831-1844*. With a Foreword and Historiographical essay by Gary Land, ed. Gary Land, xiii-xxviii. Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1994.

Litch, Josiah. *An Address to the Public and Especially the Clergy on the New Approach of the Glorious, Everlasting Kingdom of God on Earth, as Indicated by the Word of God, the History of the World and Signs of the Present Times*. Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1842.

_____. *A Complete Harmony of the Daniel and Apocalypse*. Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1873.

_____. *The Probability of the Second Coming of Christ: About A.D. 1843*. Boston: David H. Ela, 1838.

_____. *Prophetic Expositions; Or A Connected View of the Testimony of the Prophets Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Time of Its Establishment*. 2 volumes. Boston: Joshua Himes, 1842.

_____. *The Restitution, Christ's Kingdom on Earth: The Return of Israel, together with Their Political Emancipation; The Beast, His Image and Worship; Also, the Fall of Babylon, and the Instruments of Its Overthrow*. Boston: Joshua Himes, 1848.

Loughborough, John N. *The Great Second Advent Movement: Its Rise and Progress*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1909.

Miller, William. *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ, about the Year 1843: Exhibited in a Course of Lectures*. Kemble & Hooper, 1836.

_____. *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ about the Year 1843, Exhibited in by William Miller*. Boston: [Joshua] V. Himes, 1842.

_____. *Synopsis of Miller's Views*. Boston: Joshua Himes, 1843.

_____. *Wm. Miller's Apology and Defence*. Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1845.

Nichol, Francis D. *The Midnight Cry: A Defense of the Character and Conduct of William Miller and the Millerites, Who Mistakenly Believed that the Second Coming of Christ Would Take Place in the Year 1844*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1944.

Numbers, Ronald L. and Jonathan M. Butler, eds. *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*. 2nd ed. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993.

Rowe, David L. *Thunder and Trumpets: Millerites and Dissenting Religion in Upstate New York, 1800-1850*. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985.

_____. *God's Strange Work: William Miller and the End of the World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.

Sears, Clara Endicott. *Days of Delusion: A Strange Bit of History*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924.

Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia. Second Revised edition. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996.

Wellcome, Isaac C. *History of the Second Advent Message and Mission, Doctrine and People*. Yarmouth, ME: Isaac C. Wellcome, 1874.

_____. *Second Advent History*. With an introduction by Gary Land. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2008.

White, Ellen G. *William Miller: Herald of the Blessed Hope*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994.

White, James. *Sketches of the Christian Life and Public Labors of William Miller: Gathered From His Memoir by the Late Sylvester Bliss, and From Other Sources*. Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1875.

[White, James, and Uriah Smith]. *The Biblical Institute: A Synopsis of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists*. Oakland, CA: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. House, 1878.

Articles and Letters

“Blow Ye the Trumpet in Zion; Sound an Alarm in My Holy Mountain.” *Signs of the Times*, 31 May 1843, 102-03.

F[room], L[e Roy] E. “Time Phase of Fifth and Sixth Trumpets.” *Ministry*, June 1944, 22-26, 46.

Land, Gary. “The Historians and the Millerites: An Historiographical Essay.” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 32, no. 3 (Autumn 1994): 227-246.

L[itich, Josiah]. “The Nations,” *Signs of the Times*, 1 February 1841, 161.

_____. "The Three Wo Trumpets." *Signs of the Times*, 7 September 1842, 179-82.

_____. "Fall of the Ottoman Power in Constantinople." *Signs of the Times*, 1 August 1840, 70.

[_____]. "The Two Witnesses." *The Trumpet of Alarm!* 24 April 1843, 12-13.

[_____]. "The Woe Trumpets," *The Trumpet of Alarm*, 24 April 1843, 11-12.

Miller, William. "Chronological Chart of the World." *Signs of the Times*, 1 May 1841, 20-21.

_____. "Synopsis of Miller's Views." *Signs of the Times*, 25 January 1843, 149.

_____. "Address to Second Advent Believers." *Signs of the Times*, 31 January 1844, 195-96.

[_____]. "Miller's Letters—No. 8," *Signs of the Times*, 1 September 1840, 81-82.

Dissertations, Theses, and Papers

Arthur, David T. "'Come Out of Babylon': A Study of Millerite Separatism and Denominationalism, 1840-1865." Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 1970.

Dick, Everett N. "The Advent Crisis of 1843-1844." Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1930.

Moon, Jerry. "Josiah Litch: Herald of 'The Advent Near.'" Term paper, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 1973.

Rowe, David L. "Thunder and Trumpets: The Millerite Movement and Apocalyptic Thought in Upstate New York, 1800-1845." Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1974.