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THE NUMBER 666: HERMENEUTIC PRINCIPLES OF EARLY ADVENTISTS

The book of Revelation contains many unusual and symbolic images that convey the theological concepts of the author. In the central part of the book are passages about the Antichrist. The number 666 is one of his characteristics and has always attracted the attention of Christian commentators. Throughout church history, many different hermeneutic methods have been applied to determine the meaning of the number 666. The Seventh-day Adventist Church emerged in the 19th century from research into the prophetic texts of the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation. The lack of a hermeneutic analysis of the interpretation of the number 666 among early Adventists necessitates this study. The article is devoted to the definition and analysis of the features of the hermeneutics of early Adventists in the interpretation of the number 666. In the first part of the study, I analyze the interpretation of the number 666 in the Millerite movement from 1833 to 1844, and in the second part – in the Adventist movement from 1844 to 1888. The hermeneutic of commentators from the Millerite and Adventist movements was based on historicism. They interpreted biblical prophecy in the context of specific historical events. Three main interpretations of the number 666 were formed: 1) 666 years; 2) 666 church organizations; 3) Title Vicarius Filii Dei. Through the influence of William Miller, it was widely believed among the Millerites that the number 666 meant a span of 666 years. 666 years was included in the chronological calculations of other prophetic periods from the biblical

apocalyptic books: 2300, 1260, 1290 and 1335. Early Adventists ignored William Miller's interpretation and popularized a second interpretation that the number 666 symbolizes the 666 church organizations that are part of spiritual Babylon. The third interpretation was introduced by Uriah Smith, who used the hermeneutical method of gematria. Uriah Smith popularized the interpretation that the Latin title of the pope, Vicarius Filii Dei, has a numerical value of 666.

Keywords: *number 666, number of the beast, book of Revelation, hermeneutics, Adventists, Apocalypse.*

The mysteries of the visions of the Book of Revelation have always attracted theologians and commentators. The last book of the New Testament is written in an apocalyptic style, which is characterized by symbolism. Christian writers faced difficulties in interpreting mysterious and non-standard images. Since one of the genres of the book of Revelation is prophecy, commentators often tried to decipher future events or connected John's vision with the religious and political events of his time. The book of Revelation reveals the struggle between good and evil and its plot ends with the final victory of God. In this struggle there are various enemies who despise and persecute God's people. Chapters 12-14 emphasize this theme, showing that the war began in heaven. The dragon, the beast from the sea, and the beast from the earth is a liar and a parody of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Christian writers interpreted the vision of Rev. 13 of the chapter as a description of the antichrist. One of the most interesting and at the same time confusing characteristics of the antichrist is the number of his name – 666 (Rev. 13:18). Today there are many interpretations of this mysterious number.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church arose as a movement based on interpretations of the apocalyptic books – Daniel and Revelation. The study of Bible prophecy and eschatological expectations were at the core of early Adventists. Ellen White, one of the founders of the Adventist Church, also paid attention to the interpretation of the Book of Revelation. She wrote that «there is need of a much closer study of

the Word of God; especially should Daniel and the Revelation have attention as never before in the history of our work» [23, p. 576].

There are few studies of the interpretation of the number 666 in early Adventism. LeRoy Edwin Froom, in the monumental series *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* from the fourth volume of *New World Recovery and Consummation of Prophetic Interpretation*, examined the development of Adventist interpretation of Daniel and Revelation [6]. He mentioned in part, some of the interpretations of the number 666 that have been among Adventists since the great disappointment of 1844. Edwin de Kock devoted an entire book to the study of the number 666, *The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy*, which consists of three parts [11]. Kock consistently studied the reception of the number 666 in the history of Christianity and argued for the use of the gematria method. The commentator traced the adoption by Adventist pioneers of the traditional interpretation of the number 666, which is deciphered in the papal title *Vicarius Filii Dei* and its spread in the church.

It is worth noting that although the mentioned commentator analyzed the history of the interpretation of the number 666 in the Adventist Church, they did not use a comprehensive approach. In LeRoy Edwin Froom's book, the topic of the number 666 is only one of many, and he did not single it out. Edwin de Kock focused his attention on the method of gematria and the interpretation of *Vicarius Filii Dei*. Therefore, the lack of a hermeneutic analysis of the interpretation of the number 666 in early Adventism calls for a separate study of this topic. Therefore, I will reveal the characteristic features of the interpretation of the number 666 in the writings of early Adventists, as well as analyze their hermeneutic principles of interpretation. The purpose of the article is to determine and explore the hermeneutic principles of the early Adventists in the interpretation of the number 666. The realization of this goal involves solving the following tasks: a) to trace the history of the interpretation of the number 666 in the Millerite and Adventist movement; b) identify various hermeneutic approaches to the number 666; c) study the theological ideas of commentators.

Number 666 in the Millerite Movement (1833-1844)

666 Years

William Miller (1782-1849) – an American citizen who, due to certain circumstances, such as participation in the War of 1812, and the death of friends, converted to God and began to carefully study the Bible. Based on his own research in the books of Daniel and Revelation, he concluded that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ must soon take place. Beginning in 1831, he proclaimed the importance of preparation for meeting Christ [9, p. 38]. As a result, the Christian Millerite or Adventist movement was formed, which expected the coming of Christ in 1843-44 [18, p. 176-177].

William Miller interpreted the number 666 using the temporal hermeneutic principle – as 666 years. In the commentary on the book of Daniel 11:24, he wrote about the fourth beast and the antichrist, and claimed that the phrase «Even for a time» indicates «the time pagan Rome was to exist, which I shall hereafter show is 666 years» [15, p. 24]. In a commentary on Daniel 12, William Miller added a period of 666 years to his chronological calculations of the prophetic periods of 2300, 1260, 1290, and 1335. According to him, pagan Rome began to rule in 158 B.C. and finished his story in 508 A.D. [15, p. 31]. He then added 30 years for the transition from pagan to papal Rome based on the prophetic period of 1290 years and gives the year 538 as the beginning of the 1260-year reign of the antichrist. The commentator claimed: «Now add the remainder of the 1335 over and above 1290 which is 45 to A.D. 1798, and it will end in A.D. 1843 or add 1335 to A.D. 508 when pagan Rome was destroyed, or the daily sacrifice abomination was taken away, and you have the same A.D. 1843» [15, p. 31].¹

¹ Then William Miller added: «The fourth kingdom and the last of all earthly kingdoms, was divided into two parts, the first began 158 years B.C. and lasted 666 years to the end of the pagan daily sacrifice abomination, which was 508 A.D. The last number given in Daniel (viz.) 1335 carries us down to the resurrection and will end A.D. 1843. In this last number is included the reign of Antichrist; 1260 years beginning in A.D. 538

William Miller separately devoted chapter 4 to the analysis of the number 666, where he commented on the book of Revelation. The first beast (Rev. 13:1-10) is the political dimension of the antichrist, and the second beast (Rev. 13:11-18), according to Miller, symbolizes the church dimension [15, p. 32]. The commentator categorically declared that the number 666 belongs to the first beast – pagan Rome: «it is very evident that the beast he saw numbered is the one John calls the “first beast” of which Antichrist is the mark» [15, p. 32].² Miller gave several reasons why, in his opinion, John numbered Pagan Rome. The first reason is that this power could not manifest itself while the first existed. He referred to the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Thess. 2:7 which says: «For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way». Miller also understood the command to calculate the number of the beast (Rev. 13:18) through the prism of Dan. 5:26 where it says that «God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end» [15, p. 35].

The second reason is the parallel of Rev. 13:18 with Rev. 17:9,10. Since in Rev. 13:19 and 17:9 are similar appeals to wisdom, William Miller believed that John’s words about the existence of five beasts before his time, the sixth in his time and the seventh after him (Rev. 17:10) indicate the possibility of counting the beast only then, when this seventh beast will enter the world stage [15, p. 35]. The commentator claimed: «The explanation of which is, that Rome in its Pagan state, had seven different forms of executive government, viz: republican, consular, tribunitial, decemviral, dictatorial, and one is, imperial, the other is not yet come, that is kingly» [15, p. 36]. The unification of secular and ecclesiastical Rome will lead to the formation of the eighth power, which will absorb 7 forms of government and will last until the end of the world. At the time of writing Revelation, 5

and ending A.D. 1798; also the 1290 beginning A.D. 508, and ending A.D. 1798» [15, p. 31].

² William Miller repeated this thesis one more time, indicating its importance to him: «Now it is very evident that the beast spoken of in this passage, together with those in the 12th and 14th verses is the first beast, that existed before the image beast, and of which the last, or papal two horned beast renewed his mark and name» [15, p. 35].

forms of government had already passed, respectively «the beast, which would be wisdom to number, could not be the antichristian beast, for that he had not yet come into existence and did not until about 442 years afterwards» [15, p. 36].

The third reason is the fatal wound of one of the heads of the first beast (Rev. 13:3,12), which William Miller interpreted as a form of paganism. In his opinion, the Roman Empire used paganism as a tool of conquest [15, p. 36]. Accordingly, when 10 kings of the nations became Christians, paganism was dealt a death blow in the 5th century AD. However, due to papal power, paganism was revived again in the middle of Christianity and the wound was healed [15, p. 36].³

After William Miller provided evidence that the number 666 refers specifically to the first beast, he began to argue for a hermeneutic method of interpreting the number 666 as a time span. First, in Rev. 13 it referred to the beast a time period of 42 months (Rev. 13:5) and therefore, according to Miller, it is logical to assume that another time period will be given to indicate the chronological end of pagan Rome [15, p. 36-37]. The commentator also interpreted the word «calculate» through the prism of biblical texts, where it refers to time: Dan. 5:25; «also marginal reading in Job 16:22; Dan. 8:13» [15, p. 37].

Secondly, Miller interpreted the phrase «it is the number of a man» (Rev. 13:18) with the help of the biblical texts Job 14:5 and Ps. 90:12, which speaks of the days and years of human life [15, p. 37]. He believed that the number is associated with a person to once again indicate a period of time. William Miller concluded that «Thus from the considerations mentioned, I have come to the conclusion that this beast called Pagan Rome began when Rome became connected with the Jews, by league 158 years B.C. and lasted until 508 years after Christ making in all 666 years. Then by adding Daniel's 1335 years bringing us down to A.D. 1843» [15, p. 37].

³ William Miller concludes: «In this passage then, I understand John to number the first beast in the fourth kingdom, and has reference to the time that he should exist, before he would receive his deadly wound» [15, p. 36].

William Miller also putted forward a unique interpretation of a prophecy in Hos. 6:1-3. The prophet Hosea predicted that «After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him» (Hos. 6:2). The commentator attributed two days to the period of suffering of the church from the fourth beast-kingdom, and the third day to the period of resurrection and reign with Christ. Miller used the principle of one day for 1,000 years (Ps. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8) and connected his interpretation also with the millennium in Rev. 20 [15, p. 37-39]. Miller concluded that the 2,000 years begins in 158 B.C. If you add 1842 years, you get 2000 years (two days). Accordingly, «the year 1843 being the first in the third thousand, agreeing with the 2300 in Daniel, and the 666 added to 1335 makes 2001 and ends in the year 1843-and the reader will now perceive that we have witnesses, all agreeing with the same point of time» [15, p. 39].

Other members of the Millerite movement also shared Miller's view of the number 666. Josiah Litch (1809-1886) – a Methodist minister and a physician, held a leading role in the Millerite or Second Advent movement [7]. He interpreted the number 666 in the same way as William Miller, but he used a different hermeneutic principle. Admitting that the number 666 is of great interest, Josiah Litch attributed it to: «1. “The number of the beast,” with seven heads and ten horns. 2. The number of the name of the beast» [12, p. 182]. In the first case, he repeated Miller's arguments that the number of the beast is the number of a man, which in his opinion indicates the days and years of life. Accordingly, the number 666 symbolizes the time span of the beast's existence [12, p. 182-183]. The commentator used the gematria method to reveal the second aspect of the meaning of the name number: «The number of a man's name, would be the number to which the numerical letters of his name would amount when added together. What name then amounts to just six hundred and sixty-six? I answer the Greek letters which spell The Latin Kingdom, amount to that number» [12, p. 183]. Josiah Litch believed that the Latin kingdom was the Roman Empire in a pagan form. He attributed the beginning of this kingdom to the time when Rome united with the church. Litch argued that «The first league between the people of God and the Latin

government, took effect at the time when Bacchiades, a Grecian general, left off, at the command of the Romans, to trouble the Jews, B.C. one hundred and fifty-eight years» [12, p. 183-184]. A period of 666 years ends in 508 A.D, when paganism was replaced by Christian rule. The commentator concluded that «Both the number of the beast, and the number of his name, agree perfectly; and I can see no reason for doubting but this is the true meaning of this dark and mysterious passage» [12, p. 184].

Joshua V. Himes (1805-1895) was a Christian leader and minister who became the principal manager and financier of the Millerite movement [16]. He adhered to the interpretation of William Miller and in his prophetic table wrote about 666 years of the rule of the Roman Empire [6, p. 727]. Charles Fitch (1804-1844) – a prominent New England clergyman, one of the leaders in the Millerite movement published the prophetic chart «1843 Chart», which gained popularity and became standard in 1842-43. Le Roy Froom writes that «It was an attempt to simplify and unify the prophecies, and to make them easier to present to the public. It thenceforth became the standard chart, superseding all others, and was a telling factor in the proclamation of the “1843” phase of the Millerite message» [6, p. 733]. It is interesting that in this prophetic table 666 as years of pagan or imperial Rome is omitted [5, p. 25]. According to Le Roy Froom «This had been Miller’s uniform position and that of most previous charts. There was now a general move away from that position» [6, p. 737].

Among the followers of William Miller there were also those who did not agree with him. Henry Jones (1804-1880) – congregationalist minister and abolitionist, disagreed with the interpretation of the number 666 as 666 years of reign of pagan Rome [6, p. 580]. Jones wrote a book *Principles of Interpreting the Prophecies*, in which he revealed his own hermeneutic principles of interpreting biblical prophecies [8]. The sixth principle is as follows: «Days, weeks, months, and years, occasionally mentioned in the prophetic writings, are generally, if not always, figurative, representing indefinite, rather than definite periods of time, or duration» [8, p. 47]. Accordingly, he rejected the year-day principle and although

he believed in the imminent return of Jesus Christ, he did not consider Miller's interpretation of the year 1843 to be correct. Regarding the number 666, Jones wrote that its meaning is not fully understood, but it certainly has nothing to do with the time period in history [8, p. 49-50].

Number 666 in the Adventist movement (1844-1888)

666 Church Organizations

William Miller's interpretation of the number of the beast did not gain support among Adventists after the disappointment in 1844.⁴ James M. Stephenson – one of the members of the Adventist movement wrote a commentary on the number 666 and put forward several theses. First, he insisted that «The beast numbered is a definite beast» and the number 666 refers to the specific first beast (Rev. 13:1-10) that received the fatal wound [21, p. 166].⁵ Second, «It is a definite number, i.e., 666. Hence, it cannot refer to man's mode of reckoning; for any number from one to the highest number in the reach of human computation, would be as much in accordance with man's mode of reckoning as 666» [21, p. 166]. Thirdly, «It is a definite man who is numbered», which, in his opinion, indicated the impossibility of using the gematria method [21, p. 166]. This hermeneutic method does not give concrete results, because many people in history had a name with a numerical value of 666. James Stephenson mentioned some attempts to calculate the name: «Some have referred this number to the first Pope, others to Latinus, and others to Napoleon Bonaparte. But, if, as Adventists profess to believe, the Bible be its own expositor, we must find a clue to the man here spoken of, in some part of that Book» [21, p. 166].

⁴ Edwin de Kock states that «Miller's followers either did not accept or ignored his 666-year interpretation» [10].

⁵ Stephenson referred to Rev. 14:11 where «the mark and the name inhere in the Papal beast». The commentator also referred to Rev. 15:2, where «the mark and the number, the image and the name, all refer to the Papal beast. The pronoun *his* in each case personifies the same beast, i.e., «his image, his mark, his number,» or the number of his name. Hence it is the beast with seven heads and ten horns, and not the two-horned beast that is numbered» [21, p. 166].

James Stephenson argued that there are two men in the Bible who are opposed to each other. The first is Jesus Christ, the second is the man of sin (2 Thess. 2:3). This man «represents the Papal Anti-Christian church» as well as other Protestant churches that have a connection with Babylon (Rev. 17:5) [21, p. 166]. The commentator referred to the *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, according to which the number of different denominations is 666. He wrote that «And their number is the number of a man, (the man of sin) and his number is six hundred three score and six. Those churches collectively or individually have that number» [21, p. 166].

James Stephenson's idea was supported by other Adventists. Edwin de Kock notes that «From 1851 to 1860, three of the Sabbatarian Adventist leaders – John N. Andrews (1829-1883), John N. Loughborough (1832-1924), and James White (1821-1881) – expressed that idea, particularly in their articles in the *Advent Review* and *Sabbath Herald*» [10]. John N. Loughborough (1832-1924)⁶ – a pioneering evangelist and administrator, in the comment on Rev. 13:18 wrote that «For an exposition of the number of the name, see the article of Bro. J. M. Stephenson, in the *Review* of Nov. 29, 1853» [14, p. 46]. James S. White (1821-1881)⁷ – one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church wrote: «The whole family of Babylon must agree and unite to defend certain leading doctrines and institutions which they all believe from the mother (Catholic church) down through all the 666 names, even to the youngest of the daughters (Protestant sectarian bodies)» [24, p. 43]. James White originally believed that the number 666 referred to the two-horned beast (Rev. 13:11-18). In 1847, he claimed that «This last power that treads down the saints is brought to view in Rev. 13:11-18. His number is 666. Much of his power, deception, wonders, miracles, and oppression, will doubtless by [be] manifested during his last struggle under the “seven last plagues,” about the time of his coming to his end» [26, p. 9]. However, James White later apparently changed his mind and argued that those who attribute the number 666 to

⁶ For the biography of John Loughborough, see: [13].

⁷ For a biography of James White, see: [22].

the second beast (Rev. 13:11-18) are making a mistake. He remarked ironically that «A little “wisdom” in the use of language will help them» [25, p. 181]. He admitted that he lacked wisdom and therefore makes no attempt to solve this number. On the other hand, he mentions the interpretation that appeared 15 years ago that there are 666 churches [25, p. 182].

William A. Pierce wrote a letter to Uriah Smith: «It has been about fourteen months since we embraced the present truth, and we feel to thank God that the scales have fallen from our eyes, and we can see the great truths which shine out from the Word of God. We find it to teach a very different doctrine from what the 666 counterfeit sects would be glad to make it teach» [17, p. 54]. This reference shows that Pierce adhered to the interpretation of the number 666 as an indication of the number of churches. Another author with the initials M. E. S. in the article *Conditions of Salvation* also shared this view and wrote that «We can now understand the origin of the great number of faiths abroad in the land, at the present time, amounting to nearly “the number” 666. Revelation 13:18. It is plain a perverted gospel, when proclaimed and believed, will produce a perverted faith; but since there is but one true gospel, there can be but one true gospel faith» [19, p. 122].

Adventist William S. Foote, reflecting on the phrase «There is peace and security» (1 Thess. 5:3), asked the question: «Among the 666 nominal churches, how many thousands, think you, are groping in midnight darkness and error under the delusive cry of peace and safety?» [3, p. 54]. The question reflects his view of the number 666 as a symbol of a large number of church organizations. Elsewhere Foote in a commentary on Eph. 2:19, 21 wrote: «We understand by “one body”, one church, not 666 different ones» [4, p. 173]. Merritt E. Cornell (1827-1893) – a tent evangelist and leading debater wrote: «The whole family of Babylon must agree and unite to defend certain leading doctrines and institutions which they all believe from the mother (Catholic church) down through all the 666 names, even to the youngest of the daughters (Protestant sectarian bodies)» [2, p. 43].

666 and *Vicarius Filii Dei*

John N. Andrews (1829-1883), a pioneer writer and scholar-evangelist, did not leave a detailed interpretation of the number 666. In his commentary on Rev. 13 he mentioned the number of churches in passing: «The Protestant church may, if taken as a whole, be considered as a unit; but how near its different sects number six hundred three score and six, may be a matter of interest to determine» [1, p. 85].⁸ Edwin de Kock noted that Andrews changed his view and in 1872 accepted Uriah Smith's interpretation of the number 666 [11, p. 457].

Uriah Smith (1832-1903) made a significant contribution to the interpretation of the number 666 in the Adventist Church and popularized the method of gematria [10].⁹ In 1865, he published a commentary on the Book of Revelation – *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Revelation*, in which he presented the interpretation of Andreas Helwig for the first time among Adventists [20]. The commentator mentioned attempts to attribute the number 666 to such words as «Lateinos» or «Latin,» but did not agree with such an interpretation, because it is the number of a man and not a kingdom.¹⁰ Smith claimed that the best option for a name with the numerical value of 666 is «the blasphemous title which the pope applies to himself, and wears in jeweled letters upon his miter or pontifical crown. That title is this: Vicarius filii Dei: “Vicegerent of the Son of God”» [20, p. 225]. The commentator calculated the numerical value of the Latin letters used for numbers and shows that their sum is 666. As confirmation, he

⁸ Le Roy Froom expresses John Andrews' position as follows: «The number 666 he does not define, but mentions the possibility of its representing the large number of Protestant sects» [6, p. 1101].

⁹ Edwin de Kock writes that «Uriah Smith (1832-1903) published the work *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Revelation* that would swiftly change the understanding of the number 666 among Seventh-day Adventists» [10].

¹⁰ Uriah Smith writes that «We think we discover, however, a serious objection to the name here suggested. The number, says the prophecy, is the number of a man and if it is to be derived from a name or title, the natural conclusion would be that it must be the name or title of some particular man. But in this we have the name of a people or kingdom, not of “a man” as the prophecy says» [20, p. 224].

cited from another work the story of a witness who claims to have seen a pope in a Roman church at a ceremony with a miter that contained this title [20, p. 225-226]. This interpretation of Uriah Smith became popular and accepted among Seventh-day Adventists.

The hermeneutic principles of the participants of the Millerite and Adventist movements were based on historicism. They interpreted apocalyptic prophecies in the context of history and tied them to specific historical events and periods. Analysis of the interpretation of the number 666 during the period of the Millerite movement (1833-1844) shows that William Miller's interpretation prevailed at that time. He developed a detailed interpretation of the number 666 as a time span of 666 years and included it in his chronological calculations of the other prophetic periods of 2300, 1260, 1290 and 1335. He based his hermeneutic method on a specific interpretation of Rev. 13:18 using the biblical texts of Dan. 5:26; Job 14:5; Ps. 90:12; Rev. 17:9, 10 and Hos. 6:1-3.

William Miller developed a detailed argument for his interpretation and categorically attributed the number 666 to the first beast (Rev. 13:1-10), in particular to the period of pagan Rome. According to him, this period began in 158 B.C. and ended in 508 A.D. Other leaders of the Millerite movement Josiah Litch and Joshua V. Himes, also accepted William Miller's interpretation of the number 666. However, already in the generalizing prophetic table of Charles Fitch, the time span of 666 years was eliminated. Henry Jones – was one of those who denied the hermeneutic approach of William Miller and rejected both the year-day principle and the interpretation of the number 666 as a time interval.

A study of the interpretation of the number 666 among Adventists after 1844, who later formed the Seventh-day Adventist church, shows that they departed from the generally accepted position of William Miller. James M. Stephenson pioneered the interpretation that the number 666 symbolizes the 666 church organizations and branches that are part of Babylon. Such leaders as John N. Andrews, John N. Loughborough, James S. White, William A. Pierce, William S. Foote, and Merritt E. Cornell supported this interpretation. Adventists

originally believed that the number 666 belonged to the two-horned beast (Rev. 13:11-18), but later abandoned this idea.

Significant changes in the interpretation of the number 666 occurred after the publication of Uriah Smith's commentary in 1865. He suggested using the gematria method to calculate the numerical value of the name of the Antichrist. According to Smith, the best option is the Latin title of the pope – Vicarius filii Dei, the numerical value of which is 666. This interpretation was supported by John Andrews and other Adventists and became generally accepted. Summarizing what has been said, it can be argued that Adventists were open to new interpretations and were ready to admit their limitations in interpreting complex biblical passages. I see further consideration of this issue in the study of modern hermeneutical principles for the interpretation of the number 666 among Adventist theologians.

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Число 666: герменевтичні принципи ранніх адвентистів

Анотація

Книга Об'явлення містить незвичайні та символічні образи. У центральній частині книги розміщені уривки про антихриста. Число 666 є однією з його характеристик і завжди привертало увагу коментаторів. Протягом церковної історії було застосовано багато різноманітних герменевтичних методів для визначення значення числа 666. Церква Адвентистів сьомого дня виникла у XIX ст. на основі досліджень пророчих текстів апокаліптичних книг Даниїла та Об'явлення. Відсутність герменевтичного аналізу тлумачення числа 666 серед ранніх адвентистів зумовлює необхідність цього дослідження. Стаття присвячена визначенню та аналізу особливостей герменевтики ранніх адвентистів при тлумаченні числа 666. У першій частині дослідження проаналізовано тлумачення числа 666 в міллеритському русі з 1833 по 1844 рр., а в другій частині – в адвентистському русі з 1844 по 1888 рр. Герменевтика коментаторів міллеритського та адвентистського рухів була основана на історичизмі. Вони тлумачили біблійні пророцтва в контексті конкретних історичних подій. Були сформовані три основні тлумачення числа 666: 1) 666 років; 2) 666 церковних організацій; 3) Титул *Vicarius Filii Dei*. Завдяки впливу Вільяма Міллера серед міллеритів стала поширеною думка про те, що число 666 означає проміжок часу 666 років. 666 років було включено в хронологічні обчислення інших пророчих періодів з біблійних апокаліптичних книг: 2300, 1260, 1290 і 1335. Ранні адвентисти проігнорували тлумачення Вільяма Міллера і популяризували другу інтерпретацію, згідно з якою число 666 символізує 666 церковних організацій, які є частиною духовного Вавилону. Третю інтерпретацію запровадив Урія Сміт, який використав герменевтичний метод гематрії. Урія Сміт популяризував інтерпретацію, згідно з якою латинський титул папи *Vicarius Filii Dei* має числове значення 666.

Ключові слова: число 666, число звіра, книга Об'явлення, герменевтика, Адвентисти, Апокаліпсис.