

CONCERNS ON THE NEW SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST INTERNATIONAL BIBLE COMMENTARY (SDAIBC)

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I believe that the initiative taken by some scholars of Andrews University, dealing with the preparation of a New SDABC which intends to be international, is praiseworthy. The former one was written more than half a century ago, and it is necessary to update it. Theological knowledge, as well as several related sciences like archeology, are always increasing, which requires more currently documented material. In the former commentary a number of documents were prepared by our scholars of that time while other sections were more devotional.

Let us begin by clarifying that, in reality, there are two Bible commentaries that are underway in Andrews University. The first one has to do with an enlarged commentary of the Andrews Bible. They expect to have a book of about 1800 pages adapted for people who did not have the opportunity to be trained in theological matters. The editor of the entire project, which includes the Bible and the study notes as well as the follow-up commentary, is Dr. Angel M. Rodriguez, former BRI director.

The project for a second commentary was born later, also at Andrews University, in the Old Testament department. From the beginning, Jacques Doukhan was chosen as the chief editor of the project. It is called Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary (SDAIBC). Ed Zinke was consulted later for financial support. His acceptance made the project viable. The Executive Editorial Committee of this second project is composed of about a dozen doctors in theology. A favorable aspect of this commentary is that from the beginning it intends to be faithful to the Spirit of Prophecy and the historicist tradition of the apocalyptic prophecies.

The purpose of the commentary under Jacques Doukhan's direction is to complement, theologically and pastorally, the former SDABC. The former one will not disappear, so this new commentary is not destined to replace it, but to complement it. In this way, they are not combating the former commentary, but opening the scope to a more embracing analysis in several topics. The task is not easy because it is hard to agree on every point and, of course, no one presupposes that the new commentary will be infallible in every respect.

One challenge is to obtain the financial support for such a project, and another is to be able to sell the commentary once the project is finished, in order to recover the investment. Especially at a time when the internet is becoming the easiest way to obtain information, such an impressive project requires a large amount of courage. I reflect on what happened some 15 or 20 years ago when George Knight, another doctor of Andrews, began a similar project. His commentary intended to be simple and devotional. But many people want a scientific commentary to clarify their doubts concerning the meaning of the text. Probably the principal mistake was that Knight enlisted the help of some liberal interpreters who introduced the typical rationalist skeptic deductions of modern theology known as Higher Criticism. Although this trend was seen in only two or three Bible books of the commentary, the fact discredited the entire project to the point where the Publishing House ceased printing it, because the books were not being sold.

It is natural that many have concerns about these new commentaries of the Bible. In what follows, I will share my own concerns on the biblical points that are especially sensitive for our distinctive messages. Since the commentary is still in process, my concerns will not be an anticipated criticism of the commentary. It will reflect certain concerns about points which could strengthen or darken the truth.

I welcome, partially, the attempt to prepare a commentary that agrees with the Spirit of Prophecy. I say partially, because I repeatedly saw contributing scholars quoting statements of E. G. White for the purpose of corroborating a theological point long kept alive by the contributor. They tended to neglect other statements that showed an opposite perspective and would thereby balance or enlarge the picture in

a way that was uncomfortable for the interpreter. This is the first hermeneutic pitfall that the editors of the new commentary will need to overcome when considering a substantial number of Bible texts.

Just as we Seventh-day Adventists require the hermeneutical principle of interpreting the Bible in the light of the entire Word of God, so also we must require the same principle in reference to the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy. We must take into account all what E. G. White wrote and said on a determined subject before deciding what God really revealed to her. As I deal with my concerns on the new commentary of the Bible I am also aware of positions that contributing authors have held in the past and continue to advocate even today. I wonder what these editors will do when they encounter Spirit of Prophecy statements that challenge their past and current convictions regarding texts or visions under consideration.

The books of the Bible which are prominent in our distinctive messages are Leviticus, Daniel, Hebrews, and Revelation. For the forthcoming commentary to be truly Adventist, will it maintain the positions transmitted by our pioneers in those books which were confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy? Let us begin by touching some key points that appear in the Pentateuch, as an introduction to our concerns regarding the book of Leviticus.

PENTATEUCH

If Gerald A. Klingbeil is the commentary's author on **the book of Genesis**, I believe that he is well trained in theology and can offer us a good contribution. The key points are in the three first chapters of Genesis and in the history of the flood. I have no doubt that he will state clearly that the biblical chronology speaks about 6,000 years of history since creation, and that the seven days of the week were literal days.

In **the book of Exodus**, the most significant challenge will be the chronology, its historical dating. But on this point, our theologians, with few exceptions, have respected the chronological dating of the Bible, including its confirmation by the apostle Paul. I do not doubt that the interpreter chosen for comment on that book will include a discussion on the short or long chronology between Abraham or Jacob and the date of departure from Egypt. Anyway, that discussion will appear more definite in the book of Deuteronomy and, especially, regarding the date of the conquest according to the information left in the books of Joshua and Judges.

While the book of Exodus tells the story of liberation, the book of Leviticus introduces the doctrine of liberation. We find something similar in the New Testament. While the gospels tell the story of redemption, the epistles bring us the doctrine of that redemption.

THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

This book was until recent times a challenge for our church and the Christian world in general. E. G. White wrote that in her days the Jewish system of worship was not well understood and called for studying it. She promised a great spiritual reward for that endeavor (see the introduction to my first seminar on the sanctuary, *The Glorious Promises of the Sanctuary. With stories and illustrations.*

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The Christian world stopped considering that book a challenge to understand it as a unity, when it concluded that it contained many contradictions which could be solved by literary criticism. Through this methodology, they expected to disengage the text from what was supposedly added along the centuries in the history of Israel. Many also don't believe that Moses was the author of that book. But no doubt, a SDAIBC will respect the date assigned by the Bible to the book of Leviticus.

Even in the 1970's, Edward Heppenstal tried to introduce into our church the Evangelical idea that sin contaminates, while the blood of the sacrifice purifies. But modern Jews began to study the book of Leviticus as a whole, without necessarily discussing the date of its completion. Their debates about the meaning of the book have shed light on its content. They discovered the paradoxical principle that characterized the old ritual law, confirming what our pioneers had believed and which was also confirmed

by the Spirit of Prophecy. The same blood that cleansed the sinner, defiled what was holy and clean (like the sanctuary) because it bore the impurity of the sinner. (See documentation in *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment. From the Pentateuch to Revelation...*, chapter 3).

I don't know who has been chosen to write the commentary entry on Leviticus. I suppose that it is Roy Gane, who had the opportunity to study in Berkeley, California, with Jacob Milgrom, the greatest rabbi interpreter of the sacrificial system in modern times. This is positive, but it carries some dangers that were seen represented in the Sabbath School brochure on the sanctuary, a little more than one year ago. Although the one who prepared the booklet was Martin Pröbstle, a young Austrian theologian, Roy Gane and Jacques Doukhan were the counselors in his doctoral dissertation which contains the same wrong views found in that brochure. We cannot understand how that booklet passed the filters of the commissions of the General Conference with no one there able to realize the serious problems introduced there. See in my webpage, under the section *articles*, "Sabbath School Quarterly on the Sanctuary (Oct-Dec 2013)."

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I also dealt with the subject in my fourth seminar on the sanctuary, *The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary. Biblical, Historical, and Astronomical Confirmation* (2014).

For the SDAIBC to be authentically Adventist, it will need to clearly affirm that the sanctuary was legally defiled by the confessed sins of the people of God, and that it was from these sins alone that the sanctuary was cleansed by the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. The contamination of the sanctuary by unpardonable and unconfessed sins was illegitimate and illegal. The solution given for that kind of contamination was not the substitute sacrifice, but the death penalty (Num 35:33-34; Deut 19:19; 21:21, etc). The ritual of the Day of Atonement did not cleanse the sanctuary from those unconfessed sins. In any case, the Day of Atonement was the deadline for the expulsion or execution of the rebellious. If we begin with a misconception in Leviticus, we will fail to correctly understand the prophecy which marked our destiny as a church, that of Dan 8:14.

The problem began with Gerhard Hasel. In his studies he concluded that the sins which were not forgiven during the year were not pardoned on the Day of Atonement with the blood of the sacrifice which was carried to the Holiest of Holies. He believed that the sanctuary was purified only from the sins confessed formerly during the year. I spoke with Hasel personally in France at an Adventist theological symposium. His problem had to do with the fact that he had never studied the death penalty in the Old Testament and its connection with the defilement and vindication of the sanctuary. The BRI asked me, at that time, to prepare a paper on the subject dealing with the defilement and cleansing of the sanctuary in ancient Israel which they published in the studies on the book of Leviticus in the 1980's.

For forgiveness on the Day of Atonement, Hasel resorted to the general sacrifice for the sin of the people that was offered at each of the feasts. But this didn't solve the problem either, as I could see while speaking with him. That sacrifice for sin executed at every feast (Num 28-29), did not take place at the moment when the High Priest entered into the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement. For additional documentation which includes clear statements from the Spirit of Prophecy, see my criticism of the Sabbath School Lesson on the sanctuary quoted above, and my four seminars on the sanctuary. When the High Priest entered the Most Holy on the Day of Atonement, no one was officiating in the court or in the Holy Place...

It is important to understand thoroughly the levitical doctrine of liberation, because our understanding of the investigative judgment depends on it...

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

Let us jump to the Epistle to the Hebrews and deal with that counterpart of the book of Leviticus. That epistle represents the Christian version of the sacrificial system. For this reason, a correct understanding of the sacrifices of the Old Testament is indispensable to understand the Christian epistle of the Hebrew worship.

If Felix Cortez (assistant professor in the New Testament department at Andrews University) is nominated to write the entry on that epistle for the new commentary, he may consider himself fortunate to live in the best time to do so. Our church has grown up significantly in its understanding of these issues in these last three decades. The BRI not only published two papers that I wrote in the 1980's on Leviticus (condensed into only one that was divided in two parts), but also another paper that I prepared on Hebrews. Let me share with you the problems that the Adventist interpreter encounters in this Epistle. I will introduce it with something that I experienced several years ago.

A doctoral student at the UAP (Universidad Adventista del Plata, Argentina), who had come from another country, consulted me for advice on his doctoral thesis. His subject was "the blood in Hebrews". I wrote two paragraphs for him outlining the pitfalls he would encounter. Shortly thereafter I was visiting that University. I offered him the opportunity to visit me for consultation. But he chose not to accept my offer. While defending his thesis two or three years later he said that I had guided him in its preparation. But I never saw his thesis, or had any additional communication with him on the matter. Frankly, I don't really know what he wrote. This time, however, once published, I will read the renewed commentary on Hebrews prepared for the SDAIBC at Andrews, and share my reaction.

1) The nature of the heavenly sanctuary (spatial correspondence). Is there a sanctuary in heaven with two rooms, one called The Holy Place and the other one The Most Holy Place, separated by doors or curtains? Here we find the Hebrew and Greek thought confronting each other. If the new commentary is to be truly Adventist, it will need to retain the Hebrew approach and acknowledge (as E. G. White did) that the heavenly sanctuary has two rooms, and furnishings that are equivalent to its earthly counterpart.

The clear testimony of the Spirit of Prophecy is absolutely free from Greek pagan philosophies, but unfortunately it is being eroded in our theological circles by no one less than a member of the BRI. I speak of Gerhard Pfandl, who I greatly appreciated as a conservative, but who in recent years has left me stupefied. It seems that after his retirement he began to say and publish things he had not dared to endorse previously. To review the problems of Pfandl on the nature of the heavenly sanctuary, along with my reply to what he wrote, see my webpage under the title: "A response to Dr. Pfandl's challenges regarding the Adventist doctrine of the Heavenly Sanctuary."

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Pfandl doesn't care at what the Spirit of Prophecy says on this matter. Evenso, he quotes some isolated statements of E. G. White in order to justify his denial of a spatial correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary. He thinks that the only acceptable correspondence is the functional one, without realizing that those who begin by denying its spatial projection, end up by denying the functional projection as well (if not they themselves, those who follow them). His position begs the question as to how much it strengthens the view of the vision of Christ passing from the Holy Place to the Most Holy in 1844. The consequences of the view of Pfandl will be seen later in his denial of the historicist approach of the sixth trumpet.

My response to this modern problem is that the spatial and functional correspondence is clearly delineated not only in the writings of E. G. White, but also in the Pentateuch, in Daniel, in Hebrews, and in Revelation. Notwithstanding, a Seventh-day Adventist colleague with whom I taught theology in our theological center of Collonges-sous-Saleve, France, prepared a doctoral dissertation at the Protestant Faculty of the University of Strasbourg which denied the literal existence of a heavenly sanctuary. When his professor requested him to document what our church believed on the matter, he responded with some statements from *Questions on Doctrine* and others from E. G. White. The day came when he defended that dissertation, affirming (without mincing words) that he didn't believe what his church believed. One of the members of the jury, however, ended by telling him: "You and I can have problems believing that there is a temple in heaven. But this was not a problem in the days of the apostle, because they believed in the existence of a heavenly sanctuary."

2) Typology. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, our modern logic encounters its borders in biblical typology. There are clear testimonies of the apostle that go in the direction of a correspondence between the old worship and the new one. But there are also other texts that are more concerned with explaining the differences. How do we resolve the dilemma?

In his doctoral dissertation, my aforementioned colleague chose to level all the typological content of the epistle to the Hebrews on the side of the antithesis. For him, the only purpose of the Epistle was to show the uselessness of the old worship, and the need for a new one. In consequence, the priestly ministry of Christ had, in his view, nothing to do with the old one. One of the Protestant members of the jury told him, after hearing him carefully in his dissertation: “You didn’t convince me. That epistle purposed to explain the sense of the old worship in the Christian dispensation.”

Others, against all evidence, go to the opposite extreme. They try to find a heavenly counterpart in every description of the furnishings. Finally, there are those who reject Bible typology because they don’t see coherence in the methodology. Again, how are we to understand the apparent typological incongruities of the Epistle to the Hebrews?

The solution is more simple than many imagine. The apparent discrepancies are explained by the very apostle, by citing the prophecies of the Old Testament which announced them. Therefore, the correspondence between what is old and what is new, between the past and the future, is kept.

Paul resorted to the Psalms to prove that God had anticipated a change in the system of sacrifices. There will be no more animal sacrifices, but the sacrifice of the Messiah as the only sacrifice which will be accepted by God (Ps 40). He also resorted to Psalm 110 to prove that there would be a change in the priestly lineage. The priest of the new covenant would be a son of David, no more a son of Aaron. The old priests did not officiate in a seated posture. However, this new priest would be of a different order (represented by Melchizedek) which would allow him to officiate at the right hand of God (because as a King he would reign on a throne, that of His Father: v. 4). E. G. White also resorted to the prophecy of Zech. 6 to show that Jesus would officiate as priest, seated upon his throne in the Holy Place. In addition, she brought for consideration the prophecy of Dan 7, where there is a motion of thrones in the final court of judgment, which according to typology, would concern a movement from the Holy to the Most Holy Place.

Let me anticipate here that this prophecy of Dan 7 foretold an additional change in connection with the old regime. While the elders judged the people at the doors of the city, and later on in the palace of the king, the 24 elders judged the people in the temple, in the Holy of holiest (I will return to this point in my concerns on what that commentary would have to say about the Revelation).

But there is no prophecy which says that there would be a spatial and functional change in the heavenly sanctuary. On the contrary, the apostle Paul made clear that the earthly temple was a copy of the heavenly temple, as revealed to Moses on the mount. And just as sacrifices were offered in the old dispensation, and their blood carried into the inner rooms of the temple; so also Jesus would bring the signs of His sacrifice into the inner rooms of the new and heavenly sanctuary, to officiate there as our High Priest. In other words, the borders of typology are marked by the Bible, especially in the New Testament. No one is authorized to go beyond or before that which the Bible itself anticipated and determined as typological characteristics.

A Bible Commentary which takes pride in being biblical and Adventist, will not pass over these facts. It will keep the heavenly-earthly correspondence not only in functional matters, but also in spatial contours.

3) Distinction between the inauguration and the conclusion. One problem of interpretation today found not only among scholars outside of our church, but also among some of our own theologians, is that instead of receiving the legacy of our pioneers and of E. G. White on this subject, they adopt the modern Protestant legacy. That foreign legacy for Adventists concerns the inability to distinguish between what was expected to happen at the inauguration of the heavenly sanctuary, and what would take place at the conclusion of the ministry of Christ in that realm. This we will consider more specifically in our concerns on what the new commentary will say regarding the book of Revelation.

a) Seated at the right hand of God. The president of our French seminary read a Psalm at one of the devotional meetings of the faculty, and asked the students to comment on it. At the end of that Psalm David said that God was at his right hand strengthening him and at the same time that he found pleasures at God's right hand (Ps 16). In my comment I asked where is the right hand of God? Does it imply a spatial position since David could not stay physically at the right hand of God, and have God remain at the same time at David's right hand?

My colleague, who had defended his thesis at Strasbourg and attempted to deny our doctrine of the sanctuary, argued like Pfandl is doing now. He said that the Father was not separate from Christ for 1800 years and, therefore, that there are no doors or curtains separating them in the heavenly sanctuary. For my colleague, after His resurrection Jesus would have gone directly to the Most Holy, and would have been seated there at the right hand of God till today.

The expression, "right hand of God," implies the assurance of all the power of God to produce the final victory of the Lord over all the battles of this world. It does not necessarily imply a fixed position on a throne (like the term "first born" which cannot always be interpreted literally). Anyway, E. G. White saw in the apostles' repeated statements, years after the inauguration, a spatial projection. Jesus was upon a throne in the Holy Place, seated at the right hand of God until 1844 when the Father and the Son moved to the Most Holy Place. Since then, the position projected is that of the Father seated for a work of judgment, and the Son standing before Him.

How did E. G. White justify that change of location from the Bible? After all, in the Old Testament worship service there was no throne in the Holy Place. The only three furnishings found there did not represent a throne (see my book, *The Final Crisis in Rev 4 and 5*, chap 3). What Paul did in the Epistle to the Hebrews, E. G. White did after the vision she had of thrones which were settled in the Most Holy Place. She resorted to typology to place Jesus in the Holy Place, and to Psalm 110:4 and Zech 6 to show that Jesus would be priest at the right hand of God, upon the very throne of God. There would be a change, anticipated by God in prophecy, like in the samples already mentioned of the discrepancy between the old worship and the new one.

But, when was Jesus seated at the right hand of God? Heb 1 says it was after the cleansing of sins. We have here a discussion on the two appearances of Jesus before His Father the first one just after His resurrection, and the other one nearly 50 days later at Pentecost. A discussion of this matter appears in my third seminar on the sanctuary, *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary*, and also in my webpage, in a paper entitled, *A Summary of the Heavenly Ministry of Jesus and its Relation to Revelation 4 & 5*. (2006).

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I believe that Jesus sat down in the Most Holy Place at the right hand of God at the inauguration of His heavenly ministry (like Moses who anointed the ark in that apartment of the earthly tabernacle). And once the inaugural ceremonies were finished, the Son began His ministry in the Holy Place, seated with His Father on a throne which was set there. Just as the glory of God was introduced in the Most Holy Place at the inauguration of the earthly temple, and the people rejoiced when they saw the glory of God; so also at Pentecost Jesus, the *shekinah*, was introduced in the Most Holy, and the disciples on earth felt His power and saw the divine fire coming down in tongues of fire.

b) Emphasis at the inauguration. Unlike the book of Revelation, the Epistle to the Hebrews put the emphasis on the inauguration. By knowing nothing of these two coronations, some like Stefanovic at Andrews have been confusing the two events. This will become more apparent in our consideration of key issues in the book of Revelation. The emphasis of the Epistle to the Hebrews was to help the Jews in Paul's time to see Jesus at the right hand of God, only now after the order of Melchizedek. The kingdom of David and his throne will be given to Jesus in the New Jerusalem along with the new Israel. He will receive that throne at the end of His priestly ministry in the Holy of Holies, no longer related to a priestly role.

c) **The cleansing of the sanctuary.** Another point of divergence between Adventism and the Christian world at large has to do with the final cleansing of the sanctuary in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Some Seventh-day Adventist theologians have abandoned the legacy of our pioneers confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy in order to adopt the Protestant and Evangelical pattern. My colleague in our French seminary tried to prove that his church was wrong because in his view there is no sanctuary in heaven. Therefore he made an exegesis of Heb 9:23 where he broke the correspondence between the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary and the purification of the heavenly one. For him, that text doesn't speak of a cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, but simply states that the new order counts on a better sacrifice. He simply linked Heb 9:23 with the inauguration.

I will not introduce here the proofs that are contrary to that inauguralist position. This I do in my doctoral dissertation, *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment*, chap 7; and in my second seminar on the sanctuary, entitled: *The Glorious Fulfillments of the Sanctuary*. Here I will say that Heb 9:23 is not the only text in the epistle where Paul deals with the final ministration of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. A Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary will keep what God confirmed through the gift of prophecy. The final cleansing of the sanctuary is pointed to definitely in Heb 9:23.

In these issues linked to the inauguration and the conclusion of the heavenly ministration, we find ourselves in a struggle between the Protestant theological pattern and that of Seventh-day Adventists. The attempt to circumscribe everything to the inauguration, without distinguishing between the initial priestly coronation, and the Davidic royal coronation at the end, is an assault on our prophetic mission. A pretention that Jesus purified the heavenly sanctuary at the inauguration, and that there would be no cleansing of the sanctuary at the end, ignores both the projection of the old ritual into the new one, and the message of the gospel in shadows seen by Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Heb 9:23 has nothing to do with a presumed inaugural cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. The canonic Bible dealt with a cleansing of the outer altar at the inauguration, but never of a cleansing of the sanctuary at that time. In order to contradict the testimony of the Bible, liberal Protestants have to resort to the apocryphal book of Maccabees.

Let me conclude with this thought . My colleague in our French seminary argued that the heavenly sanctuary could not be cleansed at the end because nothing unclean could remain in God's presence. This is to imagine things that the Bible doesn't say. For this reason, in my doctoral dissertation and in other books, I have been bringing into consideration the fact that our sins reach heaven, and move God to intervene. Also in the earthly sanctuary God assumed the dirtiness of His people till the Day of Atonement.

When we start to reason with our short-sighted criteria on what is necessary or not necessary in the heavenly sanctuary, and upon what could be there or not, we enter into open antagonism between the biblical testimony and our secularized and Hellenized culture; between what was confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy and what men who didn't see the heavenly sanctuary imagine. I prefer to believe the prophets, not those who speculate in the vacuum...

DANIEL

I don't know who has been chosen to write the Daniel entry for the new commentary (it could be Gerhard Pfandl or Martin Pröbstle, two Austrian scholars who touched on some important points in that book in their doctoral theses). I mention them because along with Ranko Stefanovic, they introduced some Protestant concepts which are in conflict with our faith as Seventh-day Adventists. I will enumerate those conflicting points from the denominational perspective on the book of Daniel.

1) **Dan 7:9-14.** Ranko Stefanovic, in his doctoral thesis at Andrews, and especially in his book *Revelation of Jesus Christ (Backgrounds..., 109; The Revelation..., 166,174,207)*, linked the appearance of the Son of Man before the Ancient of Days to the inaugural coronation of Jesus in the heavenly temple in the year 31. This is the common approach of the Protestant and Christian world at large. The problem

is that they do not realize that there are two coronations in the Christian era, one priestly at the beginning, and the other exclusively royal at the end. It is amazing that the advisers of his dissertation did not discern this faulty assumption. Unfortunately, his problem to discern the difference in the two coronations is not confined to Andrews University. It was obviously shared by Jon Paulien, his mentor in the preparation of his doctoral thesis. We will see this more clearly when we will analyze the problems that they have been introducing into their studies on Revelation.

The understanding of Dan 7:9-14 that has been held by our church throughout its history and endorsed by the Spirit of Prophecy is a reference to the investigative judgment which would take place at the time of the end, previous to the coming of the Lord. Both Pfandl and Pröbstle agree with this. That scene of judgment appears not only after the vision of the fourth beast that represents Rome, but also after the depiction of the horns which represent the European kingdoms, and the little horn which became greater and represents the Roman papacy.

2) Dan 8:13-14. Especially since the dialog with Desmond Ford, the discussion has been centered in what defiled the sanctuary that needed to be vindicated/cleansed in Dan 8:14. Ford understood that the sins of the horn defiled the sanctuary (the Roman papacy). Gerhard Hasel replied that it had to do with the confessed sins of the people of God. By the way, Hasel stated that if the sins of the horn contaminated the sanctuary, it was only in the cases of priestly conversion like that of Luther and other reformers who converted to the gospel and confessed their sins.

More recently, Gerhard Pfandl introduced in a Sabbath School quarterly (October-December 2004), the idea that in Dan 8, the sanctuary was contaminated by both the rebellion of the horn and the confessed sins of the people of God. While for Hasel, the work of the pagan heathen kingdoms that attacked the sanctuary had to do with a profanation, not with a contamination; for Pfandl, Ps 79:1 was sufficient evidence to indicate that a pagan army could also defile the sanctuary. But both Hasel and Pfandl did not study the different ways that God determined to solve both types of sins, because neither of them studied the death penalty in the Bible.

In my doctoral dissertation which I defended in 1981 at the Protestant Faculty of the Univ. of Strasbourg, I showed that there was a *legal* contamination produced by the sacrifice which had to do with the sins which the people of God confessed under repentance. This was, as clearly seen in the Spirit of Prophecy, the only kind of sin from which the sanctuary was cleansed on the Day of Atonement, according to Lev 16. But there was an *illegal* contamination which had to do with defiant sins and which were not mitigated through the sacrifice either before or during the Day of Atonement. The only way to vindicate the sanctuary and purify the land contaminated by such sins (Num 35:33-34), was the very sacrifice of the guilty (by the death penalty), implied in Lev 23.

Pfandl could have been right when he said that the sins of the horn who attacked the sanctuary also defiled it in Dan 8:14. But by not defining the method indicated by the law provided to solve that kind of contamination, he left the doors open so that his disciple Martin Pröbstle ended by adopting the idea that the cleansing ritual of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement purified it from both the confessed sins as well as the unconfessed sins. This is a heresy from our Adventist perspective, because it doesn't have biblical support, and it weakens and distorts the doctrine of the investigative judgment. It is derived from the Medieval Jewish concept which many rabbis support till today. It consists in believing that the Day of Atonement granted a greater mercy than during the year, purifying the people from sins that could not be cleansed during the year.

Roy Gane, (who studied with Jacob Milgrom in Berkeley, California, the greatest Jewish interpreter on the Israelite sacrifice in modern times), was the mentor of the thesis of Martin Pröbstle. It is amazing that he didn't guide his disciple within the Adventist parameters on this point. Nor was Jacques Doukhan able to warn him that this view distorts the biblical belief of our church. And that view past the filter which always reviews the Sabbath School brochure and is led by another Jew, Clifford Goldstein. In Heb 9:7 the apostle Paul says clearly, and in contrast to the Medieval Jewish concept (shared by many Protestants and modern Jews like Milgrom), that the High Priest entered the sanctuary to cleanse it at the end of the year for the "sins committed in ignorance."

Another serious problem has to do with the wrong conclusion that the people could not be forgiven on the Day of Atonement, by the same blood which purified the sanctuary. This would imply, prophetically, that after 1844, no one may receive forgiveness for sin. We go to the writings of E. G. White, and find nothing to support that denial. But I answered this point, briefly, in my concerns on the book of Leviticus. You can see additional comments on my webpage, and even more in my recent book, *The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary*.

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Perhaps I might add something else here. The sins of the Philistines did not contaminate the sanctuary, unless they came to Israel to participate in the sanctuary services, because through those services God accepted the sacrifices even of foreigners (Lev 17:8; Isa 56:6-8). God did not dwell among the Canaanites or the Assyrians, but only in the land where His glory came down from heaven (Num 35:34). This is the reason why the sins which defiled the sanctuary were, in principle, only those of the Israelites (Lev 16:16,30), not of the enemies of the Lord who came to attack, and thus profane, the temple. The outcome for God's people was the freedom from all their sins (Lev 16:30). Those who invaded the people of Israel and profaned the sanctuary, as well as those who illegally defiled it were eventually destroyed (Lev 23:29).

So also, at the end of the investigative judgment, the "horn" as well as all the unfaithful world, are destroyed. During the millennium no one remains alive, excepting those who were cleaned on the Day of Atonement (investigative judgment). God did not assume to Himself the sin of the rebellious (something implicit already in the oft repeated Hebrew expression, *nasa' 'awon*, "to bear the sin"). Neither God nor His sanctuary assumed any responsibility for the sins of those people.

3) The *tamid* and the abomination of desolation. Another point which has been debated in our church, perhaps for being related to two prophetic dates (Dan 12:11-12), has to do with the *tamid* and the abomination of desolation. From the origin of our denomination two interpretations have been defended. The first one goes back to William Miller (though not all the Millerites followed him in his view), and was followed years later by Uriah Smith and other pioneers. The taking away of the *tamid* would have to do with the fall of paganism, interpreted as a permanent heathen desolation (2 Thess 2:7).

Another concept has become predominant in our church today. All of the vision of chapter 8 in Daniel, is set on the terminology of the sanctuary. Therefore, the taking away of the *tamid* would have to do with the taking away of the intercession of Christ by the counterfeit Roman clergy, to impose the papal abomination of desolation (Dan 8:11-13). Both interpretations place the beginning of the prophecies of the 1290 and 1335 days/years in 508, because for both, the conversion of Clovis from paganism to Roman Christianity marks the beginning of papal abomination. I wrote extensively on this point in my fourth seminar on the sanctuary, entitled *The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary*. So, I will not spend time here on this subject. By the way, E. G. White never involved herself in the debate...

4) The prophetic dates (490 - 1260 – 1290 – 1335 – 2300 days/years). In connection with these dates, the new Bible commentary will need to be clear in its historicist approach with the well established apocalyptic equation of days/years. Certain attempts to introduce a futurist scope to these dates were seen in Samuel Nuñez and other pastors. Other idealist trends are seen in Zdravko Stefanovic, who sought symbolic literary explanations, and must be likewise rejected. Zdravko manifested few interest in history in his commentary on the book of Daniel. He didn't take a position when exposing the preterist and the historicist interpretations. On the contrary, he seems to project, at times, an idealist or spiritualizing approach. He thought to find a delay in the prophetic sequences because they went from 490 to 1260 days, then 1290 and 1335 days, and finally 2300 days. But the year/day principle is well documented in the Bible, especially in connection with the Apocalyptic books and its link to history is also confirmed.

The book of Revelation

The greatest challenge that the new commentary on the Bible (SDAIBC) faces is found in the last book of the Bible. New hermeneutic principles have been introduced over the last quarter of a century that are built on imaginary structures and allegories without foundation. This in turn has resulted in a neglect of the role of history as the basis for prophetic interpretation. Such structures and applications are also supported by a theological scope which contradicts the testimony of the Bible.

Structuralist hermeneutic

In the theological world, this concept was born between the 1970's and 1980's. It was introduced into our church by Kenneth Strand in his studies on Revelation at Andrews University. No one denies the value of trying to view the message of Revelation as a whole. The problem is that such structures are often fabricated under the particular presuppositions of the interpreter, and then imposed on the text, passing over the real pictures projected by the prophecy. While Strand warned about the subjectivity of his own method ("Foundational Principles of Interpretation", 31), the next theological generation ended up by adopting it in an almost dogmatic way, drawing theological conclusions that contradict the very content of the visions themselves.

Gluder Quispe defended a doctoral dissertation which shows the contradictory views raised in recent times on the trumpets of Revelation, which in turn, were related to a loss of interest in history. Another doctoral thesis would be useful to show the contradictions of the different structures proposed in recent times on Revelation, caused mostly by trying to support the particular dogma of every interpreter. Which of all these structures should we chose as Seventh-day Adventists?

The structuralist method is too often subjective, turning the attention of the people away from the principal purpose of the book. That purpose is to show how God would lead His people through Christian history until their final triumph at the second coming of the Lord.

Let us start with Kenneth Strand. He divided Revelation into two parts, historical (chapters 1-14) and eschatological (chapters 15-22). But he warned that he drew this division from the emphasis he found in each of the two sections of Revelation, without implying that every eschatological aspect would have been erased from the first section, nor every historical trait from the second section. Jon Paulien succeeded him at Andrews in the following decade, but he went beyond Strand by presuming that the eschatological parts of the first section, at the end of each series, are "premature closures", that is, they occur prior to the time of the end ("The Role of the Hebrew Cultus, Sanctuary, and Temple in the Plot and Structure of the Book of Revelation," in AUSS, 33 (1995), 261).

NO! Revelation follows the recapitulative scheme of the visions of Daniel which always culminate at the time of the end! This is seen in every septet vision of the first section. It is noticeable that Strand divided the book into two parts between chapters 14 and 15. This runs counter to the almost universally accepted structural division of Revelation between chapters 11 and 12.

Ranko Stefanovic returns to the natural division of Rev 1-11 and 12-22, but concludes that the Most Holy Place is not to be found prior to Rev 11:19 (Revelation..., 30ss, 179, etc). This is the reason why he transfers verse 19 of chapter 11, which reveals the ark of the covenant, to the second part, separating the eschatology from history (he repeated this view on March 3, 2007, in his speech at Andrews University, to which I was invited to reply. He said, literally: "These two divisions of the book [Rev 1-11 and 12-22] correspond to the two phases of Christ's ministry in heaven, and the second, his pre-advent judgment ministry, relates to the Most Holy Place", with "Rev 11:19... as the dividing line...")

This approach of Ranko contradicts the projection of the book of Revelation in its first section as well as the second, and also has root in the proposition of Mervin Maxwell that the central vision of Revelation (chapters 4 and 5) is given in the Holy Place of the heavenly temple.

Locating the first half of Revelation in the Holy Place

E. G. White had a vision of Jesus seated in the Holy Place at the right hand of God until 1844. At that time both Jesus and the Father proceeded together into the Most Holy Place (see Dan 7:9-14). Mervin Maxwell tried to justify this vision by locating an article of furniture which could represent a throne in the Holy Place. He thought it could be found in the table of shewbread. The two rows of breads would have represented the Father and the Son, seated upon a table, beside the daily ministrations before the altar of incense and before the curtain that covered the ark in the Most Holy. That position was rejected at the time by the BRI, but served as a pretext for Ranko Stefanovic to go still further and declare that the Most Holy Place did not appear prior to Rev 11:19.

I call the proposition of Maxwell “dislocated typology,” because the ministry of the sanctuary was focused toward the ark of the covenant containing the ten commandments, not toward the table of shewbread which was located to one side. In addition, a table is not a place to sit. The fact that the throne of God is represented in other parts of the Bible in the North, doesn’t mean that the throne was located in the north of the sanctuary. In Ps 48:2, Mount Zion is placed “on the sides” or “ridge” or “crest of the north,” which by the context has to do with the highest place of the mountain where God dwells. The highest place of the mountain was upon the rock called today Sakra, the place where God dwelt in the Most Holy which was higher than the holy place. Since the city was found in the north of Jerusalem, many understand that this is a reference to the temple of God where He dwelt, not to the north of the sanctuary.

Another text of the Bible refers to heaven by the term “north” (Job 26:7). Ancient mythology placed the gods in the north, as we may see in Exod 14:2 which mentions Baal Zephon, which literally means, “Baal of the North.” It was supposed that Anu, the most important god in Babylon, had his throne in the third heaven. His constellation was placed upon the polar stars, and all the other stars turned around him. As a matter of fact, pagan mythology represented, frequently, the gods meeting upon a high mountain, in a far place toward the north. In the text of Isaiah 14:13, the text seems to refer to the attempt of the king of Babylon, which represents at the same time Lucifer, trying to sit upon the mount of the Lord where God dwelt, not upon the north of the sanctuary. In the case of Lucifer, it had to do with his attempt to sit in heaven over God in the place where the angels met to worship and praise the Lord.

Nor did the Spirit of Prophecy link the shewbread to the throne in Rev 4 and 5, or place the throne in the Holy Place, but rather in the Most Holy. There are too many quotations from her writings which support that for us to ignore them (I quote her abundantly in my books).

On the other hand, the vision itself provides proof of a scene in the Most Holy Place which we cannot neglect. How did E. G. White justify her vision of Jesus seated at the right hand of God in the Holy Place? She resorted to typology and to the prophecies of the Old Testament which announced a difference for the new dispensation, with a transference from one throne at the end of the ministry of Jesus in the Holy Place, to another throne in the Most Holy (Zech 6; Dan 7:9-14; see my third seminar on the sanctuary, *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary*). This is the same rationale used by the apostle Paul in Hebrews (as already seen) in order to justify some changes in the correspondence between the old worship and the new one. He referred to the prophecies of the OT which foretold a change in the nature of the sacrifice (no longer of animals, but that of the Messiah now: Ps 40), in the genealogical descent (no longer from Levi but from Judah: Ps 110:1,4), and in an order equivalent to that of Melchizedek, who was not only a priest, but also a king, etc.

The Jewish feasts and the *tamid*

I will not examine in detail here the problems of the structuralist propositions that have been offered in recent times. I do this in my book, *The Final Crisis in Revelation 4-5* (1998), especially in *Excursus I & II*.

Richard Davidson introduced in the 1980’s, a structure of Revelation under the successive pattern of the Jewish feasts. That structure was not known previously by our pioneers, not even by E. G. White. No theologian had offered such a curious connection. But it was adopted by Paulien, Stefanovic, and Doukhan. The latter offered a Jewish look into the book of Revelation, though I am convinced that it will

be hard for the Jews to accept his views because he arbitrarily selected certain rabbinic statements while putting aside other rabbinic traditions which would contradict his proposed links.

Unfortunately, when we search the foundations of such an arrangement of the visions of John with the Jewish feasts, we are left wanting. There is nothing that allows us to link the first vision (Rev 1-3) of the candelabra to a presumable Passover, absolutely nothing! Paulien tries to find something in the seventh church (which corresponds prophetically to the final judgment) to link to the communion supper. But what then was the meaning of the open and closed door placed before the sixth church? Does it not have a connection with the open door of the Most Holy on the Day of Atonement, which is confirmed in Rev 4:1, as clearly seen by E. G. White?

The presumed link between Pentecost in the second vision (Rev 4-5) contradicts the clear testimony of the Spirit of Prophecy and the content of the vision. Nor is the presumed relation of the trumpets with the feast of trumpets of the seventh month clearly visible. On the contrary, that relation could lay the foundation for a futurist approach to the trumpets. As a matter of fact, the Day of Atonement does not appear prior to the seventh trumpet which was blasted ten days after the feasts of trumpets (see Rev 11:19). Do we have to go back to see the feast of tabernacles in Rev 7?

What is the problem with these structuralist approaches? They seek out a structural pattern in the Revelation then adjust everything that John wrote to fit that pattern. Worse yet, the structuralist approaches can also generate a forced “idealism,” because they divert the attention from the true content and historical focus of the apocalyptic visions to different issues. They draw some presumed structural “chiasms” with the same purpose of adjusting the prophecies to patterns that are foreign to Revelation.

What are we to say about the *tamid* (“continuous” ministry in the Holy Place) presumably seen in the book of Revelation by Paulien, and followed only by Stefanovic? We can observe that a supposed sequential order of the *tamid* of the *Mishnah* is nonexistent (there are steps that are invented), and its connections with Revelation are far-fetched. I will not repeat here my criticism of those structural propositions that I included in my quoted works, especially in the two appendixes of the book *The Final Crisis in Rev 4-5*.

It could seem innocent, methodologically speaking, to seek extra-biblical connections to fabricate a presumed literary structure. However, this approach often becomes grounded on principles that are so lacking in historical fact as to resemble the most fanciful of conspiracy theories and permit their adherents to reject everything that does not fit their artificially fabricated parameters. For instance, the Passover is linked to a presumable service of a Holy Supper in the vision of the seven churches. The presumption is then made that the vision of the throne room (Rev. 4 and 5) cannot bypass the following feast, that is, Pentecost. But the vision itself indicates the antitypical Day of Atonement, with a door open to the Most Holy, as confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy.

Some believe that Jesus went to the Most Holy Place immediately after His resurrection, and at Pentecost (50 days later) he was enthroned in the Holy Place. For this reason they agree with those who project into Rev 4-5, the appearance of Jesus and His presumable enthronement in the Holy Place. Others, like Paulien and Doukhan, admit later that the vision comprehends the whole sanctuary, without excluding the Most Holy (“The Role of the Hebrew Cultus...,” 251). However, Paulien contradicts himself when he proposes that it has to do with a vision based on the *tamid* of the *Mishnah*. Does he not know that the *tamid* was performed in the Holy Place, never in the Most Holy? *On the other hand, if Stefanovic does not see the Most Holy Place before Rev 11:19* (Revelation..., 30ss, 179, etc), why does he identify the sealed book beside the throne in Rev 5 with the book of the law? Did he forget that this book was located beside the ark in the Most Holy? (Deut 31:26). Once more we ask ourselves, what kind of bread is being offered to our church in these new studies on the book of Revelation?

Spatial correspondence between both sanctuaries denied (even in Revelation [!!!!])

This is another serious problem. It is an assumption that causes those who adopt it to begin the study of Revelation with a particular hermeneutic that has no biblical support. If there is one book in the New

Testament which brings out the spatial correspondence between the earthly temple with the heavenly one, it is the book of Revelation.

In an attempt to validate his historical theology in the first part of Revelation, Kenneth Strand simply concludes that Revelation shows a sanctuary with only one room, not two. In his view, if John employs the language of two rooms, it is only to deal with the *functionality* of the heavenly priestly ministry (*Symposium...*, 58). What is more alarming is that now we know that Gerhard Pfandl follows Kenneth Strand in this typological spatial denial. [See my webpage under the title: "A response to Dr. Pfandl's challenges regarding the Adventist doctrine of the Heavenly Sanctuary."

<http://www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/articles.html>]

Both Gerhard Pfandl and Ekkehardt Mueller implied that they would be working together on a scientific commentary of Revelation. How scientific will it be? Will they respect the biblical parameters confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy or will they adopt structural principles and skeptical concepts which come from a liberal hermeneutic?

Toward the end of the 1970's, Edward Heppenstal (in his book *Our High Priest*) introduced into the church the denial of a heavenly sanctuary divided into two apartments. I remember that I adopted his views at that time with open arms, which became formative for me in theological matters. It took me about ten years to recover the biblical spatial connection between both sanctuaries.

Desmond Ford (a disciple of Heppenstal) took another step in that direction by denying that Daniel 8:14 had been fulfilled in 1844. Kenneth Strand also adopted the position of Heppenstal that now Pfandl is daring to endorse and spread. Like it or not, those who enter into this type of speculation find themselves halfway toward the denial of the prophetic foundation which gave birth to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They struggle between the biblical and Adventist approach in relation to the physical realities of the world to come, and the Greek pagan approach which drags them toward the material spiritual dualism which has done so much damage to Christianity throughout the centuries.

Strand found that Mario Veloso, in the book prepared by the BRI in the 1980's (*The Sanctuary and the Atonement*), saw the Most Holy Place in several places in the first half of Revelation (including Rev 4-5). But he also noticed that Mervin Maxwell confined Rev 4-5 to the Holy Place. In an attempt to harmonize both views, he considered both views "excellent." According to him, "there could be in Revelation an underlying concept of one room in the heavenly temple, but the functional significance of the two-room model is nevertheless" expressed by the different furnishings of the temple (*Symposium...*, 58).

No one has a problem with localizing the furnishings of the temple in the book of Revelation. But, where do we place the throne? Rev 4:5 places the seven lamps of a candelabra in the Holy Place but, was the throne in the same apartment? Rev 8:2-5 places the altar of incense in the Holy Place but, was the throne also there? Strand concludes by saying that we cannot see in Revelation "a 'geographical' confinement" of God and His throne. According to him, "the concept is not that the 'throne' fixes God's location, but rather the reverse: Where God is, there is the throne!" (*ibid*, 58).

But does God need to live outdoors to be Omnipresent? Of course, not! In fact, He is never confined, even when He decides to remain within a room covered by clouds and curtains or doors. He is Omnipresent through His Spirit. (For my criticism of the non-biblical anti-spatial or supposed "confinement of God" argument, see my doctoral dissertation, *The Day of Atonement...*, chap 7, 377ff).

Unfortunately, Strand's conclusion is based on his personal philosophical problems. A lack of understanding regarding the spatial organization of the heavenly temple hinders him from adequately seeing the typological correspondence between the Old and New Testaments. This hermeneutic problem has to do with systematic theology. If we don't have a clear orientation of the Bible on a subject that is projected in Revelation (in this case typology), the consequence is seen in an attempt to break the unity of the biblical scheme to adjust it to a theology which doesn't fit the Bible or Revelation or the Spirit of Prophecy.

In order to support his theory on the book of Revelation, Strand has to imagine a mobile throne within the temple which frees God from a presumable seclusion in a room, because in his view, that temple would not be separated by veils or doors (*ibid*, 55). But in the book of Revelation, the throne is not moving. Where is the message of the open and closed doors in the book of Revelation, so meaningful for

our prophetic faith? No wonder Strand neglects Rev 3:7-8 in his structural view of the visions, and its connection with the open door of Rev 4:1 so clearly exposed by E. G. White. But Revelation is clear in always connecting the throne with the judgment at the end of the septet prophetic series. We may say the same concerning the elders and the four living creatures. If we see furnishings in the holy place before the throne, it is because the door to the Holy of holies is open as on the Day of Atonement.

Admitted subjectivity of the literary structuralist methodology

All interpreters divide the book of Revelation structurally into two parts. But at times we can be baffled by the way they do it. Kenneth Strand divided the book into Rev 1-14 and 15-22. Why? Because he felt that division denominates more clearly (though he admits not completely) the two sections into historical and eschatological sections. Ranko Stefanovic divided it as it is generally acknowledged, in Rev 1-11 and 12-22. But he retained Strand's terminology, which for such a division is more difficult to justify. In turn, he withdrew Rev 11:19 from the first section, because the ark is present there, and for him this is eschatological.

Jacques Doukhan divided the book of Revelation into 1-10 and 11-22, which amazes us because by doing so he breaks the sixth trumpet from the seventh one. Why did he divide Revelation in this way? Because he considered the Greek term *naos* as referring to the Most Holy, clearly linked to the final events which he wanted to place in the supposed eschatological section (Rev 11:2,19). This he did in spite of admitting that the term *naos* is already found in Rev 3:12 and 7:15. What do we do with the first part of chapter 11 which deals with the 1260 days/years preceding the time of the end? Are they not also historical?

Once an author has artificially denominated Revelation into two sections, historical and eschatological, those who follow him along that path will look for what is historical and what is eschatological. But why can they not follow the simple prophetic pattern of Daniel where every prophetic series ends in the time of the end? Is not this what we find in the first half of Revelation? Let us stop dividing the book under a forced terminology which John didn't employ, and the problem will disappear.

In his structuralist proposition, Jon Paulien cannot conceal the subjectivity of the method. He reveals that subjectivity when proposing a *tamid* of the *Mishnah* as the framework for the visions of John. He stated that his purpose was "to explore the possibility that a major source of intertextual and cultural overcoding in the Apocalypse can be detected..." "The structure of the book of Revelation may have been developed in part on the basis of reference to the daily and yearly sacrifices..." ("The Role of the Hebrew Cultus...", 247, 255).

Concerning the septet visions of Revelation, Paulien presumes to see materials "subtly associated" with the *tamid* and the Jewish Feasts, in spite of his admission of these presumable associations as being "far from explicit" (*ibid*, 258). He also states that he builds on the work of K. Strand, who recognized that "isolated similarities are not important in this point. But when there is a group of similarities, then we take seriously the possibility of chiastic counterparts" ("Foundational Principles of Interpretation", 31).

Why don't they work on what John wrote clearly and definitely? What is the purpose of wasting the time of the people with conspiratorial theories about an imaginary literary plot which leads nowhere? I was giving conferences in a bilingual church in the California Bay area. In the midst of the week, when I touched upon the trumpets, the brothers showed me some photocopies that someone had prepared for a short seminar on the trumpets (it was a doctor of theology already mentioned here). We could see some structural drawings of supposed chiasms in the literary composition of the trumpets of Revelation. What was the message? I didn't find it. There was nothing historical. Nothing!

Will we reclaim the legacy which we received from our historicist forefathers in the way they saw the first half of Revelation? If so, forget what several interpreters have been writing on the structure of Revelation in the last half a century.

Ekkehardt Mueller will be the author of a new commentary on Revelation. He elaborated his thesis on a *Microstructural Analysis of Revelation 4-11*. Though I don't know any paper of his adopting the imaginary structures from the Jewish feasts or of the *tamid* of the *Mishnah*, he likewise starts from an

inauguralist Protestant theological pattern of Rev 4-5 which contradicts the clear testimony of Revelation and of the Spirit of Prophecy. According to him, that vision speaks “obviously” [he doesn’t give reasons] of the enthronement of Jesus in heaven in the year 31, when that vision doesn’t even mention an enthronement. See <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/rev4-11.pdf>

I could comment on some unnecessary structural deductions of Mueller, whose logic I cannot always understand. But this is not the time and place to do so. Here I will simply mention that his structural lucubrations neglect a recapitulation of the past from the perspective of the judgment to which John was brought. Were he to take into account this demonstrable principle in Revelation, he would see that his exclusive reasonings cannot stand in several points. And, who knows if then it will be easier for him to interpret the trumpets in the way our church has until recent times, following the historicist Protestant legacy of the 16th to the 19th centuries?

Now we need to analyze Mueller’s problem of adopting the modern theological pattern which projects the vision of Revelation 4-5 back to the time of the early Christian church. That problem is shared by nearly all of the inauguralists who follow him today at Andrews University. I include this with the sincere hope that they will reconsider their position in time to adjust their contributions to a new Bible commentary under preparation. It concerns nothing less than the choice between an Adventist legacy left to us by our pioneers and a modern Protestant pattern which has nothing to do with our prophetic vision.

Adoption of a Protestant theological pattern

Yes! Systematic Theology, also called Dogmatic, is important to reach an acceptable conclusion in the interpretation of Revelation. For the current Christian theological world, Jesus sat down at God’s right hand on Pentecost as a second David. But they don’t realize that His royal ascension at the inauguration in the year 31, followed the typological pattern of Melchizedek, who was both priest and king; not that of David who was only king. Though according to His human descent Jesus came from David, He would not receive the throne of His father David in the new Jerusalem before concluding His priestly ministry in the Most Holy Place.

Let us go to the vision of Rev 4-5. Richard Davidson sees a second Moses in the Lamb who receives the book. On mount Sinai, presumably at Pentecost, Moses would have received the book of the law. But, contrary to what Paulien also affirms, Moses did not receive the book of the law on the date corresponding to a future Pentecost. Nor does the vision of John project a second Moses, but a second David (“the Lion of the tribe of Judah,” “the root of David”: Rev 5:5). Why, then, do these authors resort to Moses? Because they want to bring the book of Revelation into the their supposed sequential pattern of the feasts.

We go to the Spirit of Prophecy and find that E. G. White saw in the reception of the sealed book, the conclusion of Christ’s mediatorial work in the Most Holy, and the beginning of His messianic kingdom in the New Jerusalem. The current theological confusion of some of our scholars, about what should be expected at the inauguration of the heavenly temple and what should happen at the end of this priestly ministry, is not seen in the Millerites, our pioneers, or E. G. White. But such a confusion is shared to a greater or lesser degree by all those at Andrews who currently see a second Pentecost in Rev 4-5. Such confusion is magnified by Jon Paulien and Ranko Stefanovic due to the fact that they see only one coronation of Christ. They realize that the vision of Rev 4-5 has to do with a Davidic royal ceremony, but they place it at the wrong time. Still worse, they don’t know that there would be a second coronation. Let us review their problems.

a’) Stefanovic constantly quotes Dan 7:13-14 and Rev 14:14 to prove that the coronation of Christ took place in the year 31 (*The Revelation...*, 166,174,207). How is that possible? Both visions refer to the final judgment! Let us quote just a few statements of E. G. White in her projection of a future coronation of Christ:

“Christ says...: ‘On my coronation day, you will be a jewel in My crown of rejoicing’” (HP 267). “... when the coronation shall take place, and Christ, our Advocate and Redeemer, becomes the king of his redeemed subjects” (HM, 11-01-97, 7).

b’) Ranko also draws from the Bible and certain extrabiblical sources, a unilateral background to interpret Rev 4-5. For example, he fails to quote Ps 122:4-5 or John 5:22-23. These passages contradict his assertion that the acclamation to the Lamb in Rev 5 has nothing to do with a judgment. For the same reason he must also ignore both Rev 14:7 and 19:7-9.

- Ranko seems to agree with Beal in dismissing “a second and future enthronement of Christ” (Backgrounds..., 109). As a matter of fact, he doesn’t refute him, and ignores any other coronation.

c’) His theological confusion is clearly seen when he compares the Epistle to the Hebrews with Revelation. He wrote that “although Revelation puts a strong emphasis on... Jesus into his royal role, the epistle of Hebrews describes more particularly the priestly aspect of his exaltation...” (Revelation of Jesus Christ, 210). I agree. But let us emphatically assert that while Hebrews emphasizes the priestly inaugural ceremony of a second Melchizedek, Revelation emphasizes (from chapters 4-5) the final judgment and its Davidic royal ceremony. Actually, both books of the New Testament reflect different moments, one the inauguration, and the other the conclusion of the heavenly ministry of Jesus. This is the reason why the throne, the four living creatures, and the 24 elders appear in the book of Revelation only in the context of the end of the world and the final judgment.

The BRI in the 1990’s

While trying to dogmatically locate the vision of Rev 4-5 at the inauguration of the temple and priesthood of Jesus in order to face some futurist inroads into our church, the BRI in the 1990’s became bogged down in their study of the seals and the trumpets (Rev 6-11). They announced with confidence for a number of years that they would soon publish their studies, which would clarify the subject. But they couldn’t reach an acceptable solution. All along the way, they refused to write what the SDABC had written more than a century ago. Instead of stating that some interpreters believe such and such, but Adventists favor this other view, the BRI in the 80s wanted to define clearly several issues... Finally they admitted an interpretive bankruptcy for the first half of Revelation, which continues until today. And it will continue as long as they follow that dogmatic inauguralist approach of Rev 4-5, and adopt the hermeneutic principles that are foreign to the legacy left by our pioneers and the Spirit of Prophecy.

The BRI in the 1990s published, literally: “The committee at present has not developed a satisfactory interpretation of these prophecies [dealing with Rev 4-11] that solves all the problems inherent in them...” Notwithstanding, according to the report, it is believed that “while the church may never fully understand these portions of the larger prophecy, we can learn important lessons from them, and we would discourage no one from study” [F. B. Holbrook, “Issues in the book of Revelation,” in *Ministry* (Jan 1991), 10; reprinted in F. B. Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Rev.* (BRI, RH, 1992), 175-181].

This quasi defeatist admission seems to look for a consolation in the idealist methodology, currently in vogue in modern theology, and is therefore opposed to the historicist legacy left by Protestantism in the 19th century. (I say “idealist” for its interest in spiritual lessons without being able to connect them to history).

The Spirit of Prophecy in Rev 4-5

The statements of E. G. White about the vision of Rev 4-5 (most of them expressed toward the end of her life) place the throne in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary, and at the conclusion of the priestly ministry of Jesus there. Some Adventist theologians adopted the inauguralist interpretation of Rev 4-5 because in the book *Desire of Ages*, E. G. White stated that when Jesus appeared before the Father at the inauguration, a multitude of angels acclaimed Him by saying, “Worthy is the Lamb.” But they didn’t

grasp that she also projects the same acclamation to the conclusion of His ministry in the Most Holy Place, and again during the millennium (at the end of the millennial judgment), when He is crowned for yet a third time. A song may be sung in several different contexts, so the contents of the song do not necessarily serve to determine the time referred to in the vision.

The Spirit of Prophecy also stated that the throne of God, surrounded by a rainbow, was present at the inauguration when, together with the representatives of other worlds, the Redeemer was welcomed. But some don't realize that she depicts the throne in several other statements as residing upon the mercy seat of the ark, with the same description of the rainbow upon the throne. For this reason, the majority of the Seventh-day Adventist commentaries of Revelation in the 20th Century, following Sara Peck (secretary of E. G. White) saw in Rev 4-5 a vision of the final judgment.

This approach of the Spirit of Prophecy is being challenged in recent times under the anti-eschatological influence of the scholarly theological world, especially at Andrews where several theologians are trying to turn the page back toward a first century approach. I will not refer here again to the many statements of the Spirit of Prophecy which speak of Rev 4-5. I did this in my books and in various messages on the internet. But it will be useful to mention some basic statements regarding what E. G. White said and did not say.

1) She never linked the open door of Rev 4:1 to the inauguration of the heavenly temple. On the contrary, she related it to the open door of Rev 3:7-8, in connection with the antitypical Day of Atonement (investigative judgment). That door of Rev 3:7 was revealed to her directly by God. She didn't take this view from another person.

“There is One who sees it all, and He says, ‘I have set before thee an open door’ [Rev 3:8]. Through this [door] was shown the throne of God, overshadowed by the rainbow of promise [Rev 4:1-3] the token of the everlasting covenant, showing that mercy and truth are together, and drawing from the beholder praise to the Lord” (*Ms 27*, 1891).

2) She never saw thrones (plural) in the Holy Place, but only in the Most Holy, in connection with the investigative judgment in 1844. In the Holy Place she saw only one throne. But while seeing Jesus being transferred in a mobile throne into the Most Holy, she testified, amazed, that she saw thrones there which she had never seen before. She never saw thrones outside the Most Holy Place for the rest of her life.

“I saw a throne and on it sat the Father and the Son... And I saw the Father rise from the throne, and in a flaming Chariot go into the Holy of Holies, within the veil, and did sit... There I saw thrones that I had never seen before. Then Jesus rose up from the throne, ... He stepped into the chariot and was borne to the Holiest where the Father sat. There I beheld Jesus, as He was standing before the Father, a great High Priest” (*To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad*, 4-6-1846; also in *DS 3-14-46*).

3) She never placed the throne of Rev 4:4 in the Holy Place. She saw, on the contrary, under that throne, the mercy seat in the Most Holy.

“Go to the throne of grace. You will be answered from the mercy seat... The rainbow above the throne is a token that God through Christ binds himself to save all who believe in him... Whenever we come to the throne of God to ask his mercy, we may look up, and behold the rainbow of promise, and find in it assurance that our prayers shall be answered” (in *ST*, 10-10-1892, 1).

“Turn your face to the light, to the throne of God. What will you see there? The rainbow of the covenant... [Rev 4:3]. Beneath it is the mercy seat, and whosoever avails himself of the provisions of mercy that have been made and appropriates the merits of the life and death of Christ has in the rainbow of the covenant a blessed assurance of acceptance with the Father as long as the throne of God endures” (*Ms 66*, 1895; *ST 05-02-95*, 7).

4) She never applied the taking and opening of the sealed book to an inaugural setting of Christ. She always placed that ceremony in the future, at the conclusion of His mediatorial work in the heavenly temple, in the final judgment.

“The time will come when all will praise him..., saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof... Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (*RH* 6-4-95, 6; see also *Lt* 80a, 1895).

“Their decision [“we have no king but Caesar;” “his blood be on us and on our children”] was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision [of the Jews] will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the Tribe of Judah” (*COL* 294; compare this statement with Deut 31:26ff, and John 5:45). [The book is not unsealed during the whole Christian dispensation, but only in the future day of judgment].

“That awful cry ascended to the throne of God. That sentence, pronounced upon themselves, was written in heaven. That prayer was heard... Terribly will that prayer be fulfilled in the great judgment day...” (*DA* 739-40).

That day of the breaking of the seals of the book is not the inauguration or the entire Christian era, but the final day of judgment (Acts 17:31; Rom 2:16). The four living creatures who surround the throne before the 24 thrones in the Most Holy interact with the Lamb in the opening of the book (Rev 6). There is no change of scene in the heavenly temple. In addition, for the rest of Revelation both the elders and the living creatures appear only at the end of Christ’s priestly ministry.

5) She never linked the throne of David with the throne upon which Christ sat down after His resurrection. On the contrary, E. G. White was emphatic to say that the throne of David would not be given to Him before the conclusion of His mediatorial work in the heavenly temple.

He ‘shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne.’ Not now ‘upon the throne of His glory;’ the kingdom of glory has not yet been ushered in. Not until His work as a mediator shall be ended will God ‘give unto Him the throne of His father David,’ a kingdom of which ‘there shall be no end.’ Luke 1:32, 33” (*GC* 416).

“This, will not take place, until Jesus has finished his priestly office in the Heavenly Sanctuary, and lays off his priestly attire, and puts on his most kingly robes, and crown...” (Ellen G. White, *The Early Years*, I, 125-6). “I had a view of Jesus rising from His mediatorial throne and going to the Holiest as Bridegroom to receive His kingdom” (5 *MR* 97). “Then I saw Jesus lay off His priestly attire and clothe Himself with His most kingly robes. Upon His head were many crowns, a crown within a crown. Surrounded by the angelic host, He left heaven” (*EW* 281).

6) She never denied that the vision of Rev 4-5 was related to the final judgment (contrary to what some have been doing today at Andrews). On the contrary, she often claimed categorically that this vision is a judgment scene (see my book, *The Final Crisis in Rev 4-5*, chap 2).

“What will such a one do in the day that the books are opened, and every man is judged according to the things written in the books? The fifth chapter of Revelation needs to be closely studied. It is of great importance to those who shall act a part in the work of God for these last days. There are some who are deceived. They do not realize what is coming on the earth... They will be found wanting when God pronounces judgment upon the children of men. They have transgressed the law and broken the everlasting covenant, and they will receive according to their works” (9 *T* 267).

“If you are ready for judgment, if your name is in that book that is sealed, if it is such that will commend your course of action, then Christ will say, ‘Have a seat on My throne.’ He has promised, ‘To him’—that falls under every temptation that comes?—no—’to him that overcometh,’ He says, ‘They shall sit down with Me upon My throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father on His throne’” (*Ms 164*, 1904. Sermon).

“Is it a principle that is found in the Word of God, which everyone will have to meet in the day of final accounts, when every case is to be brought in review before God, and every case is to be decided? By what? Well, we read of a book in Revelation that was in the hand of One. There it was seen, and no one could open the book. And there was great mourning and weeping and agony because they could not open the book. But one says, ‘Here is One, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, He can open the book.’ He takes the book, and then O what rejoicing there was! The book was opened, and now it can be read, and every case will be decided according to the things that are written in the book” (*Ms 164*, 1904. Sermon).

“John writes, ‘I beheld, and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne’ [Rev 5:11]. Angels were united in the work of Him who had broken the seals and taken the book. Four mighty angels hold back the powers of this earth till the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads” (*Lt 79*, 1900). [Keep in mind that the book is opened in the judgment. See statements of E. G. White in point 4].

You may see more statements in my book, *The Final Crisis in Revelation 4-5*, and in my third seminar on the sanctuary, *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary*. I have published those statements and many others in several of my books, and I have included several of them in messages that I sent over the internet, that you may find on my webpage. The scholars at Andrews didn’t take them into consideration. Will you dare to break in the future, the forced pattern which many have been fabricating from outside our ranks, to embrace the pattern that comes from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy?

Be careful! We do not want any of the following statements of E. G. White to become applicable to ourselves. I share them here not as an accusation, but as a warning to us all in our study of the sacred book of Revelation.

“It is as easy to make an idol of false doctrines and theories as to fashion an idol of wood or stone... Though in a different form, idolatry exists in the Christian world today as verily as it existed among ancient Israel in the days of Elijah. The god of many professedly wise men, of philosophers, poets, politicians, journalists—the god of polished fashionable circles, of many colleges and universities, even of some theological institutions—is little better than Baal, the sungod of Phoenicia” (*GC 583*).

“When pride and ambition are cherished, and men exalt their own theories above the word of God, then intelligence can accomplish greater harm than ignorance” (*GC 573*). “The greater the light bestowed, the greater the darkness of those who pervert and reject it” (*752*).

“As the time comes for it to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments... The laborers will be qualified rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions” (*GC 606*). “In the last solemn work few great men will be engaged.... Those who have trusted to intellect, genius, or talent will not then stand at the head of rank and file... He will raise up and exalt among us those who are taught rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the outward training of scientific institutions... God will manifest that He is not dependent on learned, self-important mortals” (*5 T 80,82*).

The seals

The sealed book is not opened progressively across the years of the Christian dispensation. The scene of Rev 4-5 shows the four living creatures in the Most Holy Place, interacting with the Lamb as He opens the seals, in a final scene of judgment. The four living creatures or cherubim (see Eze 10:20), were

represented in the Most Holy Place of the temple of Solomon, where two additional cherubim were sculpted, one on each side of the ark.

Let us keep in mind that in Revelation, the throne is not in motion. The scene takes place within an open door like on a Day of Atonement, in the most sacred place of the heavenly shrine. While confirming the vision of Rev 4-5 as representing the final judgment, the seals of the book of the covenant that the Lamb breaks are to be seen as a final review of the stamp (tracks) left along the centuries by the church which claimed the promised inheritance.

The seals are revealed in a living way and, at times, the outstanding voice which marked the epoch is heard. For instance, in the third seal a voice is heard coming from the midst of the living creatures. Who was among the four living creatures, in the midst of the throne? The Lamb (Rev 5:6). What was He doing there? Opening the seals. In consequence, the voice which explains the picture of the third seal comes from that time, and brings out the character of the antichrist represented in that seal. We find something similar in the fifth seal. John watches the martyrs under the altar, and hears them clamoring loudly to be avenged by the judgment of God. And the court answers that outcry by assigning them white clothes. (See my book, *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary*, Appendix I).

What is the purpose of the vision of the seals reviewed by the court? The universe must see how the testimony of the Word of God, though degraded along the centuries, overcomes in the last faithful generation of the 144,000 whose testimony is now sealed on earth. It is also proven that God answered the outcry of the martyrs through the judgments of the trumpets which hinder a complete triumph of those who procured the destruction of the divine testimony.

We know that the book was open when the Jews resigned their theocracy as heirs of God's kingdom (see above statements of the Spirit of Prophecy). This took place when they rejected the Son of God, by saying, "we have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). We also know that the book reached the final judgment sealed. But we are not told when that book was sealed. Was it being sealed along the centuries by the testimony of those who invoked the Word of God? Since the sealing agent of that Christian testimony is the Spirit of God (Eph 1:13-14; 2 Cor 1:22; see John 3:33), some could suppose that the same Spirit would also seal into the book of God the kind of testimony left by the church throughout the Christian dispensation. It seems, however, that the book was sealed at the inauguration, at a time when the book of the law and inheritance was not expected to be opened, but would rather be placed beside the ark of the covenant until the day of judgment (Deut 31:26; see that divine prescience sealed in the most secret presence of God, in 32:34; see Rom 2:5).

The purpose of the seals placed on the book at the inauguration would then be revealed at the end, when they are opened in the judgment. In this way God would preview the way His church would claim the rights of inheritance along the centuries until the moment when her testimony prevails. In other words, at the opening of the seals, the universe can see the divine prescience, together with His loving purpose of redeeming His people (see Ps 139:16; Isa 34:16-17; also Jer 1:6; even the statements of E. G. White about the prescience of God in the content of that sealed document of Rev 5, in my book *The Final Crisis in Rev 4 & 5*).

The recapitulative principle of history at the conclusion of the judgment is well attested in the Bible and in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy. See my third seminar on the sanctuary, *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary*, appendix 1. It is also seen in the very book of Revelation. The martyrs of the fifth seal are granted white robes after they died, while continuing to rest in their graves until the last generation overcomes (Rev 6:9-11).

Let us keep in mind that the definitive and official white robes are conferred by the heavenly court at the end (Rev 3:5; see 19:7-8), and that in Rev 6:11 they are granted to the martyrs even before their resurrection from the dead, because the judgment begins with the dead and ends with the living. The judgment of the dead takes place at the end (Heb 9:27; Rev 11:18), and culminates with the judgment of the last generation which is finally sealed on earth. Another example of a historical review at the end of the judgment of God is seen in the panoramic vision given by God to the wicked, at the conclusion of the millennial judgment (GC 666ff). But this is not the moment to develop the purpose of the seals and the trumpets which is extensively treated in my books.

Will we vibrate with the history outlined in prophecy, in such a way that all may clearly see its fulfillment? In relation to the seals, we have to keep in mind that in recent times, some have tried to introduce a futuristic interpretation. It is necessary to state clearly that in the seals, the complete history of the Christian testimony is represented, from the beginning to the end of the judgment. From among several statements of the Spirit of Prophecy that are relevant to this point, let me share two of them:

“The mangled forms of millions of martyrs cried God for vengeance upon that apostate power” [the papacy since the 13th century] (*GC* 59-60). “When the fifth seal was opened, John the Revelator in vision saw beneath the altar the company that were slain for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. After this came the scenes described in the eighteenth of Revelation, when those who are faithful and true are called out from Babylon” [Revelation 18:1-5 quoted] (*MS* 39, 1906).

The seventh seal. It is comprehended in Rev 8:1-5, which includes the seven trumpets and the priestly ministration in the holy place during the whole Christian dispensation. Just as the seventh-day belongs to the Lord, so also the seventh seal belongs to Him. It gives testimony of the fidelity of God in fulfilling His part of the covenant. In the Book of the Law or Covenant, God promised to protect His people, answering their outcry when they were oppressed by their enemies (Gen 12:3; Exodus 2:23-24; 23:22; Deut 28:7; 30:7; Judg 6:6ff; see 2 Thess 1:6, etc). The seven trumpets in the seventh seal reveal that God fulfilled that promise, punishing the empire which would attempt to silence the testimony of those who had the Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus.

The seventh trumpet consummates the wrath of God which is comprehended in the seven last plagues. Why does the seventh seal conclude in Rev 8:5? Because every septet prophetic series concludes with lightnings, thunders, and an earthquake. Rev 4:5 concludes the message to the seven churches; Rev 8:5 concludes the seven seals; Rev 11:19 concludes the seven trumpets; Rev 16:18 concludes the seven plagues (see graphic of the first half of Revelation in my book, *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary*, 302). Though the detailed description of the trumpets starting in Rev 8:6 does not figure in the seventh seal, it extends the picture of that seal while identifying the armies called by God to punish the oppressive empire (see my booklet, *The Mystery of the Apocalyptic Trumpets Unraveled*).

Why is the intercession on the altar placed before the throne? (v. 3). Because, according to the Mosaic law, the altar was in front of the curtain of the Most Holy Place and of the ark of the covenant, the place per excellence of the throne of God (2 Sam 6:2). That altar was in the Holy before the throne of God in the Most Holy no matter if the curtain or door was open or closed (Exodus 30:6; 40:26; Lev 16:12, etc). So the mention of the throne confirms that God took into account the intercession of Christ during the entire Christian dispensation, answering the outcry of the martyrs who died under that altar during the fifth seal (Rev 6:9-10).

God responds to the outcry of the saints by granting them the peace they need in the affliction, and punishes their enemies who oppressed them. At the same time, the opening of the seventh seal in the Most Holy Place in the midst of the throne (see Rev 5:6-7) implied that the entire divine intercession is brought into memory before God and His throne in the final court of judgment. In my book, *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary* (appendix 1), I bring into consideration some Bible texts which link teleologically the altar of incense with the Most Holy Place, despite being physically in the Holy Place and referring the whole work performed there (1 Kgs 6:19-22; Heb 9:4 [see vv. 27-28]; Rev 11:1).

For those who are not familiar with the term “teleology,” let me share what the dictionary says. It means “to explain a phenomenon by its final causes.” Thus, the altar before the throne in Rev 8:3, while representing the whole work of intercession in the Holy Place, points teleologically to the final judgment before the throne of God in the Most Holy. This same fact allowed E. G. White to link that intercession with its final work before the ark of the covenant: “I saw Jesus, who had been ministering before the ark containing the ten commandments, throw down the censer” (*EW* 279-80, see Rev 8:5).

It is there, in the Most Holy, that testimony of those who have called upon the promises of the book of the covenant to receive the inheritance is reviewed, and the promise of God is fulfilled to protect those who keep His Word and the testimony of Jesus. As a matter of fact, the seventh trumpet is clearly linked to the final judgment and the ark in the Most Holy (Rev 11:15-19).

The trumpets

In the light of what is happening today, we wonder how it is that Protestants and the Seventh-day Adventists who succeeded them in apocalyptic historicism have agreed the most consistently on the interpretation of the trumpets and on the identification of the Roman antichrist. Why should that cause us to wonder? Because it is the interpretation of the trumpets of Revelation which causes the most confusion for theologians today. What for centuries had been so clear, in these last years has been covered with mysticism and skepticism, a new trend that began with modern Protestantism and that is now being introduced into our church. What is the cause? The introduction of principles of interpretation that are foreign to what our forefathers found in the Bible.

How and when did the problem start? In my little book, *The Mystery of the Apocalyptic Trumpets Unraveled*, I show, briefly, that the set back in the interpretation of the trumpets started when Rome ceased to be seen as the object of the divine judgments. In our church this began in the middle of the 20th century, when the first trumpet began to be linked to the fall of Jerusalem. Since that time, some have felt compelled to spiritualize the fulfillment of several trumpets, moving farther away from their concrete historical fulfillment. But they tended to return to the historicist track when they reached the fifth trumpet, because they respected the clear application made by E. G. White in the book *The Great Controversy*.

The day came, however, when it was necessary to reinterpret what E. G. White had to say in order to be rid of the historicist application. But her testimony is too clear to simply pass over it. She wrote: "In the year 1840 another remarkable fulfillment of prophecy excited widespread interest" (*GC* 335). However, instead of appealing to history to confirm what Protestants and our pioneers who succeeded them believed, several are finding it easier to conclude that she never intended to interpret the fifth and sixth trumpets at all, but simply relied on what the Millerites believed. In the view of these modern riders of prophetic interpretation, God would have providentially caused the fulfillment of a prediction of Josiah Litch to encourage the Millerites in their preaching, without it having anything to do with the prophecy of Revelation.

What did E. G. White mean when she wrote, "another remarkable fulfillment of prophecy"? Which were the other remarkable dates fulfilled at that time? In the same chapter, she affirms other important dates like the abundant and unequal fall of meteorites in 1833, and the final judgment which began in heaven in 1844. Did she also express herself as a Millerite regarding these events, and not as God's servant?

When I consider the gradual skeptical advance which now seeks to open a "progressive" window in our history, I believe that if this trend is not stopped, we are not too far from the time when the other apocalyptic dates will be openly rejected. By the way, some who once shared our prophetic message are already using the same arguments to reject these very dates today.

Jon Paulien, Ranko Stefanovic, Gerhard Pfandl, and Ekkehardt Mueller have led the way in withdrawing from the historicist interpretation of the trumpets, and to offer in its place a spiritualized application of their fulfillment. Instead of armies who punish the oppressive empire, they see philosophies. The divine punishment of the trumpets seems almost crazed, as though God randomly lashes out in retaliation at these enemies to the right and to the left, but following no definite pattern. By losing sight of Rome as the goal of the divine judgments and as an answer to the outcry of the martyrs, they end up falling once again into interpretative bankruptcy.

In his inability to find in his imaginary historico-ideological picture for the application of the apocalyptic symbols of the trumpets, Stefanovic asks if John really intended for all of his visions to be interpreted. He literally wrote: "it is uncertain whether John intended every detail of this description to be interpreted" (R. Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 304-5). It is noticeable that for the second edition

of his commentary on Revelation, the BRI had required him to correct and add certain points, but they did not suggest that he change his overall approach to the trumpets! That commentary was translated into Spanish by Rolando Itín in Argentina, but South America didn't want to publish that book. According to a report I received recently, that commentary is finally being published in Spanish by the press at Andrews University.

The formerly veiled and discreet attacks on the historicist interpretation of the trumpets have now become open and daring. One advocate of this new trend, Heidi Heiks, has thrown himself like a kamikaze against the official interpretation of our church. He considered those like us, who continue supporting the prophetic truth on the trumpets, as being deceived by the devil, and sharing Satan's deceitful plot. Were our pioneers falsifiers or forgers in their interpretation of the trumpets of Revelation, as Heiks pretends? Even more surprising is that he obtained the support of none other than a vice-director of the BRI (yes, Gerhard Pfandl!), who appealed in his foreword for a call to search for a spiritualized fulfillment of the trumpets. See my criticism to the book of Heiks, under the title Book review of *Satan's Counterfeit Prophecy*, in <http://www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/articles.html> Be careful again!

“Many a star that we have admired for its brilliance will then go out in darkness” (*PK* 157).
“The development of those who are not of the truth, will become of more frequent occurrence, as we near the close of time... Frequent will be the apostasies of men who have occupied responsible positions” (*RH* Sept 11, 1888).

If this doesn't happen for some, others who follow them will advance their skeptical steps even further until they lose all root in present truth. I have researched and written a lot on the trumpets in recent years. There is much biblical, theological, and historical truth that confirms the historicist legacy which we have received. Here I would simply ask if we will believe what our church has always believed or if it will exchange it for aimless divagations.

Ekkehardt Mueller of the BRI, who is preparing the commentary on Revelation for the SDAIBC, has likewise rejected our legacy on the trumpets of Revelation. In this he follows Paulien, Stefanovic, and Pfandl. What does he propose in exchange? A tentative, dubious or undecided approach. You may see on my web page my reply to his doubts, as well as the hermeneutic problems that he adopts, contrary to the principles of interpretation that we see in the Bible and which we received from our forefathers in apocalyptic historicism. There you will also see, at the end, my appeal to Ekkehardt, considering his doubts, to return to the certainties of our prophetic legacy. See “The seven Posaune (the Seven Trumpets)” in: <http://www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/articles.html>

The fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets

What is more striking is that in a message from the BRI, Mueller presumes that Adventists... “are convinced that the present generation lives at the verge of Christ's Second Coming, in the time of... the sixth trumpet.” See:

<http://www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/Documents/TrumpetsBRIanswer.pdf>

But, are you sure? Can you tell me when Adventists believed that we are living in the time of the sixth trumpet? This is what some like Mueller are trying to cause us to believe, by imposing a particular literary form over the content of the book of Revelation. We, Seventh-day Adventists, never believed this. The sixth trumpet is linked to the horns of the altar of the holy place (Rev 9:13), and this trumpet finished in 1840. In that context the angel of Rev 10:7 appears foretelling the seventh trumpet which must start in 1844, when the door to the Most Holy would be open at the time of the final judgment (Rev 11:18-19).

“As foretold in the Scriptures, the ministration of Christ in the most holy place began at the termination of the prophetic days in 1844. To this time apply the words of the Revelator, ‘The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament.’

Revelation 11:19” (SR 378). “I saw that the enemies of the present truth have been trying to open the door of the Holy Place, that Jesus has shut; and to close the door of the Most Holy Place, which he opened in 1844, where the Ark is containing the two tables of stone” (RH Nov 9, 1905). “The announcement that the temple of God was opened in heaven and the ark of His testament was seen points to the opening of the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary in 1844 as Christ entered there to perform the closing work of the atonement” (GC 433).

Notice that the description of the seventh trumpet starts in Rev 11:15 and ends in v. 19 with the typical conclusion of “lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm” (as in Rev 16:17-18, concluding the seventh plague). For this reason, the announcement of the seventh trumpet began in October 22, 1844, and will be consummated when the angels of God initiate the last battle, “at the last trumpet,” at the second coming of Christ. The problem of Ekkehardt Mueller is the problem of Gehrard Pfandl, Jon Paulien, and Ranko Stefanovic. These interpreters do not believe in the prophetic fulfillment of the sixth trumpet as having concluded in 1840, and what we see instead is their wandering, drifting into all kinds of imaginations. They don’t believe in the confirmation of the Spirit of Prophecy about the conclusion of the sixth trumpet on that date. If we add to this the denial of Heppenstal, Strand, and Pfandl of the correspondence and literality of the two apartments of the heavenly sanctuary, what remains of our prophetic legacy which brought us to life?

Still worse, on what basis may they assume that they are representing Adventists with their interpretation that breaks the prophetic scheme which synchronizes what happens in the heavenly sanctuary with what happens on earth? Sixth trumpet: Holy Place – Seventh trumpet: Most Holy.

There was a certain brother named Owen who in the 1880’s proposed to change the official interpretation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on the trumpets. His futurist proposition was rejected by the Congress of the General Conference, where the official proposition was confirmed. E. G. White was notified about this, and she confirmed that interpretation in the first version of the book *The Great Controversy* which was published in the same decade. In spite of the fact that Prescott, one of the leaders of the church, suggested that she changes that view in the next edition of the book in 1911, she confirmed the fulfillment of the prophecy in the year 1840, and was even more explicit.

Historical accuracy of the trumpets

While confirming the date of August 11, 1840, as the conclusion of the sixth trumpet, E. G. White also validated the historicist interpretation of the fifth trumpet. But today some have been trying to play down or diminish the value of the dates offered by the Millerites, and confirmed by its historical fulfillment. Some even deny them altogether. This is seen boldly in the magazine *El Ministerio Adventista* (the equivalent of *Ministry* for Spanish pastors), in March-April 2013, under the leadership of the InterAmerican Division. That Division showed less scruples at the time about publishing theological issues. They translated the article written by Dr. Angel M. Rodriguez in *Ministry*, 2012, and eliminated my name from the list given by Rodriguez of the eight interpretations originally offered in the English magazine. It was evident that my name bothered them. Did they do it with the authorization of the author of the article, or simply as an assumed privilege of their office as magazine editors? See my short reaction to the article of Rodriguez in my webpage: <http://www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/Documents/Ministry-trumpets.pdf>

Some have been trying to insist that the historicist interpretation which we inherited from the Millerites is based on incorrect dates. As so often happens, this caused others—myself among them—to inquire more deeply into history. Therefore, we may affirm, more than ever before, that modern historians confirm the chronology of both trumpets. This historical confirmation appears abundantly in my books *The Seals and the Trumpets...*; *The Mystery of the Apocalyptic Trumpets Unraveled*, and with additional documentation, in *The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary* (2014). In the latter book I answer the objections raised in recent years to the prophetic chronology of the fifth and sixth trumpets. It is worth noticing that the same kind of criticism that we receive from the skeptical world when we apply the

fulfillment of the prophetic dates to the Apocalyptic beast and the 2,300 days/years, is employed by some Adventist theologians to reject the historical chronology of the trumpets. Jón Sefánsson illustrates this fact in his masters dissertation defended in 2013 at Andrews University, *From Clear Fulfillment to Complex Prophecy. The History of the Adventist Interpretation of Revelation 9, From 1833 to 1957*. Let us here affirm the two key dates.

July 27, 1299. This begins the second period of time of 150 years with the battle of Bapheus, which started the Ottoman military expansion over the Byzantine Empire in the East, and later over the Holy Roman Empire in the West. Josiah Litch based his dating on Edward Gibbon, a historian of the 18th century. Joseph von Hammer, in the first part of the following century, dated that battle to the year 1301 or 1302. Heidi Heiks, with a pride born from his ignorance, said that he had consulted Turkish “authorities”, and that he could affirm that the date offered by Gibbon had been long ago abandoned by historians and that this discussion has been over for far too long. So? How many “authorities” of Turkey did he consult? He quotes just two or three, and in a unilateral way, glorifying those “authorities.”

I cannot deal with the details here. I will share soon more documentation on the date of the battle of Bapheus. A renewed study undertaken by this servant, in exchanges with Dr. Kenneth Matthews and Steve Emse, let us affirm as never before, that the strongest evidences for dating the battle of Bapheus is that of July 27, 1299. As a matter of facts, current scholars of history are proving that the confusion of von Hammer was caused by his attempt to synchronize the Turkish chronology with the Byzantine chronology, taking as reference the battle of Koyun Hisar which does not agree with the description made by Pachimeres of the battle of Bapheus.

Dr. Rudi Pau Lindner (Professor of History in the Univ. of Michigan), *Explorations in Ottoman Prehistory* (Univ. of Michigan Press, 2010), 103, note 3: “Attempts to mesh the Ottoman and Byzantine chronologies together, with Bapheus as common to both chronologies, have been unsuccessful...”; Dr. Colin H. Imber (Professor of Middle Eastern studies at Univ. of Manchester, England: “... modern historians have over-optimistically identified [Koyunhisar] with the Bapheus in Pachymeres.” They give proofs to show that such an identification of von Hammer which led him to look for a different date, is impossible.

August 11, 1840. There are three simultaneous events that no one can deny on that day, which shows why the Millerites understood that the prophecy had been fulfilled on that day, and why the Seventh-day Adventists who came from the Millerites, even E. G. White, also understood that the sixth trumpet was a fulfilled prophecy.

1) Constantinople: The Turkish sultan accepted on that day the protection and leadership of the European powers, and began a process of secularization of the Muslim Empire to satisfy the requirements of the Western world.

2) Beirut: The English warships reached this Syrian governorate on that day, requiring the ruler assigned there by the Pasha of Egypt to resign and leave that city.

3) Alexandria: The convoy that had departed from Constantinople with the ultimatum of the European nations requiring the submission of the Pasha of Egypt, reached this capital that same agreed upon day. All knew the purpose of that convoy, so that its arrival caused a sensation in Alexandria. The Pasha required the ship to be placed in quarantine and he left Alexandria for few days, apparently to harangue the Arabs against that ultimatum. Although the ultimatum was officially delivered to him on his return, and the Pasha refused it, the consequence was a war which forced him to surrender and submit to the decision of the Western Powers before the year was out. Since then, the Muslim nations have often been forced to submit to European nations against their will, and later even becoming virtual dependants to the United Nations. This is the reason why Bin Laden complained against those Arab nations which, according to him, betrayed the Koran by submitting to the United Nations.

For the importance of these historical facts in the history of the Ottoman Empire and the turning point in its relation to the European powers, seen by modern historians, see my book, *The Seals and the Trumpets. Biblical and Historical Studies*.

The Apocalyptic beast and its time of supremacy

Another concern regarding the new trend in an increasing number of Bible exegetes, is the fact that they are rendering vague, imprecise, and universalized, the application of the Apocalyptic beast of Rev 13, and the woman called “Babylon.” The Apocalyptic beast is the Roman papacy which is represented as a “beast” because John identifies it in its political-religious role (union of church and state). This is seen in its intolerant and blasphemous character combined. In order to be truly Adventist, we must specify clearly that the Babylonian woman is the Roman Catholic Church.

Our concern is real because we are seeing a gradual attempt to soften or avoid altogether any clear mention of the powers or kingdoms involved in the Apocalyptic symbols. Little by little, all symbolic biblical references are being spiritualized, remodeling (even emptying) the apocalyptic messages of their definite historical application. Each time you want to identify the political or religious power clearly represented in a determined vision of Revelation, these new approaches want to remind you that these visions have to do with wider concepts, in such a way that, in essence, they are not necessarily linked to a specific historical event. Or they tell you, simply, that we have to be faithful to a Bible exegesis, as if a historical application would betray the testimony of the Bible, that book which makes no sense apart from history.

The problem is that this new idealistic trend is more and more interested in ideological concepts instead of applying specific fulfillments to definite historical events. It has to do with a spiritualization of the Apocalyptic fulfillment. In this way, the eschatological identification of the seals, the trumpets, and the beasts, are becoming again and again more vague, indefinite, and imprecise.

a) The name and number of the beast. What definition will we give to the name of the apocalyptic beast represented by the number 666? Will we forget the name in their search for a symbol of the number? These questions are pertinent because we are increasingly seeing a trend that avoids clearly informing the Roman papacy that their boasted title, *Vicarius Filii Dei*, is both blasphemous and contains the divinely anticipated number which unmasks it: 666. It has nothing to do with a symbol of a universal number for humanity or imperfection, something that has been demonstrated to have no biblical foundation. See the monumental book of Edwin de Kock on the usage of the term *Vicarius Filii Dei* in history, and my summarized analysis of its content on my webpage, under the title, “Book Review of The Truth about 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy by Edwin de Kock (2011),” on:

<http://www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/articles.html>

b) Babylon. Will we clearly state that for Seventh-day Adventists, as for the old reformers, the Roman Catholic Church is represented by a corrupt woman who dresses herself in purple and scarlet, as seen even today in the costumes of the Vatican prelates?

Again, it is pertinent to ask this question because we are witnessing a universalization of the harlot of Rev 17, which leaves Rome in a very secondary scope, because it pretends now that it has to do with a spiritual entity which encompasses each kingdom opposed to God. In consequence, she is no longer the apostate church in her ecclesiastical representation, but a “spirit of rebellion” which pervades all the kingdoms of the world.

Not so! “Babylon” is applied by Revelation to a specific time in history which is clearly fulfilled in the Roman Catholic Church, who is joined by her Protestant daughters near the end this earth’s history... It is true that the same spirit (or its equivalent) displayed by Rome, was manifested in many other kingdoms, and that by assuming that spirit the last Rome accumulates in the last days of earth’s history all the measure of their sins (Rev 18:24; see Matt 23:35; Luke 11:51). But this does not supplant the fact that the

woman (Babylon) of Revelation refers directly, precisely, and concisely to the Roman Catholic Church, and her daughters who at the end follow her in her apostasy.

The book of Revelation does not refer simply to the apostasy of the latter days in general and no more. No! See *GC*, chapter 21.

“Babylon is the church, fallen because of her errors and sins, because of her rejection of the truth sent to her from heaven... The ministers present fables, prophesy smooth things, to soothe their fears and quiet the awakened conscience” (*GC* 607).

c) The prophetic dates. To remain distinctly Adventist, we have to specify the time of supremacy of the Roman antichrist from 538 to 1798, in fulfillment of the 1260 days/years. Stefanovic, in his first commentary relegated that time to 1200 years in general terms, refusing to define an exact period of time (in his typical style) to avoid historical analyses. Just as some search today for a spiritualized symbol in the prophetic dates of the trumpets, so also others do the same with the prophetic dates of papal predominance. What Protestants could see clearly in former centuries, because they could definitely understand the purpose of the trumpets and of the book of Revelation at large, several Adventist theologians cannot see anymore. They promote themselves proudly as “exegetes.” But, what is the real background of this new trend which departs from our prophetic legacy? The adoption of modern evangelical theological patterns as well as their idealist interpretive methodology which shows more interest in concepts and messages that are detached from historical fulfillment. They forget that our church was born from the Protestant historicist legacy which, in turn, was confirmed by God Himself through the Spirit of Prophecy. But this heavenly confirmation is being neglected, if not completely, at least in part.

The wedding ceremony and supper of the Lamb

Another point that some are not clear on (as in the commentary on Revelation of Stefanovic), has to do with the meaning of the wedding of the Lamb (Rev 19:7-9). The evangelical world is not clear on it, because they don't know that there are two coronations of Christ, one at the beginning, and the other at the end. The wedding represents the coronation and enthronement of the Son upon the New Jerusalem which takes place at the end of the world, at the time of the judgment (Matt 22). That wedding is not performed at the inauguration for several reasons.

a) The church must call the people of the world to come to the wedding, and this call lasts across the entire Christian dispensation (Matt 22 and 25; Rev 22:16-17).

b) The Father will not crown the Son as king of an empty city. This is why the wedding must be preceded by a priestly kingdom to prepare the redeemed to live in that city. This is also why that former “mediatorial throne” (as designated also by E. G. White), must conclude with a work of judgment to determine who will be the definitive citizens of the kingdom.

The Christian world in general does not know that truth, because they want to know nothing of an investigative judgment. They are inauguralists who believe that salvation was consummated at the cross and, therefore, the concept of “once saved always saved” makes unnecessary an investigative judgment.

c) It is necessary to distinguish between a wedding ceremony which began in 1844, and the wedding supper or banquet which will take place in the house of the Father at the conclusion of the wedding ceremony. Because Jesus will come after the conclusion of that wedding ceremony, to seek those who were considered worthy of participating in the wedding supper (Luke 12:35-37). Thus, the wedding ceremony represents the investigative judgment which grants only those with the acceptable robes (the righteousness of Christ: Rev 1:5; 7:13-14; 22:14), to participate in the wedding supper (Matt 22:11-13).

The judgment grants the white robes first to the dead (Rev 6:11), and then to the living ones, both actually receiving them at the same time at the conclusion of the judgment (Rev 3:5).

Again, will we follow the trend of many who forget the legacy left by our pioneers concerning the meaning of the Lamb's Wedding and the moment of its consummation, to adopt a different pattern which is not that which God revealed to us so clearly? God forbid!

Conclusion. The concerns that we have expressed in this document do not intend to exhaust the issues involved. There are many underlying things that I did not touch on here because I have already done so in several of my books. My purpose here was to prepare a summary in order to clarify current controversial issues. More than once I thought to avoid quoting or citing those whom I believe have taken a wrong direction in the interpretation of our distinctive messages. But I believe that the moment has come when we have to be open and precise.

I have seen throughout the years that no matter how often you write and warn them of their views, many hold to the same spurious assumptions without accepting the criticism. They often get angry instead of being thankful or attempt to improve or change what they have written. Since, on the other hand, those issues have been published by my colleagues, I believe that it is legitimate to quote or cite them to assist people who are confused by concepts which depart from our prophetic legacy and apocalyptic commission. I must fear God more than men in this respect. Otherwise, for not giving the trumpet a certain sound, I will be judged as a traitor in the heavenly court.

Something has become clear to me. We are living at a time when the internet does not forgive. No one may write any longer ex-cathedra, because if someone says something wrong, it will be noticed and brought out by someone somewhere in the world. So nothing that is written in a Bible commentary (be it Adventist or not) will avoid being confronted with the truth, no matter what name is on the commentary or what church backs it.

We have seen that Andrews University is no longer considered the final word in theological and ecclesiastical matters for the worldwide church. Despite the collaboration of several authors of that university on a book intending to open a window for women's ordination, they couldn't convince the congress of the General Conference. Such may be the fate of a new Bible commentary which proposes to be Adventist, if they depart from our prophetic legacy. I hope, however, for the contrary. Let us trust God in all things. Even if some heretical views from an Adventist perspective could eventually escape the filters of our theologians, let us keep in mind that God allows heresies to come in to push His church to study more the truths that He entrusted to us for this time.