

# IDENTIFYING BABYLON AS THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH CURRENT OBJECTIONS AND ANSWERS

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Some leaders of our church from different countries and continents are asking me to address the current trend to partially or completely detach the Roman Catholic Church from the apocalyptic Babylon. They write me that some who studied at Andrews University return stating that Babylon is not Rome or the Roman Catholic Church.

I just read some papers on Babylon. One is by Edwin Reynolds, *The Symbol of Babylon in the Book of Revelation* (he teaches at Southern University). Other papers belong to Ekkehardt Mueller, a member of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference, entitled *Babylon in der Offenbarung* (Babylon in Revelation: 2004); *The Beast of Revelation 17. A Suggestion* (2009); and *Roman Catholicism in Prophecy* (2010). Ranko Stefanovic at Andrews University, wrote in *Ministry Magazine*, “The Seven Heads of the Beast in Rev 17.”

A Spanish pastor asked me to read his book on Babylon (not yet published), which is good, except when he offers reasons for his rejection of Babylon as a symbol of Rome. I must say that all these papers concerned me because in each case they fail to identify Babylon as a symbol of Rome. Their objections were taken from non-Adventist theologians.

E. G. White clearly identified the Roman Catholic Church under the symbol of Babylon, not only in connection with the Middle Ages, but also in its final context when the Protestant churches join her. But the axis of all that final conflagration of religions continues to be Rome. I believe that the trend of detaching Rome from her central role in the prophecy, in connection with the final apostasy, is a very serious deviation from the true meaning of Babylon in the book of Revelation, which betrays on the other hand, the purpose of numerous other apocalyptic prophecies.

## Rome as the Babylon of Revelation

The term “Babylon” that appears in 1 Pet 5:13 is generally understood as a reference to Rome. This was the way the first Christians understood that text, among them, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Jerome, and Augustine. However, the current trend, even among our own theologians, is to spiritualize that identification more and more as well as all of the prophecies of Revelation. For instance, following this trend, the number 666 is looked on as ideological, in order to avoid telling the papacy, “you are that man” (2 Sam 12:7), the “man of sin” (2 Thess 2:3), a blasphemous man, because it is the “number of a man” (Rev 13:18).

See <http://adventistdistinctivemessages.com/Spanish/Documents/Vicarivsgreatapostasydekok.pdf>

This spiritualizing trend is also seen in the interpretation of the trumpets, and is to be expected when the importance of Rome (the last universal empire foreseen by the prophet Daniel) is obscured or discounted in the apocalyptic prophecies. Thus, modern interpretations have resorted to preterism or futurism, and today they turn toward idealism with its trend to spiritualize any and all prophetic fulfillments. Several of our own theologians have been unable to escape that trend. They began to be misled when they believed Rome was no longer to be considered worthy of God’s judgments (for instance, from the midst of the former century when Edwin Thiele applied the first trumpet to Jerusalem). Since then, the spiritualization of the historical fulfillment of the trumpets has become more and more prominent. It has opened the door to a similar treatment of other apocalyptic visions, including the visions of the sanctuary, with many denying the spatial correspondence with the earthly sanctuary.

Let us now turn our attention to Babylon. We have not yet reached the extreme position taken by the majority of Protestants and Evangelicals, who completely disqualify the Roman papacy from being identified as Babylon. But several of our theologians are taking away her central role in the prophecy,

especially when they presume that Babylon speaks about the final apostasy of Christianity, instead of specifically Rome. For this reason we can perceive here and there, sometimes slightly, and other times openly, that idealistic and spiritualizing trend which dilutes the final warning that God requires to be given. The Roman Catholic Church is not just one in the pile, but the mother of the spiritual and moral corruption of the world.

The purpose of this study is to answer, briefly, the principal objections given in recent times to Babylon as the symbol of Rome and, more specifically, the Roman Catholic Church.

**Objection I.** In the book of Revelation, Babylon is not a literal city because it is represented as a symbolic and universal harlot, while the city of Rome is local. Literally, Ekkehardt Mueller says that “the term doesn’t mean a literal city as seen, for instance, in the fact that Babylon is depicted as a prostitute which rides on a beast with seven heads and ten horns. Even more, the eschatological part of Revelation depicts not local, but universal conflicts and problems.”

[In German: “Dass der Ausdruck nicht die buchstäbliche Stadt betrifft, wird beispielsweise daran deutlich, dass Babylon als eine Hure dargestellt wird, die auf einem Tier mit sieben Köpfen und zehn Hörnern reitet. Ausserdem beschreibt der eschatologische Teil der Offenbarung universale und nicht örtliche Konflikte und Probleme”].

Do you agree with this statement? Does the book of Revelation not project a literal city called Babylon because the name Babylon is symbolic, as well as her prostitution? Does the universality of Babylon prevent it from having a capital called Rome?

**Answer:** 1) Why is the church of the popes called the Roman Catholic Church? Is it because she is a local power? What does Catholic mean? Universal. What does Roman mean? The city of Rome as the local see of a universal religious empire.

2) The attempt to disconnect Rome from her physical or geographical milieu reflects, in some cases, an attempt to refute the preterism which connects Babylon with imperial Rome.

It is striking to see how Mueller divides the book of Revelation from chapter 1 to 14 as historical, and from 15 to 22 as eschatological. Doukhan does it from chapter 1 to 10 (historical), and from 11 to 22 (eschatological). Stefanovic divides the book from 1 to 11 (historical), and from 12 to 22 (eschatological). It is evident that these authors cannot free themselves from the arbitrary literary structure of Revelation introduced by Kenneth Strand at Andrews University between 1970 and 1980.

If Mueller went as far as to start the second half of Revelation in chapter 15, it is because he realizes that the material of chapters 12 to 14 is made mostly of prophetic history. But are not the seven mountains of Rev 17 also historical? In the judgment of Babylon described by one of the seven angels of the last plagues, the complete history of the harlot and her illicit relation with the kings of the earth is recapitulated. The sooner we put aside the arbitrary literary division proposed by Strand half a century ago, the better we will be able to focus our attention on the real purpose of every apocalyptic vision.

In the structural division of Mueller, Babylon appears in the eschatological part (in the time of the end with the call to leave Babylon [Rev 18:4-5]). Therefore, he believes that Babylon is not imperial Rome in Revelation, but the final confabulation of religions which rises up against the divine government in the time of the end.

But how then do we treat the river Euphrates in the sixth trumpet? That river is there connected to the heavenly realm, with the horns of the altar of the holy place from where the voice comes. Not before the seventh trumpet is the door to the Most Holy and the final judgment opened. So, Babylon in the sixth trumpet is clearly applied to Rome during the Middle Ages, before the time of the end.

What shall we do with the prophecy of Dan 7, which projects Rome first in her imperial pagan stage, then in the little horn that appears in the Middle Ages (for 1260 years), and finally in the judgment which destroys the Roman papacy at the end of the world? I agree that the city of Babylon represents the final

apostasy of all the churches and religions, but we cannot depreciate its old geographical roots, because Rome is always the center of these apocalyptic prophecies (we will return to this point below).

3) I want to congratulate Mueller because he contrasts admirably the two mothers of Revelation, namely, Babylon and Jerusalem. But, is Babylon symbolic and the New Jerusalem literal? Are we not running the risk of ending up denying the literality of the New Jerusalem by spiritualizing the Babylon of Revelation? Can we speak in Revelation of the universal government of God without identifying it with its city? Of course not! Neither does it make sense to spiritualize mystic Babylon to the point of denying its geographical connection in order to obscure its identification with Rome, and speak simply of the final apostasy.

Mueller recognizes that both cities, the earthly one and the heavenly one, are universal because they exert a universal influence. So, should we deduce that they are not universal because they are capital cities? If we don't deny the reality of the heavenly city because of its universal role, known in Revelation as New Jerusalem, neither can we deny the reality of the earthly city denominated Babylon as symbol of the church of Rome. As a matter of fact, she is at the same time catholic, that is, universal.

4) Sometimes I ask myself if some of those who make the description of the heavenly city relative, do so because they essentially deny its real existence. In fact, that tendency can be seen in the trend to spiritualize the heavenly sanctuary. But no! The Roman Catholic Church makes no sense without the city of Rome. Neither do the true people of God make sense without linking them to a real heavenly city (Heb 11:16: He "has prepared a city for them"; "the heavenly one" (Heb 12:22; Rev 21:2).

In the earthly imposture, millions look to the bishop of Rome, not to the High Priest of the New Jerusalem. In addition, the Church of Rome, as portrayed by John with the term Babylon, is the only church in the world which is also a city.

5) From ancient times Romans have identified their city with the city of the seven hills; Virgil, Horatius, and Cisero among others. In the West, as the book of Revelation began to be circulated, Christians also identified the seven hills city of Babylon with Rome. Surprisingly, several Adventist theologians in recent years have disregarded the identification of the seven mountains or hills with Rome in Rev 17. In some cases, they seem to be trying to avoid the preteristic notion that connects Babylon with the Roman empire. But they don't realize that by doing so, they take a step toward idealism in their interpretation, undercutting its historical application.

**Objetion II.** (a) The seven **heads** of the beast are seven mountains and also seven kingdoms. One of those kingdom-heads represents the papacy. If the woman is the Roman Catholic Church, how could she be seated on one of the heads of the beast which represents the papacy?

(b) In addition, it is inferred that the seven mountain-kingdoms represent all the empires of the world which have opposed God and persecuted His people. Did the Roman Catholic Church sit upon the old kingdoms of the world?

(c) Edwin Reynolds, based on Rev 18:24 ("in her was found the blood of... all who have been slain on earth"), deduces that the seven heads of the beast must start with the first world empire, namely, Egypt. Therefore, the harlot which rides the beast must also be universal, not only spatially but also temporally. Rome, however, is just one of all the heads, limited in time and universality.

**Answer:** (a) This question was answered more than half a century ago. But some of these new Seventh-day Adventist "exegetes" base their work on other parameters which lead them to neglect if not completely ignore those who have gone before them. The outcome is what we see as a tangle of deductions and restrictions that they impose on the text, which darkens its true meaning and intention.

The answer that caught my attention half a century ago, when I studied theology, is this: beasts represent political powers, and women ecclesiastical authorities. The first beast of Rev 13 represents a politico-religious power (the papacy), because Church and State were united during the Middle Ages. But

in Rev 17 we find a noticeable distinction between the political and ecclesiastical powers, because they appear at a future time, denominated “time of the end” when they receive the sentence of their judgment by the angel of the seven plagues, that is, during the time when they were separated (“once was, now is not, and yet will come up”: vv. 8,11). The whore is now revealed in the time of the last two heads, namely, in the succession of the sixth and seventh heads. This is an undeniable fact even if the harlot also sits (virtually or proleptically) upon all the former five heads of the beast (see our answers to points (b) and (c) below).

John sees the woman-church riding the political power, to represent the entire history of the apostate Roman Catholic Church from the time she joined the kingdoms of the earth (the ten horns). In other words, we could also infer that the fifth head upon which the Roman Catholic Church sits proleptically in Rev. 17 is the Holy Roman Empire which had emperors who compromised with the pope [We will deal more with this fact in the context of another objection].

So, the woman Babylon in Rev 17 is the Roman Catholic Church which controls or leans upon the political power represented during the entire Middle Ages by one of the seven heads, namely the Holy Roman Empire. In 2 Thess 2 we read that the same Roman antichrist was expected to sit upon the church. Should we then wonder to see in this chapter, that the angel represents the politico-religious union by two symbols, that is, the beast and the woman which go riding together, not simply as in chap 13 by a similarly blasphemous beast? In Dan 7 and 8 we see the same powers represented by different animals. Why should we restrict God in the manner He can use to show us more definite details in His second vision of the same beast of Rev 13?

Though Ekkehardt Mueller does not emphasize the distinction between the political and religious powers, he seems to accept it. But Reynolds rejects such a distinction because, according to him, the old imperial cities were also represented by a woman. This is the reason why he concludes that “once we understand how extensive and ubiquitous the presence and power of the Great City, Babylon is, there is no need to confuse it with historical civil or religious powers... It is not the papacy... [because] Rome is one of the seven heads... over which the Great City reigns. Thus the papacy should be expected to manifest the spirit of Babylon, but that does not make it identical or coextensive with Babylon.”

Again we answer that the fact that the Old Testament refers to some old capitals of the world as women does not mean that in Revelation, the woman does not represent the church. We see it already in Rev 12 (which is confirmed also in Eph 5), in connection with the remnant church which is persecuted by another woman revealed in Rev 17, which in turn caused her husband (God) to withdraw from her for prostituting herself with the kingdoms of the earth. [We will see later how in her interpretation of Babylon, E. G. White also emphasizes the symbol of a woman which represents the church].

(b) & (c) It is remarkable how much the universality of Babylon confuses these new exegetes! They don't realize that by denying the direct link of Babylon to Rome, they give the very tools to that religious entity which she most desperately needs to discredit the final message which is to be given to the world on the fall of Babylon: “come out from her my people” (Rev 18:4-5).

If the woman is seated upon all the historical kingdoms of the world because she is seated upon the beast with seven heads, then the papacy of Rev 13 is also related to all the historical kingdoms of the world because it is depicted as a beast with seven heads. But the beast reigns with one head at a time (the heads are successive), and the head related to the papacy receives finally a deadly wound (Rev 13:3,14; 17:8,11). Likewise, the beast ridden by the harlot in Rev 17, is seen by John at the moment when five empires had already fallen. This is why she may be connected with the last two governments (the eighth forms part of the seven: the recovering of the political power of the Roman Catholic Church at the end (Rev 13:15-18). These two final kingdoms are revealed in the time of the end.

On the other hand, it is striking that none of these current “exegetes” have realized the biblical principle of cumulative liability for the prior generation. In other words, Babylon is not literally seated on the empires of the world but rather assumes the same rebellious spirit of the former empires and, therefore, becomes twice as guilty of the facts that took place in the past in assuming the role of those kingdoms (she didn't learn the lesson God gave when He destroyed them).

### *Some examples of cumulative liability for the prior generation*

1) Matt 23:34-36: “Therefore I am sending you prophets and sages and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so *upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth*, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I tell you, all this will come on this generation.”

We see here that the last generation receives the consequences of all the righteous blood which was poured out since Abel. It is also in this sense that the blood of all the martyrs of human history are found in Babylon-Rome (Rev 18:24). It is also in this sense that the woman-Babylon (Rome) is shown to John as seated upon the same bloody and rebellious spirit of all those old empires. But we cannot conclude by this fact that all the former bloody empires are Babylon or that the Babylon of the latter days was also seated, literally, upon all those old kingdoms.

2) Acts 7:51-53: “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. *As your fathers did, so do you*. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And *they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered*, you who have received the Law ordained by angels, yet have not kept it.”

3) In Revelation: (a) *The seals*. The horseman of the fourth seal pushes the apostasy to the extreme (in depth of cruelty) while still retaining the characteristics of the second and third horsemen (Rev 6:1-8). This fact fulfills the divine warning which follows the wickedness of “the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation,” to the tenth generation in other cases, and even forever for other people (see A. R. Treiyer, *The Glorious Promises of the Sanctuary*, chapter 5).

(b) *The trumpets*. The fact that “the rest of men” do not repent or pay attention to the former six judgment-trumpets (Rev 9:21-21), justifies God in sending them the seventh and last trumpet-judgment. The “curses” in the last three trumpets that are not given in the first four, shows us an accumulated liability and punishment, especially the last one which reflects the final wrath of God in the seven-last plagues (see Rev 11:18 [“wrath of God”], and Rev 16 where God consummates His wrath in those final plagues).

Following generations bear responsibility and accumulate wrath in the sight of God, until the moment comes when He says enough is enough. “God keeps a reckoning with the nations... When the time fully comes that iniquity shall have reached the stated boundary of God’s mercy, His forbearance will cease. When the *accumulated* figures in heaven’s record books shall mark the sum of transgression complete, wrath will come” (5T 524 [1889]).

4) The first beast of Rev 13 incorporates the characteristics of the three first beasts or empires of Dan 7:1-8 (similar to a leopard, the feet of the bear, and the mouth of the lion).

**Objection III.** Rev 11:8 speaks of the “great city” and for some, it is not Babylon, but Sodom and Egypt, “where their Lord [of the two witnesses] was also crucified.” Therefore, it is argued that the great city could have different names and not necessarily refer to a literal city.

**Answer:** But “the great city” referred to there is still Babylon (Rome). What then is indicated by the angel when he refers to Sodom and Egypt, the “great city” or the street of that great city? John clarifies this in v. 13 when he says that only “a tenth of the city collapsed” by the political turmoil, that is, France, one of the ten horns.

I was happy to see that, unlike other interpreters, Ekkehardt Mueller at least left open the possibility that the great city of Rev 11:8 was not Sodom and Egypt, but the great Babylon. In fact, the secular French Revolution didn’t come from outside like the trumpets, but it was produced within the dominions

of the city which for centuries embraced the ten European kingdoms where the papacy predominated under the principle of a church-state union. The political earthquake that shook France was later felt throughout all those parts of Europe where Rome exerted her authority.

“This specification of the prophecy was also fulfilled by France. In no land had the spirit of enmity against Christ been more strikingly displayed. In no country had the truth encountered more bitter and cruel opposition. In the persecution which France had visited upon the confessors of the gospel, she had crucified Christ in the person of His disciples” (*GC* 271).

The liability of the generation that crucified Christ is extended to a later generation that did the same (in this case the Roman Catholic Church during the Middle Ages).

**Objection IV.** Ranko Stefanovic, in an article published by *Ministry* quoted above, wrote this: “The angel clearly does not refer to literal mountains since he immediately explains to John that these seven mountains actually represent ‘seven kings.’” “Since the seven mountains in Rev 17 are successive, they cannot be interpreted in a literal manner. In the Old Testament, mountains often represent world powers or empires (Jer 51:25; Eze 35:2-5; Dan 2:35).”

On the other hand, Stefanovic states that “nowhere in the text [of Rev 17] does it indicate that John was transported to another time,” more definitely, to the time of the end. He concludes, therefore, that the fifth empire represented by the heads of the beast is the Roman empire in operation in the days of Christ. This is, of course, a preterist scope.

**Answer:** 1) Are not the seven churches of Revelation successive? Do they cease being contemporaneous and geographical for being chosen in the prophetic perspective as being successive till the coming of the Lord? Let us be careful in the imposition of “exegetical” rules that we will have to violate in other places without rhyme or reason.

2) In Gal 4:21, Paul identifies geographically the name Hagar with Mount Sinai, and then he applies it to the earthly Jerusalem in his days. But the angel of Revelation who reveals to John the geographical localization of the city of Rome by the surname Babylon is not permitted to do something similar. Our modern exegetes do not authorize him to identify the city of seven hills as Rome in Revelation because they symbolize kingdoms. No! The angel displays before John all the empires of the world which are represented at the end, in the seven hills of the city of Rome, even if they are successive in the symbol!

3) The dragon in Rev 12 and 13 represents the devil and, “in a secondary sense, pagan Rome” (*GC* 438). But in Rev 17, the seven hills of the city of figurative Babylon which corresponds literally with Rome cannot have “a secondary sense” according to the enlightened of this new generation. Even worse. In these new interpretations the primary sense is eliminated by the secondary sense. The city of Rome with her seven hills is put aside to keep only its secondary application to empires. Why? Because the modern goal is to avoid as much as possible a direct application of the apocalyptic prophecies to Rome. It is for this reason that these same “exegetes” look for other candidates for the judgments of God through trumpets of war, which (in their thinking) have little or nothing to do with Rome.

4) The seven mountains or empires of the world are seen portrayed in the last rebellious and apostate city of the prophetic history which chose those seven mountains to establish her kingdom: Rome. In other words, the picture of the city of Rome is, in itself, a symbolic mock-up of all the empires of the world. Actually, in the light of the biblical testimony, why should we wonder at the way God unmasks the rebellious and apostate spirit of Rome, bringing out how those former kingdoms that arose to oppose Him, are portrayed by her seven hills? Why not read in those seven hills how the Roman Catholic Church is supported by the rebellious and haughty kingdoms of the world, to continue that agenda of opposition to the divine government? (Isa 2:12-15). How fitting is the settlement of the unfaithful woman of Rome

upon its seven hills to represent the empires of the world throughout human history!

5) The angel who has one of the plagues shows the distinction between the harlot and the civil power because it depicts the time of the end when two powers or heads were ruling, namely, (1) the atheism of France and (2) American Protestantism. While the first (France) wounded her to death in 1798 (Rev 11:7-9), the second (Protestant America) raises her at the end when it speaks as a dragon, thereby giving her life (breath) to impose her dogmatic agenda: Rev 13:11), which allows her to once again control the civil powers (Rev 13 and 17).

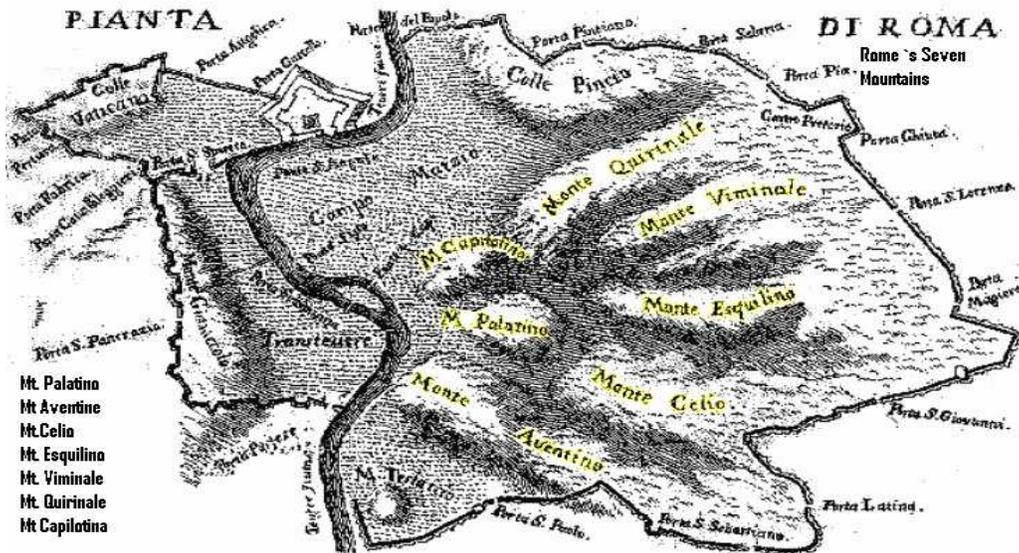
Some think that we have to start the seven empires of the world with Egypt, followed by Assyria, and then by Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. They also argue that the Roman empire in all its phases is represented by only one beast in the book of Daniel. Others, however, think that John in Revelation depends on the book of Daniel, which introduces the empires of the world beginning with Babylon (Dan 7). The fact that Rome is represented by Daniel with just one beast doesn't change the matter. In Revelation, imperial Rome is represented by the dragon, and papal Rome by the beast (Apoc 13).

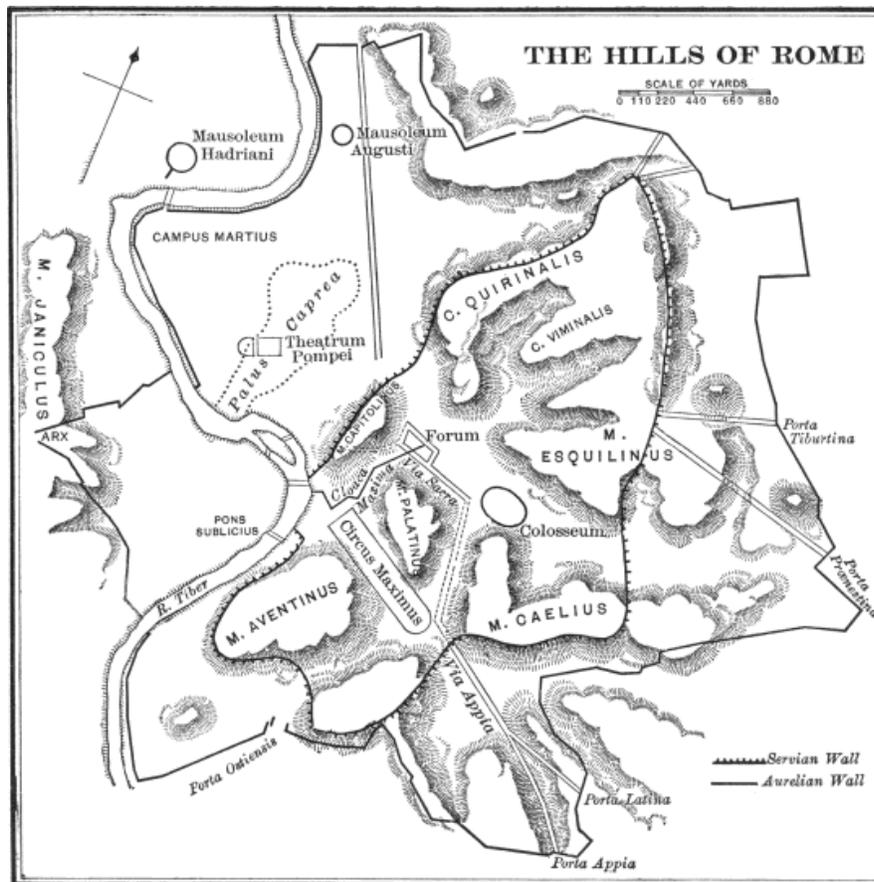
Anyway, I don't think that we have to waste time to determine when to start the kingdoms of the world. The number seven means something complete, and the emphasis is placed on the last three empires, namely the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh one. In the terminology of its fulfillment, we may see there, respectively, the Holy Roman Empire (Rev 13:1-10), Atheistic France (Rev 11:7-9), and Protestant USA when it speaks like a dragon (Rev 13:11). The eighth which belongs to the seven is the recovering of the political support that the papacy will receive at the end (Rev 13:3-4; 17:8,11). [Time and space doesn't allow us to deal carefully with this issue here].

**Objection V.** The book of Revelation speaks of seven mountains (Gr. *oros*), not of seven hills (Gr. *boumos*) as those found in Rome. Consequently, those seven mountains cannot be a reference to the topography of the city of Rome which contains instead seven hills.

**Answer:** 1) Rome was identified in the days of John and even today by the seven *mounts* (or *mons*) as well as by seven hills (*collis*). The city is portrayed in Latin as *Septem Montes Romae*.

On the other hand, sometimes it is hard to differentiate when they became mountains or stop being called hills. This is seen in one of the maps that I share below where some of the mountains of Rome are referred as "hills," and others as "mountains." For this reason, we often find the terms "mountains" and "hills" superimposed or employed indiscriminately as synonyms, in Latin as well as in Hebrew and Greek.





The next picture is the topography of the Septem Montes Romae as it was at the beginning, with the temple of Jupiter in the Caelian Mountain



2) We find in the Bible, notably in Zeph 1:10, that the prophet refers to the “hills” of Jerusalem using the plural feminine (*haggeba’ot*), which the LXX rightly translated as *bounos*; while in Gen 22:2 *harim*, “mountains,” is employed for the place which surrounded the future temple of Jerusalem. Several passages refer to the “mountains” of Jerusalem (Ps 133:3: “mountains of Zion”; 87:1: “His city is in the holy mountains”; Ps 36:6: “His righteousness is like the mountains of God”). This shows us that the employment of hills and mountains could change and even be synonymous.

In Ps 10:5 and 10, when the tabernacle was not yet in Jerusalem, the prophet speaks of “the hill of God” (Heb. *gibat*; Gr. *bounón*); while on different occasions the Mount of the Eternal (Mount Zion) is applied to Sinai (mountain) or to a little mountain-hill of Old Jerusalem, or to all Jerusalem.

The passages where “mountains and hills” are employed in parallelism in both Hebrew and Greek (LXX) abound in the OT (Deut 33:15; Ps 148:9; Isa 2:14; 54:10; Hab 3:6). It is striking that God announces in Isa 2:14, that He will be exalted upon every “high mountain” and over every “high hill” (the same Hebrew and Greek terms), both of which refer to kingdoms which arise proudly against God (see Isa 2:2). If the prophet was thinking in terms of a real difference, why did he not write “high and low mountains”? Because the purpose was to highlight all haughty and proud kingdoms, no matter how strong they are, or the physical height of their mountain.

“Everlasting mountains” and “everlasting hills” are employed in parallel in several passages (see Deut 33:15 and Hab 3:6, as well as other passages; compare them with Gen 49:6). In Deut 12:2 the mountains and hills are mentioned as places where the pagans worshipped their gods (see Isa 65:7; Jer 2:20; 3:6; Hos 4:13).

In Luke 3:5 we find again the parallelism of *bounos* (hills) and *oros* (mountains), bringing out like Isaiah, that both will be leveled. But in Rev 16:20 John says that all mountains will disappear, without speaking about hills (though they are obviously implied). This shows us the trend in John of generalizing its prophetic depiction with the term mountains.

In Luke 23:30 Jesus says that the wicked will cry out to the mountains (*óresin*) and the hills (*bounoin*) to fall upon them to be hidden from the presence of God, while in Rev 6:16 John uses *óresin* (mountains) and *petrais* (rocks) to depict the same final event.

Briefly, in Rev 17 John employs *óresin* to portray in a generic way the seven mountains or hills of the city of Rome, and in a secondary sense, to unmask there all the kingdoms or empires of the world upon which the city-harlot (the Roman Catholic Church) is seated. She sits upon those kingdoms of the world in a proleptic (virtual) way, by assuming or embodying the same rebellious and proud spirit of those kingdoms which preceded her.

**Objection VI:** There are more than just seven mountains in Rome.

**Answer:** It is true that today there are more than seven hills in the city of Rome. In addition to the seven known hills there are three more hills, one in the north of the city and two in the zone called Trastevere. However, those hills do not belong to the famous seven which were part of the culture of the Roman empire since the legend of Romulus and Remus. The first settlements were developed in those seven hills which would lead to the metropolis. The aforementioned three which didn’t form part of the seven had no historical relevance in the development of the city. Only seven have a direct link with the history of Rome.

**Objection VII.** According to what we have seen in this study, Ekkehardt Mueller divides the book of Revelation in two parts: 1-14 and 15-22. The first would be historical, and the second one eschatological. Then he affirms that the majority of the texts introduce Babylon in the second section. But in the first section, he insists that Babylon is introduced at the end of the prophetic series, so in his view, the projection of Babylon in those texts is also eschatological. This leads him to deduce that Babylon is the final apostasy of all the churches (which he calls “satanic trinity” in reference to Rev 16:13-14), not the Roman Catholic Church in particular.

**Answer:** 1) The division of Revelation made by Mueller is, to my knowledge, unique, because the majority of expositors divide Revelation in 1-11 and 12-22. He must divide the book of Revelation in the manner he does in order to be roughly consistent with the division made by Kenneth Strand several decades ago (historical and eschatological, respectively). Even so, he cannot avoid the fact that the seven mountains which represent the seven universal empires appear in that second section (Rev 17).

2) Mueller's problem is rooted in his unclear view of the trumpets of Revelation. This is why he places the Euphrates of the sixth trumpet in the final and eschatological part of the section artificially denominated as being historical. See

<http://adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/Documents/DiesiebenPosaunen-reviewed.pdf>

But in the sixth trumpet, as confirmed clearly by E. G. White, Babylon is mentioned by the Euphrates river in the second part of the Middle Ages, that is, before the eschatological times.

[Let us bring out here that E. G. White requested Prescott to investigate history to have more documentation for the dates of the fifth and sixth trumpets, and for the 1260 years of papal oppression. Prescott didn't find a historical confirmation and advised her to eliminate the dates in her second revised version of the Great Controversy. But she didn't accept his recommendation, and maintained her more definite stance on the matter. Current historical studies vindicate her statements].

3) What nickname is given to Babylon in Rev 17? "Mother of harlots." The harlot daughters are the churches which join their mother at the end, falling into the apostasy into which she had fallen centuries before. A mother comes first; the daughters come later. The fact that she appears already with her daughters (the Protestant churches), shows us that John sees her in the final time when she will receive her sentence of divine condemnation.

4) John sees the mother harlot Babylon "drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus," which makes reference to a former bloody time, something that took place in the Middle Ages. Though the projection of the vision is placed at the end, the angel of the seven plagues depicts her role in all of her medieval story.

We find something similar in the description of the sixth plague. The three demonic powers which appear there calling the rulers of the earth to meet in Armageddon (Rev 16:13-16), were at work before the outpouring of the plagues (see Rev 13). But those former attempts of unity are mentioned in the sixth plague to explain the nature of that final battle which takes place between the sixth and seventh plagues (Rev 16:17-21).

5) The description of the apparel of the harlot and the golden cup in her hand, as well as her bloody spirit portrayed in Rev 17:1-5, corresponds specifically to the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. The purple and scarlet colors are seen in the "cardinals" and "purpurates" of the Vatican. It can be seen online with a simple video search of Vatican meetings.

E. G. White connected the dress and splendor of Babylon and the fact that it is a city where the papal see is found, with the pomp of the Roman Catholic Church throughout history. This, along with her bloody character, cannot be found in another kingdom or city (see quotations below). The statement that the kings of the earth committed adultery with her is also, in the view of E. G. White, thoroughly and abundantly attested to by history.

But these new and modern theologians are often self-proclaimed exegetes who think they are above the testimony of Jesus through the Spirit of Prophecy, and don't care about what she wrote. Some are selective in their quotation of her statements. They resort to the statements which seem to support their particular approach, but disregard the statements which don't fit their own views.

6) It is true that the term Babylon may include the daughters of the harlot which corrupt themselves as she did, and restore her old authority. Thence the final description of “Babylon is fallen” applies to those daughters which join her in the last apostasy of the world. But we have to distinguish between the harlot (the Roman Catholic Church), and the fall of the churches which is fulfilled when they join their mother for allowing her to deceive them, at the point of restoring her lost politico-religious authority.

**Objection VIII.** The papacy sits on the Vatican, not on the seven mountains of Rome.

**Answer:** For a period of about one thousand years the principal palace of the papal residence was on the Caelian Hill, one of the seven mountains of the city of Rome. In the Lateran Treaty of 1929, Mussolini yielded the Vatican state to the papacy, which is in front of the seven hills. He also granted the papacy several other extraterritorial properties within the old city of Rome, among them the Lateran Palace of the Holy See which is in the Caelian Hill. There is found also the See of the Roman Vicariate.

On the other hand, how has the pope always been referred, and even is so today; as “the bishop of the Vatican” or “the bishop of Rome”? Is it the pope of the Vatican or “the pope of Rome”? How is his church identified? Is it Vatican Catholic Church or “Roman Catholic Church”?

So, it is historically accurate to link the city of the seven hills with the papacy who ruled for more than one millennium. The fact that after the Avignon captivity he was settled in other places of Rome doesn't change that historical reality. He continues being the pope of Rome, and the Catholic Church continues being Roman.

**Objection IX.** The blasphemous names are on the beast, not on the prostitute woman.

**Answer:** 1) I don't see anything in the vision of the beasts of Rev 13 and 17 which permits us to dissociate the blasphemous names of the beast from the woman. They represent the character of the little horn in Dan 7 which are on the beast. The prostitute sits proleptically upon the blasphemous kingdoms which preceded her, where the emperors were worshipped as gods, because she inherits that blasphemy and increases it. See A. R. Treiyer, *The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary*, chapters 7 and 8.

2) After Muslims hindered communication with the Eastern Roman Empire, the empire in the west became known as the Holy Roman Empire. This meant that the new form of the Roman empire adopted the Roman Catholic Church with all its conglomerate of dogmas and blasphemous prerogatives. This is also the reason why, in principle, at the inaugurations of those new western emperors coming from France, Austria or Spain, the popes themselves placed the crowns on their heads. Thomas Aquinas represented that church-state union of two crowns, namely, the imperial crown and the papal crown, as the union of soul (the church) and body (the empire). This was admirably represented by the angel of the seven plagues with the representation of the beast (the empire) and a prostitute woman which rides it (the Roman apostate church).

3) In Rev 17:7 the mystery of the woman and of the beast which carries her is the same. That mystery consists of the horrendous “abomination” which the state (represented by the beast) brings, allowing the harlot to ride it, imposing her idolatrous and blasphemous dogmas. Abomination means “detestable idolatry,” the worst kind of idolatry. And the very popes ruled for more than one millennium not only religiously but also politically in the Papal States of Italy.

When Clovis, the first barbarian king who converted to the Roman Catholic faith, founded His capital in Paris in the year 508, he gave political and legislative positions to the catholic clergy, under a clear principle of church-state union. In other words, Clovis imposed the catholic faith with its papal worship as the foundation of his government. So also did Justinian three decades later, the Eastern Roman emperor, as well as the future emperors of the now called Holy Roman Empire. For this reason, it is historically accurate to place the blasphemous names on the beast, because it assumed the papal religion as the official religion of the state, and because it participated in the mystery of Babylon which consists of

her abominable idolatry. Let us keep in mind that the church delivered the heretics to the state to burn them at the stake, and then washed her hands. This she also did with all of her other deceptions.

4) All the universal empires which the Church of Rome inherited were blasphemous because their emperors pretended to occupy the place of God and were worshipped as God by all of their subjects. This I expose in one of my seminars that will soon be available on Youtube under the title, *What the devil plans to do with globalization*. I introduce this point also in my book, *The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary*, chapters 7 and 8. Those empires supported proleptically and eventually in their successive lineage, the blasphemous agenda of the woman who rules over them. The Holy Roman Empire was characterized by the government of the emperor in agreement with the pope.

We can say the same thing in another way. Without the political support of kings and rulers, the blasphemous titles of the Roman Catholic Church would not have served her well, because she would not have been able to impose herself on the world. In the figure of Rev 17, the political powers assume and impose the blasphemous titles of the harlot on the world. This is the reason that during the Middle Ages, more notably from the time of Charlemagne, the western empire was called the Holy Roman Empire, even if the emperors were French, Austrian, or Spanish.

As a matter of fact, the Holy Roman Empire was characterized by the government of the emperor in submission to the pope. The Emperor took the Oath to defend the Roman Church and swore fealty to the Pope and his successors and kissed the Pope's feet. Let us share an example. The emperor said: "In the name of Christ, I, Frederick, the Emperor, promise, pledge and guarantee in the sight of God and the blessed Apostle Peter that I will be the protector and defender of this holy Roman Church in all ways useful to her." The pope gave the new emperor a sword, and said: "Receive this sword by the hands of bishops, who, though unworthy, are consecrated to be in the place and authority of the holy Apostles, deliver it to you, with our blessing, to serve for the defense of the holy Church, divinely ordained." And the crown was then placed on the head of the new king.

**Objection X.** The Babylon of the seven hills may refer to several other cities. Wikipedia has a webpage where about 70 cities of the world have seven mountains or hills.

**Answer:** 1) No other city with seven hills fulfills the apocalyptic requisites to apply to them the title Babylon. No city in the world can rival Rome for her historical importance, and her predominance over peoples, nations, and empires. No other city fits the biblical prophecy in the historical fulfillment. Rome is the last empire of the prophecy which, after the Caesars became Papal.

It is striking that Rome was chosen as a place where there were seven mountains, because the number seven had an old meaning of something complete. They believed that a city with seven mountains represented the center of the divine government over the earth. For this reason they denominated Rome as "The City of the Seven Hills." That fact gave her the image of a sacred city. When Constantine founded Constantinople as a second Rome, he chose likewise a region with seven hills. For this reason he called it "New Rome." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven\\_hills\\_of\\_Istanbul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_hills_of_Istanbul) Would the divine revelation overlook this fact and fail to represent in Rome the imposturous and rebellious spirit of all the kingdoms of the world?

2) Some appeal to the *midrashic* literature to say that the city of Jerusalem was a city with seven mountains or hills (Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, 8th Century). But there is no biblical text to confirm this, and such an association is not made until a date which is far too late historically.

(a) Jerusalem eventually came to be identified with Mount Zion. The fact that a Jew referred to her as a city with seven mountains could have been a later attempt to place her in importance above Rome. But Jerusalem does not have seven mountains. Though the Bible speaks about the mountains of God, it doesn't say that they are seven. Jerusalem is rather a city where Mount Zion is found. In Revelation, the New Jerusalem is located upon a high mountain, not upon seven mountains (Rev 21:10; see Isa 2:2-3;

Mic 4:1-2).

Among the seven imaginary mountains of old Jerusalem that some evangelical writers try to postulate is Mount Olivet. But the Mount of Olives was never located within Jerusalem. It was outside the city. In Ezek 11:23 we read that “the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood *on the mountain that is on the east side of the city.*” It is true that later on the city was expanded to embrace the place of the temple. But this took place in Solomon’s time. And even so, it was never extended to the Mount of Olives. Wikipedia refers to the Mount of Olives as being “a mountain ridge east of and adjacent to Jerusalem’s Old City.”

(b) On the other hand, those futurist evangelicals arbitrarily apply the prophecy of the seven mountains to the Old Jerusalem because they don’t know that in the new Christian dispensation, the ethnic and geographical names are kept, but applied or projected in symbol or type to other peoples and kingdoms. Actually, there is a second Babylon that is Rome; a second Israel that is in fact the Christian church and which, at the end, is represented by the 144,000, the last survivors of the holy seed. There is a second Adam who is Christ, as well as a second Melchizedek and a second David who also represent Christ in different contexts. There is a second Egypt which represents France with her atheistic revolution, and to the countries which assume later its secular role. Therefore, no biblical foundation exists to raise the old Jerusalem in the fulfillment of the prophecies of the New Testament, because what counts from that time on is the New Jerusalem (Heb 11:10,16; 12:22; Rev 21 and 22).

(c) When John wrote the book of Revelation, the Old Jerusalem had been destroyed and had no more relevance in the Christian world. The attempts of reconstructing that Old Jerusalem to repeat the sacrifices, is to revive a misguided dream which rejects Christ, His sacrifice, and His priesthood in the temple of heaven (see the Epistle to the Hebrews).

(d) Through such distorted approaches the devil succeeds in concealing the snare of his most cunning deception, which continues to be Rome. Thus he can cause many to fall into the trap of expecting a fulfillment which will never take place, and prevent them from perceiving the fulfillment of what is taking place right now in the union of churches and religions under the leadership always centered in the papacy. A similar torch of false prophecy is currently being promoted by those who continue to try at any cost to place Islam in the prophecies of the final events.

3) The old Babylon was built in the plane of Shinar (Gen 11). There were no mountains there, which explains why they raised pyramids as in Egypt. It is true that Babylon is represented by “a destroyer mountain” (Jer 51:25). But in the book of Revelation, spiritual Babylon is represented by the seven mountains or hills of Rome which in symbol and in a secondary sense, as already seen, represent all the empires of the world. The old Babylon was desolate in John’s days, and the angel refers to another Babylon with additional characteristics that old Babylon didn’t have.

**Objection XI.** Babylon refers to Imperial Rome in her pagan manifestation, not to the Roman Catholic Church (preterism).

**Answer:** 1. A noble woman represents a noble church and gives birth to sons who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus (Rev 12:17; 14:12). “Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people” (Rev 19:8). A corrupt woman represents a corrupt church who gives birth to corrupt churches. That harlot mother is the Roman Catholic Church (Rev 17).

The noble woman is related to Christ and is persecuted by the dragon. Her capital city is in heaven, the New Jerusalem. The harlot woman is related to the dragon and is drunk with the blood of the martyrs. She is related to an earthly city, Rome.

2) The noble woman is related to the beginning when she gives birth to the Son of God, and to the end

in connection to her sons, the last faithful remnant. The whore is never related to the beginning of the apocalyptic visions. She is revealed at the end, already drunk with the blood of the martyrs. In addition, she is shown as already a mother.

3) The Roman Catholic Church lasts until the end of the world. Pagan imperial Rome has been extinct for many centuries.

4) She deserves to be punished twofold for what she did (Rev 18:6), something that the Bible never says of a pagan city (Ps 137:8; Jer 50:15; Joel 3:4), but only of the people of God in apostasy (Jer 16:18).

5) Instead of being a virgin to be married to Jesus, she fornicates with the kings of the earth (Rev 17:2).

6) She boasts at the end that she is not a widow, once she recovers the political authority that she had lost in 1798. Let us keep in mind that Rome always “boasts” of being an eternal city, pretending that she will not be destroyed. “She glorified herself and lived in luxury, so match it now with torment and sorrow. In her heart she boasts, ‘I sit enthroned as queen. I am not a widow; I will never mourn’” (Rev 18:7).

7) In the end, after realizing that they are lost and perceiving how they were deceived by the harlot, the princes of the world kill her. “The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to carry out His purpose by uniting to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled” (Rev 17:16-17).

This moment is portrayed by E. G. White in her book *The Great Controversy*. “All unite in heaping their bitterest condemnation upon the ministers... The multitudes are filled with fury. ‘We are lost!’ they cry, ‘and you are the cause of our ruin;’ and they turn upon the false shepherds. The very ones that once admired them most will pronounce the most dreadful curses upon them. The very hands that once crowned them with laurels will be raised for their destruction. The swords which were to slay God’s people are now employed to destroy their enemies. Everywhere there is strife and bloodshed” (GC 655-6). But the time of reckoning for the beast also comes. “The beast was captured... and thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur” (Rev 19:20).

8) She is destroyed by the Lord at His coming. All the prophecies of Daniel, Paul, and John concur on this fact.

“The great city of Babylon will be cast down, never to be seen again” (Rev 18:21).

“Whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming” (2 Thess 2:8).

Again, it has to do with the Babylon of the latter days. “But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever” (Dan 7:26). “He will be destroyed, but not by human power” (Dan 8:25). “Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him” (Dan 11:45).

## **Conclusion**

Babylon in the book of Revelation is the Roman Catholic Church. The city with seven hills is the city of Rome. The books of Daniel and Revelation give unequivocal importance to the role fulfilled by that blasphemous kingdom, as well as its well-deserved punishment when the wrath of God will be poured out without mercy in the seven last plagues (Rev 16). When the focus of the angel condemning Rome for her blasphemous and bloody role is detached or becomes watered down, problems interpreting the visions of Revelation begin.

Fortunately, *Wikipedia* defines well what the Seventh-day Adventist Church believes with respect to Babylon, the harlot of Revelation (at least as of today, March 2017).

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whore\\_of\\_Babylon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whore_of_Babylon)

Any attempt to deny or avoid identifying Babylon directly and precisely with the Roman Catholic Church, even in its geographical location, corresponds to a modern trend that tries to spiritualize the content of Revelation and its fulfillment, to avoid denouncing her sins, and to be rid of the responsibility of calling the people to come out from her as required by God in Rev 18:4-5. It is a subtle attempt to avoid confrontations. The fact that at the end the Protestant churches join her in her spiritual fall does not diminish this great truth one bit, because the Roman papacy continues being the axis of the final apostasy of all the churches and religions of the world.

The trumpet must give a certain sound. If our theologians don't blast this warning sound, the pastors and laymen will instead have to give it (as they now are). This does not mean that we have to be incendiary, but we do have to say things as they are, and under the influence of the Spirit of God who gave us the book of Revelation. We must keep in mind that God has in Babylon many people that belong to Him and that worship God according to the light they have. It is God who through us calls them to come out from there (Rev 18:4-5). The Lord will come to rescue those who came out of Babylon.

I don't have time right now to prepare an exhaustive study of the E. G. White statements about Babylon in the book of Revelation. I was told that Gluder Quispe did it in Peru. I expect that we will soon have that material. Let me share, however, some quotations which I gleaned quickly from the Spirit of Prophecy.

#### **Statements of E. G. White about the apocalyptic Babylon**

“In Revelation 17, Babylon is represented as a woman, a figure which is used in the Scriptures as the symbol of a church. A virtuous woman represents a pure church, a vile woman an apostate church. Babylon is said to be a harlot; and the prophet beheld her drunken with the blood of saints and martyrs. The Babylon thus described represents Rome, that apostate church which has so cruelly persecuted the followers of Christ. But Babylon the harlot is the mother of daughters who follow her example of corruption. Thus are represented those churches that cling to the doctrines and traditions of Rome and follow her worldly practices, and whose fall is announced in the second angel's message” (4 *SP* 233).

“In amazement they hear the testimony that Babylon is the church, fallen because of her errors and sins, because of her rejection of the truth sent to her from heaven” (*GC* 606-7).

“The woman (Babylon) of Revelation 17 is described as ‘arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness:...and upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots.’ Says the prophet: ‘I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.’ Babylon is further declared to be ‘that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.’ Revelation 17:4-6, 18. The power that for so many centuries maintained despotic sway over the monarchs of Christendom is Rome. The purple and scarlet color, the gold and precious stones and pearls, vividly picture the magnificence and more than kingly pomp affected by the haughty see of Rome. And no other power could be so truly declared ‘drunken with the blood of the saints’ as that church which has so cruelly persecuted the followers of Christ. Babylon is also charged with the sin of unlawful connection with ‘the kings of the earth.’ It was by departure from the Lord, and alliance with the heathen, that the Jewish church became a harlot; and Rome, corrupting herself in like manner by seeking the support of worldly powers, receives a like condemnation.

“Babylon is said to be “the mother of harlots.” By her daughters must be symbolized churches that cling to her doctrines and traditions, and follow her example of sacrificing the truth and the approval of God, in order to form an unlawful alliance with the world. The message of Revelation 14, announcing the fall of Babylon must apply to religious bodies that were once pure and have become corrupt. Since this message follows the warning of the judgment, it must be given in the last days; therefore it cannot refer to the Roman Church alone, for that church has been in a fallen condition for many centuries. Furthermore,

in the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation the people of God are called upon to come out of Babylon. According to this scripture, many of God's people must still be in Babylon" (*GC* 382-3).

"The Waldenses were among the first of the peoples of Europe to obtain a translation of the Holy Scriptures. Hundreds of years before the Reformation they possessed the Bible in manuscript in their native tongue. They had the truth unadulterated, and this rendered them the special objects of hatred and persecution. They declared the Church of Rome to be the apostate Babylon of the Apocalypse, and at the peril of their lives they stood up to resist her corruptions" (*GC* 65).