

ISHMAEL IN BIBLE PROPHECY AND HISTORY

Dr. Alberto R. Treiyer

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In recent times, the world's attention has shifted again towards the Muslim religion, because its most radical representatives are trying to destroy the political, economical, and religious system of modern globalization. Many Christians and even Muslims are confused by the acts of terrorism committed in cold-blood by people who pretend to believe in God, and ask themselves if the Bible has some prophecy about a religion which is born from and identifies itself with the Arab people. Our answer is yes. The children of Ishmael (both literal and spiritual¹) were taken into account in the Word of God.

I. In the Old Testament

The world was still young, and the possibility of becoming the father of a great nation was feasible. Abraham could dream of blessing all future generations of the earth through his seed (Gen 12). But his wife was infertile, and by her suggestion, he thought to obtain an heir via his maidservant. However, God told him that his heir would be called Isaac, and would come from Sarah, his legitimate wife. Thus started the millenarian rivalry between the maidservant and her mistress, and between the two sons that the patriarch had with both women.

This is the context of the controversy that appears in the first promise concerning Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Hagar. God shows pity to the maidservant and tells her that his son "will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers" (Gen 16:10,12). A little later God says to Abraham: "as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac" (Gen 17:20-21; see 25:13-16; 1Chr1:29ff).

Two competing seeds

Both sons of Abraham would become fathers of a great nation. But the covenant of God, the plan of salvation to save the world, the revelation of the divine glory, the gospel for humanity, the first-born spiritual blessings, would come only through the legitimate heir Isaac (see John 4:22; Rom 2:17-20; 3:1-2; 9:4-5). Under these facts, it was obvious that both seeds could not dwell together. When the rivalry between the two sons began, the maidservant with her son were sent far away to the wilderness (Gen 21:8ff). His offspring lived there "in hostility against all his brothers" ("against," "in hostility" [as in Gen 16:12; 2 Chr 21:16, etc]). This is what the apostle Paul confirms when he said that "he who was born according to the flesh *persecuted* him who was born according to the Spirit" (Gal 4:28).

"Sarah saw in Ishmael's *turbulent disposition a perpetual source of discord*" (PP 146). "The lack of faith on the part of Abraham and Sarah had resulted in the birth of *Ishmael, the mingling of the righteous seed with the ungodly*. The father's influence upon his son was counteracted by that of the mother's idolatrous kindred and by Ishmael's connection with heathen wives. The jealousy of Hagar, and of the wives whom she chose for Ishmael, surrounded his family with a barrier that Abraham endeavored in vain to overcome" (PP 173).

"Abraham's early teachings had not been without effect upon Ishmael, but the influence of his wives resulted in establishing idolatry in his family. Separated from his father, and embittered by the strife and contention of a home destitute of the love and fear of God, Ishmael was driven to choose the wild, marauding life of the desert chief, 'his hand' 'against every man, and every man's

¹The term "spiritual Arab" is sometimes used to refer to those who adopt the Islamic faith without being Arabs.

hand against him.’ Gen 16:12. In his latter days he repented of his evil ways and returned to his father’s God, but *the stamp of character given to his posterity remained. The powerful nation descended from him were a turbulent, heathen people, who were ever an annoyance and affliction to the descendants of Isaac*”(PP 174).

The children of the east

After becoming a widower, Abraham also sent to the wilderness the sons he had from Keturah, far away from his legitimate heir, in an attempt to avoid a rivalry that would hinder divine plans (Gen 25:1-6). Also Esau, who despised his spiritual inheritance, joined one of the daughters of Ishmael and settled in that extensive region of the wilderness, to the east of the promised land (Gen 36:1-19). All those Bedouin or nomad people (hence the term “Arab”), conformed eventually what the Bible denominates “the children of the east” (Gen 29:1; Judg 6:3; 1 Kgs 4:30). When the patience of God regarding Moab and the children of Ammon was exceeded, God delivered that territory to the Eastern people (Eze 25:4,10, etc).

Some have tried to relate Balaam to the children of the east, though his true origin is uncertain. Anyway, Balaam seemed to share a mix of righteous and ungodly seed, because he was a prophet and, in spite of this, he intended to corrupt and curse the offspring of Isaac (Num 22:25; 31:16). Others have sought the righteous inheritance of Abraham also in Job, in Jethro (father-in-law of Moses), in the Shulamite who would have inspired the Song of Songs, the Queen of Java who visited Solomon, Obil the Ishmaelite who was over the camels of the king of Israel (1 Chr 27:31), and the Magi from the east who came to anoint Jesus in his cradle (Matt 2). This, despite the fact that it is hard to trace the origin of Job, the Shulamite, and the Magi who anointed Jesus.²

These positive records allow us to prove that the divine prophecies relating to certain people are not arbitrary or absolute, but they simply reflect the laws of inheritance (Exod 20:5; Deut 23:3,5,8). The doors to God’s kingdom are open for everyone who is converted from fallen generations, because God “shows mercy to thousands” who love him and keep his commandments (Exod 20:6).

Unfortunately, in what respects the children of the east, the majority of the historical records show them as being idolatrous and hostile toward the true seed, which confirms the divine prophetic anticipation. Early in history, we see the Ishmaelites (whom are also identified as Midianites), not showing mercy to Joseph when they traded his acquisition and slavery (Gen 37:28,36; 39:1). Even Moses must condemn the Midianites (the people of his wife and father-in-law who came from Keturah: Gen 25:1-2), for prostituting the people of Israel in Baal Peor (Num 25).

In the time of the judges the Midianites joined, “like locusts,” the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples to afflict the Israelites and, eventually, to destroy them (Judg 6-7).³ In the time of the kings, the Arabs again invaded the land of Israel. God withdrew His protection from His apostate people, and the Destroyer began his work through these enemy “brothers” (2 Chr 21:16, 26:7).⁴ Again, during Ezra and

² Some suggest that God wanted close relations between the seed of Ishmael and the seed of Israel, by the fact that incense was required for the service of the temple, which in turn was supposed to be imported from Arabia. But if this was the case then the plan of God would have also been to closely join the Phoenicians with the Israelites, because king Hiram from Tyr helped Solomon in the construction of the temple (1 Kgs 5). The only thing we may deduce is that these were commercial treaties that are to be kept with all nations in the best terms, without losing independence. Actually, God wanted to keep His people separate from any idolatrous and heathen people, even from the kinship of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3).

³ The Amalekites, who probably came from Esau (Gen 36:12), received a perpetual condemnation when Israel was still in the wilderness (Ex 17:14; Deut 27:17; 1 Sam 15:1). In Persian times Haman, who was apparently an Amalekite, attempted to completely annihilate the Jewish people (Esth 3).

⁴ It is notable that in 2 Chron 21:17, the offspring of Ishmael and his relatives are portrayed with the word “to break” (*baqa*: see this term in 2 Sam 23:16; 2 Kings 3:26; 25:4, with the meaning of breaking lines in a battle, or the wall of a city or what there is in the city), a term which could be related to *abaddon*, “Destroyer,” that appears in the fifth trumpet of Revelation in reference to the Islamic invasions (Apoc 9:11). Our attention is also called to the

Nehemiah's time, Geshem, the king of the Arabs who dwelt in Kedar, is reported as one of the enemies of the Jews (Ezra 4; Neh 2; 6).

The prophecy of Isaiah 60 in the Christian perspective

The final proclamation of the gospel that will cover the entire world is announced in Isa 60:1-7. There we find a grand reunion of the redeemed of all nations in Jerusalem, the capital of the kingdom of Judah. The offspring of Ishmael are also mentioned among the pagan nations (Nebaiot: Gen 25:13; 28:8-9; 36:2-3; 1 Chron 1:29-31), as well as other eastern-related peoples, bringing incense to praise the Lord. Many have seen a fulfillment of this prophecy in the Magi who came from the east to see the Son of God. Others dream with the final conversion of the Arabs to the gospel. But, how could we understand this prophecy from the Christian perspective?

In Gal 4:28-31 the offspring of Ishmael is considered the enemy of the offspring of Isaac. But in the Christian projection, the only Abrahamic offspring that counts is the spiritual one ("the Israel of God": Gal 5:16). For this reason, the apostle Paul concludes that the fleshly offspring of Sarah ended by rejecting the blessings of the first-born, and thus also became an enemy of the spiritual descent. Therefore, in the Christian dispensation, the only seed of Abraham that can be considered heir of the divine promises is the spiritual one, composed of various human beings converted to the gospel, both Jew and Gentile.

Under this view of the New Testament, all of the divine promised blessings or warned curses (to any nation of the Old Testament) are fulfilled in the Christian dispensation in a spiritual or symbolic sense (see Rev 11:8; 17). Thus, the final reckoning of the 144,000 from among all the tribes of Israel (the majority did not yet exist in John's time), represents the spiritual army of the redeemed from all nations, tribes, tongues and peoples, whom God raises up to deliver the last battle of faith (Rev 7:4-8; 14:1-12). Salvation is universal, but the etymological and symbolic connection continues being the offspring of Israel. Even the doors of the New Jerusalem contain the names of the 12 patriarchs, whose foundation is shared by the 12 apostles (Rev 21:12,14).

Consequently, how would the prophecy of Isaiah 60 be fulfilled in the Christian perspective, which describes the immigration of all nations to be saved into Jerusalem? (see also Isa 2:2-5; Mic 4:1-3). That prophecy is fulfilled in a spiritual dimension with the conversion of the Gentiles to the gospel, which include the inhabitants of Arabia (Acts 2:11). For this reason, the book of Revelation foretells the congregation of the redeemed nations, not in the old Jerusalem, but in the new one, "the heavenly one" (Heb 11:16), without specifying the names of such nations (Rev 21:24,26). Though in the new earth, many nations may be formed from the redeemed (which will bring their glory to the city of the Great King), this will not take place but by the resurrection of the dead who would have been converted from such nations (see Isa 19:19-25).

It is in this Christian perspective that E. G. White projected the fulfillment of Isa 60:1-7. There she saw portrayed the conversion of Gentiles and Pagans at the end of the world (*DA* 34; *GW* 28; *HP* 313). "These prophecies of a great spiritual awakening in a time of gross darkness are today meeting fulfillment in the advancing lines of mission stations that are reaching out into the benighted regions of earth. The groups of missionaries in heathen lands have been likened by the prophet to ensigns set up for the guidance of those who are looking for the light of truth" (*RH*, June 24, 1915; see also 3 *MR* 284-5; 12 *MR* 399; *LS* 295; *Ev* 706, etc).⁵

children of the east in Judges 6 and 7, because they are compared to "locusts," as in the fifth trumpet, in a context that reveals the same ethnic and eastern origin (Rev 9:3).

⁵ Some have thought that in Hos 2:1,25; 3:4-5, the salvation of more than a spiritual remnant of old Israel is predicted. But there, the ten tribes of Israel stop to be God's people (see also Isa 7:8). Therefore, the declaration of again becoming the people of God is given there through the conversion to the gospel of those who, like them, are not God's people (Rom 9:25-33; 1 Pet 2:9-10). We may say the same about the conversion of the Egyptians and of the Assyrians foretold by Isaiah (19:18-24), and about the conversion of all those whom, like them, are not God's

II. In the New Testament

In ancient times God promised to be with His people along the centuries in their confrontations with the powers of the earth that sought to destroy them (Gen 12:3; Deut 28:7; 30:7). Trumpets of war would be blasted to deliver them from oppressing kingdoms (Num 10:9; Sal 79:5-11; Jer 51:27,35-36). But God would not compromise His character in those struggles for power between nations engaging in war (see Isa 10:5-7; Jer 51:20). He would instead be the Arbiter of all destinies. He would allow and control those wars only so far as they continued to accomplish the purpose of safeguarding His people.

But, what would God do to protect His church in the new dispensation of His spiritual kingdom? How would He keep in check the last oppressive empire which, in its different forms and steps, would oppress the messengers of the two witnesses (the Bible)? (Rev 1:9; 6:9-10; 11:3; 12:17; 14:12; 17:6; 20:4). The answer is given in Revelation. There would also be trumpets of war in the Christian dispensation that were to be blasted under divine authorization to undermine the power of Rome. In these calls to war, the children of the east would play a long and important role. This however would have nothing to do with a supposed special and divine promise revealed in Islam to the offspring of Ishmael.

The fifth and sixth trumpets of Revelation

During the late Middle Ages, Protestants realized that there were only two significant periods of invasions that shook the Roman yoke along history. The first one had to do with the Barbarian invasions that caused the fall of the old Western Roman Empire (such as God had foretold in the first four trumpets of Revelation). With the Muslim invasions of the Middle Ages they then saw the fulfillment of the fifth and sixth trumpets. These latter judgments caused the definitive fall of the Eastern Roman Empire, and the harassment for more than a millennium of the Holy Roman Empire that was raised in the West to replace the Roman Caesars. Since we dealt carefully with these matters in three successive books,⁶ [www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com], here we have to restrain ourselves to deal with some key issues related to this paper.

The fifth trumpet (Rev 9:1-11)

The fifth trumpet of war against Rome (in the Middle Ages) is immersed in a typical eastern language of wilderness. For this reason, its application to the Islamic invasions enjoyed one of the greatest interpretative consensuses of the second Christian millennium, especially among Protestants. John sees a star that had fallen from heaven, which suggests an eastern origin, because stars come from the east.⁷ The

people (Rom 9:25-33; 1 Pet 2:9-10). The old Egyptians and Assyrians, as well as the remnant of other nations, enter within this symbolic perspective. Evenso, the literal redeemed from among them, who in ancient times converted to the Lord according to the light they had, will be raised and form part of the nations which will be saved and will go to the New Jerusalem to praise God and learn about His Law (the only divine revelation). See Isa 2:1-4; Rev 21:24-26, in connection with Rom 2:14-16.

This is also the view of the Spirit of Prophecy in *PK* 298-299. E. G. White foretells there a fulfillment of the promise given to Hosea regarding a remnant of ancient Israel. But she employs there the word “symbol,” and foretells its fulfillment in the Second Coming of Christ. In agreement with this view, she states that “individuals among the Jews will be converted; but as a nation they are forever forsaken of God” (1 *SG* 107). “Old Jerusalem [with His temple and the glory of God in its midst] never would be built up” (*EW* 76). The same thing may be said of Ishmael as a nation, and of any other nation. Salvation is individual, and only a remnant of the spiritual seed will be saved at the end (Rev 12:17). The promise found in Rom 9 and 11 is applied individually to the Jews who convert to Christ, and literally to all Israel at the end of the world by the resurrection of the dead who had been converted to God’s law.

⁶*The Seals and the Trumpets. Biblical and Historical Studies* (2005); *The Mystery of the Apocalyptic Trumpets* (2012); *The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary. Biblical, historical, and astronomical confirmation* (2014).

⁷The star of the third trumpet which represented Attila, the king of the Huns, also came from the east.

key of the abyss is given to that star, from which smoke and horsemen armies come and expand like locusts, and hurt like scorpions. Their ferocity is strengthened by the teeth of a lion. The angel of the abyss is their king, and he is called Destroyer.⁸

A century and a half after the fall of the Western Roman Empire under the barbarian kings, the Muslim invasions began to harass the Eastern Roman Empire and the actual Western Holy Roman Empire. The Islamic Empire appeared suddenly, practically from nothing, but out of the eastern wilderness. No invasion would have taken place if Mohammed would not have first given his inflammatory speeches against the idolatrous and apostate Christian Rome. Given the relevance of this new prophet in unifying the Arabs, many Christians saw in him, already in the Middle Ages, the star that had fallen from heaven and opened hell for tormenting the infidel world. If the star appears as having already fallen, it is because the judgment of this trumpet starts after the death of Mohammed, when the first Islamic military expansive wave was launched.

The angel of the abyss

Neither Christ nor the angel who in the end shuts the devil into the abyss are “the angel of the abyss” (Rev 1:18; 20:1-3). This is because both Christ and unfallen angels are not depicted in the Bible as having fallen from heaven. This is instead said of Lucifer (Isa 14:12; Luke 10:18). The Bible refers to the abyss as the dwelling place of Satan and his rebellious angels, as the place they emerge from to deceive and destroy the nations (Isa 14:12,15-19; Luke 8:27,29,31; Jud 6,13; see Lev 16:10,21-22; Rev 20:1-3). This is the reason why many see Satan as “the angel of the abyss” of the fifth trumpet, who through Mohammed opened hell via vengeful and vindictive far-reaching wars against the Christian Roman infidels.

Let us take into account that in the Bible, not only the Son of Man, but also angels and human beings (Matt 16:19; 18:18), even the Pharisees (Luke 11:52), have keys. In the case of the church, she may with the key of the Word of God deliver an unrepented wicked man to Satan, in a spiritual dimension, for his eventual perdition in the coming of the Lord (1 Cor 5:4ff). To have keys means, therefore, to have power or authority. That authority or power over death was in the hands of Satan after the introduction of sin (Heb 2:14). But Christ took that power away from him (Rev 1:18; see Jud 9). Anyway, the devil partially recovers that power each time men allow him to leave his prison and fall upon them to destroy them (see Matt 12:43-45). Actually, Satan will not definitively be locked in an abyss (from which he may no longer deceive the nations) until the very end (Rev 20:1-3).

Against those who don't have the seal of God on their forehead

That the objective of the divine judgment of the fifth trumpet should fall upon apostate Christian Rome, is seen again with the injury it causes those who do not have the seal of God on their forehead. The seal is the law of God (Isa 8:16), and the seal of the law is the Sabbath (Exod 20:8-11; 31:13-17; Eze 20:12,20). Since the “Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28), the Sabbath belongs to Him (Isa 58:13). Therefore those who keep the Sabbath [in practical terms all the law: James 2:10], belong to Him and receive the seal of God on their forehead (Deut 6:8; Heb 8:10).

Just after assuming the primacy over Western Rome, the popes nullified the true day of the Lord by obtaining from the Barbarian kings the imposition of Sunday's laws which honored the first day of the week instead of the Lord's seventh day. Transgressors were penalized. At that time, the Arab Saracens

⁸ This is not the first time the Bible refers to men as angels, portraying both the earthly and heavenly connection (Rev 2:1,8,12, etc; 9:14-15; see Isa 24:21-22). Neither is it the first time the Bible (though with a different Hebrew term) refers to a created being as the “Destroyer” with a mission of judgment (Isa 54:16: *mishhit*). The six references with the term *abaddon* in the Hebrew Bible are related to death or the place of death (Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Ps 88:11; Prov 15:11; 27:20).

appeared over the horizon, scourging those unsealing agents of the divine law.⁹ Actually, during his first military campaign, Abu Bakr ordered his army to split with a saber the heads of Christians who wore a tonsure.

Was Mohammed a true prophet?

Given the fact the book of Revelation introduces Mohammed as a star that fell from heaven, a good number of interpreters deduced that Mohammed had been a true prophet who later apostatized. But in Isa 14:12 we see the story of the usurping prince of this world in a similar way, as a star that falls from heaven. That story was given under the prominent representation of the king of Babylon who was never a prophet. Evenso, he vividly represented the character of the rebellious angel who fell from heaven and tried to destroy the apostate people of Israel. Mohammed's followers did something similar once he opened the bottomless pit for them. They launched all their infernal fury against Rome to torment her, though without being able to do away with her. "During those days people will seek death but will not find it," said the revelator. "They will long to die, but death will elude them" (Rev 9:5).

Mohammed did accomplish a few great things. He eradicated idolatry and turned his people into monotheists. But at the same time, he exalted himself over Christ and the other prophets of the Bible (Sura 33:40; 61:6; 7:156), and denied both the incarnation of the Son of God and his divinity.¹⁰ He also pretended to have received his "revelation" from the angel Gabriel, whom he briefly portrayed in vision (Sura 53:4-9; cf. 2:97). This very fact brings us to a place where we have to decide if Gabriel really gave Mohammed his revelation, or if he was rather a rebellious angel masquerading as an "angel of light," seeking to make his followers appear like apostles of the Lord, and ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor 11:14-15).¹¹ How may we know the truth? If we only had the Quran, it would be hard to determine it. This would depend on our disposition to believe Mohammed or not. But for a Christian, "the Word of God is the great detector of error" (*Miscellaneous Collection*, 201). And it is a fact that the sacred book of Islam speaks about the Bible, but exalts the Quran over the Bible.

Let us keep in mind that the true prophets always confirmed the testimony of the former prophets. Those who would suffer martyrdom in the following centuries, according to the book of Revelation (1:9; 6:9-10; 12:17; 14:12; 17:6; 20:4), would not suffer for bearing the testimony of Mohammed, but because of "the Word of God (the Old Testament) and the testimony of Jesus" (the New testament). Nothing of that may we see in the Islamic invasions because Muslims did not spread the Bible, but the Quran, and purposed to impose it over the whole world and over any religion (Sura 48:28; 61:9). What do we find in the Quran? A mix of the righteous seed with the ungodly seed, like that which could be seen in Ishmael. Be careful, because the rebellious prince loves to confuse people by combining truth with error.¹²

When we study the Quran, we are impressed by the fact that there is practically no page that evades some type of threat with hell, which is portrayed with all kinds of horrific descriptions, sometimes mixed

⁹For historic documentation, see my books on the trumpets quoted in a former footnote.

¹⁰Why did Mohammed reject the incarnation of the Son of God? Because "it beseemeth not God to beget a son" or "it is not [befitting] for Allah to take a son" (Sura 19:35). Though he believed in the virginal birth of Jesus, he saw in it a sign of the power of God to cause someone being born without male intervention (Sura 19:21), as when He made Adam and Eve who were not begotten. Among the many texts in the Quran that deny the divinity of the Son of God, let us quote one here: Sura 5:77-78.

¹¹Though we can believe in a determined moment to have received an illumination from an angel, it is different to pretend to receive a divine "revelation" through a specific angel, identified by name. Concerning the spirit from God who, according to Mohammed made Mary conceive, it had nothing to do with one person of the Deity, because Mohammed rejected Trinity. It will be useful to keep in mind that Gabriel, the angel through whom God would have given the Quran's revelation, is also considered a spirit of God (Sura 2:81; 26:193; 42:52).

¹²"The enemy is determined to mix error with truth" (8 T 184). "Error cannot stand alone, and would soon become extinct if it did not fasten itself like a parasite upon the tree of truth. Error draws its life from the truth of God. The traditions of men, like floating germs, attach themselves to the truth of God, and men regard them as a part of the truth" (Ev 589).

with statements that for God it is easy to destroy.¹³ Therefore it is not hard to see in the smoke that comes from the bottomless pit that Mohammed had opened, a figure of hell with which the Muslim invasions threatened and tormented the Roman apostate Christianity during the entire Middle Ages (Gen 19:29; Jud 7). The figure of a lion showing its teeth also fits the foretold picture of terror, because the Bible says that Satan “prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”(1 Pet 5:8). The symbol of a scorpion in the wilderness (Deut 8:15), brings out also his method of scourge and terror (1 Kgs 12:14; 2 Chr 10:11,14). It represents the Arab military tactic of falling unexpectedly upon its enemies (Neh 4:11), causing the people to live in anguish, without knowing the moment when they will ambush and terrorize again (Eze 2:6).

The period of time of the fifth trumpet

Twice the fifth trumpet foretells an invasive period of five prophetic months, which fits perfectly with the two expansive waves of the Arab Saracens and Ottoman Turks, respectively. Since Mohammed started his inflammatory speech in the year 612, with the foundation of Baghdad as a House of Peace in the year 762, 150 literal years elapsed. If we take as reference the first military campaign of Abu Bakr that began in the year 632 we reach 150 years later to the year 782 when Harun-ar-Rashid reached the doors of Constantinople. That year, despite his success, he decided to make an agreement of peace that put an end to the invasive spirit evidenced up to that moment.

In 1299 the capital of the Turkish empire was founded in Söğüt, and the first significant military expansion took place in Bapheus on July 27.¹⁴ 150 years later, in 1449, the one who would be the last Roman emperor in the east received the authorization of the Turkish sultan to be crowned. The true master of all those regions would now become the Turkish sultan, who would prepare himself to consummate what was prophesized in the sixth trumpet.

Let us conclude here our summary of the fifth trumpet with the testimony of modern historians. The Islamic invasions broke the unity of the Roman Empire during the first five centuries of the Christian era. Many were the attempts of both the Byzantine Empire and the papacy to unite the East with the West. But in order to recover that union they needed the sea which Muslims had closed for Christians. That separation of the East and the West continues even today with the Orthodox and Catholic Christian world, which the current popes are trying to reconcile. In the words of one of many secular historians, “as a factor in European history, the rise of Islam must be considered as a *destructive* force” (Hayes-Baldwin-Cole, 137-8). This was the word employed by John in the fifth trumpet.

The sixth trumpet

The sixth trumpet keeps the basic characteristics of the former trumpet, which shows us that it has to do with the same Islamic power which did not change its war style because it was founded, in addition, on the same theological source. While the fifth trumpet tormented without killing (without being able to exterminate the Byzantine Empire), the sixth trumpet is released to kill. After a long time of anguish and agony, the capital of the Roman Eastern Empire fell in the year 1453. Thence, the stigma of death would

¹³ “Indeed, those who disbelieve and commit wrong [or injustice] - never will Allah forgive them, nor will He guide them to a path. Except the path of Hell; they will abide therein forever. And that, for Allah, is [always] easy” (Sura 168-9). It is true that the Bible also warns about the final punishment of the wicked, but it does not permanently threaten people with hell or consider hell to be everlasting. Its consequences will be eternal, but not its duration. The destruction of the wicked is a “strange work” for God, an “alien task,” and by no means easy (Isa 28:21; Eze 33:11).

¹⁴ For a historical documentation of this date, which is supported by modern scholars, see my fourth seminar on the sanctuary, *The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary* (2014), 261-282. More documentation will come from a book that is being prepared by Dr. K. Matthews.

hang upon the Holy Roman Empire, as the Turkish hordes pushed forward in their military conquering campaigns over Europe (Rev 9:14: symbolized by the Euphrates).

From the mouths of the horses whose heads resembled lions came fire, smoke, and sulfur (Rev 9:17). This description of the sixth trumpet is a clear reference to gunpowder which had not been known before, and is composed by sulfur (or brimstone), charcoal, and potassium nitrate. The Byzantine capital fell under the fire of the Turkish canons in April 12, 1453. Even the three strong colors of the Turkish horsemen's clothes - red, blue and yellow - was foretold by the apostle John with admirable precision. Their number, "twice ten thousand ten thousand" reflects a countless number of warriors who launched themselves to the conquest of the infidel world.¹⁵

The dominant time of the sixth trumpet

Sometimes God marks a period of time using different reckonings or calculations. A broader reckoning in prophetic matters is to give a day the meaning or highlight of that year. Time (1), times (2), and half a time (1/2), was another way to refer to 1260 days, symbol of years (see Rev 12:6,14). In relation to the sixth trumpet, God projected its duration in terms of a day, a month, and a year, which translated to our reckoning system means 391 years (Rev 9:15).

The last Byzantine emperor was crowned under the authorization of the Turkish sultan in the year 1449. This brought many to predict the end of Turkish predominance in the year 1840, 391 years later. This remarkably occurred on August 11, 1840, when Turkey accepted to place herself under the tutelage of the European nations who had promised to protect the sultan's kingdom. The European ultimatum against the Pasha of Egypt who was trying to destroy the Turkish Empire took effect on that very day.¹⁶ Given the close connection between the two trumpets wherein the same Turkish empire was involved (first to torment without killing, and then being released to kill), many linked the dates of the two periods of time into 541 years (150 + 391). Thus, they sought the point of departure of the second Islamic expansion of 150 years in the time corresponding to the Ottoman Turks, more specifically, in the first crucial battle of Bapheus that took place in July 27, 1299. They gave to "the hour" mentioned in the sixth trumpet a prophetic value of 15 literal days, and again reached August 11 of 1840. Great was the astonishment of many Protestants and Adventist pioneers when they witnessed its exact fulfillment before their eyes.

Other interpreters take as the point of departure the definitive fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, and see its culmination in the law of apostasy issued by the sultan on March 21, 1844. That law of apostasy was required by England. In that law, the sultan committed himself to no longer kill the infidels who abandoned the Mohammedan faith to become Christians. Thus, since the time when they were released to kill until they decided to no longer kill, 391 exact years elapsed.

Consequences of the Islamic invasions

Who raised Mohammed and launched the Muslim hordes against the apostate world of Rome? Was it God? Yes! In the Bible, what God permits is introduced as something that He does, because when He takes away His Spirit from a person like the Pharaoh of Egypt, He leaves the place free for the devil to

¹⁵Similar terms were used by Daniel and John to portray the countless number of angels surrounding the heavenly court (Dan 7:10; Rev 5:1).

¹⁶August 11 was significant for Constantinople because the Turkish sultan accepted the protection of the European nations who made him know on that day that they were now in control of the situation. That day was also meaningful for Beirut when the order was given to the governor of the Pasha of Egypt to withdraw from the region, without waiting for the decision of the very Pasha in Alexandria. The Pasha left Alexandria two days before the arrival of the convoy of Constantinople, in an attempt to avoid the European ultimatum which reached his city on the very day of August 11, causing a great sensation there. Finally, the ultimatum was put in his hands some days later. Though he rejected it, he also had to submit to the sentence of the high powers of Europe, before the end of the year 1840.

fill, hardening the heart (Exod7:3-4; 9:12; 10:20,27; Rom 9:17-18). But, what could be the purpose of the devil to raise in the East an empire to destroy another one which he himself had raised in the West to likewise cause martyrdom? (Rev 6:9-10). He did the same when he raised later another “monster of the abyss” (Rev 11:7), from the place where the devil comes (as already seen), to give a death wound to the Roman power. In the case of Rev 11:7, it had to do with the Atheistic power which appeared toward the end of the 18th Century, which at the same time deceived the world through a new system of incredulity.

“Satan delights in war” (GC 589), like those who delight in cock, dog, and wild animal fights, and even in boxing matches. Through the Roman papacy, the devil concealed the Bible to impersonate Christ and God, and more easily deceived the world. He also persecuted the remnant of the true seed of Christianity, which had to flee to uninhabited places for refuge (Rev 12:6,14). At the same time, he exalted human tradition over the Bible. Something similar was accomplished by the devil on the other side of the world (the Islamic one), by replacing the Bible with another revelation, the Quran, which laid the necessary foundation to annihilate, if possible, the Christian civilization.

What was the role of God in all this? Via the Muslim invasions God punished the apostasy of Rome and gave a break to the remnant persecuted by the papacy. For in order to face the Islamic invasions, the popes had to delay their plans of exterminating presumed heretics that spread the Bible. They thus needed Protestant support to stop the advancement of a common enemy that could destroy all vestige of Christian faith in Europe. As the Arbiter of all destinies, God can bring good out of evil situations. “We behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will” (Ed 173; PK 500; see Acts 4:27-28).

“The Saviour has said, ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him’ He says again, ‘And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.’ *Mohammedanism has its converts in many lands, and its advocates deny the divinity of Christ. Shall this faith be propagated, and the advocates of truth fail to manifest intense zeal to overthrow the error, and teach men of the pre-existence of the only Saviour of the world? O how we need men who will search and believe the word of God, who will present Jesus to the world in his divine and human nature, declaring with power and in demonstration of the Spirit, that ‘there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.’ O how we need believers who will now present Christ in life and character, who will hold him up before the world as the brightness of the Father’s glory, proclaiming that God is love!*” (HM, September 1, 1892 par. 4).

Conclusion

Let us not seek today in Muslims a special prophetic projection. If we do it, we will lose direction in prophetic matters, or will be distracted from the true purpose of the prophecies. The Muslim empire is over. There will not be a third Islamic expansive wave that will be unified into an empire. Since 1840, the Muslim countries have submitted to the European countries and, in a wider dimension during the following century, to the United Nations.

The violent reactions of some radical Muslims today do not conceal their disgust of the fact that, according to what they argue, the Muslim countries have preferred to submit to the United Nations instead of to the Quran. Anyway, they will not be able to impose themselves over the whole world. The seventh trumpet is the Lord’s trumpet (Rev 11:15-19), and it will be the last one (1 Cor 15:52). It will be blasted by His angels in His second coming (Matt 24:31). God raised the Seventh-day Adventist Church to proclaim this seventh and last trumpet. This is our mission now until the coming of the Lord.

Let us exalt Jesus and the Bible! Everyone coming from Ishmael and other children of the east according to the flesh, may become spiritual descendants of Abraham, if they convert to the gospel of the true seed, Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16). Something similar may be said about the Jews according to the flesh. The doors of heaven are open for all of them. They may become partakers of the promises given by God

to the true heir of Israel. I am certain that many sincere current Muslims will hear the voice of the fourth angel which will fill the whole earth with its glory, calling them: “Come out of Babylon, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Rev 18:1-4). Those who do that are truly heirs of the promises of God to Abraham, who called him to leave his relatives to form a new-born people, the people of God. This requires emigration not to Rome or to the Mecca, but to the heavenly city of God, the New Jerusalem, the heavenly Canaan.