

PRINCIPLES OF APOSTASY IN THE SABBATH SCHOOL QUARTERLY ON REVELATION

1st quarter of 2019

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This is the first time in the history of the Adventist Church that a Sabbath School quarterly rejects the interpretation of our pioneers regarding the trumpets, even though it has been confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy and the General Conference in session.

This also marks the first time the spatial correlation between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary is disregarded in some points in such an important work. Furthermore, when it comes to the various apocalyptic symbols, modern interpretations and speculations are favored above the clearly defined explanations that Jesus gave us through the Spirit of Prophecy and which the Bible confirms.

A few years ago, I prepared a reaction to the Sabbath School quarterly on the Sanctuary titled: *Great Heresy in the Sabbath School Quarterly Regarding the Doctrine of the Sanctuary*. This article can be found on my website by clicking the “Articles” tab at [www.distinctivemessages.com]. The purpose of that title was not to identify the authors as heretics, but to alert readers of the serious confusion some ideas introduced in that Quarterly. Whether through ignorance or unawareness, these new ideas being promoted were a distinct departure from the Bible and our historical understanding of the sanctuary. In spite of the title of my criticism, the overall effect of that Sabbath School Quarterly was positive, and I believe helped strengthen the faith of God’s people.

With this piece I again want to clarify that I do not seek to demonize anyone as an apostate Adventist. My purpose is simply to reveal how certain proposed principles are neglecting the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. The word apostasy refers to an abandonment or renunciation of original faith. This Sabbath School quarterly thus marks an unfortunate milestone of abandonment when it comes to **some** of prophetic legacy we received from Protestant historicism and the pioneers of the Adventist Church. This quarterly does make several great points and maintains historicism as the principle of interpretation, but particularly with the first part of Revelation, it regrettably detaches itself from the testimony Jesus gave us in the Spirit of Prophecy.

This paper deals more specifically with problematic issues found in the quarterly on Revelation. If the reader wants to watch messages from a positive perspective, without open criticism, he can watch the youtube videos that I prepared in both English and Spanish on every lesson, which will be available on my website: [www.distinctivemessages.com]

Warning: the analysis of the quarterly that you will find here is based on a document approved by the committees of the Sabbath School department of the General Conference. However, some changes were introduced at the last moment. One of them has to do with the definition of the three unclean spirits of Rev 16 as a satanic trinity. It has to do with an innovation of Dr. William Johnsson which was later adopted by other Seventh-day Adventist theologians, including the principal contributor to the quarterly. But instead of seeing in the three unclean spirits of Rev 16 a presumed satanic trinity, it is more reasonable to see in those three spirits a counterpart of the three angelic messages. In addition, the allusion to the Trinity was also put aside because the parallelism sought by the author between the Trinity and the three unclean spirits is forced. Though the Trinity is clearly seen in Revelation, in order to approach that subject, it is advisable to offer a wider analysis.

Ranko Stefanovic reacted against those changes, because in his words, they “challenged my scholarly credibility” See [<https://atoday.org/dr-ranko-stefanovic-on-the-revelation-sabbath-school-quarterly/>]. He

mentions changes introduced in Revelation 1:9-20, and chaps. 5, 7, 11, 13, 19. But I found other changes that in my view are positive, though many incorrect positions have been inadvertently kept. For this reason, I maintain my original criticism because the same problems are found scattered through his work, if not in the study guide for members and teachers, in the accompanying book written by Ranko, and in his book on Revelation that he promotes. The interpretation of the trumpets in the study guide marks a clear departure from Adventist historicism which was confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy and maintained by the General Conference in session. Other issues are masked in the Study Guide but remain relevant concerning the moment referred to in the heavenly temple.

Let's summarize the quarterly's problems before diving into the details.

1. *Omission of key Biblical texts that suggest a different view than the one being proposed, and use of Biblical texts that do not align themselves with what Revelation reveals.*

This negligence leads them to put forth a version of Revelation that does not fit with the reality Jesus wants us to see in that book. One reason for this is that those in charge of preparing both the adult quarterly and the teacher's edition either studied at non-Adventist theological centers or alongside those at Andrews who are predisposed to accept the theological structure inherent at such universities, where the inaugural coronation of Christ is seen as foundational, and a second final coronation is not envisioned.

2. *Abandonment of the clear teachings of the Testimony of Jesus through the Spirit of Prophecy.*

Key statements of the Spirit of Prophecy that offer a perspective different from the one they wish to present are left out, and other statements are taken out of context and introduce a distorted account of Revelation.

3. *Abandonment of the spatial correlation between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary.*

This trend allows them to reorganize Revelation into something other than the prophetic legacy bequeathed to us by Protestantism and our Adventist pioneers, despite the clear confirmation of Jesus through the Spirit of Prophecy. The rejection of a spatial correspondence between the earthly sanctuary and the heavenly sanctuary was introduced into our church about half a century ago, and little by little expanded its influence through various Adventist circles. Now that view is bringing unexpected results.

Thus for instance, rather than seeing the just judgments of God in the form of trumpets of war against the last tyrannical empire prophesied by Daniel (Rome), the authors of the lessons spiritualize the fulfillment and fail to arrive at the Adventist Church between 1840 and 1844, at the conclusion of the sixth trumpet. Between these two dates there is a transition from the Holy to the Most Holy in regard to the priestly ministry of the heavenly temple that is discarded in the quarterly (compare Rev 9:13 with 11:19). More so the lesson prefers overlooking the prophetic time specified in the sixth trumpet, in order to extend that trumpet beyond the opening of the door to the Most Holy, all the way to the end of the time of mercy. This is why Ekkehardt Mueller and other theologians allege that Adventists believe they are still living in the time of the sixth trumpet (which is not true).

For more details on this see these articles on my website:

[<http://www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/Documents/TrumpetsBRIanswer.pdf>] and [<http://www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/Documents/DiesiebenPosaunen-reviewed.pdf>]

There are three quotes from Ellen White that encouraged me to spread the warning about certain elements of prophetic apostasy found in the Sabbath School quarterly. It confirms my conviction that, in spite of that, the goal of discussing apocalyptic topics in the quarterly is indeed laudable, and I trust that it will motivate people to search the Scriptures and better appreciate our prophetic faith.

“God will arouse His people; if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat. The Lord calls upon all who believe His word to awake out of sleep... This light should lead us to a diligent study of the Scriptures, and a most critical examination of the positions which we hold. God would have all the bearings and positions

of truth thoroughly and perseveringly searched, with prayer and fasting. Believers are not to rest in suppositions and ill-defined ideas of what constitutes truth” (*CW* 40; 5 *T* 707-8).

“My message to you is: No longer consent to listen without protest to the perversion of truth. Unmask the pretentious sophistries which, if received, will lead ministers and physicians and medical missionary workers to ignore the truth. Every one is now to stand on his guard. God calls upon men and women to take their stand under the blood-stained banner of Prince Emmanuel. I have been instructed to warn our people; for many are in danger of receiving theories and sophistries that undermine the foundation pillars of the faith” (1 *SM* 197).

“False teachers may appear to be very zealous for the work of God, and may expend means to bring their theories before the world and the church; but as they mingle error with truth, their message is one of deception, and will lead souls into false paths. They are to be met and opposed, not because they are bad men, but because they are teachers of falsehood and are endeavoring to put upon falsehood the stamp of truth” (*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 55).

Positive features

Before we review in detail the problems of interpretation found in this Sabbath School quarterly, it would be good to highlight its positive features. Even though emphasis is not placed on the historical fulfillments, a respectable focus is presented on various fronts.

1. In analyzing the message to the churches of Revelation, the quarterly does not omit its prophetic fulfillment (even though the accompanying book regrettably does omit the door that Jesus closes and the one He opens in 1844, announced in the message to the sixth church - an important fact for our Adventist faith). Fortunately, the last minute changes to the Study Guide include mention of the opening of the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary, that Jesus places before that church.

2. It maintains the historicism of the seals (although the judgments presumed in the lesson are hard to see in some symbols, and it is not clear what role the horsemen have in the vision).

3. It offers a good summary of the 144,000 and the sealing.

4. Regarding Rev 10, generally speaking, it accurately declares that the rise of the Adventist Church after the Millerite disappointment in 1844 fulfilled this prophecy (although again it is unfortunate that this vision is misplaced within the sixth trumpet).

5. Excellent summary of Rev 12 to 22, even though it lacks historical detail to highlight the fulfillments, nor is it free from valid questioning.

Omissions and significant mistakes

Most of the problems occur in considering the first section of Revelation. One of those problems has to do with the vision of Rev 4 and 5. Whereas during the first half of the 20th century the majority of Adventist interpreters believed (beginning with Sara Peck, Ellen White’s secretary) that the vision of Rev 4 and 5 depicted an investigative judgment, in the second half of that century inaugural interpretations began to surface. This was due to the introduction of a non-Adventist theological framework that is biased to use an almost exclusively retrospective approach, and thus envisions the inaugural enthronement of Christ in the year 31. And yet concerning the vision of Rev 4 and 5, we find even prominent non-Adventist theologians who connect that vision with the judgment.

There is also some concern about a futurist trend being adopted by some in regards to the prophetic fulfillment of the seals and the trumpets of Revelation. But one mistake should not lead us to another. Moreover, this worry becomes unnecessary when we keep in mind that a judgment is supposed to review

the past, not judge the future or remain exclusively with those living in the time of the end. Beyond a judgment, that vision focuses primarily on the final investiture of the Lamb in front of the heavenly court.

Let's delve into the details. For those interested in more information, you may reference the books listed on my website, and the various articles and youtube videos therein. Some of them will soon be available on Kindle: [www.distinctivemessages.com].

GOD'S PEOPLE IN CITIES

Lesson 3

1) Neglect of the open door in the message to the church of Philadelphia.

The accompanying book of Ranko Stefanovic, offers a summary of Christ's message to the churches, but with a significant omission for the Adventist Church, that was fortunately added in the Study Guide just before its printing. Unfortunately, that change was not included in the accompanying book of Ranko which fails to mention anything about the door that Jesus closes, and the one He opens for the church of Philadelphia. Why? Because since Kenneth Strand, (who taught at Andrews University between the 1960's and 1990's and whom the quarterly quotes at times), the tendency of Adventist theologians at Andrews has been to deny the spatial correlation between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary.

As a matter of fact, in his analysis of the doors that open in Revelation, Kenneth Strand ignored the message of Jesus to the sixth church. For him "there could be in Revelation an underlying concept of one room in the heavenly temple, but the functional significance of the two-room model is nevertheless present in Revelation" ("Victorious-Introduction' Scenes," in *Symposium on Rev.*, 58, n. 11).

Employing this same line of thinking, Ranko Stefanovic (the author of this quarterly on Revelation), in his book *Revelation of Jesus Christ* (140-141), discards the interpretation Jesus gives about Revelation through the Spirit of Prophecy. For him the door Jesus opens that no one can close is the preaching of the gospel. But wasn't the door to the gospel closed in many places and for long periods of time? This implies men can close it. So how do we explain Jesus saying that when He closes a door no one can open it? Is it then Jesus who closes the door to the gospel so that no one can open it?

a) What did Ellen White write about that door?

"The application of Revelation 3:7,8 to the heavenly sanctuary and Christ's ministry was entirely new to me. I had never heard the idea advanced by anyone. Now as the subject of the sanctuary is being clearly understood, the application is seen in its force and beauty" (*EW* 86).

"But clearer light came with the investigation of the sanctuary question. Now was seen the application of those words of Christ in the Revelation, addressed to the church at this very time: 'These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth; I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.' [Rev 3:7,8]. Here an open as well as a shut door is brought to view. At the termination of the 2300 prophetic days in 1844, Christ changed his ministration from the holy to the most holy place..." (*4 SP* 268).

"I saw that Jesus had shut the door of the holy place, and no man can open it; and that He had opened the door into the most holy, and no man can shut it (Rev 3:7,8); and that since Jesus has opened the door into the most holy place, which contains the ark, the commandments have been shining out to God's people, and they are being tested on the Sabbath question" (*EW* 42).

b) Why is the message of the open door given to the sixth church ignored in the book of Stefanovic?

Because Ellen White connected the opening of that door to the Most Holy with the vision of the open door to God's throne in Rev 4 and 5, something many like him are trying to avoid in order to confine this vision to an inaugural past. And this view on Rev 4 and 5 is retained in the Study Guide, in open rejection of what the Spirit of Prophecy wrote on the subject.

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

c) *That same denial of the spatial accounts of the heavenly sanctuary is again seen in the discussion of the trumpets* (Lesson 7, Monday). The quarterly here reflects the interpretations of both Stefanovic and Ekkehardt Mueller. They place that sixth trumpet at the time of the end, without noting that the voice that comes out of that trumpet is amidst the four horns of the altar in the Holy Place, and precedes the opening of the Most Holy Place in 1844 in the time of the end (Rev 9:13; see Dan 8:14,17,19; Rev 11:15,19). See also my criticism of E. Mueller views in “*The Biblical Research Institute’s (BRI) Recent Circulation on the Trumpets*,” and “*Die Sieben Posaune (The Seven Trumpets)*” in the Articles tab at www.distinctivemessages.com.

The worst thing about such a conclusion is that in addition to abandoning the prophetic legacy of our church with regards to the expectations of a literal heavenly sanctuary, it rejects the clear and definite testimony of the Spirit of Prophecy. It is already very unfortunate that such theological views are taught in some of our universities. But to now see them in a Sabbath School quarterly that goes to 20 million members worldwide, backed by some theologians tasked with defending our faith at the Biblical Research Institute (BRI), is quite disturbing. For more on this please refer to another article on my website titled “*A response to Dr. Pfandl’s challenges regarding the Adventist doctrine of the Heavenly Sanctuary.*”

[For a more detailed discussion regarding the vision of Rev 4 and 5 and the interpretation of Ellen White and our pioneers, see my book *The Final Crisis in Rev 4 and 5*, as well as my third seminar on the sanctuary, *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary*. Yet another article titled “*A Summary of the Heavenly Ministry of Jesus and its Relation to Revelation 4-5*,” and “*Concerns about the new SDA International Bible Commentary (SDAIBC)*” under the section of Revelation (What E. G. White did and did not say)].

~~THE ENTHRONEMENT OF THE LAMB~~ WORTHY IS THE LAMB

Lesson 4

2) The title of the fourth lesson imagines the enthronement of the Lamb. Fortunately, the Study Guide finally changed the original title, *The Enthronement of the Lamb*, although it is retained in Ranko’s accompanying book.

Reply: a) Rev 5 doesn’t speak about an enthronement of Christ who remains standing in the vision. It is simply His investiture. However, at the conclusion of the judgment, the Lamb takes His seat upon a throne to come for His people (Mat 25:31; Apoc 14:14). These texts are completely excluded from the Sabbath School Quarterly, as well as the vision of judgment and investiture of the Son of Man in Rev 7.

b) The most documented book dealing with this section of Revelation concludes that the vision does not portray an enthronement, but an eschatological investiture. David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5* (World Bible Commentary, 1997), 336:

“The term ‘investiture’ is a more appropriate designation for the narrative in Rev 5 than ‘enthronement,’ since ‘investiture’ refers to the act of establishing someone in office or the ratification of the office...” “The investiture scene in Rev 5 appears to have been adapted from Dan 7:9-14..., which centers on the investiture of ‘one like a son of man,’ not his enthronement.” [Aune finds several terminological links between the two visions, corroborated by the LXX].

3) Disregard for Jesus' call to come up from the Holy Place (Rev 1-3) to the Most Holy Place (Rev 4-5). To avoid this fact, the quarterly's authors presume that the first vision's focus is on the earth, whereas the second vision is making a call to ascend up to heaven (Lesson 4, Introduction).

Reply: a) This carelessness tends to be seen with those who do not want to uphold the spatial nature of the heavenly temple, with the movement of ministry from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place.

b) However, the quarterly recognizes that the first vision presents Jesus in priestly attire presiding among the candelabra that represent the churches. In other words, in that vision Jesus is in the heavenly temple. Thus, a call to come up to the throne room is not a call to ascend from the earth to heaven, it is a call to come up from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place.

Jesus invites John's readers on two occasions to look at what would take place "after" the prior vision in the Holy Place. He focuses the apostle's sight toward the judgment's future, not back to the inauguration that took place before the first vision in which Jesus is already presiding in the Holy Place. In other words, the opening of the door in Rev 4 and 5 is not a flashback to a more distant past beyond that of the first vision. Neither would it make sense for Jesus to tell John that He would show him what must take place after what was about to be revealed. The "after" also refers to something that would take place after John's present time in the year 90.

c) We should recall that the Most Holy Place in Solomon's temple was between six feet taller than the Holy Place (according to an archeological-topographical study of the temple mount), or ten feet taller according to what can be deduced from 1 Kings 6:2,17,20. For Biblical and archeological documentation, refer to my book *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary*.

d) The vision of the throne in Rev 4 is based on the vision of the throne in Isaiah 6, which states: "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, *high and lifted up*." This is why John is called to *come up* to the throne room in the Most Holy Place (Rev 4:1), *after* having seen Jesus among the candelabra in the Holy Place (Rev 1:12-13).

"Isaiah was permitted in vision to look into the holy place, and into the holy of holies in the heavenly sanctuary. The curtains of the innermost sanctuary were drawn aside, and a throne high and lifted up, towering as it were to the very heavens, was revealed to his gaze... [like John in Rev 4, he could see both the Holy and the Most Holy, because the door to the Most Holy was open].

"The vision given to Isaiah represents the condition of God's people in the last days. They are privileged to see by faith the work that is going forward in the heavenly sanctuary. 'And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament.' As they look by faith into the holy of holies, and see the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, they perceive that they are a people of unclean lips... But if they, like Isaiah, will receive the impression the Lord designs shall be made upon the heart, if they will humble their souls before God, there is hope for them. *The bow of promise is above the throne* [see Rev 4:3], and the work done for Isaiah will be performed in them" (E. G. White, in *SDABC*, IV, 1139).

e) John was shown the door to the Most Holy Place after it had been opened (Jesus had opened it to the church of Philadelphia, whereas the church that lives within the time of judgment prophetically speaking is Laodicea, which means the "People's Judgment"). Consequently, this vision seems to be focused more precisely on the end of the heavenly judgment and the priestly ministry of the Lamb, and shows us the moment when Christ is to be invested as King of the New Jerusalem. From that perspective, the open door leads us to witness the final investiture.

f) The fact that John sees a candelabra in front of the throne does not imply that the throne is in the

Holy Place. Beginning with Sara Peck (Ellen White's secretary) onwards, Adventists reasoned that John sees the candelabra and the throne at the same time because the door to the Most Holy was open.

4) Denial that the vision of a heavenly judgment in Rev 4 indicates a specific event.

The teacher's edition seems to forget about the open door in the heavenly temple, and thus affirms that the vision of the throne in Rev 4 does not allude to a "specific event," but rather "a general description of worship in heaven." Three supporting arguments are provided:

a) "The throne is not being established, it is already established."

Reply: Correct. The throne is not relocating. The door to the throne had been opened to the church of Philadelphia. John sees the throne in the Most Holy Place already established, in the context of the Seventh Day Adventist Church that lives in the time of the judgment (Laodicea, the "People's Judgment"). Whosoever overcomes the challenges of that church is promised by Jesus to be seated in the throne room (Rev 3:21). To confirm such a promise, readers are then shown that throne (Rev 4:2-3). This is also why the elders worshiping the Lamb proclaim the fact that the redeemed shall be kings and priests (Rev 5:10). John points this out by noting the redeemed seated on thrones to judge the wicked together with Christ (Rev 20:4,6).

b) "The songs of verse 8 do not refer to a particular event as they are sung 'day and night.'"

Reply: There is no night before the throne of God (Rev 21:25). That phrase denotes something permanent or ceaseless that takes place in the setting of the judgment in the Most Holy. The vision of Rev 4 comes from Isaiah 6 that, as we have already discussed, Ellen White applies to the Most Holy Place and within a context of judgment. Furthermore, the four living beings were also represented in the Most Holy Place of Solomon's temple, which had four sculpted cherubim: two sculpted over the cover of the ark by Moses (Exodus 25:18-22), and two additional cherubim sculpted by Solomon (1 Kings 6:23-28), totaling four cherubim.

c) "The song of the four beings continually repeats itself ('every time that')."

Reply: A scene tasked with the worship and exaltation of God as He judges is indeed magnificent. Angels ceaselessly worship him in the heavenly court. With the throne now in view, Jesus' promise to grant those who overcome a seat with Him on His throne becomes quite poignant (Rev 3:21). In Rev 5, where Jesus receives the book that qualifies Him as King, we again see an emphasis on the fact that the redeemed will reign together with Him (verse 10).

5) Both the quarterly and the teacher's edition conclude that the 24 elders are not angels, but instead human beings that Jesus took with Him to heaven as a display of His victory. The reason given is that the term elders does not apply to angels, and the crowns (*stefános*) are a symbol of victory (Lesson 4, Monday).

Reply: a) But the testimony that Jesus Himself gives through the (**Holy**) Spirit of Prophecy is that they are not human beings. They are instead angels.

"John was distressed at the utter inability of any human being or angelic intelligence to read the words, or even to look thereon. His soul was wrought up to such a point of agony and suspense that *one of the strong angels* had compassion on him, and laying his hand on him assuringly said, 'Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof'" (*Lt 65 1898*). That angel is an elder. "*One of the elders*

saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof” (Rev 5:5).

b) The angels have crowns that they cast towards the feet of the Lord as in Rev 4, which, combined with the fact of being seated on thrones, the crowns they possess do not necessarily signify victory, but rather hierarchy (Greek LXX *stefános*: 1 Chron 20:2; Jer 13:18; Zech 6:11,14; Rev 9:7, etc). Hence John considers them “strong angels” [see discussion regarding the various interpretations in my book *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment...*, 523-547]. In fact, Greek lexicons assert that the word *stefános* could also refer to a ranking of nobility. It was common in the Jewish literature of the first century to envision angels participating in priestly activities.

Even so, if we would like to use the term *stefános* to connote triumph, we must remember that the triumph of others is often assumed by those who love and work for them (Greek LXX *stefanos*: Prov 12:4; 17:6; NT: Philip 4:1; 1 Thess 2:19).

The angels “veil their faces before him as he sits upon his throne; they cast their crowns at his feet, and sing his triumphs as they behold his resplendent glory” (*ST* 1-4-1983, 11). “Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts His hands and with a loud voice says, ‘It is done;’ and all the angelic host lay off their crowns...” (*GC* 613).

c) Even though an ancient manuscript of Rev 5 reads: “He redeemed us,” the other three ancient manuscripts render it “He redeemed them.” The version used by Ellen White stated: “He redeemed us.” But she clarifies this in reference to the angelic song:

“Holy angels will join in the song of the redeemed. Though they cannot sing for experimental knowledge, ‘He hath washed us in his own blood, and redeemed us unto God,’ yet they understand the great peril from which the people of God have been saved. Were they not sent to lift up for them a standard against the enemy? They can fully sympathize with the glowing ecstasy of those who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony” (*Lt* 79, 1900).

This is appropriate because as we have already seen, the Bible shows us that the crown of someone else’s victory can be assumed by those who love them.

d) The thrones are not in the Holy Place, they are in the Most Holy Place. Ellen White had a vision of Jesus and His Father seated on a throne (singular) in the Holy Place. But she never saw thrones (plural) there. When Jesus rises and opens the door to the Most Holy Place, and the Father then sits on His throne, fulfilling the vision of Daniel 7:9-11, she then states she saw thrones in the Most Holy Place.

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

e) Ellen White never referred to the 24 elders as glorified human beings. Nor did she make the mistake of pretending that the risen saints would already be seated on thrones with crowns before the Son takes a seat (as alluded to in the quarterly), and is crowned at the inauguration of the heavenly priesthood.

f) The judgment scene in Daniel 7 represents God as the “Ancient of Days,” because maturity is a prerequisite for competence in judgment (Lev 19:32; Isa 3:4). Thus the description of the 24 elders does not require them to be human beings. Rev 4 and 5 represents a court of venerable beings.

Jesus anticipated that there would be a heavenly “Sanhedrin” (Matt 5:22: literally “Sanhedrin”), which

once again points to angelic hosts, not human beings. The Jewish Sanhedrin was composed of courts with 24 elders in each city, and three courts of 24 elders in Jerusalem. Although they often indicated 23 elders, and 70 or 71, the common denominator was 24. See references in my book *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment*, 532.

The vision reveals a replica of the court of David that was surrounded by elders being seated on thrones to judge together with him (Psalm 122:4-5). Jesus anticipated that in the final court room, the Son would be glorified and honored as was the Father, like in Rev 4 and 5 (John 5:22-23). These texts are also totally ignored in the books of Stefanovic and the quarterly in discussion.

6) The quarterly speculates that “the 24 elders could represent the people of God as a whole,” or the 24 orders of singers in the temple of Solomon (Lesson 4, Monday).

Reply: But those singers never officiated in seated positions nor performed their role together, but rather in shifts. Nor are there Biblical texts or indications from the Spirit of Prophecy that suggest they represent “the people of God as a whole.”

7) The quarterly assumes that the scene in Rev 5 refers to the inauguration of Christ as king-priest, and completely ignores His second coronation at the end of the world (Lesson 4, Thursday).

Reply: a) But the titles used for the Lamb are not priestly, they are royal: “The Lion of the tribe of Judah,” “the root of David.” We must here clarify that the title *the Lamb* is also not a priestly reference. In Rev 17:14 John applies this term to Jesus after He concludes his priestly work. Through the Spirit of Prophecy, Jesus tells us that He went to the Most Holy Place in 1844 to receive the kingdom, and that once the judgment concludes He will remove his priestly attire and clothe Himself with royal attire. Thus, the Lamb that wounds the nations is no longer a Priest, yet He maintains the title *the Lamb*.

“Then I saw Jesus lay off His priestly attire and clothe Himself with His most kingly robes. Upon His head were many crowns, a crown within a crown. Surrounded by the angelic host, He left heaven” (*EW* 280).

b) *If the Lord was revealing an inaugural vision, why does John cry* when he sees that no one in heaven or on earth was found to be worthy to take the book and open its seals (Rev 5:3-5)? John knew that Jesus had conquered and had taken seat at the right hand of God 60 years earlier. He witnessed this when he received the Holy Spirit during the Pentecost. He now weeps because he is presented with a different situation. It is the very scene of judgment, and the book granting the inheritance to the redeemed remained sealed. Why isn't the Savior showing up during such a critical time to open it?

c) On the other hand, the elders did not decide who would be priests, this was done only by God through Moses, who would anoint them (Exod 28-29). The same thing happens with the coronation of Christ's priestly kingdom, when He received only from God the designation of High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:4-6). But David was anointed by the elders (2 Sam 5:3; 1 Chron 11:3), who also determined in judgment those worthy of being received into the city of refuge when under persecution (Jos 20:1-5). This is why in Rev 5 the elders are those cheering the Lamb when He receives the book that will make him King.

d) One significant issue that seems to have permeated this quarterly is also found in Ranko Stefanovic's doctoral thesis defended at *Andrews University* and in his commentary on the book of Revelation, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. In these works he ignores the fact that Christ is crowned twice, something we see repeated in this quarterly. This makes him unable to see a second coronation in the context of Rev 4 and 5.

Allow me to provide references. In his doctoral dissertation, Ranko Stefanovic seems to agree with

Beal in dismissing “a second and future enthronement of Christ” (*Backgrounds...*, 109). As a matter of fact, he doesn’t refute him, and ignores any other coronation. He constantly quotes Dan 7:13-14 and Rev 14:14 to prove that the coronation of Christ took place in the year 31 (*The Revelation...*, 166, 174, 207). How is that possible? Both these visions refer to the final judgment! Let us quote just a few statements of E. G. White that clearly indicate a future coronation of Christ:

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

e) Stefanovic’s theological misunderstanding is once more clearly seen when he compares the *Epistle to the Hebrews* with *Revelation*. He wrote that “although Revelation puts a strong emphasis on... Jesus into his royal role, the epistle of Hebrews describes more particularly the priestly aspect of his exaltation...” (*Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 210). I agree. But let us emphatically assert that while Hebrews highlights the priestly inaugural ceremony of a second Melchizedek, Revelation emphasizes (from chapters 4-5 onwards) the final judgment and a Davidic royal ceremony. Both books of the New Testament reflect different moments, one the inauguration, and the other the conclusion of the heavenly ministry of Jesus. This is the reason why the throne, the four living creatures, and the 24 elders in the book of Revelation appear only in the context of the end of the world and the final judgment (Rev 7:11-13; 11:15-19; 14:3; 19:4).

E. G. White made note of the difference between these two coronations, the inaugural and the final:

“‘He shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne’ [Zech 6:13]. Not now ‘upon the throne of His glory;’ the kingdom of glory has not yet been ushered in. Not until His work as a mediator shall be ended will God ‘give Him the throne of His Father David,’ a kingdom of which ‘there shall be no end’” [Luke 1:32-33]; *GC* 416).

“The throne of glory represents the kingdom of glory; and this kingdom is referred to in the Saviour’s words: ‘When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations.’ Matthew 25:31-32. This kingdom is yet future. It is not to be set up until the second advent of Christ” (*GC* 347).

As He enters the Most Holy Place in 1844, Jesus says:

“Wait here; I am going to My Father to receive the kingdom; keep your garments spotless, and in a little while I will return from the wedding and receive you to Myself” (*EW* 55).

8) The Sabbath School quarterly makes note of the description in the *Desire of Ages* about an inaugural coronation of Christ into His priestly kingdom (Lesson 4, Friday). In this description she is referring to the throne of God, surrounded by a rainbow, and the song that declares the Lamb worthy to receive the glory described in Rev 5:12.

Reply: a) What throne is Ellen White referring to in this statement from *DA*? Is it the throne of grace referred to in Heb 1:8-9 (4:14-16), or the throne of judgment described in Rev 4:2 (Matt 25:31-32)? As we have already seen (1, b), in Rev 4 she locates the throne within the open door to the Most Holy Place in 1844. The fact that in the book *DA* she sees the covenant rainbow over the inaugural throne does not equate that throne to the throne of the final scene of Rev 4:2. That rainbow also accompanies Christ in Rev 10:1. Should it surprise us to also see the same rainbow accompanying the Father at the inauguration? The rainbow is not limited to the inauguration or the conclusion, but rather accompanies both. The context of Rev 4 it is that of the final judgment.

“Turn your face to the light, to the throne of God. What will you see there? *The rainbow of the covenant*, the living promise of God. *Beneath it is the mercy seat*” (ST 05-02-95, 7; see also ST 10-10-92, 1). “Go to the throne of grace. You will be answered from *the mercy seat*... *The rainbow above the throne* is a token that God through Christ binds himself to save all who believe in him” (ST 10-10-1892; 1 MR 109).

“In heaven the semblance of a rainbow encircles the throne and overarches the head of Christ... The revelator declares, ‘Behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne... There was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.’ Rev 4:2,3” (PP 107). “The One who has stood as our intercessor; who hears all penitential prayers and confessions; who is *represented with a rainbow*, the symbol of grace and love, encircling his head, *is soon to cease his work in the heavenly sanctuary*. Grace and mercy will then descend from the throne, and justice will take their place. He for whom his people have looked will assume his right—the office of Supreme Judge. ‘The Father... hath committed all judgment unto the Son... And he hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man’” (RH 1-1-89, 1).

b) Some have deduced that the same council that was convened for the inauguration of the ministry of Jesus in heaven will also be convened for its conclusion, a work of judgment to take place in the same sanctuary with the door to the Most Holy now open. There are some additional statements of E. G. White that seem to point in that direction, without necessarily compelling us to imply a dual fulfillment in Rev 4 and 5.

“There is the throne, and around it the rainbow of promise. There are cherubim and seraphim. The commanders of the angels hosts, the sons of God, the representatives of the unfallen worlds, are assembled. The heavenly council, before which Lucifer had accused God and His Son, the representatives of those sinless realms over which Satan had thought to establish his dominion—all are there to welcome the Redeemer” (DA 834). “In His teachings, Christ sought to impress men with the certainty of the coming judgment, and with its publicity... It is to be held in the presence of other worlds... There will be no lack of glory and honor” (Mar 341).

c) It is striking that E. G. White quoted Rev 5:11 to depict the heavenly court that passes final judgment on the whole world in *chap 28* of the *Great Controversy*, entitled “Facing Life’s Record.” She first quoted Daniel 7:9-10 from the KJV, “thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” She commented about this text of Daniel saying that the prophet saw “the great and solemn day when the characters and the lives of men should pass in review before the Judge of all the earth” (GC 479). Then, she quoted Rev 5:11, again from the KJV: “It is He, the source of all being, and the fountain of all law, that is to preside in the judgment. And holy angels as ministers and witnesses, in number ‘ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,’ attend this great tribunal” (*ibid*).

d) On the other hand, a song such as that found in Rev 5:12 may be sung for different occasions. Ellen White applies this angelic song to the conclusion of the judgment prior to the advent, to the final redemption, and to the conclusion of the post-millennial judgment. See quotes in my book, *The Final Crisis of Rev 4 and 5*, chapter 2.

e) For a summary of what Ellen White did or did not say about the vision of Rev 4 and 5, see the article on my website titled *Concerns about the new SDA International Bible Commentary (SDAIBC)*, and go to the section on Revelation. www.distinctivemessages.com.

9) The quarterly assumes that the sealed scroll is not in the hand of God, but rather on the right side of the throne. Verbatim: “The Greek text indicates that the scroll was lying on the throne at the right hand of the Father, awaiting the One who was worthy to take it and occupy

His seat on the throne” [changed at the last moment in the Study Guide by “worthy to take it and to loose its seals,” though kept in the accompanying book of the author] (Lesson 4, Tuesday). This suggestion is promoted to then assume that in taking the scroll lying on the throne Himself, the Lamb would then sit on that throne.

Reply: a) But as already seen, Rev 5 does not say He sits on that throne, nor does the Father tell Him then: “sit at my right hand.” That occurred some 60 years prior to John’s vision, at the inauguration. Now John sees Jesus during His final and decisive stage of heavenly ministry. Yes, of course He will soon sit! But on a cloud (Rev 14:14), on a throne of glory to judge the nations (Matt 25:31).

b) Contrary to what the quarterly affirms, the Greek text does not suggest that the scroll is lying on the throne, it rather specifically confirms that it is in the hand of He who sits on the throne. See Rev 1:17,20 and 2:1 where the same Greek word *dexios* is used. Outside of Revelation we see the same word used in Matt 6:3; 27:29; Gal 2:9, clearly again referring to the hand, even though the additional word *cheiros* – “hand” is not used.

The assumption that the Father did not have the scroll in His hand, but that it was rather lying on the throne, is extremely forced. This makes the Son assume His kingdom of His own accord, without His Father granting it to Him. This unfortunately again reveals that the quarterly authors do not really care about the clear “testimony of Jesus” through the Spirit of Prophecy. It also proves that an exegesis without a right theology leads astray.

“There in His open hand lay the book...” (12 *MR*, 7). “The book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open” (*COL* 294).

The Father grants the Lamb the sovereignty of kingship, and this fact is so powerfully illustrated in the giving away of the sealed scroll that no one else in heaven or on earth could open. In other words, the Lamb does not take this of His own accord.

c) D. E. Aune, 339-340 states that the fact “that the Lamb takes the scroll from the right hand of the one seated on the throne (5:7), further suggests that the roll is depicted ‘in’ the hand of God in 5:1,” and mentions the interpretation of Ranko Stefanovic as being “almost alone” favoring the interpretation of the right side.

10) The Sabbath School quarterly ignores that the sealed scroll is a reference to the book of the covenant and offers up a solitary and shortened quote from Ellen White thinking it contradicts this fact (Lesson 4, Tuesday). This is done to avoid linking the scene with the final judgment in the Most Holy Place, given God had ordered the book of the covenant to be placed next to the ark.

Reply: a) Ranko Stefanovic did a great job in his doctoral thesis and his commentary on Revelation with regards to the fact that the sealed scroll is the book of the law (the Bible). I too made this link in my book *The Day of Atonement...*, p. 550, years earlier. Yet in the Sabbath School quarterly this fact is set aside because it would lead them to recognize that the scene in Rev 4 and 5 is at the end (in the judgment, in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly temple), since the book of the law or covenant was placed next to the ark to remain there until the day of judgment, as a witness against the covenant breakers (Deut 31:26; see 32:34).

b) Whenever a descendant of David was being crowned, the book of the law was given to him (Deut 17:18-19; 2 Kings 11:12; 2 Chron 23:11). The handing of the book of the law from the Father to His Son accordingly implies the transfer of the kingdom (symbolized by David’s kingdom) that would

take place once the judgment was over.

As we have already seen, David was anointed by the elders (2 Sam 5:2; 1 Chron 11:3), who in turn determined in judgment who would be allowed into the city of refuge when under persecution (Josh 20:1-5). Similarly, in Rev 5, the elders are those praising the Lamb as He receives the book that will make him King and anticipate welcoming the redeemed who had been persecuted on earth – those Jesus saved with His blood to forever reign with Him.

c) Despite this, Ellen White's quote offered up by the authors of the quarterly does not deny that the sealed scroll is the Testimony or Book of the Covenant or Book of the Law, nor does it deny that it could be the book of inheritance. On the contrary, it confirms this. Let's compare the quotes.

“There in His open hand lay the book, the roll of the history of God's providences, the prophetic history of nations and the church. Herein was contained the divine utterances, His authority, His commandments, His laws, the whole symbolic counsel of the Eternal, and the history of all ruling powers in the nations. In symbolic language was contained in that roll the influence of every nation, tongue, and people from the beginning of earth's history to its close” (Lt 65 1898).

“In history and prophecy the Word of God portrays the long continued conflict between truth and error” (2 SM 109).

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

d) We should recall that the heavenly realities are much greater than earthly copies (Heb 9:11). Thus, the book of the law or covenant or testimony or inheritance or of destiny that is in heaven, is also much greater than the copy that Moses wrote and ordered to be placed next to the ark in the ancient Israelite temple. For details, see my book *The Final Crisis in Rev 4 and 5*, chapter 2, and *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary*.

11) The Sabbath School quarterly assumes that the Lamb takes the sealed scroll or book at the inauguration of His priestly ministry in the year 31.

Reply: a) But Jesus testifies through the Spirit of Prophecy that this must take place at the end, not at the beginning. When the Jews renounced the covenant of inheritance contained in the book of the law, their renunciation was registered in the book of the covenant or inheritance in heaven, the one now sealed with the witness of those who from there on would enter a covenant with the Lord (see Joshua 24:25; Neh 9:38; 10:1,29).

“‘Shall I crucify your King?’ Pilate asked, and from the priests and rulers came the answer, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’ John 19:15. When Pilate washed his hands, saying, ‘I am innocent of the blood of this just person,’ the priests joined with the ignorant mob in declaring passionately, ‘His blood be on us, and on our children.’ Matt. 27:24, 25. Their decision was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the Tribe of Judah” (COL 294). [Jesus does not continuously open the book during the entire Christian era, but rather removes the seals “in the day” of judgment].

“Looking upon the smitten Lamb of God, the Jews had cried, ‘His blood be on us, and on our children.’ That awful cry ascended to the throne of God. That sentence, pronounced upon themselves, was written in heaven. That prayer was heard... Terribly will that prayer be fulfilled *in the great judgment day*” (DA 739-740). See Rom 2:16: “*on the day* when God judges people’s secrets through Jesus Christ”; Acts 17:31: “he has set *a day* when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed.”

“John writes, ‘I beheld, and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne’ [Rev 5:11]. Angels were united in the work of Him who *had broken* the seals *and taken* the book. Four mighty angels hold back the powers of this earth till the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads” (Lt 79, 1900). [Here we can see that the opening and taking of the book occur at the end, disregarding the order of taking and opening. Keep in mind that the book is opened “in the day” of judgment].

b) Jesus, via the (Holy) Spirit of Prophecy, applies the angelic songs of Rev 5:12 to various contexts. But the song in Rev 5:9 that refers to the worthiness of the Lamb to take and receive the sealed book is only and exclusively projected into the future. The Lamb does not take the book at the inauguration to open it in the judgment, He takes and opens it in the judgment.

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

12) The Sabbath School quarterly assumes that the vision of Rev 5:6 refers to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit during the Pentecost. It infers that the seven spirits in the eyes of Christ are a reference to the Holy Spirit that is sent to the earth at that time (Lesson 4, Thursday).

Reply: a) But the Lamb appears with the seven eyes before receiving the book that will bestow upon Him Kingship, and prior to the praise of the four living beings and the elders. This makes it quite challenging to imagine the Pentecost in this description, because that outpouring could not take place before His inaugural enthronement (John 7:39; 15:26; Acts 2:33).

“When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity. The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven’s communication that the Redeemer’s inauguration was accomplished. According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as a token that He had, as priest and king, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and was the Anointed One over His people” (AA 38-39).

b) On the other hand, the Holy Spirit is one Person, not seven. The seven spirits mentioned might be referring to seven angels through which the Spirit also works. In the introduction to the book of Revelation, John saw “the seven spirits” “before His throne” (Rev 1:4-5), because God wants all the churches to visualize the final judgment that is to be revealed in the second vision (Rev 4 and 5).

c) Who are the angels? They “are *ministering spirits* sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation” (Heb 1:14). The Holy Spirit, no doubt, is involved in the ministry of these angels as well, as can be seen in John’s first vision where the seven angels are illustrated as being in the right hand of Christ (Rev 1:16,20; 2:1). Also, what the Lord says the Spirit also says (Rev 2:7,11,17, etc: note that the Spirit is always portrayed as a single person).

d) The description of the seven spirits that are linked with the eyes of the Lamb, has its counterpart in the vision of Zech 1:10-11, where the prophet is told that “they are the ones the Lord has sent to go

throughout the earth,” to give “the angel of the Lord” a report of what they saw. The prophet is using a figure from the informational system of the Persian administration, whose informants were called “the eyes of the King” (see references in my book *The Day of Atonement...*, 571, n. 448; *The Seals and the Trumpets...*, 38-40). Therefore, the vision of the seven eyes points to much more than the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It shows the omniscience of the Lamb which is revealed through the ministry of those known as the eyes of the King – the seven angels.

As a side note, the horns of an animal are a symbol of power. The seven horns of the Lamb represent His supreme power, given that the number 7 is a symbol of completeness. When Jesus appears before the throne He does not then receive that power as He already is in possession of this before receiving the book that will bestow upon Him the attribute of King of kings and Lord of lords.

e) Rev 5:6 refers simply to the role those angels have accomplished as those “sent” from the Lord. Some versions translate the text as those “having been sent out into all the earth” (Berean Literal Bible); or those who “have been sent through the whole earth” (Good News Translation)]. When were they sent? Before the final investiture of the Lamb.

f) In the first vision Jesus sends a message to the angel of each church to emphasize the fact that the elder or pastor at each church can count on an angel sent by Jesus to accompany him in his mission. The messages of Christ to the churches have the purpose of preparing them for the judgment that is to be revealed in Rev 4 and 5.

g) Although the vision of Rev 5 does not refer to a special inaugural outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we should recall that God is to pour out His Spirit in a more powerful way at the end of the world, in what the Bible calls the “latter rain.” Let us see this statement of the Spirit of Prophecy.

“Those who rose up with Jesus would send up their faith to Him in the holiest, and pray, ‘My Father, give us Thy Spirit.’ Then Jesus would breathe upon them the Holy Ghost” (*PE* 55).

THE SEVEN SEALS

Lesson 5

13) The quarterly assumes that the first half of Revelation (1-11) is historical, beginning with the first century and on through to the end. But it also affirms that the second half of Revelation is eschatological (12-22), and looks at the past from the perspective of the end [the wording was slightly modified in the Study Guide] (Quarterly introduction; Lesson 8, introduction).

Reply: a) Regrettably Ranko breaks his hermeneutical rule in considering the vision of Rev 17. According to Stefanovic, the present time in that vision is not the time of the end, but the first century in which John was living. The five kings in his view had already occurred, and from that point on one would speak of the pagan Roman Empire and later the papacy (see the analysis below under lesson 12).

b) Ellen White also contradicts this focus presented in the quarterly when she affirms that the visions of Rev 12 and 13 begin with the Roman Empire in the days of John. In other words, the second half does not necessarily imply flashbacks from the future to the past, but rather events from the time of John into the future. The Study Guide is right when it affirms that chapters 12 and 13 are a preparation for the future events depicted later in the book.

“The line of prophecy in which these symbols [Rev 13] are found begins with Rev 12, with the dragon that sought to destroy Christ at His birth” (*GC* 438).

c) Instead of calling the second half of Revelation “eschatological”, it would be preferable to consider it as being more universal, because Rev 12 begins with the fall of Satan in heaven, and the woman represents primarily old Israel with twelve stars (the twelve patriarchs or twelve tribes, before giving birth). The final events narrated in the rest of that second section are also more universal.

14) In the teacher’s edition, a few options are provided to help guide the discussion as to the meaning of the sealing of the scroll. But shockingly the one option that seems to best fit the context of the vision is ignored.

a) When the people of Israel confirmed the covenant after a reading of the book of the law, their leaders would sign and seal that endorsement with the entire nation (Neh 9:38; 10:1,28-29; see also Josh 24:1,20-26, and compare the words “witness against you” with the same words in Deut 30:19; 31:9,19,24-26,28; 32:34).

b) In “coming up” to the throne room in the Most Holy Place, John was led to anticipate and contemplate the history of Christianity and its testimony from the perspective of the heavenly court. Contrary to what the quarterly affirms, in the first part of Revelation the past is seen from the future.

c) We are not told when the book was sealed. But in the light of Ps 139:16, where we are told that God has written all things in His book “before one of them came to be,” we could infer that the sealing of the new covenant people was predetermined by God in His book at the time of the inheritance transaction, that is, when the Jews resigned theocracy by saying, “we have no king but Caesar.” God’s predestination does not banish human free will, it instead reveals His foreknowledge. In other words, the opening of the seals in the judgment would impress the heavenly creatures with God’s omniscience. He previewed events up to the last generation, whose open testimony of the Word of God would be sealed, leading to the definitive victory of His Word (see A. R. Treiyer, *The Final Crisis in Rev 4-5*, first chapter).

d) The fact the four living beings that appear in the judgment in Rev 6 urge the apostle to consider the content of the seals, shows us how the heavenly court reviews the testimony of those who entered a covenant with the Lord throughout the various ages of Christianity. This is again confirmed in the fifth seal. The court assigns white robes to medieval martyrs while they continue to rest until the number of those to perish like them is complete with the last generation (that of the sixth seal). The white garments are awarded by the heavenly court after death, in the day of judgment (Heb 9:27; Rev 3:5).

15) The quarterly offers a historicist view of the seals (Rev 6). This is great! But it does not offer a satisfactory answer to the question of what the seals are, or what their purpose is (Lesson 5).

Reply: a) The seals do not appear to be judgments of God; they are more a reflection of the character of those Christian leaders that degraded the Christian witness with negative consequences. Princes rode horses, which suggests that the first four seals pointed out the leadership of the church (Eccl 10:7; Est 6:6-11).

b) If the seals were judgments, what is the judgment of the first seal, whose inscriptions represent the church going forth to conquer the battle of evangelistic faith? Christ does not clothe Himself in red in the second seal to produce infightings among Christians (that horseman is not a reference to what pagans do to Christians, nor is it a judgment of God, it is more so about battles within Christianity). Neither does Christ clothe Himself in black in the third to introduce a famine, nor does He reflect the pallor of the fourth to execute a ministry of death. This has to do with the degradation of Christianity

promoted by its leaders throughout the centuries. See details in my book, *The Seals and the Trumpets*.

16) The quarterly assumes that the altar mentioned in the fifth seal is a reference to the altar of the holocausts, at the foot of which the blood of the sacrifices was spilled (Lesson 7, Sunday).

Reply. The altar of the fifth seal is not that of the courtyard because there is no earthly altar in the heavenly sanctuary (see Heb 13:11). The Greek text of Rev 6:9 says “below the altar” (*hupokáto*), not “at the foot of the altar” (*ekceho* or *basin*), as was the case with the blood of the sacrifices in the temple. In the days of John, the Jews believed that if they remained faithful, they would die “below the altar” in heaven, or “below the throne of God.” See my books, *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment...*, 517, n. 260; *The Seals and the Trumpets*, 153, n. 1.

17) The quarterly suggests that the declaration given to the martyrs in the fifth seal (“until the number was completed” by the last generation) does not refer to a number, but rather to a culmination of Christ’s grace for that generation that makes them complete in Him (Lesson 5, Wednesday).

Reply: Both interpretations are possible according to the Greek text. Although several quotes from Ellen White refer to the *number* of the redeemed that becomes complete at the end of the judgment, it would behoove us to consider both interpretations to see if they might complement each other.

“Every case has been decided for life or death... *The number of His subjects is made up*” (GC 613-614). “An angel with a writer’s inkhorn by his side returned from the earth and reported to Jesus that his work was done, and *the saints were numbered and sealed* (EW 279).

“Christ had received His kingdom, having made the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins. *The subjects of the kingdom were made up*. The marriage of the Lamb was consummated. And the kingdom, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, was given to Jesus and the heirs of salvation, and Jesus was to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords... In that fearful time, after the close of Jesus’ mediation, the saints were living in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. *Every case was decided, every jewel numbered*” (EW 280-281).

Excursus: *The book of the law and the millennial judgment*

To expand on the subject, E. G. White never denied that the vision of Rev 4-5 was related to the final judgment (contrary to what some have recently been doing at Andrews University). On the contrary, she often claimed categorically that this vision is a judgment scene (see my book, *The Final Crisis in Rev 4-5*, chap 2).

“We read of a book in Revelation that was in the hand of One. There it was seen, and no one could open the book. And there was great mourning and weeping and agony because they could not open the book. But one says, ‘Here is One, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, He can open the book.’ He takes the book, and then O what rejoicing there was! The book was opened, and now it can be read, and every case will be decided according to the things that are written in the book” (Ms 164, 1904).

While the confessed sins of the righteous are deleted from the heavenly books in the pre-advent judgment, their good works will not be erased. These righteous works will beautify the city of God, and will bring happiness among the redeemed. The apostle wrote:

“Let us rejoice and celebrate and give Him the glory. For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. She was given clothing of fine linen, bright and pure.” For

the fine linen she wears is the righteous acts of the saints” (Rev 19:7-8).

The book of the law, together with the book of good works, will vindicate the redeemed during the millennial judgment, and will justify God for having redeemed them, in contrast with the evil works which will condemn the wicked.

“A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name. ‘On the day when I act,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘they will be my treasured possession... And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not’ (Mal 3:16-18).

“I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books” (Rev 20:12).

“After the saints are changed to immortality and caught up together with Jesus, after they receive their harps, their robes, and their crowns, and enter the city, Jesus and the saints sit in judgment. The books are opened—the book of life and the book of death. The book of life contains the good deeds of the saints; and the book of death contains the evil deeds of the wicked. These books are compared with the statute book, the Bible, and according to that men are judged. The saints, in unison with Jesus, pass their judgment upon the wicked dead. ‘Behold ye,’ said the angel, ‘the saints, in unison with Jesus, sit in judgment, and mete out to the wicked according to the deeds done in the body, and that which they must receive at the execution of the judgment is set off against their names.’ This, I saw, was the work of the saints with Jesus through the one thousand years in the Holy City before it descends to the earth...” (EW 52).

“All true knowledge obtained in this life will be retained by us in heaven. There our education is to be perfected. In the new earth Christ will lead us by the side of the living waters and explain the dark passages of Scripture that we have never been able to understand. All His providences will then be made plain” (Ms 102, 1904).

“God knows that we have only just begun the study of his Word. He knows that many have only a surface knowledge of the truth. When in the redeemed family above we follow him whithersoever he goeth, he will open to us the mysteries of His word... He will show us the beauty and loveliness of his word, which now we do not half understand. Then we shall cast our glittering crowns at his feet, and touching our golden harps, fill all heaven with rich music, singing, ‘Worthy, worthy is the Lamb, who died, and who lives again, a triumphant conqueror’” (GCB, 4-25-01, 40).

You may see more statements in my book, *The Final Crisis in Revelation 4-5*, and in my third seminar on the sanctuary, *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary*. I have published those statements and many others in several of my books, and I have included several of them in messages that I delivered over the internet, that you may find on my webpage.

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

Lesson 7

18) The Sabbath School quarterly links the throwing of the lit censer in Rev 8:5 to the daily labor of the high priest. It affirms that “the priest came out and threw the censer over the pavement, producing a loud noise,” followed by the blasting of trumpets (Lesson 7, Sunday).

Reply: a) But it does not offer a single Biblical text to confirm this, and completely ignores the Biblical testimonies that show the throwing of the censer implies the end of intercession and subsequently the destruction of the wicked (Psalm 11:4-6; Prov 25:22; Eze 10:2). [Note: The Study Guide later added the text of Eze 10:2, and connects that throwing of the censer to the end of heavenly intercession [this is a commendable addition!]. The Spirit of Prophecy clearly links the throwing of the

lit censer with the final judgment. If Rev 8:5 links the censers with the altar, it is because that vision has the purpose of highlighting the end of heavenly intercession. There are no remaining charcoals left to burn incense.

“An angel with a writer’s inkhorn by his side returned from the earth [see Eze 9], and reported to Jesus that his work was done, and the saints were numbered [see Rev 6:11] and sealed [see Rev 7:3-4]. Then I saw Jesus, who had been ministering before the ark containing the ten commandments, throw down the censer. He raised His hands, and with a loud voice said, ‘it is done’” (EW 279-280).

b) The quarterly makes it clear that it is not in favor of the futurism being promoted by some brethren who want to locate all the trumpets at the end of the time of mercy. But again, we do not have to resort to error to contest another error. In the seventh seal we see the stamp of the seven trumpets and the heavenly intercession (Rev 8:1-5). Just like the seventh day belongs to God, so too does the seventh seal. It reveals to the heavenly court (gathered “before the throne”) how God kept His promises delineated in the book of the covenant and protected His people throughout the centuries. Therefore, the seventh seal encompasses the entire Christian dispensation, up until verse 5 where it ends with the cessation of heavenly intercession in the final judgment.

c) In addition to the hurling of the censer over the earth, the conclusion of the heavenly intercession is seen with what comes after the toss: “there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake” (Rev 8:5). That description appears at the end of every prophetic series (Rev 4:5 [conclusion of the seven churches]; 8:1-5 [conclusion of the seven seals]; 11:19 [conclusion of the seven trumpets]), and (Rev 16:17-18) [conclusion of the seven plagues].

“A crisis had arrived in the government of God. The earth was filled with transgression. *The voices of those who had been sacrificed to human envy and hatred were crying beneath the altar for retribution.* All heaven was prepared at the word of God to move to the help of his elect. One word from him, and the bolts of heaven would have fallen upon the earth, filling it with fire and flame. God had but to speak, and there would have been *thunderings and lightnings and earthquakes and destruction*” (RH 5-7-17).

d) Rev 8:2-5 shows the content of the seventh seal (“I saw,” as in 6:1,5,8,9,12), which includes the seven trumpets and the heavenly intercession (the divine part of the covenant with His people that the court recapitulates at the end of the judgment). Beginning with verse 6 the Lord reveals to the apostle a detailed development of the seven trumpets.

19) In the original teacher’s quarterly, Jon Paulien pretended that Adventists have not yet achieved a consensus on the seven trumpets. But in the printed edition this statement was taken out. What we are seeing is an apostasy from what was believed for centuries by Protestants, was later adopted by our pioneers, and confirmed by E. G. White. It is evident that the Study Guide wants to hide the fact that what is being introduced into the lesson is an obvious apostasy from the faith that encouraged Adventists since the time of Ellen White, and that continues to encourage Adventists today.

a) Adventists achieved a remarkable consensus on the seven trumpets in 1848, which they then confirmed at the General Conference session of 1883, and then again at the following session, without any subsequent renunciations to this agreement from the world church. At that time, they declared that a change in the interpretation of the trumpets “would unsettle some of the most important and fundamental points of our faith.” Surprisingly, that is what is now taking place in this Sabbath School quarterly, the “unsettling [of] some of the most important and fundamental points of our faith.”

b) Why doesn't the quarterly cite the clear-cut declaration of Ellen White that confirmed the decision of the 1883 GC session, which happened to be the adopted Protestant and Millerite view of the seven trumpets?

“In the year 1840, another remarkable fulfilment of prophecy excited widespread interest... At the very time specified, Turkey, through her ambassadors, accepted the protection of the allied powers of Europe, and thus placed herself under the control of Christian nations. The event exactly fulfilled the prediction” (GC 334-5).

c) The historicist interpretation of the seven trumpets of Revelation, together with the interpretation of the apocalyptic beast, obtained the greatest consensus among Protestant interpreters. This was also the case within our church until after the death of Ellen White. Some then began to question the historical documentation, which intensified in the second half of the 20th century when readers of Revelation were further removed from the events witnessed by the pioneers in the 1840's. Today, that historical documentation is available and compelling. Those who deny the available data do not achieve a consensus because they are openly apostatizing, and there is no other possible interpretation that respects the parameters established by Revelation for its historical determination.

20) Abandonment of the “testimony of Jesus” and the Protestant and Millerite legacy adopted by our pioneers regarding the fulfillment of the seven trumpets (Lesson 7, Monday).

Reply: a) Regarding the fifth and sixth trumpets and the prophetic dates therein, some Adventist leaders beginning in the 20th century have wanted to correct the testimony of Jesus, because it lacked at the time enough historical proof in some areas. But Ellen White did not accept correction regarding the interpretation of those dates, just like she also refused to change other prophetic dates. Today, the historical evidence is impressive.

See my books on the trumpets, and the article on my website also published by a prominent journal: A. R. Treiyer, “The Chronology of Events in the History of Pachymeres related to the battle of Bapheus and the beginning of the Ottoman Empire,” in *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* (Vol. 7, Number 8, August 2017), 23-48 [Note: this journal allows free online reading]. For the interpretation of the trumpets in both the Christian history and the Seventh Day Adventist Church, read my book *The Seals and the Trumpets*, and my web page: [<http://www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/Documents/Trumpetsdates.pdf>]

b) Looking back through history, Protestants saw that the only judgments worth mentioning against Rome (through calls of war), were those of the Barbarian invasions (represented by the first four trumpets, which began in the first century) and those of the Muslim invasions (seen in the following two trumpets). They successfully toppled the Roman Empire and kept the papacy in check when it appeared later. But the new theological trend is to try to fit every trumpet with every seal and with every church, when the purpose of each of those visions is different. They are more interested in the way the message is packaged than in the message itself.

c) Ellen White did not discuss to the first four trumpets directly but accepted the Protestant legacy of seeing Rome as the target of these judgments, as this was the last oppressive empire announced by the prophet Daniel in his prophecies.

“But the chief agent of Satan in making war upon Christ and His people during the first centuries of the Christian era was the Roman Empire, in which paganism was the prevailing religion. Thus, while the dragon primarily represents Satan, it is in a secondary sense, a symbol of pagan Rome” (GC 438).

Several modern theologians forget the role this Empire had in persecuting God's people and overlook its final role in our days. In its place they are introducing confusion by adopting a structural method of apocalyptic interpretation that began to develop around the 1970's. For details about why this method of interpretation is problematic, and why the *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary* currently in progress will need to overcome this to truly be an Adventist Commentary, see: <http://www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/Documents/Concernsdaibc.pdf>. This isn't to say that a study of the literary structure of Revelation is a bad idea, it just happens to be the case that this method tends to be subjective and arranged according to the likes and desires of the interpreter.

21) The teacher's edition, more so than the Study Guide, ignores the prophetic dates specified in the fifth and sixth trumpets, that end on August 11, 1840. They do this to be able to extend the sixth trumpet beyond the disappointment of 1844. With such a move, they also ignore the spatial correlation between the heavenly and earthly temple.

Reply: a) It is affirmed that the trumpets are judgments against those who oppress God's people. But in the vague historical proposition by the authors of the lesson there are trumpets which don't reflect a judgment of God. The description of the trumpets represent military wars through which God punishes the pagan Roman empire and the following Holy Roman Empire. They are not philosophies or apostasies.

b) In order to identify the non-Adventist background of this incorrect assumption which denies a spatial correlation between the earthly and heavenly temples, I will bring the example of two members of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference, namely, Ekkehardt Mueller and Gerhard Pfandl.

1. In the 44th issue of the Biblical Research Institute Newsletter, *Reflections*, Ekkehardt Mueller assumes positions that are at odds with our church's historic and current beliefs, especially in relation to the trumpets. He says, literally: "Adventists... are convinced that the present generation lives at the verge of Christ's Second Coming, in the time of the sixth seal and the sixth trumpet." This neglect of a spatial correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary is at the base of his German paper *Die Sieben Posaunen* [The Seven Trumpets], with his admittedly regrettable uncertain and dubious conclusions. See my web page:

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

But Adventists have never believed this concerning the sixth trumpet, nor do they believe it even today. Contrary to what Mueller now affirms, Adventists have always believed that the seventh trumpet began after 1840/44. When in Rev 10 the seventh trumpet is announced, it is because the sixth trumpet is already over (e.g. it is no longer mentioned because we are between 1840 and 1844).

The conclusion of the second woe or sixth trumpet comes even after the two witnesses representing the Old and New Testaments return to life and are exalted (Rev 11:7-14). The Word of God was vindicated immediately after the French Revolution, by the establishment of different Biblical Societies (GC 287), and the "great religious awakening under the proclamation of Christ's soon coming" (GC 354). All this happened before the year 1840/1844.

After the conclusion of the second woe specified in Rev 11:14, the seventh trumpet sounds with the opening of the Most Holy Place in the heavenly temple (Rev 11:15,19). The great disappointment also takes place after the conclusion of the sixth trumpet which is connected to the Holy Place, because the voice of that trumpet comes from the horns of the golden altar (Rev 9:13). When "the hour" of judgment corresponding to that trumpet expired, the beginning of the seventh trumpet was announced (Rev 10:7).

The sixth trumpet is placed in the context of the altar of incense (in the holy place: Rev 9:13), and the seventh opens the door to the Most Holy (Rev 11:15,19). The seventh trumpet begins with its announcement, and ends with the military intervention of the heavenly army at the Second Coming of

Christ, at the last [the seventh one] trumpet.

2. Gerhard Pfandl wrote about “The Reality of the Heavenly Sanctuary,” in *Perspective Digest* 19.3 (2014): “there is not a tent or a temple of stone in heaven, but a heavenly sanctuary made of heavenly material and in heavenly dimensions.” Why? Because, in his words, to believe in a heavenly temple of stone is simply an “absurdity.” Therefore, he concludes by saying that “we do not know exactly what the heavenly sanctuary looks like” (!!!). Again, he insists later on in his paper, that the biblical writers didn’t see the geography of the heavenly temple but a symbol to represent the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary. He doesn’t realize the fact that the earthly temple was not a symbol of another symbol, but a symbol of a reality (Heb 8:5).

Let us ask the question if our belief in the transference of ministry that took place in 1844 is strengthened or weakened by these propositions. No wonder Pfandl also rejects the dates of the fifth and sixth trumpets offered by Protestants and Adventists throughout their history. What does Jesus tell us through the testimony of the Spirit of Prophecy?

“As Christ’s ministration was to consist of two great divisions, each occupying a period of time and having a distinctive place in the heavenly sanctuary, so the typical ministration consisted of two divisions, the daily and the yearly service, and to each a department of the tabernacle was devoted” (*PP* 357). “Moses made the earthly sanctuary after a pattern which was shown him. Paul teaches that that pattern was the true sanctuary which is in heaven. And John testifies that he saw it in heaven” (*GC* 415). “I was also shown a sanctuary upon the earth containing two apartments. It resembled the one in heaven, and I was told that it was a figure of the heavenly. The furniture of the first apartment of the earthly sanctuary was like that in the first apartment of the heavenly. The veil was lifted, and I looked into the holy of holies and saw that the furniture was the same as in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary” (*EW* 252-253).

See more statements in my criticism to Gerhard Pfandl on my web page:

[<http://www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/Documents/Pfandlproblemsheavenlysanctuary.pdf>]
]

b) The fact that we see two moments of time between the sixth and the seventh trumpets, projected by two different apartments of the heavenly sanctuary (Rev 9:13; 11:15,19), doesn’t mean that the intercession of Jesus ceased in 1844. On the contrary, that intercession continues today, but over the ark in the Most Holy Place, where the High Priest placed the censer on the Day of Atonement. Though we can apply theologically the intercession before the altar of incense to the entire Christian dispensation, and refer to that ministry to show what He is doing today for us (see *DA* 568), the fact is that on the Day of Atonement, that very intercession was performed only upon the mercy seat.

“In the service of the earthly sanctuary, which, as we have seen, is a figure of the service in the heavenly, when the high priest on the Day of Atonement entered the most holy place, *the ministration in the first apartment ceased*. God commanded: ‘There shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he comes out.’ Leviticus 16:17. So when Christ entered the holy of holies to perform the closing work of the atonement, *He ceased His ministration in the first apartment*. But when *the ministration in the first apartment ended*, the ministration in the second apartment began...

“But clearer light came with the investigation of the sanctuary question. They now saw that they were correct in believing that the end of the 2300 days in 1844 marked an important crisis. But while it was true that that door of hope and mercy by which men had for eighteen hundred years found access to God, was closed, another door was opened, and forgiveness of sins was offered to men through the intercession of Christ in the most holy. *One part of His ministration had closed, only to give place to another*. There was still an ‘open door’ to the heavenly sanctuary, where

Christ was ministering in the sinner's behalf.

“Now was seen the application of those words of Christ in the Revelation, addressed to the church at this very time: ‘These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.’ Revelation 3:7, 8” (GC 428-430).

One more point. When the high priest concluded his intercession in the Most Holy on the Day of Atonement, he went to the Holy and cleansed the altar of incense with the same blood that cleansed the Most Holy (Lev 16:17-18). The movement is from the Most Holy to the Holy and to the courtyard. This is what we also see in Revelation when the door of the Holy Place is opened at the conclusion of the heavenly priestly ministry (Rev 15:5). The altar is mentioned there in the context of leaving the temple, to pour out the plagues (Rev 14:15,17,18; 15:5-8; 16:7).

More will be available in my commentary on youtube that I prepared for each lesson of this quarterly.

JUDGMENT ON BABYLON

Lesson 12

22) The quarterly presumes that the scarlet color of the woman and the beast in Rev 17 was customary for a prostitute, with the addition of the purple on the dress of the woman associating it with the attire of the high priest in the OT. This ignores the literal application of the purple and scarlet colors that have characterized the Roman Curia (Lesson 12, Monday).

Reply: a) There are no Biblical or non-Biblical references provided to substantiate the idea that prostitutes habitually dressed in purple combined with scarlet. Even so, which of the two symbols are we to choose? The attire of the prostitute or that of the high priest? Did the high priests in the temple of Israel clothe themselves with the attire of a prostitute?

b) The attire of the high priest included the color blue. If the prophecy's intention was really to represent the attire of the Israelite high priests, why not also include that color (Ex 28:5)?

c) Given the modern tendency to spiritualize apocalyptic fulfillments, the author of the quarterly set aside a quote from Ellen White when she correctly declares:

“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...” (GC 382).

23) The teacher's edition (prepared by Jon Paulien) frequently repeats, especially in lesson 12, the following concept: “In a vision, the prophet can be taken anytime and anyplace, but explanations of the vision to the prophet, in order to make sense, must come in the time and place of the prophet.” Following this principle, the quarterly is challenged by the interpretation of the seven kings and the eighth in Rev 17.

Reply: a) The application of this principle of linking the angel's explanation to the prophet's present time does not always work. For example, in Dan 7:25 the beginning of the explanation takes place at a future time for the prophet (“From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem”). In Dan 12:11 the explanation takes place at a still more distant time from the prophet's perspective. It deals with the beginning of the 1290 days/years (“From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the

abomination that causes desolation is set up”). In Rev 22:10-11, the actual time of the explanation is the time of the end and even the end of the time of probation.

“Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near. Let the unrighteous continue to be unrighteous, and the vile continue to be vile; let the righteous continue to practice righteousness, and the holy continue to be holy”

In Rev 17 the present time is also the time of the great prostitute which sits on the beast, that is, after the appearance of the Roman Catholic Church, when she is already a mother of prostitutes and is already drunken with the blood of the saints. In other words, the context in which the explanation of the angel is given is the time of the end, not the present time of the apostle (Rev 17:8).

b) Who are the seven kings or kingdoms? Let me share how I see this part of the prophecy. More can be found on my web page where I deal with the symbols of Rev 17 in the paper: *Identifying Babylon as the Roman Catholic Church. Current Objections and Answers.*

[<http://www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/Documents/Identifyingbabylon.pdf>]

Revelation is built on the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel, which began with Babylon. The following universal empires are well known.

1. Babylon.
2. Medo-Persia.
3. Greece.
4. Pagan Rome.

5. Papal Rome supported by the Holy Roman Empire (let us notice that the deadly wound was given not to pagan Rome, but papal Rome. Pagan Rome is represented in Rev 13 by another beast called the dragon through whom the devil oppressed God’s people). “Once was, now is not, yet will come up out of the abyss [because it was deadly wounded: Rev 13:3-4], and go to its destruction” (Rev 17:8; see Dan 7:11,26; 8:25). It is “the beast who once was” (Rev 17:11). It is also the eighth which belongs to the seven (it was the fifth that at the end is recovered: Rev 17:11).

John places us in the time of the end, that is, after the political authority of the papacy received its deadly wound.

6. Secular authorities which began with the reinstatement of atheism in the French Revolution, putting an end to the union of church and state (Rev 11:7-8; cf. Dan 11:40). John is placed in the time of the end, because he says that the sixth is (“one is”), and the next, the seventh one, “has not yet come, but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while” (Rev 17:10).

7. USA Protestant government which restores the political authority of the papacy (Rev 13:12-13). The Roman papacy is the eighth now restored and supported by Protestantism.

“I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW”

Lesson 13

24) Because the Most Holy Place was a cube, and the New Jerusalem looks like a cube for many modern interpreters, the quarterly deduces that the entire city of God becomes the Most Holy Place.

Because the city of God contains the New Eden, others go even further and infer that the Eden of creation was a temple (is it not a trend toward pantheism?), and thus Adam and Eve were co-priests. The last phase in this wandering interpretation is to promote the Ordination of Women to pastoral ministry just like men. That final stage seems to motivate many to see a replica of a temple in cities and gardens. See my criticism to the commentary on the book of Genesis of Jaques Doukhan [<http://www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/Documents/GenesisCritiqueDoukhan.pdf>]

Reply: a) But John is not projecting the New Jerusalem as a cube. Let us read its dimension from a

literal translation.

“The city lies foursquare, and its length the same as also the width. And he measured the city with the reed at twelve thousand stadia. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal” (*Berean Literal Bible* of Rev 21:16).

The modern trend is not to take the heavenly city as a literal or material city, but purely symbolic. Many theologians do the same with the heavenly temple. In consequence, they have no problem interpreting the city as being a cube with 1,400 miles or 2,200 kilometers in length, breadth, and height (something not plausible if it was literal). But those who believe that it has to do with a real city don't see it as a cube. Instead, they believe that the city can be visualized in a coherent way. For example, if the height of the city had such an implausible measurement, its wall of just 70 meters in height would make no sense.

Since the horizontal extension takes as a reference the extremes of the city that are marked by its wall, it is reasonable to deduce that the height of 144 elbows or near 70 meters of its wall is equal in all its horizontal extension.

“In Syria-Palestine, cities were characteristically enclosed by irregular walls because of the uneven topography. In the plains of Egypt and Babylonia, however, cities could be enclosed with square or rectangular walls” (David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22* [1998], 1160).

This may explain why the description of John tries to strengthen the fact that the walls of the New Jerusalem would not be irregular, meandering, nor uneven in length, breadth, and height. Rather it will form a perfect square.

In this context, it is legitimate to ask ourselves about the place on which the New Jerusalem will descend. Will it be upon a steep place and, therefore, requiring irregular measures in both horizontal and height like the old Jerusalem and other cities of Palestine that John knew well? The prophecy of Zechariah that E. G. White took to depict the place where the city of God will descend at the conclusion of the millennium shows us that its topography will be a plain and therefore proportional in length and height. Let us read the specification given by E. G. White in her book *Great Controversy*, p. 662:

“Christ descends upon the Mount of Olives, whence, after His resurrection, He ascended, and where angels repeated the promise of His return. Says the prophet: ‘The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee.’ ‘And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof, ... and *there shall be a very great valley.*’ ‘And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one.’ Zechariah 14:5, 4, 9. As the New Jerusalem, in its dazzling splendor, comes down out of heaven, it rests upon the place purified and made ready to receive it, and Christ, with His people and the angels, enters the Holy City” (*GC* 662).

b) On the other hand, John is clear in stating that the Lord is the temple of the city, not the city. Let us ask ourselves: does the fact that a table has four legs like a lion allow us to conclude that the table became a lion, or the lion a table? Of course, not! The forced conclusion of confusing the city with a temple conceals pantheistic trends. The book of Revelation is clear in stating that the Lord is the temple of the city, not that the whole city is a temple or still worse, the Most Holy Place.

c) In addition, we need have no doubts about the real and material nature of the city of God. The following statement of E. G. White is appropriate in this context.

“A fear of making the future inheritance seem too material has led many to spiritualize away the very truths which lead us to look upon it as our home. Christ assured His disciples that He went to

prepare mansions for them in the Father's house. Those who accept the teachings of God's word will not be wholly ignorant concerning the heavenly abode. And yet, 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.' 1 Corinthians 2:9. Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it. No finite mind can comprehend the glory of the Paradise of God" (GC 674).

In short, the measurements of the city of God reveal two basic notions: perfection and immensity. Its beauty is seen in the proportions and perfect balance, as in the description of its material. Its immensity is in accordance with the revelation of "the great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb," and acknowledging God for His work of redemption (Rev 7:9-10). If so great a multitude from throughout the millenniums will be saved, there is hope for me who am a sinner. The city of God is not crowded; there are rooms for all who want to live there. Do you want to accept the invitation of the Lord to dwell in His city forever? He will be the King for all eternity, and we will not try to install another king, because no other being gave his life for us.

Let us conclude with a statement found in the book *Early Writings*, which exhorts us to dream about the city of God and its biblical descriptions as something real which will bring us closer and closer to God if we follow her advice.

"The true Christian's joys and consolation must and will be in heaven. The longing souls of those who have tasted of the powers of the world to come and have feasted on heavenly joys, will not be satisfied with things of earth. Such will find enough to do in their leisure moments. Their souls will be drawn out after God. Where the treasure is, there will the heart be, holding sweet communion with the God they love and worship. Their amusement will be in contemplating their treasure—the Holy City, the earth made new, their eternal home. And while they dwell upon those things which are lofty, pure, and holy, heaven will be brought near, and they will feel the power of the Holy Spirit, and this will tend to wean them more and more from the world and cause their consolation and chief joy to be in the things of heaven, their sweet home. The power of attraction to God and heaven will then be so great that nothing can draw their minds from the great object of securing the soul's salvation and honoring and glorifying God" (EW 112-113).

Conclusion

The object of this reaction is to awaken interest in the study of Revelation, so that everyone can deepen their faith in the testimony of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy announced in Revelation (12:17; 19:10). I don't condemn the church as many are trying to do. On the contrary, I praise the collaborators of the quarterly for daring to dedicate an entire quarter to the study of Revelation, a book that has been misused in recent times by both unbelieving liberals and extreme conservatives. But I must raise my voice like a trumpet (Isa 58:1), to denounce the sin of my people in undermining the importance of heeding the clear declarations of Jesus through the Spirit of Prophecy with regards to certain vital pillars of our prophetic faith. Even if these initial skeptic steps do not necessarily lead doubters to leave the church, their witness will encourage the next generation to take more bold steps towards apostasy.

"The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. 'Where there is no vision, the people perish' (Prov. 29:18). Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God's remnant people in the true testimony" (1 SM 48).

"It is Satan's plan to weaken the faith of God's people in the *Testimonies*... Next follows skepticism in regard to the vital points of our faith, the pillars of our position, then doubt as to the

Holy Scriptures, and then the downward march to perdition. When the Testimonies, which were once believed, are doubted and given up, Satan knows the deceived ones will not stop at this; and he redoubles his efforts till he launches them into open rebellion, which becomes incurable and ends in destruction” (4 T 211).

It is regrettable that such a manufactured context is set before the entire church. The effect of this misguided view of the judgment scene in Rev 4 and 5 is that it erects a shield that restricts those who accept it from seeing the most glorious vision of the heavenly court that is about to crown Christ as King of the New Jerusalem. Due to the stubbornness of wanting to be like other Christians who do not have the light God gave the Adventist church, those who propose this view lose sight of or belittle the most glorious final coronation of Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The vision of Rev 4 and 5 is of supreme importance because while men on earth prepare to honor the antichrist (Rev 13:3-4), in heaven all the angels are preparing to honor the Creator and Redeemer (Rev 4-5). That vision is more relevant today than ever because it should lead us to contemplate and glorify God and His Son in harmony with the proclamation of His glory in heaven (Rev 14:7). We need to know we will soon face God, Christ, the four living beings, the 24 elders, and the angels of heaven in that heavenly court (Rev 7:9-12; 14:1-3; 19:1-8; see 11:15-19). Can we even begin to imagine how momentous and magnificent this is?

Finally, each of us is to take a stand that can assist us in staying true when the final time of trouble and testing is before us. To avoid retreat and spiritual weakening when faced with opposition, we must now base our faith on the immovable rock of the Word of God.

“Men whom He has greatly honored will, in the closing scenes of this earth’s history, pattern after ancient Israel... A departure from the great principles Christ has laid down in His teachings, a working out of human projects, using the Scriptures to justify a wrong course of action under the perverse working of Lucifer, will confirm men in misunderstanding, and the truth that they need to keep them from wrong practices will leak out of the soul like water from a leaky vessel” (*MR* 13:379,381 [1904]).

“In this age the Lord is sending his servants with no ordinary message, but with special truths that must come before believers of every rank and tongue. Many of our church-members have never studied fully into the more sure word of prophecy, and do not understand the facts that have made us what we are. All should bring into exercise the powers of the intellect, that they may clearly understand the different phases of present truth, and especially the subjects of prophecy which were opened to us when the message of Christ’s soon coming was first heralded” (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 2, 1908, 3).

“The present truth for this time comprises the messages, the third angel’s message succeeding the first and second. The presentation of this message with all it embraces is our work. We stand as the remnant people in these last days to promulgate the truth and swell the cry of the third angel’s wonderful distinct message, giving the trumpet a certain sound. Eternal truth, which we have adhered to from the beginning, is to be maintained in all its increasing importance to the close of probation. The trumpet is to give no uncertain sound... Faith, eternal faith in the past and in the present truth is to be talked, is to be prayed, is to be presented with pen and voice” (10 *MR* 314).