

TRUMPET AFTER TRUMPET
by Erwin R. Gane
Reviewed by Dr. Alberto R. Treiyer
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Erwin R. Gane recently wrote a book entitled *Trumpet After Trumpet*. This book was published by the Pacific Press Publishing Association (PPPA). It should surprise us that an Adventist Publishing House would print such a book as it adopts a theory our church has repeatedly rejected. There have been numerous prior works with similar approaches that have not been accepted by our publishing houses. For instance, a similar futuristic approach to the trumpets by Marvin Moore about 30 years ago (whose manuscript was given to me by the author) was not published by our publishing houses in the '80s after the Biblical Research institute of the General Conference warned about the problems that would follow if that framework was to be adopted. But now things seem to be changing. The PPPA is publishing several books that are creating doubts regarding the historicist messages we received as a legacy from the Protestant Reformation. Unfortunately, these books are increasing (instead of decreasing) the confusion and ambiguity introduced into our church over the past 50 or so years.

Interestingly, a prior futurist book by E. R. Gane entitled *Heaven's Open Door* was likewise rejected by the BRI in the '80s, but the PPPA decided to publish it anyway in 1989. Erwin Gane now includes in the bibliography of this new book on the trumpets two books authored by his son Roy, a professor at Andrews University. However, nowhere in the book do we find his son's endorsement of the views expressed. E. R. Gane also knows I wrote two books on the trumpets because he previously contacted me about the topic, but he does not include them in his bibliography. This is unfortunate because in doing so he is repeating the same problems many before him have had time and time again. When a comprehensive bibliography is lacking, critical flaws in the framework of an interpretation become less readily apparent.

The current proposition of E. R. Gane in *Trumpet After Trumpet* emphasizes a *double or dual interpretation* of the apocalyptic prophecies, an approach that has been repeatedly rejected by our church (see in *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy* (BRI, Washington DC, 1986), the papers of G. F. Hasel, "Fulfillments of Prophecy," 288-372; and W. G. Johnsson "Conditionality in Biblical Prophecy with Particular Reference to Apocalyptic," 259-287; also refer to the website of the BRI). To avoid falling into the same trap, I will review some of the hermeneutical problems that have previously led others like him to believe the typical fantasy and spiritualization of futurism. In doing so please note I will not try to get into all the details involved with his approach because I have already done so in two books, which the interested reader can search to find more specific answers: *The Seals and the Trumpets. Biblical and Historical Studies* (2005, 420 pages), and *The Mystery of the Apocalyptic Trumpets Unraveled* (2012, 80 pages).

A presumed dual fulfillment of the Apocalyptic prophecies

The Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church, via the committees formed by the BRI in the '80s, has officially rejected all suppositions of a dual fulfillment in regards to the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. It is important to appreciate that some of the conditional promises made by God to His people in the old dispensation were partially fulfilled when a remnant of Israel returned to the promised land from Babylon, with the expectation that the rest of these promises would be completely fulfilled by the people of the new dispensation (the church). These divine promises were conditional because they depended on the faithfulness of the people to the divine covenant. Therefore, because old Israel did not fully fulfill the role God had assigned to it, these promises were fulfilled in the New Israel - the Church. For details, see H. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God. Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Andrews University Press, 1983).

Fortunately, salvation does not depend on us, but on God's grace, a grace we have to accept if we want to be saved (Eph 2:8). This is seen more definitively in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation which are not conditional. Their fulfillment does not depend on us. It depends on the ability and power of God to

lead His people to their final victory. If this were not so we would have to continue waiting and waiting indefinitely for the final triumph of a church that would depend, in this case, on human success. But salvation rests on the power of God to complete His plan of redemption. This is what we see especially in the apocalyptic prophecies where a dual or triple or greater fulfillment is not envisioned.

On what basis then does Gane insist upon a dual fulfillment of the trumpets - one historical and another eschatological (see pages 297-305)? First of all, on an interpretation of the Bible that does not take into account the fact that the apocalyptic prophecies are unconditional. Secondly, on a partial reading of the statements of the Spirit of Prophecy.

Some answers to the arguments for a dual fulfillment

1. *The little horn of Dan 8.* Gane doesn't base his approach on a biblical foundation, but rather on a controversial interpretation of the little horn of Dan 8:10-13 adopted by Uriah Smith, one of the pioneers of the SDA Church. Interestingly, other pioneers like Stephen N. Haskell who also wrote a commentary on Revelation did not adopt such a dual approach in those verses. In the '80s, the BRI published a book entitled *Symposium on Daniel*, which denied the possibility of a dual fulfillment in this prophecy. Some see in verse 9 the pagan phase of Rome, and in verse 10 the papal phase. Others see in verse 11 a switch from pagan Rome to papal Rome, but a dual fulfillment simultaneously projecting these two phases in verses 9 to 13 is not accepted.

2. *The seven churches of Revelation.* Gane presents as proof of dual and even triple fulfillments the fact that the messages of Jesus to the churches of Revelation can be applied to different times. This is a mistake. We may spiritualize some of the prophetic messages of the churches from a practical or homiletical perspective, but this does not deny the fact that in the apocalyptic projection there is only one fulfillment. The messages given by Jesus to the seven churches work for "all the churches," much like the Epistles of Paul. This however does not imply that their prophetic or apocalyptic projection would have several fulfillments.

"The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era. The number 7 indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the end of time, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the world" (AA 585).

3. *The prophecy of Matthew 24.* Gane also resorts to the prophecy of Jesus about the end of the world, which took the events of the destruction of Jerusalem as an example of final events. But we find there a sequence of events that start with the destruction of Jerusalem and culminate with the destruction of the world. These are two different events. Since the disciples could not dissociate them, the Lord dealt with these two events without explaining that they would be fulfilled in separate ways. As time went by and the disciples let go of their patriotic prejudices they would be able to read this message of Jesus again and easily distinguish the two separate events.

"In Matthew 24, in answer to the question of His disciples concerning the sign of His coming and of the end of the world, Christ had pointed out some of the most important events in the history of the world and of the church from His first to His second advent; namely, the destruction of Jerusalem, the great tribulation of the church under the pagan and papal persecutions, the darkening of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars. After this He spoke of His coming in His kingdom" (GC 393). "Had He opened to His disciples future events as He beheld them, they would have been unable to endure the sight. In mercy to them He blended the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves" (DA 628).

The prophets of the Old Testament spoke about the end of the world within the *microcosm* of certain cities whose fate was to be analogous to what would take place within the *macrocosm* of the end of time.

During these last days, the same spirit of these ancient and corrupt settlements would acquire a global dimension. We should thus ask ourselves if the literary framework of Matt 24 is completely apocalyptic or rather comparable to the literary style found in other prophecies of the Bible, where the destruction of a people serves as an illustration of the destruction of the entire world or, in other words, where the destruction of the world is portrayed by the destruction of a people.

4. *Warnings of E. G. White*. The title of Gane's book is derived from a statement of E. G. White where she speaks about the trumpets being blasted into the future. Throughout the Bible, the use of trumpets is frequently associated with a call to war. Therefore, one cannot assume this statement is referring to the seven trumpets of Revelation. Similarly, the plagues that she mentions in a general sense in that same quote are not necessarily the last seven plagues of Revelation.

We must also remember that before destroying a nation or an empire God brings into consideration prior judgments that were disregarded by the people. These then become the evidence that neither the easy way (the warning) nor the hard way (God's past judgments) led to a change in such nations or empires (see Rev 9:20-21). This vindicates God's subsequent and definitive intervention, that of the pouring out of the last plagues contained in the seventh trumpet (see Rev 11:18; 15:1; 16:1, in connection with the "wrath" of God). During the first century John was brought to behold these events from the *final judgment* perspective. This *review* of the state of worldly affairs is presented to him vividly as something that was yet to come (see *RH*, July 4, 1893: "When the grand review shall take place." See also, for more statements and examples, A. Treiyer, *The Apocalyptic Expectations of the Sanctuary*, Appendix I, 303-311).

Gane would do better if he paid attention to the warnings of the Spirit of Prophecy regarding those who would attempt to find dual fulfillments in the apocalyptic prophecy: "Some will take the truth applicable to their time, and place it in the future. Events in the train of prophecy that had their fulfillment away in the past are made future, and thus by these theories the faith of some is undermined... You recognize these facts in Bible history as true, but apply them to the future. They have their force still in their proper place, in the chain of events that have made us as a people what we are today, and as such, they are to be presented to those who are in the darkness of error... The truths that have been unfolding in their order, as we have advanced along the line of prophecy revealed in the Word of God, are truth, sacred, eternal truth today" (*SM II*, 102-3).

Additional problems

The cautious reader will feel disappointed in reading Gane's spiritualization of the trumpets of Revelation with their projection towards the future. The inherent ambiguity of such futuristic approaches resembles that of some Medieval Catholic interpretations that sought to replace Rome as the target of God's judgments with any other obscure entity. Such approaches also neglect the fact that the trumpets projected armies. As a result, it becomes impossible to see a clear connection between the historical fulfillment of the trumpets and the spiritualized future projection that Gane proposes.

Let me mention some examples. Gane tries to maintain a historical fulfillment for the prophetic dates of the fifth and the sixth trumpets but in doing so he is unable to project those dates to his presumed spiritual eschatological fulfillment. According to him, "demonic and human forces of evil will torment the professed people of God for an unspecified period of time" (p. 302). He offers a dual fulfillment for the first six trumpets but not the seventh because it deals with the end. Why then also project the prior trumpets to the end when they take place during the time when the ministry in heaven is connected to the altar in the holy place, all before the time of the end? (p. 303).

We are not offered in his book a theological analysis of the entire book of Revelation, in particular the first half. Nevertheless, it seems to be the case that he has identified with some of the interpretations put forth by certain Adventist authors beginning in the 1950s, which distanced themselves from the precise historical fulfillment of these prophecies and increasingly spiritualized the book of Revelation.

In order to offer a new and futuristic interpretation of the trumpets Gane assumes that for centuries there was no agreement on these prophecies and, therefore, concludes they are confusing. This

unfortunately is the usual argument employed by futurists. They are confused because they fail to see the historical connection with the biblical prophecy.

Gane and other confused readers would do well to expand their bibliography and read great works such as that of Leroy Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*, or the documentation contained in my books. For centuries Protestants enjoyed tremendous consensus when it came to the apocalyptic prophecies that targeted the Roman papacy, including that of the trumpets that predicted the divine judgments against Rome for her countless crimes. These Protestants had a clear message to preach and rejected the ambiguity and confusion of previous Medieval theories. It was not until the end of the 19th century that Protestants and Evangelicals forgot about Rome as being worthy of the divine judgments and slowly abandoned the principles of interpretation held by their spiritual ancestors. It is unfortunate to now see Gane bringing the same confusion into Adventism.