

THE PROPHETIC DATES OF THE TRUMPETS OF REVELATION

A history of interpretation and the confirmatory role of E. G. White¹

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The book of Revelation is prophetic history emphasizing God's answer to the outcry of those who suffer persecution "because of the Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus" (Rev 1:9; 6:9-10; 13:17, etc.). The oppressing power on whom the spotlight is focused is also the last empire portrayed in the prophecies of Daniel, namely Rome, in her different phases of development throughout history. When John wrote his book, Jerusalem had been destroyed about a quarter of a century earlier, and Jesus addressed seven representative Christian churches of Asia, not the Jews or their capital city. The last messenger sent by God to the nation of Israel was Stephen in the year 34 and the Jews stoned him (Acts 7). From then on, the apostles were sent to the Gentiles (Acts 8-9). Therefore the trumpets of Revelation (chapters 8-11) imply divine judgments against those who oppress God's people. They are directed against Rome, not against the old city of Jerusalem.

The expectation of the earliest Christians centered on the fall of the Roman Empire, followed by the appearance of the antichrist, and finally the coming of the Lord to put an end to that evil empire. The antichrist was expected to appear after the fall of Rome, and then to sit with ten kings upon an apostate church. They based these views on the prophetic warnings of Daniel, Paul, and John. For them, Rome was a persecuting city. It contained the very throne of the prince of this world.²

In simple and direct words, E. G. White affirmed this spotlight on Rome and located it in its proper place in Apocalyptic history:

"The line of prophecy in which these symbols [of Rev 13] are found begins with Revelation 12, with the dragon that sought to destroy Christ at His birth. The dragon is said to be Satan (Revelation 12:9); he it was that moved upon Herod to put the Saviour to death. 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).

However, in the fourth century things began to change. The Roman Empire's persecution of Christians decreased, beginning with the nominal conversion of Constantine. From that moment on, some began to dream of the conversion of Rome. They began to envision how the heavenly city of God could become associated with that cruel city. If the emperor himself was baptized, the rest of the empire and the world at large could become Christians too. The same dream lives in the hearts of many Christians today, who are

¹ I want to thank my friend Dave Sydnor who voluntarily reviewed the English edition of my two documents dealing with the prophetic chronology of the trumpets, one from the historical perspective, and the other from the historico-theological viewpoint. He obtained years ago a Master of Divinity degree at Andrews University, and is well acquainted with the historical and theological terminology.

I also wish to acknowledge Juan Gabriel Piedra Quirós for sharing with me certain documents which he located from the internet on our denominational history and on the current Turkish discussion concerning the year of the foundation of the Ottoman Empire. He is fluent in both English and Spanish, and I am recommending that he study theology at Southern Adventist University. However, he needs a sponsor for that enterprise. If someone who reads this paper is able to help him, please let me know. I was impressed by his balanced judgment as a layman on different theological matters, which could rival that of even the greatest theologians.

² See Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130-202), *Adversus Haeresus*, book 5, chapters 25, 30; Tertullian (c. 155-222), *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, chapter 24; Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386), First Catechetical Lecture, XV, 12; Hippolytus, *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, 25-28; Lactantius Firmilianus (fourth century), *Divinae Institutiones*, book VII, chapter 27; John Chrysostom (347-407), Homily IV, 2 Thess 2:6-9; Jerome (c. 340-420), *Commentary on Daniel 7*: "We should therefore concur with the traditional interpretation of all the commentators of the Christian Church, that at the end of the world, when the Roman Empire is to be destroyed, there shall be ten kings who will partition the Roman world amongst themselves. Then an insignificant eleventh king will arise..." the antichrist; Augustine of Hippo (c. 345-430), *De Civitate Dei* (20, 19)

hoping that a supposed Christian unity will convert the whole world and save it from final destruction.

In the fifth century, the dreams many had for the conversion of Rome were shaken by the Barbarian invasions which had already begun in the first century. But now, for the first time, a barbarian general was able to penetrate the capital of the empire and burn part of the city. The sack of Rome by Alaric created a conundrum. If Rome was experiencing conversion, how could she be struck by such a calamity? Was Christian Rome in fact being punished by God? What answer could they offer to pagans who claimed that only the gods of ancient Rome could protect the city from foreign invasions?

Roman Christians in general responded by holding fast to the new view of Rome's impending conversion. They rejected pre-millennialism which had taught in former centuries that the Lord will come after the destruction of Rome and the world. "No!", they said. Rome and the world would indeed be converted. The reason for God's punishment by means of the barbarian invasions was the persistence of paganism and the apostasy of many Christians. These convictions resulted in a severe persecution of pagans, presumably to avoid the punishment of God. At the same time, the bishop of Rome was exalted as the supreme representative of God on earth, whose mission must be to establish order in the world.

How did they explain the apocalyptic prophecies which warned of the destruction of Rome? They simply spiritualized them, disconnecting the visions from concrete historical events and their chronologically fixed context. Instead of recognizing that the predicted antichrist had already come and was seated upon the emperor's chair, they spent the entire Middle Ages projecting the coming of that antichrist to a time in the indefinite future. This spiritualized and diffused Apocalyptic vision eventually became the foundation of the prophetic medieval faith.³

Other Christians, however, did not necessarily agree with every detail of this new approach. In the fifth or sixth century, Andreas of Caesarea recognized in the barbarian invasion of Rome the fulfillment of the first trumpet of Revelation. He saw that the burning and slaughter of the invading barbarians dramatically fit the biblical prediction.⁴

Again, in the eighth century, Beatus of Liebana, a Spaniard monk, realized that the locusts of the fifth trumpet fit perfectly the Arabian Saracen invasions of Rome. Many upheld his view in the following centuries, including even Martin Luther at the time of the Reformation in the 16th Century. It became easier for those in Luther's time to accept this view because from the beginning of the tenth century, the Roman pope was already being identified as the apocalyptic antichrist. And the Reformers were eyewitnesses to how Rome was being punished by God through the Muslim Turkish invasion.

As early as 991 A.D., while presiding over the Council of Rheims, Archbishop Arnulf of Rheims said that the current pope John XV was the antichrist predicted by Paul, who would sit in the midst of the church. As in the first centuries, Rome could again be seen as deserving of the judgments of God for her apostasy. This realistic observation became the classical Apocalyptic view of all those who were confronted with the popes over nearly the entire new Christian millennium.

In the 16th century, Heinrich Bullinger replaced Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich, Switzerland. He concluded that the first four trumpets of Revelation were fulfilled by the barbarian invasions of Rome. The fifth and sixth trumpets were represented by the Saracens and the Ottoman Turks respectively. More than a hundred interpreters endorsed his view, which became the standard historicist Protestant interpretation until the 19th century.

We Seventh-day Adventists inherited that Protestant view. Our pioneers took the Protestant prophetic torch, and proclaimed it to the world. We are supposed to believe that the trumpets of Revelation are divine punishments against Rome—the last empire—in her three different phases: pagan, medieval papal,

³ W. Strabo in the 9th Century is a typical example of the spiritualization of the trumpets. The first one represented for him, the blindness of Jews. The second pointed out the turning of the apostles to preach to the gentiles. The third are the heretics. The fourth are the apostate members of the church. The fallen star of the fifth trumpet is Satan himself, and the smoke refers the doctrines of the antichrist. The sixth deals with the control of the secular princes by Satan. The seventh envisions the end of preaching and the establishment of the everlasting rest. For more details on his apocalyptic vision and other equivalent spiritualized projections of the trumpets, see A. R. Treiyer, *The Seals and the Trumpets. Biblical and Historical Studies* (Adventist Distinctive Messages, 2005), 233-236.

⁴ Cf. Edward Bishop Elliot, *Horae Apocalypticæ*, Appendix 3, 5.

and modern Babylon. The trumpets, blown during the Christian era, are seven divine deterrents to hinder the progress of the last Roman Empire in its bid to prevail against the kingdom of God.

Protestant interpretation of the apocalyptic dates of the trumpets

Protestants adopted the medieval Jewish view that the “days” in the Apocalyptic prophecies represented years of literal time. This principle is clearly confirmed in the Bible. Since the fifth and sixth trumpets contained dated prophecies, they understood that the five months of harassing Rome by the Saracens, corresponded to 150 years. They saw it fulfilled from the time when Mohammed preached his first inflammatory sermon in 612, to the foundation of Baghdad as “House of Peace” in 762. From that time on, the hostilities significantly decreased. In the following centuries, until the appearance of the Ottoman Turks, Muslim attacks against Rome did not cease, but they did not represent a generalized invasion which could allow them to settle within the empire.

Historicist Protestants also understood “the hour” of judgment determined for the sixth trumpet as covering 391 years; namely, one day, plus one month [30 days], plus one year [360 prophetic days]. Some also gave “the hour” an apocalyptic correspondence of 15 literal days [dividing 360 days of one apocalyptic year by 24 hours of one day]. Investigating the second expansionist wave of Muslims as the possible sixth trumpet, they found an amazing starting point in the fall of Constantinople in the year 1453.

In fact, the Turks, who until that time had been tied or restrained before the river Euphrates (Rev 9:14), a symbol of Babylon or the literal Roman Catholic Church, were unleashed “to kill” apostate Christianity. Therefore, the historicists of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries understood that the Muslims had been restrained for centuries by Constantinople, and concluded that they were not “released” until 1453, with the fall of that city. Consequently, they predicted that the time of judgment represented by the sixth trumpet would end in 1844.

Historicist Protestants therefore expected something to happen in the year 1844 that would mark the conclusion of the 391 years, something related to the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Since nothing happened in that year that brought their attention to the fulfillment of the sixth trumpet, Protestants, little by little, abandoned the historicism of the trumpets of Revelation. The only notable thing that happened in that year, was the opening of the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary (Rev 11:19). But in order to keep their historicist legacy, Protestants needed to assimilate the great disappointment, and to accept the true Sabbath that is found within the ark of the covenant in the heavenly temple (Rev 10).⁵

In other words, to keep historicism alive after 1844 meant to become a Seventh-day Adventist. The prophecies of the trumpets are connected to the foretold experience of the Millerites and the emerging of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This is the clear context of the mission related to the proclamation of the final hour of judgment, and the need of preparation to meet the Lord. But Protestants at that time decided to reject both the sanctuary message and the Sabbath. Such disdain implies at the same time, a departure from historicism as a valuable principle for the interpretation of the apocalyptic prophecies of the Bible. Many adopted preterism, others futurism, still others dispensationalism, and today, with the adoption of an idealistic interpretation of the book of Revelation, most of them have returned to the spiritualized approach of the Middle Ages.

Millerite interpretation

William Miller followed those who assigned 15 literal days to “the hour”, and modified the Protestant interpretation of the fifth and sixth trumpets. For him, the dates given in both trumpets began in 1298 and reached their end in 1838. Josiah Litch improved the dates offered by Miller. He dated the beginning of the five months of the fifth trumpet in the year 1299, taking the English historian Gibbon as a reference

⁵ “An acceptance of the truth concerning the heavenly sanctuary involved an acknowledgment of the claims of God’s law and the obligation of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. Here was the secret of the bitter and determined opposition to the harmonious exposition of the Scriptures that revealed the ministration of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary” (GC 435).

for the battle of Bapheus on July 27 of that year, which Pachymeres specified as the beginning of evils for the Byzantine Empire. 150 years later he found that the last Byzantine emperor was crowned after requesting authorization from the Turkish sultan. This happened on January 6, 1449. Litch interpreted this fact as proof of the surrender of the Byzantine emperor to the Ottoman authority, and the consequent loss of independence.

But, what about the 391 years, 15 days of the sixth trumpet? He located that at the end of the 150 years to form in total with the former trumpet, 541 years and 15 days. Beginning July 27, 1299, it would reach to August 11, 1840. Two years before the expiration date, he predicted a significant event concerning the Ottoman Empire. Many came to expect perhaps even the fall of the Ottomans on that day. When the day arrived, the newspapers announced the submission of the Turkish sultan to the high powers of Europe.

The impressive fulfillment of this prophecy on the exact day anticipated by Litch two years before gave strength to the Millerite message which announced the coming of the Lord in the year 1843, and after that, with a better calculation, on October 22 of the year 1844.⁶ So, for the Millerites, the submission of the last Byzantine emperor to the Sultan and conversely the later submission of the Turkish sultan to the European nations became fulfilled prophecy.

What led the Millerites to modify the historicist Protestant interpretation? I find three possible reasons. One of them would be their initial belief in the Second Coming of the Lord in the year 1843. Therefore, the Protestant view of a culmination date in the year 1844 couldn't fit their prophetic chronology. Even if this reason is plausible, I don't think it was their primary motivation.

A second possible reason would have been to place the 150 days/years historically, which after the establishment of the Ottoman Empire in 1299, required a fulfillment in 1449. They needed to chronologically locate the second Muslim wave against Rome. And the events which corresponded to those two dates were amazingly fulfilled. But the third and principal reason in my view which led them to link the dates given in the fifth and sixth trumpets, has to do with the need to find a fulfillment which allowed them to place "the hour" (15 days) somewhere. For Josiah Litch, the date July 27, 1299, was the strongest choice of a starting point.

Seventh-day Adventist interpretation

After the great disappointment of 1844 the Millerites were scattered like the disciples of Jesus when they were disappointed after seeing their Lord die on the cross (Luke 24:18-21; Matt 26:31). And just as the Lord confirmed their faith after His resurrection, He likewise confirmed the faith of a remnant of Millerites through the "testimony of Jesus" which is the "Spirit of Prophecy" (Rev 12:17; 19:10). The first disappointment separated the Christian church from the Jews (for whom the cross became a "stumbling block"), as well as from the unbelieving Gentiles (for whom the message of the gospel was "foolishness"). The second disappointment separated the end-time Adventist community from both apostate Christians (for whom the priesthood of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary and the true Sabbath became a "stumbling block"), and secular unbelievers (for whom the exaltation of that disappointment is "foolishness") (1 Cor 1:23). But "to those who are called by God, the disappointment of the year 31 and the disappointment of the year 1844 is "God's power and God's wisdom" (v. 24).

Why did the Lord build the Christian faith on a foundation associated with a disappointment? For the same reason that he built the Adventist faith on a similar foundation. "So that no one may boast before him... So that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Cor 1:29; 2:5). We need to obtain an experience with God and with our history as a prophetic denomination that can claim along with the apostle Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel" (Rom 1:16).

Those who were called by God after the great disappointment didn't lose their faith. They spent entire nights studying the Bible, and God confirmed their findings through visions given to a young lady named Ellen Harmon, who was later married to James White. They reached the conclusion that all the prophetic

⁶ This date is corroborated not only biblically and historically, but also astronomically. See A. R. Treiyer, *The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary* (Adventist Distinctive Messages, 2014), lessons V, VI, and IX.

dates were correct, including that of August 11, 1840, but the event expected for the year 1844 was wrong. The cleansing of the sanctuary foretold in Dan 8:14 had to do with the final work of Jesus our High Priest in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary.⁷

In 1848, as a result of the Adventist Bible or Sabbath Conferences, the new end-time Adventist movement also affirmed that the Protestant view of the first four trumpets of Revelation was correct, and adhered to the Millerite interpretation for the dates assigned to the fifth and sixth trumpets. Since that time, both prophecies have been considered fulfilled prophecies in Adventist milieus. But they also found in Revelation chapter 10 a prophetic anticipation of their disappointment and the announcement of the blowing of the seventh trumpet (v. 7). This would be realized in Rev. 11:15-19, punctuated with the opening of the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary (Rev 11:15-19).

In 1883 the trumpets of Revelation were studied again at a General Conference session, in the context of a futurist proposition by R. S. Owen. The chair of the Conference appointed a committee of ten, with Uriah Smith among them. In the twelfth and thirteenth meetings (Nov 19), it was reported to the assembly that the committee saw “no occasion to change from the views we have formerly entertained, especially as the proposed view was, in their judgment, unscriptural, and *would unsettle some of the most important and fundamental points of our faith.*”⁸ The next year there was another General Conference session, and that view was reiterated.⁹ The interpretation which sees the fulfillment of the sixth trumpet on August 11, 1840, was declared foundational for the prophetic faith of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

E. G. White was informed of that resolution, and she corroborated that report in her book *The Great Controversy*, which was published a few years later in 1888. After this confirmation by the Spirit of Prophecy, several General Conference Sessions were marked by an unwavering testimony on the fulfillment of the fifth and sixth trumpets, namely, in 1901,¹⁰ 1903,¹¹ and 1905.¹² The dates of 1833 (the meteor shower), August 11, 1840 (Turkey’s submission to the High Powers of Europe), and October 22, 1844 (the disappointment of Rev 10 and the beginning of the seventh trumpet with Jesus’ ministry in the Most Holy Place [Rev 11:19]), were considered at these conferences to be “*Landmarks in Adventist history.*”

The general view was that the vision of the angel of Rev 10 which announces the coming of the seventh trumpet is placed between the conclusion of the sixth trumpet (which is connected to the Holy Place) and the great disappointment and beginning of the seventh trumpet (with the transfer of ministry of Jesus to the Most Holy Place [Rev 10; 11:15,19]). S. N. Haskell summarized this standard view in the following words:

“The little period between 1840 and 1844, during which the message of Rev 10:1-11 was delivered, was the

⁷ In addition to the chapters mentioned in the former footnote related to my book *The Apocalyptic Times...*, we can add here lesson or chapter X.

⁸ General Conference Bulletin of that congress.

⁹ See the master thesis of Jón Steffánson prepared at Andrews University in 2013, entitled *From Clear Fulfillment to Complex Prophecy: The History of the Adventist Interpretation of Revelation 9, from 1833 to 1957.*

¹⁰ S. N. Haskell, in the thirty-fourth Session of the GC, said in a Bible Study, April 4, 1901, 10:45 am: “It is the truth contained in these words [Rev 11:19], developed by other portions of Scripture, that lies at the very foundation of our existence as a denomination,” General Conference Bulletin. He mentioned the dates of 1833 for the fulfillment of the sixth seal (Rev 6), 1840 for the fulfillment of the sixth trumpet (Rev 9), and 1844 for the initial fulfillment of the seventh trumpet (Rev 11).

¹¹ W. W. Prescott, in the Thirty-fifth Session of the GC, in his sermon “The Time and the Work” (March 27, 1903, 7:30pm), considered the events of August 11, 1840, and October 22, 1844, “landmarks in Adventist History.” For him, the first four trumpets had to do with the downfall of Western Imperial Rome and the setting up of the ten European kingdoms under papal apostasy. The fifth and sixth trumpets had to do with the downfall of Eastern Imperial Rome and setting up of the other apostasy, the “Mohammedan” Religion (Islam). To meet both of these apostasies, God raised the Seventh-day Adventist Church with God’s final message.

¹² A. G. Daniells, president of the General Conference, in the Seventh Session of the Ministerial Institute (May 19, 11am, 1904), gave a message entitled: “The Ministry and the Field. Inspiring the People to finish the work in both Home and Foreign Fields.” He emphasized that the sixth trumpet of Rev 9 reaches to August 11, 1840. Revelation 10 announces the seventh trumpet and the great disappointment (from 1840 to 1844). Revelation 11 deals with the Seventh trumpet: from October 22, 1844 to the coming of the Lord. Cf. *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald.*

time between the close of the sixth trumpet and the sounding of the seventh.”¹³

E. G. White also kept that faith in the midst of the Battle Creek apostasy in April 1903. She wrote:

“Nothing is to be allowed to come in that will disturb the foundation of the faith upon which we have been building ever since the message came in 1842, 1843, and 1844. I was in this message, and ever since I have been standing before the world, true to the light that God has given us. We do not propose to take our feet off the platform on which they were placed as day by day we sought the Lord with earnest prayer, seeking for light” (GCB April 6, 1903; *Review & Herald*, April 14, 1903).

“The announcement that the temple of God was opened in heaven and the ark of His testament was seen points to the opening of the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary in 1844 as Christ entered there to perform the closing work of the atonement. Those who by faith followed their great High Priest as He entered upon His ministry in the most holy place, beheld the ark of His testament. As they had studied the subject of the sanctuary they had come to understand the Saviour’s change of ministration, and they saw that He was now officiating before the ark of God, pleading His blood in behalf of sinners” (GC 433).

At this point, it will be useful to include two statements (among many which are similar) of E. G. White regarding pins and pillars that are not to be changed. The following statement from her pen was placed under the headline, *Protest Against Removing Landmarks*.

“When men come in who would move one pin or pillar from the *foundation* which God has established by His Holy Spirit, let the aged men who were pioneers in our work speak plainly, and let those who are dead speak also, by the reprinting of their articles in our periodicals. Gather up the rays of divine light that God has given as He has led His people on step by step in the way of truth. This truth will stand the test of time and trial” (Ms 62, 1905, p. 6. [“A Warning against False Theories,” May 24, 1905]; 1MR 55.1).

“Not a pin is to be moved from the foundations of our faith. Truth is still truth. Those who become uncertain will drift into erroneous theories, and will finally find themselves infidel in regard to the past evidence we have had of what is truth. *The old waymarks must be preserved*, that we lose not our bearings” (Letter 395, 1906, 4: To Elder S. M. Cobb, December 25, 1906; 1MR 55.3).

The dates challenged and the role of E. G. White in the confirmation of those dates

Before publishing the second edition of her book *The Great Controversy* in 1911, E. G. White requested to review the material to make any necessary refinements, especially regarding editing and grammar. She wanted to provide better support for certain historical issues and if necessary, even to correct any errors which could have been passed over in the former edition. She wrote what she saw in vision, but she needed to read historical works to place the events in time and location. Therefore, a better documentation of what she wrote, by competent historians, would be helpful.¹⁴ She wrote later:

“When I learned that *The Great Controversy* must be reset, I determined that we would have everything closely examined, to see if the truths it contained were stated in the very best manner, to convince those not of our faith that the Lord had guided and sustained me in the writing of its pages” (Letter 56, 1911).

A comparison of the first edition of 1888 and the second of 1911 shows how divine inspiration works in a prophet. In her first edition, she mentioned the moment when “the great bell of the palace” to kill the Huguenots sounded (GC88 272). Later on she found that another historian placed the bell in a cathedral. The bell could have sounded in more than one place, but for her second edition she preferred to write, simply, “a bell” (GC 272). She saw the bell, but God didn’t tell her on what building. For this reason, E. G. White exhorted that we “distinguish between that which is common and that which is holy... For one

¹³ S. N. Haskel, *The Story of the Seer of Patmos* (Nashville, Southern Publishing, 1905), 204.

¹⁴ She said the same regarding certain scientific statements from her pen, like that of amalgamation between man and beast before the flood. She never retracted her statements on this issue. But she was instructed by the Lord not to answer those questions. The confirmation of her scientific statements is the responsibility of others. Though what she received in vision was correct, she should not be regarded as a scientific authority. See Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord. The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (PPPA, Nampa, 2000), chap 43.

to mix the sacred with the common is a great mistake..." (1SM 38).

But we have to be careful as not to discredit her for this in her historical assertions. She also wrote in her first edition of the *Great Controversy*, that "there were Waldenses... who kept the true Sabbath" (GC 88 65). This she asserted again in her second edition, saying: "some of whom were observers of the Sabbath" (GC 577). She did not obtain this information from another historian. For this reason, many questioned in recent times those statements. Today however, historical evidence is available to support the accuracy of her statement.¹⁵

E. G. White's own explanation regarding her use of other authors appears in the introduction to the 1888 edition of *The Great Controversy*. It was not her intent to cite them "as authority," which would have implied the writings of historians and commentators were a basic source rather than the visions. Rather it was because their statements afford "a ready and forcible presentation of the subject" (GC xii).

In reference to the sixth trumpet, E. G. White declared that "in the year 1840 another remarkable fulfillment of prophecy..." took place (GC 334). In the same chapter she also pointed out the years 1833 and 1844 as signs for the nearness of the end. Unfortunately, Robert W. Olson, when he was the director of the White Estate in Washington D.C., thought that E. G. White referred to what the Millerites believed, not to what she herself believed.¹⁶ This opened the door for William Shea, Gerhard Pfandl and others to break from the official interpretation of our church on the subject of the trumpets. For them, "Ellen G. White is recording what happened at that time. She is not saying that John's prophecy was fulfilled, but that J. Litch's prophecy was fulfilled."¹⁷

If we accept this view of Olson and his followers on the prophetic fulfillment of 1840, would we not open the way to say the same thing regarding the other prophetic dates in 1833 and 1844? What about the 1260 days/years? This is what W. W. Prescott did in his attempt to correct or rather eliminate the prophetic dates from the book *The Great Controversy*. For him, the dates 538, 1798, 1840, and 1844 were the product of Adventist writers. But E. G. White did not accept his recommended revisions.

"About half of his suggestions might be classified as minor, such as having to do with a precision of wording, or calling for a supporting reference. The other half were more significant, some challenging prophetic dates—such as the dating of the 1260 years—and calling into question the autumn termination of the 2300-day prophecy. His suggestions, which called for a change in teachings in the book, were not accepted (e.g., *the relation of Revelation 9 to Josiah Litch's prediction of August 11, 1840*, and Revelation 11, having to do with the two witnesses and the French Revolution). These were carefully reviewed for soundness of position and buttressed with reliable documentation."¹⁸

Around that same time, two pastors had been having problems with how God's inspiration works in a prophet. They were S. N. Haskel and W. W. Prescott, who believed in "verbal inspiration." W. C. White, the son of E. G. White, exchanged some messages with them, specifying that this had never been the position of the pioneers of our church or of E. G. White. He also stated that she never intended to be considered an authority on historical matters, and that she valued the work of competent historians. Willy wrote to Haskel:

"Regarding Mother's writings, she has never wished our brethren to treat them as authority on the dates or details of history... When 'Controversy' was written, *Mother never thought that the readers would take it as an authority on historical dates* and use it to settle controversies, and she does not now feel that it ought to be used in that way... I can not see consistency in our putting forth a claim of verbal inspiration when Mother does not make any such claim, and I certainly think we will make a *great mistake if we lay aside historical research*, and endeavor to settle historical questions by *the use of Mother's books as an authority* when she herself does not wish them to

¹⁵ See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waldensians>

¹⁶ Robert W. Olson, *One Hundred and One Questions on the Sanctuary and on Ellen White* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981), 50.

¹⁷ Preface of G. Pfandl to the book of H. Heiks, *Satan's Counterfeit Prophecy* (Teach Services, 2013). Pfandl went further on a note sent to a friend of mine on Jan 14, 2013, at 3:58 PM. For him, "the interpretation of the 5th and 6th trumpets of Rev 9 by J. Litch and Uriah Smith was taken over from the Protestant interpreter A. Barnes, it did not come out of the biblical text" [!!!].

¹⁸ Arthur L. White, *The Prescott Letter to W. C. White*. April 6, 1915, 15. This doesn't mean that "in some of our important books... there may be found matters of minor importance that call for careful study and correction" (*Ms* 11, 1910; *1 SM*, 165).

be used in any such way.”¹⁹

Because E. G. White signed her son’s letter, approving what he wrote, Haskel misunderstood the letter and replied saying that she was old and didn’t know what she had signed. Prescott, however, went to the other extreme and, for the rest of his life became (in modern terminology) “liberal.” He rejected most of the prophetic dates, and opposed the interpretation of the apocalyptic number 666 as corresponding to the title *Vicarivs Filii Dei*.²⁰ Both trends are represented today in our church, misinterpreting what Willy wrote. Some try to place her before unbelievers as an authority in history, and others play the role of unbelievers, saying openly that we cannot take her seriously regarding historical matters.

Time does not allow us to consider several letters written by E. G. White to Prescott. But in the light of the current confusion of some regarding the role of the Spirit of Prophecy today, even in connection with the dates offered for the sixth trumpet, it will be useful to bring out one point. In two letters to Prescott she wrote:

“At times, Elder Prescott, you have come very near making shipwreck of your faith. Only the grace of God and the confidence you have had in the messages He has sent through the Spirit of Prophecy have held you back. I was shown that... you are still in danger of making grave mistakes...” (*Letter 166, 1908*). “You have many times escaped from the snare of the enemy. But you are not beyond the danger of making mistakes... I write this to caution you” (*Letter 224, 1908*).

To A. G. Daniels, the president of the General Conference, she wrote:

“Message after message has come to me from the Lord concerning the dangers surrounding you and Elder Prescott. I have seen that Satan would have been greatly pleased to see Elders Prescott and Daniels undertake the work of a general overhauling of our books... But neither of you is called of God to that work...”

“The enemy of truth, through the ministry of fallen angels, would be pleased to introduce uncertainty in the minds of many in regard to the doctrines that have been established by the sanction of the Holy Spirit. Disguised as one who has a deep understanding of truth, Satan will seek to point out supposed errors in that which needs no revision, and it will take much time and patient labor to restore confidence in those whose minds are unsettled by unnecessary changes. God forbids His servants to alter that which needs no change” (*Letter 70, 1910*).

E. G. White recommended that it would be helpful to them to do evangelism. Daniels accepted the divine correction and successfully held some evangelistic conferences. He even proposed leaving the presidency of the General Conference to devote himself to evangelist work. However, she advised him not to leave his position. But regarding Prescott, she insisted of the leaders of the General Conference that they move him from editorial work and send him to preach in New York. He reluctantly went, and under a negative spirit, his success was moderate. Eight years later he referred to that experience as a “shock.”

The last letter written by W. C. White about Prescott was in answer to many students and pastors who were accusing him of teaching heresies. The letter proves that a former message of his to Haskel, which stated that his mother didn’t want to be quoted as an authority in historical matters, is misinterpreted by many today. As a matter of fact, what Willy wrote had nothing to do with a presumable freedom to correct her statements on prophetic dates, something she never approved. Willy wrote:

“I am truly sorry that anyone should say that Elder Prescott teaches heresy. I think there are some things which he teaches *regarding the prophetic dates* that many of our other ministers and teachers do not accept. I and many others that I highly regard, question very seriously that part of his teaching which seems to *unsettle a few of the historical dates* that our ministers have used heretofore in their expositions of prophecy.”²¹

W. C. White had been writing to Prescott for some weeks before his mother died, expressing hope that future studies in history would confirm what his mother had written on historical matters.

¹⁹ Sanitarium, Cal., Cot. 31, 1912.

²⁰ See E. de Kock, *The Truth about the 666 and the History of the Great Apostasy* (1911). See my review of that work in: <http://adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/Documents/TreyieronDeKock666.pdf>

²¹ W. C. White to Miss Hulda Gunther, Feb 20, 1931.

“I am hoping and expecting that a further study of history will develop confidence in the work which God has done through revelations given to Mother [and] in correcting those extravagant and fanatical views regarding her work which are injurious to Christian experience and to the advancement of the truth” (May 7, 1915).

Two different attitudes toward incomplete evidence

W. W. Prescott and W. C. White had two different attitudes in their approach to understanding incomplete evidence. Prescott concluded that because he didn't have all the answers, the Spirit of Prophecy was wrong, and without mincing words began to expose what he considered to be wrong. Willie however acknowledged that despite the evidence gathered to support the fulfillment of the prophecies, there was need for more historical information. However, he believed that what God revealed to his mother on historical matters would be confirmed in the future. Like Daniel and other prophets in the past, he didn't lose patience, but inquired as he could, and trusted that the light not yet available, would eventually be forthcoming. One sought to prevail over all others with his short-sighted conclusions. The other kept a reverent attitude toward the divine revelation, confident in God and in the direction of His church.

We must acknowledge that divine truth, whether prophetic, doctrinal, or even historical, requires the consent of the heart to be appreciated. Jesus referred to this fact when he said: “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children” (Matt 11:25). We must be careful, because what Paul said about unbelievers may prove true for us if we trust in human parameters to measure what is truth. “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel” (2 Cor 4:4). I think of what E. G. White wrote to Prescott: “I write this to caution you.”

Daniel was highly esteemed in heaven when through faith, fasting, and prayer he tried to scrutinize the divine revelation, and was highly rewarded because an angel came to help him (Dan 9:23-23). But he was admonished to wait for truths that God did not intend to reveal him yet, and accept his personal limitations to understanding them in his day. Would heaven esteem any less the one who today believes in the divine revelation, and inquires for answers with prayer and fasting like Daniel, even when heaven doesn't reveal everything to him, but reserves some revelations for others at a later time? This is how we deal with the historical truths of the Bible which modern criticism denies. Through archeology we search for proofs to confirm the historical truth.

Later studies which took years of research were appearing in our church, which opened the range for a wider understanding of the historical matters involved in the prophetic periods, and could prove the soundness of those predictions which tormented Prescott. There was room for growth, and great light came from Leroy Froom, who spent 15 years researching in the best libraries of Europe and the USA, about what our spiritual forefathers believed from the first centuries of Christianity till today. He made three trips to Europe, and received the acknowledgment of many authorities in history for the tremendous work he did. Even today we can refer to his great four volume work entitled, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*,²² to confirm the prophetic legacy that we received from those who came before us.

The 1260 and 1290 years of the prophecy of Daniel, as originally adopted from Protestant historicism by Uriah Smith, were in fact quite sound. Nevertheless, D. A. Augsburger²³ and C. M. Maxwell²⁴ later expanded our historical evidence regarding that subject. And yet more recently in 2009, a doctoral dissertation of the Andrews University was prepared by Dr. Jean Carlos Zukowski from Brazil, entitled *The Role and Status of the Catholic Church in the Church-State Relationship within the Roman Empire from A.D. 306 to 814*. His thesis is a gold mine of historical information. I myself had the opportunity to

²² It was being published around the year 1950. See <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Books/PFOF1950-V01.pdf>

²³ D. A. Augsburger, *The Beginning of the 1260 days of prophecy* (Washington, 1952).

²⁴ C. M. Maxwell, *An Exegetical and Historical Examination of the Beginning and Ending of the 1260 Days of Prophecy with special attention given to A.D. 538 and 1798 as initial and terminal dates* (Theses of Master of Arts, Faculty of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Washington DC, 1980).

gather strong additional historical information for my book *The Seals and the Trumpets*, and *The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary*. Also Heinz Shaidinger in Austria (one of my most brilliant students years ago at our French seminary in Collonges), wrote a little book which was published by the BRI and documented well the prophetic dates for papal supremacy.²⁵ Today, those prophetic dates are an undeniable truth that Prescott could not deny and would hopefully even appreciate.

The prophecy of the 2300 days presented a challenge when we did not have extra-biblical proofs to confirm the proper method of reckoning the years for the time of the Babylonian exile. But our church waited, trusting that the answers would come. And they did come, in the middle last century, with the discovery of the Elephantine papyri, which could accurately establish how the ascension years of Israel and foreign kings were reckoned in the time of Ezra. In 1951 Edwin Thiele wrote his doctoral thesis on *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, a book which is still being praised by the greatest experts on the matter, because he could prove the veracity of biblical chronology when it was considered an impossible task.²⁶ Shortly thereafter, Siegfried Horn found astronomical proofs which confirm the date of departure for the prophecy of 2300 days in the year 457 BC. Juarez de Oliveira,²⁷ an engineer from Brazil, provided advanced evidence to support this and I can confirm it myself through an astronomer uncle of mine named Adolfo Lista. In my book, *The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary*, I demonstrate how we no longer need to discuss on which day and month modern Jews celebrated the Day of Atonement in the year 1844. Astronomy has come to assist us to confirm not only modern times but the chronology of Ezra.

And my brief list omits so many contributions from theology, science, and many other branches of study which touch our faith. But, what is the attitude many are taking today when they cannot solve a theological, historical, or ecclesiastical problem as they might wish? Do we show reverence by the way God leads His church? Are we humble and patient to await for more light, when we don't have it?

Followers of W. W. Prescott and W. C. White

W. W. Prescott and W. C. White had followers throughout the 20th Century and even today as we are now well into the 21st Century, regarding several points of doctrine and prophetic interpretation.

a) In the first half of the 20th Century

The official view regarding the dates for the fifth and sixth trumpets was challenged by W. W. Prescott (former president of the GC) and W. A. Spicer (Secretary of the GC) in 1914, and (after the death of E. G. White) at a Biblical Conference that took place on July 17, 1919.²⁸ W. C. White was not invited to the 1919 Conference, but Prescott was there. Matters of inspiration regarding E. G. White were brought into question, as well as the historical fulfillment of the fifth and sixth trumpets. (We will answer those questions on the trumpets below). But although no resolution was taken to reject the official interpretation of our church, many questions remained unanswered.

²⁵ H. Shaidinger, *Historical Confirmation of Prophetic Periods* (BRI, Washington DC, 2010).

²⁶ Wikipedia introduces his book, saying that "it is a reconstruction of the chronology of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The book was originally his doctoral dissertation and is widely regarded as the definitive work on the chronology of Hebrew kings. The book is considered the classic and comprehensive work in reckoning the accession of kings, calendars, and coregencies, based on biblical and extra-biblical sources."

²⁷ *Chronological Studies Related to Daniel 8:14 and 9:24-27* (Unaspress, 2004).

²⁸ See <http://essaysbyellenwhite.wordpress.com/2008/04/> and http://www.adventistarchives.org/docs/RBC/RBC19190717__B.pdf#view=fit.

Spicer, *Beacon Lights of Prophecy* (Takoma Park, Review & Herald, 1935), does not mention at all the prophetic dates of the trumpets, and Prescott denied the dates given by our church. They are followed in recent times by H. LaRondelle, Roy. C. Naden, and today by J. Paulien, R. Stefanovic, G. Pfandl, and E. Mueller. H. K. LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible: A Biblical-Contextual Approach* (Bradenton, FL, 2007), 189, 193; R. C. Naden, *The Lamb Among the Beasts. Finding Jesus in the Book of Revelation* (Hagerstown, Review & Herald, 1996), 41-42, spiritualized the dates of the trumpets; J. Paulien never included the prophetic dates of the trumpets in his books and papers (cf. G. Quispe, 225); R. Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ. Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, Andrews University Press, 2002 and 2009).

In June and July of 1944, *Ministry* magazine published an article by Grace Amadon which intended to prove the historical accuracy of the dates of the trumpets, especially the one which deals with the battle of Bapheus. It appeared under “immediate release.” Such an urgency seems no longer to exist in our day regarding the trumpets. Reading today what Amadon wrote, we can say that she did the best that she could at that time. But she didn’t believe in the way our church had interpreted the trumpets. She wrote an unpublished paper proposing a new interpretation of the trumpets, but without attracting any followers.²⁹

We need to keep in mind that all had the same problem regarding the works of Pachymeres. That byzantine author offered much detail on the battle of Bapheus and the time when the Ottoman Empire was founded. However, he wrote in medieval Greek, and his work was never translated into English. I was able to study the subject carefully only because I have received a doctorate in France and taught at our French seminary, and the great volumes of Pachymeres were translated into that language about 15 years ago. But I don’t know how many would be willing to spend the 500 dollars (and that being a discounted price to me) to buy them. Moreover, the majority of the historical documents related to the topic coming from the 13th and 14th Centuries, were translated partial or totally into French about two and even three centuries ago. Even so, we cannot find them easily without the internet. Today, if not all, almost everything can be obtained at home, without moving from our desks, thanks to brother Google.

In 1941, H. M. S. Richards Sr. emphasized in his message to the General Conference Session, that we are living in the last part of the seven churches, of the seven seals, and of the seven trumpets.³⁰ This was the last time the trumpets were mentioned at a General Conference Session. It was evident that the message of the trumpets was being eroded in the church, especially in our theological seminaries in most parts of the world.³¹

b) In the second half of the 20th Century

A new front was opened by E. Thiele in the 1950s on the interpretation of the trumpets. For him, the first trumpet was the destruction of old Jerusalem by the Romans, not a barbarian invasion of the Roman empire. He was more concerned with the literary form of the book of Revelation than with the very purpose of the trumpets. Since the churches and the seals began in the first century, he tried to find a fulfillment of the trumpets also in the first century. But the destruction of Jerusalem didn’t occur in the year 31 when Jesus died. It came about 40 years later. And at that time, the world didn’t reckon the years and the centuries beginning with the first coming of Jesus as we are accustomed to today. The churches of Asia were raised several years before John received the vision. The concern of those churches was not the Jews, but the persecuting pagan Roman Empire, the last empire prophesied by Daniel.

Thiele was followed by other interpreters, among them, C. M. Maxwell. By so doing, they began to spiritualize other trumpets (see below in this paper). Anyway, concerning the dates of the fifth and sixth trumpets, they kept, with some modifications, the interpretation confirmed by E. G. White. Maxwell adopted the view of most Protestant historicists of the 18th and 19th centuries for whom “the hour” had no prophetic significance regarding 15 literal days.³² William Shea shared his views, and (with some variations) they adopted the dates offered by Protestants for the five prophetic months, beginning with the Saracen invasions on the Roman Empire.³³

²⁹ See Jon Hjorleifur Stefansson, *From Clear Fulfillment to Complex Prophecy: the History of the Adventist Interpretation of Revelation 9, from 1833 to 1957* (Master Thesis, Andrews University, 2013), 117-128.

³⁰ H. M. S. Richards, Sr., gave the second Friday evening sermon (June 6, 1941, 7:45pm) of the GC Congress. Cf. *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*.

³¹ See the Master Thesis of Jón Steffánson quoted above.

³² M. Maxwell, *God Cares*, 262-265. The conjunction *kai*, “and,” is for him explanatory, which means “that is to say.” The complete phrase would be rendered, in this way: “For the hour of judgment; that is to say, for a period of judgment extending over a day and a month and a year, symbolic of 391 years.”

³³ W. Shea, *Daniel and the Judgment* (Washington, 1980), 311-312. I agree with W. Shea that the dates offered by Protestants may also be applied to a military execution of what was preached by Mohammed, implying the dates 632 (first military expansion), and 782 (last Abbasid military incursion to the doors of Constantinople, with a peace treaty). See A. R. Treiyer, *The Seals and the Trumpets...*, 310-311; *The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary...*, 267-269.

In 1990 the *Daniel and Revelation Committee* nominated by the *Biblical Research Institute* of the General Conference confirmed the historicist interpretation of the trumpets, yet did not publish a paper dealing with the historical fulfillment. I participated in two of their discussions. Though we could see their firm determination to give definite answers to the questions raised, they were unable to reach an agreement for (in my view) four reasons.

1. They invited *believers* and *unbelievers* regarding the classical interpretation of the trumpets in our church to work together.

2. Several questions that our church received from most of the 20th century, remained unanswered.

3. The new propositions prepared for those who attended the meetings did not satisfy the committee. Those of Shea and Paulien were not accepted, and despite the request to work on the history of interpretation to better understand the way Christians and pioneers understood the matter, no one worked on these issues.

4. Except for the last meeting, the attendants didn't have the opportunity to receive beforehand a copy of the issues to be considered. There was not enough time to weigh the different views.

The outcome was a near bankruptcy in the interpretation of most of the first half of Revelation. They had to conclude, honestly, that:

"The committee at present has not developed a satisfactory interpretation of these prophecies that solve all the problems inherent in them... While the church may never fully understand these portions of the larger prophecy, we can learn important lessons from them, and we would discourage no one from study."³⁴

When small steps are taken away from what was once firmly believed, a second generation, and still worse a third generation, take more steps to depart from the platform of truth. J. Paulien was also invited to the Daniel and Revelation Committee and proposed modern philosophies to be trumpets 4-6. But as G. F. Hasel told me in one of the meetings of DARCOM (Daniel and Revelation Committee), "the trumpets are armies, not philosophies." Later on, G. Pfandl supported the view of Paulien, which totally severs the classical historicist interpretation of the prophetic dates from the trumpets.

c) Already in the 21th Century.

R. Stefanovic followed Jon Paulien in the interpretation of the fourth, five, and sixth trumpets. The embarrassment of some of these new propositions which begin the trumpets with the destruction of Jerusalem seems to reach a climax in what he proposes. Amazingly, the Biblical Research Institute did not require him to change these views for his second edition. In those new approaches we can see the complete loss of historicist literary and historical structure concerning the trumpets that came to us as a legacy from Protestant Reformation. That literary and historical framework is this:

Trumpets 1-4: judgments against Imperial Pagan Rome

Trumpets 5-6: judgments against Medieval Papal Rome (including Eastern Rome).

7th trumpet: time of the end (final judgment upon papal Rome resurrected and the world which follows her).

I wrote this in my book, *The Seals and the Trumpets. Biblical and Historical Studies* (Adventist Distinctive Messages, 2005), 264:

"R. Stefanovic, in his book *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 296-297, considers the Age of Enlightenment to be more darkened than the Dark Ages. He places in the fourth, fifth and sixth trumpets contemporary philosophies that appeared during and after the beginning of the time of the end...

³⁴ F. B. Holbrook, "Issues in the Book of Revelation," in *Ministry* (January, 1991), 10. His article was reprinted in F. B. Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Revelation* (BRI, Review and Herald, 1992), 171-185.

“Thus, when Stefanovic has to deal with the fifth trumpet, he does not know how to interpret its symbols, concluding that ‘it is uncertain whether John intended every detail of this description to be interpreted,’ *ibid*, 304. If we follow his proposition, we have to reach the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which open the door to the prophetic “time of the end,” already in the fourth trumpet, to return to the Islam which appeared at the beginning of the Middle Ages, *ibid*, 296-297, 306-307. Neither are we able to know when to place the sixth trumpet which, moreover, he places at the very end of the time of the end. In addition, he forgets that the locusts represent armies, not philosophies.”

- The symbols of the fifth and sixth trumpets

But why should we reach such a conclusion when every single symbol found in Rev 8 & 9 has a corresponding fulfillment in history, within the historicist legacy that we received from our spiritual ancestors? The fifth trumpet of war against Rome (in the Middle Ages) is immersed in a typical eastern imagery of wilderness. For this reason, its application to the Islamic invasions enjoyed one of the greatest interpretative consensuses of the second Christian millennium, especially among Protestants.

John sees a star that had fallen from heaven, which suggests an eastern origin, because stars come from the east. The key of the abyss is given to that star, from which smoke and armies of horsemen come, that multiply like locusts, and hurt like scorpions. Even the armor of the horsemen is clearly detailed, as well as “something like crowns of gold” that Muslims wore on their heads. All this I detail in my books and illustrate using PowerPoint when I give seminars.

Every page of the Koran threatens its enemies with horrible portrayals of hell. Mohammed and his followers felt that God called them, explicitly, to cause “terror,” which is the role depicted in the fifth trumpet against apostate Christians in particular. Their ferocity is strengthened by the teeth of a lion. The angel of the abyss is their king, and he is called Destroyer.

Look at what secular historians said of the Muslim expansion.

“The conquests of Islam *broke* the political, economic, and Christian unity of the Mediterranean ...”³⁵ “Islam could not reconstruct the maritime economic unity that the Roman world enjoyed; what he did was to *break it*.”³⁶ “As a factor in European history, the rise of Islam must be considered as a destructive force.”³⁷

The sixth trumpet retains the basic characteristics of the former trumpet. This shows us that it has to do with the same Islamic power which did not change its war style because it was founded, in addition, on the same theological ideology. From the mouths of the horses whose heads resembled lions came fire, smoke, and sulfur (Rev 9:17). This description of the sixth trumpet is a clear reference to gunpowder which had been previously unknown, and is composed of sulfur (or brimstone), charcoal, and potassium nitrate. The Byzantine capital fell under the fire of the Turkish cannons on April 12, 1453. Even the three dominant colors of the Turkish horsemen’s clothing—red, blue and yellow—was foretold by the apostle John with admirable precision. Should it amaze us, if we take into account that the colors of the great harlot in the book of Revelation, is impressively represented in the clothing and apparel of the Roman Catholic Church? (Rev 17:1-5).

- In the same innovative line

E. Mueller, a current vice president of the BRI, wrote a German paper on the trumpets where he follows Paulien and Stefanovic.³⁸ Amazingly, their view was rejected by the BRI in the 1980’s, and now is being accepted by two of the BRI members, namely, Pfandl, who is retired, and Mueller, who completely neglects the still existent official interpretation of the trumpets. Since no other General Conference session rejected the view of the GC of 1883, I assume that I can continue referring to the

³⁵ J. Pirenne, *Historia Universal* (Ed. Éxito, Barcelona), I, 455-456.

³⁶ Pirenne, II, 41.

³⁷ C. F. H. Hayes-M. W. Baldwin-Ch. W. Cole, *History of Europe* (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1949), 137-8.

³⁸ *Die Sieben Posaune* [“The Seven Trumpets”]. I reviewed his views in 2014, on my web page: www.adventistdistinctivemessages.com, in the section “articles,” under the title, *Die Sieben Posaune (The Seven Trumpets)*.

former Protestant and Millerite interpretation as the official view of our church.

In Mueller's paper we can again see a clear trend toward certain modern methodologies that are more interested in literary structural motifs and imaginary parallelisms than in theology and history.³⁹ When idealistic or spiritualized trends are adopted as historical applications of the prophecy, rather than realistic and concrete historical facts, the prophetic dates are subsequently made relative if not totally dismissed. This is the case with these new propositions for the interpretation of the trumpets. They neglect the span of time assigned by revelation to the fifth and sixth trumpets,⁴⁰ and participate in the typical spiritualization of the prophetic times accepted by the modern theological world. This denial of the prophetic dates within a presumed historicist scheme is the most dangerous introduction of an approach that has ended with the destruction of historicism in Protestant and Evangelical milieus, and will likewise end by undermining the foundation of our prophetic faith.

E. Mueller presumes even that "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."⁴¹ But Adventists have never believed this concerning the sixth trumpet, nor do they believe it even today. The sixth trumpet is placed in the context of the altar of incense (in the holy place: Rev 9:13), and this ministry culminated in 1844 when the door was opened to the Most Holy in connection with the seventh trumpet (Rev 11:15-19). How then can we place the sixth trumpet after 1844 when the door to the Holy place was closed? After quoting Lev 16:17, E. G. White wrote:

"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... One part of His ministration had closed, only to give place to another" (GC 428-429)..

Those who advance these new propositions no longer believe in the spatial correspondence between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary.⁴² If the door to the Most Holy is opened in 1844, then the seventh trumpet that culminates with the assumption of the kingdom by God and the Lamb also needs to be linked to the opening of that door, which is what our pioneers and E. G. White believed. Contrary to what Mueller now affirms, Adventists have always believed that the beginning of 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).

Mueller's concern here is the same as that of many who try to fit the churches, seals and trumpets of Revelation into a parallel historical framework. In the book of Daniel, the different empires were chronologically paralleled in the different visions. Therefore some expect that in Revelation the septet visions are likewise to correspond temporally. However, the book of Revelation does not reveal different empires. It only deals with different events that transpire within the last empire. Although all the events are expected to happen during the Christian dispensation, Protestants and the pioneers of our church were more concerned in understanding the purpose of the visions than in finding presumable symmetric parallels.

By the way, are the seven thunders and the seven plagues (Rev 10, 16), also to be placed within the same historical framework as the seven churches, the seven seals, and the seven trumpets? And what about the seven heads, seven mountains and seven kings in Rev 12 and 17? The fact that the first four decisive blows against the Roman Empire climaxed during the fourth and fifth centuries doesn't mean that there was no prior activity. The Barbarian invasions began as far back as the first century. We should also note that the plagues of Egypt occurred in a relatively short period of time, after four long centuries of oppression (Gen 15:13-14). The seven plagues of Revelation will also take place in a short period at the end of time (Rev 16). What then forbids God from representing the first four trumpets with these

³⁹ For the problems found in the interpretation of Mueller on the trumpets, see my web page referred in n. 38.

⁴⁰ A. M. Rodriguez, *Issues in the interpretation of the seven trumpets of Revelation* (Ministry, January 2012).

⁴¹ "A New Trend in Adventist Eschatology: A Critical Analysis of a Recent Eschatology," in *Reflections* (BRI, October 2013).

⁴² See my analysis of the problems found in G. Pfandle on the heavenly sanctuary, at <http://adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/Documents/Pfandleproblemsheavenlysanctuary.pdf>

critical and decisive invasions that led to the fall of Rome in the fifth century?

Let me illustrate some of the most difficult problems facing those who associate the first trumpet with the destruction of Jerusalem. Ekkehardt's propositions, on page 3 of his paper, confirm that the trumpets are a response from God to the persecution of His children. Good! But we cannot clearly see in his paper who God restrains or how He restrains them. Did God punish His people with apostasies and philosophies? For instance, he presumes that in the third trumpet Satan is the star which leads to the apostasy of Christianity, with its intolerance and persecution of dissidents. Besides the fact that this kind of spiritualized interpretation of the trumpets ruled practically the entire Middle Ages, we must ask ourselves: is God there punishing the dissidents of the Roman antichrist, that is, the faithful remnant, through apostates? (!!!).

We are not questioning the sincerity of Mueller who concludes that his own interpretation is just a suggestive contribution to the discussion on the trumpets, and not necessarily the truth (pp 33-34). He deals with his particular interpretation of prophetic matters in terms of probabilities. Therefore, we should bid him return to the old safe paths, to the tried and true scheme which we as Seventh-day Adventists inherited from the Protestant Reformation and the pioneers of our church (in spite of the unfortunate deviation of other Protestant churches from this message by the Rationalistic Protestant Reformation). There is no reason to wander about with empty rationalistic spiritualizations of Revelation when we have a wonderful interpretive legacy that is backed by centuries of history.

Summary of the three principal problems found in these new interpretations of the trumpets

1. A neglect of the spatial correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. This fact hinders 21st Century innovators to see the difference between the sixth trumpet connected to the Holy Place, and the seventh trumpet projecting the Most Holy Place. The year 1844 when the heavenly temple opened the door to the Most Holy Place becomes, in this way, irrelevant for the dated times of the trumpets.

2. A neglect of the prophetic dates which lead to the prominence of the Seventh-day Adventist church with the great disappointment of 1844, revealed in Rev 10 in connection with the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

3. An emphasis on the literary form of the visions disconnected from the purpose of the trumpets. They start with the destruction of Jerusalem because they want to connect the seven churches and the seven seals with the seven trumpets. But the destruction of Jerusalem took place 40 years after the year 31, and time back then was not reckoned the same way we do today, using centuries after Christ. In addition, there are seven mountains, seven thunders, and seven plagues, which cannot be placed in the same periods of time as the other septet visions of John. By the way, when did the plagues of Egypt affect the Egyptians? At the end of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt for 400 years. The same happened with the destruction of Jerusalem which took place 40 years after the crucifixion of the Lord.

Answers to questions raised over the years

Jón Steffánson prepared a Master's Thesis at Andrews University in 2013, entitled *From Clear Fulfillment to Complex Prophecy: The History of the Adventist Interpretation of Revelation 9, from 1833 to 1957*. He realized that our church never responded to several questions arising during the 20th century. For him, this was one of the reasons for the departure of many today from our prophetic legacy. I summarized his answers with some modifications and several additions in my book, *The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary. Biblical, Historical and Astronomical Confirmation* (2014). Let us briefly answer the basic criticism on the dates related to the fifth and sixth trumpets.

1) If the fifth trumpet deals with the Saracens, why look for 150 years to mark the beginning of the second expansionist wave under the Ottoman Turks centuries later?⁴³

Answer: The fifth trumpet mentions five months twice (Rev 9:5,10). One period of time was assigned to the Saracens, and the other to the Turks.⁴⁴ During that time, both the Saracens and the Turks were restrained by the Byzantine Empire. In the second case, at the end of the five months, under the submission of the last Byzantine emperor to the Turkish sultan, the Ottomans were unleashed to kill apostate Christians, and harass the Holy Roman Empire.

2) Current historians don't agree with Edward Gibbon who dated the battle of Bapheus in the year 1299. All agree that it took place in the year 1302. Therefore, the beginning of the 150 months and eventually, of the 591 years 15 days, is an incorrect date.⁴⁵

For those who don't link the dates of the two trumpets, there is no problem. The second 150 years of the fifth trumpet began with the foundation of the Ottoman Empire in the year 1299, as most Turkish historians agree, and ends in 1449 under the submission of the Greek emperor. From the fall of Constantinople in the year 1453 until March 21, 1844, when the Turkish sultan decreed not to kill apostate Christians, there are 391 years.⁴⁶ We could also take the year 1449 as the starting point of the sixth trumpet, and 1840 as its terminal date.

However, a careful study of the only source available for the battle of Bapheus allows us to keep the date given by Gibbon for that battle in the year 1299. The overwhelming evidence confirms July 27, 1299, as the correct date of that battle which Pachymeres declared to be the beginning of evils for the Byzantine empire. Read my paper entitled, *The Chronology of Events in the History of Pachymeres. Related to the Battle of Bapheus and the Beginning of the Ottoman Empire* (July 2017). By the way, the greatest authority on the chronology of Pachymeres upon which modern historians build their theories, reacted to my paper in the following words:

"It is true that the chronology of Pachymeres that I set about thirty years ago remains fragile, especially for book X. I am glad to see that the subject is being discussed again and I wish for stronger conclusions to be reached" (July 18, 2017).

3) The Byzantines would have lost their independence before 1448/9 AD, with similar acts of submission.

Answer: If the emperors were already vassals, why did the Turks continue fighting to conquer them? No one disputes the fact that the Byzantine strength had long been decreasing while the Ottoman power was increasing. According to Jón, the increasing weakness of the Byzantines would fit the announcement of the prophecy which said that during those days (150 years), the people would be tormented (Rev 9:10), and in their affliction, they would "seek death but" without finding it; "they will long to die, but death will elude them" (Rev 9:6). In this context, we can add the striking fact that after the brutalities performed by the crusaders in their passage through Constantinople, the Byzantines preferred to fall under the Turks than under the papacy. The same had happened earlier with many Christians in the first Muslim expansive wave in reference to the oppression of the Eastern Roman Empire.⁴⁷

Constantine XI was the last Roman emperor to be crowned. His submission to the sultan marked the

⁴³ W. W. Prescott raised this critique in the Conference of 1919. See Gluder Quispe, *The Apocalypse in Seventh-day Adventist Interpretation* (Doctoral Thesis, Andrews University, published by Universidad Peruana Unión, 2013), 69.

⁴⁴ George McCready Price, *The Greatest of the Prophets: A New Commentary on the Revelation* (Unpublished MS, Loma Linda, 1951), 94-100; R. A. Anderson, *Unfolding the Revelation: Evangelistic Studies for Public Presentation* (PPPA, 1953), 85-97.

⁴⁵ Criticism raised in the Conference of 1919.

⁴⁶ See A. R. Treiyer, *The Seals and the Trumpets...*, 341.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 302-304.

end of the empire as an independent state. Those among Adventists who look for other former dates to show the weakness of former Eastern Emperors, do not seem to realize that this is what skeptics also do with the dates we offer for the beginning of papal supremacy. There are antecedents and consequences. But we do not have to lose sight of the big picture comprehended in the prophecy.

4) *The sultan gave authorization for Constantine XI to be crowned at the end of the year 1448 AD, not in 1449.*

Answer: This is true but does not deny the fact that the authorization came the following year and Constantine XI was crowned then in fulfillment of that permission, on January 6, 1449. Since the prophecy had to fall within the last prophesied year, as for the other prophetic dates of the Bible, there is no need to discuss this point.

Stefánsson reminds us of similar examples. Artaxerxes gave authorization for the reconstruction of Jerusalem in Spring (Ezra 7), but the decree was issued in the fall (Ezra 8), beginning the prophecy of the 70 weeks and the 2300 days of Dan 8 and 9. Justinian I issued a decree of supremacy for the papacy in the year 533 AD which was not in force until the Ostrogoths (the third of the kingdoms that had to fall according to the prophecy), were definitively expelled from Rome in the year 538 AD.

5) *Why choose July 27, 1449 AD to begin the time of the sixth trumpet when the prophecy was fulfilled on January 6 with Constantine XI's coronation under the sultan's authorization? Nothing important happened on July 27 of that year.*⁴⁸

Answer: This criticism is still less valid for those who like me believe that it is not necessary to give the "hour" a prophetic value, although we cannot deny that option either. Let me share with you the answers given from the perspective of the 541 years and 15 days.

The prophecy of five months of years (150 years), according to what we saw, was fulfilled on January 6, 1449. Other dated prophecies like that of the 1260 days/years were fulfilled within the year, according to Stefánsson, not necessarily on the last day of the year. In relation to the 1260 years, it would have begun in March and ended in February.

Why do we not need to expect anything specific to happen on July 27, 1449? Because if we are going to link the two prophecies, according to Jón, we are not required to find a fulfillment for the beginning of the sixth trumpet, at the exact expiration day of the fifth trumpet, but only at the conclusion of the 541 years and 15 days. The specification to be added to the former prophecy, in terms of 15 days, is given in the sixth trumpet, not in the fifth trumpet. While the separate prophecy of five months is fulfilled on January 6 of 1449, the linked prophecies adding 541 years and 15 days would be fulfilled between July 27, 1299, and August 11, 1840.

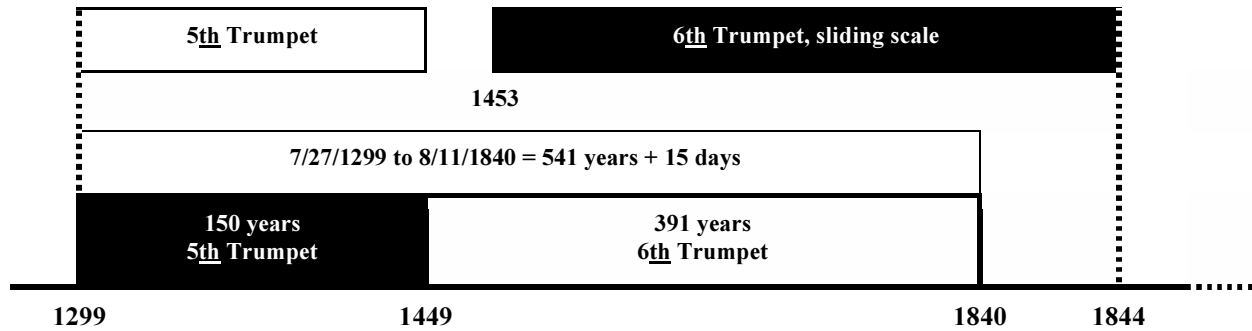
6) *There would be no reason to link the fifth and sixth trumpets into 541 years 15 days, because both prophecies are different.*

Answer: The linking of both dates suggested by Litch adds 541 years and 15 days (150 plus 391 and 15 days). Beginning on July 27, 1299, we arrive at August 11, 1840. He and Miller rightly saw that the terminology and images of the two trumpets are similar, and thought it fitting to link them. Concerning the historic perspective, I bring out in my three books on the trumpets how there are historians that speak about the two waves of Muslim expansion as a similar type of war, due to the fact that they were united by the same religious theology.

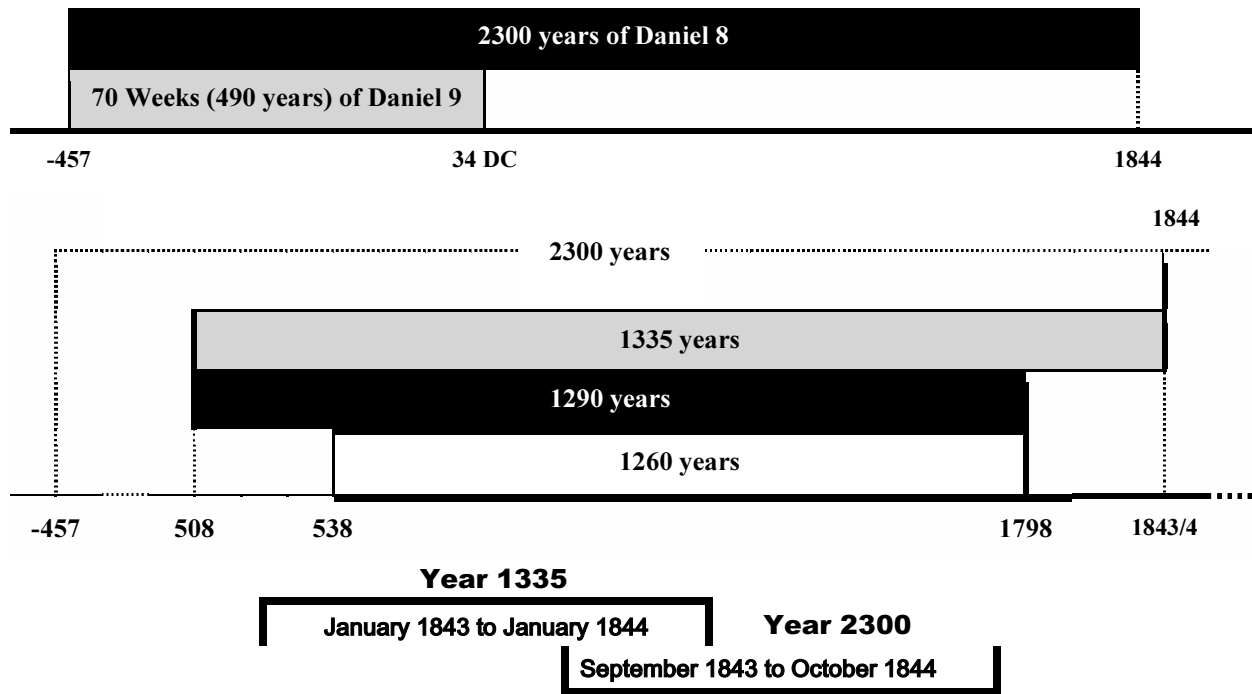
In confirmation of what Litch did, Jón Stefánsson asserts that the text seems to require the linking of the two dates. While the fifth trumpet says that the Muslims would *torture without killing*, the sixth one specifies that they would be *released to kill*. When the torture without killing ended, the release for killing

⁴⁸ Criticism raised in the Conference of 1919.

would begin. Would we wonder at the union of the two prophecies when other prophecies like those of the 2300 days/years and the 70 weeks were also linked, because the text implied it? (Dan 8-9).



The prophecy of the 70 weeks didn't require it to be completed on an exact day equivalent to the day it began. However, the prophecy of the 2300 days required it to be fulfilled on a Day of Atonement equivalent to the date of its beginning. Let us consider also the fact that even the 1335 days/years of Dan 12:12 was related by the Millerites to the 2300 days/years, as we also do today.⁴⁹ And both the 1290 days/years and the 1260 days/years are likewise linked in the terminal point.



7) *The date 1453 AD would be more important than the submission of the new and last Byzantine emperor to the Ottoman sultan, because Constantinople fell in that year.*

Answer: Again, Stefánsson reminds us that the end of the Israelite submission to the Egyptians took place on the Passover evening, not when they crossed the Red Sea under Egyptian persecution, even if the Egyptian threat ended when the Egyptians died in the sea (Exod 12:41). Also the prophecy of 70 weeks ended when the Jews stoned Stephen, not when they crucified the Son of God in the year 31 AD, or when

⁴⁹ See A. R. Treiyer, *The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary*. The 2300 days began in the old Jewish calendar and end on a Day of Atonement of the same calendar. The 1335 days began in the Julian calendar and concludes in the same calendar. Both prophecies are linked for the terminal point in the same year 1844.

Jerusalem was destroyed in the year 70 AD and the Jewish nation reached its end.

8) *The sixth trumpet employs the term “year.” Why should we interpret it in terms of 360 prophetic days? We do not do this when we read the prophecy of the millennium.*

Answer: There are two different dispensations implied in these two temporal projections. One has to do with our dispensation where princes and kingdoms are projected in symbols. The other deals with a time in the future when the Lord will speak no more in symbols, parables, or prophecies, but face to face (1 Cor 13:8-10,12; see John 3:12). On the other hand, the manner of specifying the temporal dimension of the sixth trumpet requires us to interpret the one year in terms of apocalyptic days. The prophecy indicates a sum of one day, one month, one year, that is, 391 days. In other words, the year is to be considered in terms of 360 prophetic days, as the month is to be considered in terms of 30 prophetic days, and as the five months of the fifth trumpet requires to be considered also in terms of 150 prophetic days.⁵⁰

9) *The change from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar in 1582 AD meant a correction of ten days that the Millerites would not have taken into account.*⁵¹

Answer: In the American colonies, the Gregorian calendar was adopted in 1752 AD, some decades before the birth of Josiah Litch. Since the Millerites had to calculate the prophecy of the 2300 days and of the 70 weeks, it is hard to imagine that they didn't know about the change in the calendar. Several nations delayed its acceptance. Turkey adopted the Gregorian calendar for tax purposes in 1917, and in 1926 they abandoned the Muslim calendar.

In other words, the Millerites did not see a reason for including the correction of the calendar in the prophetic calculation. No days were lacking for the years. It had to do with an adjustment of a solar calendar. Moreover, God could have taken into account the Gregorian correction as He did with the regular corrections of the old Hebrew calendar.

If the Millerites would have attempted to make their prophetic calculations by taking into account the days involved in the Gregorian correction, they would have been criticized today for not knowing that the prophecies of the Bible are not based necessarily on an astronomical year. Actually, we now have a leap year every four years, but that correction every four years does not change the reckoning of the year. Should the Millerites be required to add all the days of the leap years according to the astronomical data, to date the prophecy? Would a God who can predict centuries and millenniums of history, not also know that a change would take place in the calendar?

Other cultures had systems which also required a regular correction to the yearly reckoning. The Babylonians and the Hebrews fixed their calendar every two or three years adding a thirteenth month. But this fact did not change the reckoning of the prophecies which in one year could have less than 365 astronomic days, and in other years more. In order to avoid these problems God simplified the reckoning into 360 thematic days as a basis for the prophetic calculation. For this reason, the Millerites and the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church did not feel that the Gregorian correction of the calendar could affect the prophetic reckoning.

10) *Nothing important happened in the year 1840.*⁵²

Answer: I believed the same until I studied history, and found that modern historians confirmed what E. G. White had written. I include those statements in my book *The Seals and the Trumpets*, 339. Let us

⁵⁰ For additional arguments, see A. R. Timm, “Miniature Symbolization and the Year-day Principle of Prophetic Interpretation,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 42/1 (Spring 2004): 149-67; and “Miniature Symbolization & the Year-day Principle,” in Ron du Preez, ed., *Prophetic Principles: Crucial Exegetical, Theological, Historical & Practical Insights*, Scripture Symposium, No. 1 (Lansing, MI: Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2007), 233-70.

⁵¹ Criticism brandished by Desmond Ford.

⁵² J. Paulien's argument in a 3ABN *Symposium on the Trumpets*, February 18-20, 2012.

quote three of them in brief.

“The quadruple alliance of 1840... to protect the Ottoman empire’s integrity, also implied an unwelcome foreign solicitude about the empire’s internal affairs. From then on, European intervention became a regular practice...” “Externally and formally, the Ottoman empire by entering the Concert of European powers, had given up its specific character of a Muslim state.”⁵³

“The years 1840-1870 were indeed revolutionary in bringing Turkey and Europe into close contact and in furnishing conditions under which Europe began to exert its influence directly.”⁵⁴

“All signed the Convention for the Pacification of the Levant in 1840... In this fashion, the Ottoman Empire was first admitted into the workings of the European state system.”⁵⁵

11) *The representative of the high powers of Europe could not meet with the Pasha of Egypt before August 17, 1840, to deliver to him the European ultimatum.*

E. G. White didn’t mention the Pasha of Egypt. She spoke, however, of the submission of the Ottoman sultan to the high powers of Europe. History confirms that Abdulmecil surrendered his independence to the high powers of Europe exactly on this day. It began a secular modernization patterned on western practices which changed the face of his empire. The Treaty of London signed on July 15, 1840, by the four high powers of Europe (England, Austria, Prussia, and Russia), was considered literally an “ultimatum”, which prescribed the terms under which the Ottoman Empire had to submit if they wanted to count on European protection from the Pasha of Egypt who was threatening to destroy it. That agreement reached Alexandria the very day of August 11, 1840.

The Sublime Porte in Constantinople immediately supported the European ultimatum, but there was continued resistance from the Pasha of Egypt. The newspaper *London Morning Chronicle* of September 5, 1840, states that “the arrival of [the envoy] Rifat Bey and Mr. Alison in the Bair-Tahir steamer from Constantinople, on the 11th instant, with the ultimatum of the four Powers, produced a great sensation here.” On the same day, Admiral Sir Robert Stopford ordered Captain Charles Napier to proceed to Beirut, which was captured on August 11th.⁵⁶

In commenting on the answer given by the four ambassadors to the Turkish sultan about how the situation with the Pasha of Egypt would be solved, James White wrote:

“Have we any evidence... that Ottoman supremacy died, or was dead, that day? Read the following..., dated, ‘Constantinople, August 12th, 1840:’ ‘The manner... of applying the force, should he [the Pasha of Egypt] to comply with these terms... is the point which still remains to be learned; nor does a note delivered yesterday by the four ambassadors, in answer to a question put to them by the Porte, as to the plan to be adopted in such an event, throw the least light on this subject. It simply states that provision has been made, and there is no necessity for the Divan alarming itself about any contingency that might afterwards arise.’

“Let us now analyze this testimony. 1. The letter is dated ‘Constantinople, August 12.’ 2. ‘Yesterday,’ the 11th of August, the Sultan applied in his own capital, to the ambassadors of our Christian nations, to know the measures which were to be taken in reference to a circumstance vitally affecting his empire, and was only told that ‘provision had been made,’ but he could not know what it was; and ‘that he need give himself no alarm about any contingency that might afterwards arise!’ From that time, then, they, not he, would manage that.

“Where was the Sultan’s independence that day? GONE! Who had the supremacy of the Ottoman Empire in their hands? The great powers. According to previous calculation, therefore, Ottoman Supremacy did depart on the eleventh of August, into the hands of the great Christian powers of Europe.”⁵⁷

12) *The events of 1840 AD would be insignificant because the Ottoman Empire was already weakening prior to that year, and it was not totally disintegrated before 1922 AD.*

⁵³ H. Sched, “The Ottoman Empire from 1774 to 1918 (Chater One,” in *The Muslim World. A Historical Survey. Part IV. Modern Times* (E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1981), 14.

⁵⁴ R. H. Davison, “Tanzimat,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition* (E. Brill, Leiden, 2000), X, 201.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 203. See for more references *The Seals and the Trumpets...*, 338-9.

⁵⁶ British Royal Navy, *Historical Background for British Worldwide Military Actions 1800 - 1850.*

⁵⁷ James White, *The Sounding of the Seventh Trumpets of Revelation* (1859).

Answer: We find here again the same problem that some have had regarding the date 1449 AD, which could be foreshadowed within the warnings of Jesus in relation to the parables (see Matt 13:10-17). Those who want to understand this fulfillment can read the testimonies of a number of secular historians who bring out the importance of the ultimatum of 1840 AD in terms similar to those of E. G. White. Some years ago I also felt uncomfortable with that date, until I read those secular historians. This fact forced me to study the matter more carefully, and I found strong support for that.

In addition, as already seen, it is obvious that an empire does not fall at once. The gradual weakness of the Byzantine Empire first, and then the increasing weakness of the Ottoman Empire later, each finally reached a decisive moment. In the case of 1840 AD, the turning point was marked by the ultimatum of submission to the higher powers of Europe that the Ottoman and Muslim authorities were forced to accept.

The Ottoman Empire did not lose its independence before 1840 AD. In my book *The Seals and the Trumpets* I provide many historic references to modern historians, even Turkish sources published in the 21st century, who confirm the importance of what happened in 1840. At that time Turkey began to give up the characteristics of a predominantly Muslim state by the adoption of secular principles of government, in order to be accepted within the system of the European nations. Differing from what some of our critics believe, one century and a half after 1840, historians continue recognizing the importance of what happened in that year, in a similar way as E. G. White did 70 years after that date.

Anyway, let us keep in mind with Jón Stefánsson that many secular historians do not see the year 538 AD as being relevant to history. In the religious world today, Christians do not see relevance in the year 1844 AD. The year 31AD means nothing for others who do not even believe in the existence of Jesus. But for the divine purpose projected in prophecy, those three dates are supremely important.

13) Exegetically, the specification of the sixth trumpet means a point in time not a period of time.

The majority of the historicist Reformers from the 17th Century to the middle of the 19th Century understood that the temporal reference of Rev 9:15 made application of the prophetic day for a year principle.⁵⁸ But under the influence of the Enlightenment and the subsequent rise of “biblical criticism,” that approach was being discarded by the majority of the contemporary interpreters of Revelation. On what basis? On no basis, because the exegetic criticism employed by those interpreters to deny a temporal projection in Rev 9:15 lacks foundation.

Several modern versions still keep the meaning of duration in time.

“The four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of men” (NKJV, YLT, RV, ASB, NASB).

Since the only word containing a definite article is “hour,” the text could be also translated, always within a projection in span of time:

“The four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour [of judgment] were released: [even or for or that is] a day, a month, and a year.”⁵⁹

If we want to interpret the passage as a point in time, it would not have to do with a limited moment of one hour or one day or one month or one year, but with a time that is expanded from one hour to 391 years corresponding to the entire span of time implicated in the sixth trumpet. If we feel uneasy with the manner chosen by God to determine an extension in time (a formulation of day, month, and year), it is because we forget that God chose a similar formulation for the 1260 days or 42 months, that is, “time, times, and half a time.”

For practical purposes if we choose to see in the sixth trumpet an answer to “when,” it would be “in

⁵⁸ See my book, *The Seals and the Trumpets...*, Excursus III, 239-261.

⁵⁹ W. Shea, *Daniel and the Judgment* (Washington, 1980), 309-323.

the specific time of 391 days/years”. If we choose to see the text as an answer to “how long,” the interpretation could be expressed as being “for 391 days/years.” The conclusion then can come out the same. It is for this reason that Dr. Lee concludes that “one cannot use this text [Rev 9:15] as an argument against the historicist method of interpretation.”⁶⁰ No grammatical rule may be invoked to deny a prophetic time implied in the prophecy of the sixth trumpet. Contrary to what some want to make us believe, the historicist interpretation of the sixth trumpet is perfectly defensible exegetically.

14) *The papacy received a deadly wound in 1798 by the secular French government. Why did the trumpet-punishment of God against the papacy last till 1840?*⁶¹

The political authority of the papacy received a mortal wound in 1798 after the atheistic French revolution. Differing from the judgments of the trumpets which represent armies which invade from outside the Roman territory in her different phases, the French Revolution took place within the ten tribes that supported the papacy for more than 12 centuries. Only a tenth part of the great city (a reference to the historical Holy Roman Empire) suffered first from the French political earthquake that convulsed Europe expelling both the monarchy and the papacy (Rev 11:13). And the blow came, this time, from within the Holy Roman Empire.

It is interesting to note that France didn't sign the European treaty which submitted the Muslim empire to the will of the European nations in 1840. On the other hand, we have the example of the destruction of Jerusalem which in God's patience, did not take place at the moment when the Jewish nation delivered the Son of God to the Romans to be crucified. We find there a delay in the punishment of about 40 years. That extends even beyond the expiration date that “cut” and “determined” (Dan 9:24) the fate of the Jewish nation in the year 34, when the last of God's messenger to the Jewish nation was stoned to death. Would not God do the same for an empire such as the Ottoman, which was becoming increasingly weak, before allowing it to be subjected to other rulers of the world?

Moreover, the expiration of the second “woe” takes place after the French Revolution and the deadly wound to the political authority of the papacy in the year 1798. It comes even after the two witnesses representing the Old and New Testaments are exalted (Rev 11:7-14). In fact, the vindication of the Word of God was seen immediately after the French Revolution, by the foundation of different Biblical Societies in the following century (*GC* 287), and the “great religious awakening under the proclamation of Christ's soon coming” (*GC* 354). The date given for the sixth trumpet expired, actually, in the year 1840, or 1844 if we adopt a principle of sliding scale for most of the prophetic dates.

After the specification of the conclusion of the second woe and the exaltation of God's Word, the seventh trumpet sounds with the opening of the Most Holy Place (Rev 11:15,19). The great disappointment also takes place after the conclusion of the sixth trumpet which is connected to the Holy Place (Rev 9:13). When “the hour” of judgment corresponding to that trumpet expired, the beginning of the seventh trumpet was announced (Rev 10:7).

15) *E. G. White was not a specialist in historical matters, so we should discard her endorsement of Litch's proposed dates.*⁶²

Answer: She never accepted correction on prophetic dates, nor on the prophecy of the sixth trumpet which reaches to August 11, 1840. Despite attempts to discard the dates, she herself remained firm on this point. For a careful analysis of the statements of her son on this point, with her approval, see above in this

⁶⁰ Tarsee Lee wrote an article of five pages entitled “Revelation 9:15 and the Limits of Greek Syntax,” in *Journal of Adventist Theological Society* (1997), 100-105. He proves there that there is no exegetical foundation to deny a prophetic period of time indicated by this quadruple expression “hour, day, month, and year.” In a most recent study prepared in 2013, he increased his manuscript to 19 pages. He shared his unpublished document with me, entitled, *The Hour, Day, Month, and Year in Revelation 9:15*. For more details, see A. R. Treiyer, *The Apocalyptic Times of the Sanctuary...*, 270-271.

⁶¹ I didn't hear this question from others, but I had it in my own mind.

⁶² J. Paulien's argument in a 3ABN *Symposium on the Trumpets*, February 18-20, 2012.

paper.

16) E. G. White was not actually intending to say that the sixth trumpet of Revelation had been fulfilled. She instead was simply portraying what the Millerites believed at the time, and how the events taking place in Turkey strengthened their faith.⁶³

Answer: The context of her statement does not permit this conclusion. She wrote: “In the year 1840 another remarkable fulfillment of prophecy excited widespread interest” (GC 334). In the same chapter, she spoke about the fulfillment of the sixth seal in the year 1833, and of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Dan 8:14. She was not simply explaining what the Millerites believed, but expressing her belief in the prophetic fulfillment. See above for more details.

17) E. G. White’s endorsement of Josiah Litch’s interpretation concerning those dates (in the two versions of the book *The Great Controversy*) has hindered the ability to expand upon different interpretations.⁶⁴

Answer: This is an implicit recognition that the rejection of the prophetic dates of the fifth and sixth trumpets, means the rejection of the gift of prophecy. What is the current outcome of that rejection? Interpretational chaos! Is this what we want to have in our midst to give the world the last judgment warning? Moreover, our pioneers were right when they affirmed in the General Conference sessions of 1883, that a change on this matter would unsettle the fundamental faith of our denomination. How is it that most of our current theologians today who deal with this prophecy don’t realize it?

18) *The Adventist Church has never had an official interpretation of the trumpets.*

Answer: This is what Angel M. Rodríguez implied in an article that appeared in *Ministry* published in January 2012.⁶⁵ But he is wrong. No person would have dared to say this some decades ago. As already seen, from the very beginning of the Advent movement, even before Uriah Smith, the Millerite understanding regarding the dates of the trumpets was supported consistently by that emerging Advent movement, and endorsed by more than one General Conference session. For more documentation see above in this paper.

Warnings about futurist inroads into our church

Various futurist inroads regarding the trumpets of Revelation appear in our church from time to time. Attempts have also been made to give the trumpets a double fulfillment, in a mix of historicism with futurism.⁶⁶ But John is absolutely clear on the matter. The last three trumpets are projected by “woes.” The prophet recorded:

“The first woe has passed. Behold, two woes are still to follow. (Rev 9:12). “The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon” (Rev 11:14).

In other words, the trumpets are successive and are not to be repeated again in the future. When the 150 years of the fifth trumpet expires in time, the sixth one comes. When the 391 years of the sixth trumpet concludes, the seventh one “comes soon.” Then the announcement of the third woe is given,

⁶³ R. W. Olson, W. Shea, G. Pfandl already cited.

⁶⁴ Criticism raised in the Conference of 1919. See references in G. Quispe, 69.

⁶⁵ See A. R. Treiyer, *A Response to Ministry magazine’s article entitled: Issues in the Interpretation of the Seven Trumpets of Revelation* (Jan 2012), in <http://adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/Documents/Ministry-trumpets.pdf>

⁶⁶ Erwin R. Gane, *Trumpet After Trumpet* (PPPA, 2012). See my review of this book in my web page, <http://adventistdistinctivemessages.com/English/Documents/Trumpetaftertrumpetgane.pdf>

which does not contain dates.

In this context, it is useful to keep in mind the warnings of E. G. White on Apocalyptic matters which, in the case of the three angel messages, are related to three prophetic dates given by Daniel and John, namely, the 591 days/years of Rev 9, the 1335 days/years of Dan 12, and the 2300 days/years of Dan 8.

“There are those who are searching the Scriptures for proof that these messages are still in the future. They gather together the truthfulness of the messages, but they fail to give them their proper place in prophetic history. Therefore such are in danger of misleading the people in regard to locating the messages. They do not see and understand the time of the end, or when to locate the messages” (*Ms 136*, 1897).

“We have a sleepless adversary, and he is constantly at work upon human minds that have not had a personal experience in the teachings of the people of God for the past fifty years. 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.

“From the light that the Lord has been pleased to give me, you are in danger of doing the same work, presenting before others truths which have had their place and done their specific work for the time, in the history of the faith of the people of God. 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” (*2 SM 102-3*).

What E. G. White wrote and what she did not concerning the fifth and sixth trumpets

A summary of what E. G. White wrote in connection with the prophetic days of the trumpets, could be expressed in a few sentences. We don't have to present her historical statements before the world in order to prove history. The methodological approach is different. We are to prove her writings by history. We don't have to prove scientific matters by what she wrote, but rather prove her assertions, documenting them by science. We don't have to prove a doctrine by what she said, but by the Bible. And this doesn't mean that she is wrong in her assertions, or that we need to correct her on these issues

Now let us briefly deal with E. G. White's actual statement so that you may see for yourselves whether or not she wrote it with the intention of confirming the prophetic fulfillment of Revelation 9. Since I have already dealt with the details of 1840 in my three aforementioned books (where I review both the biblical and historical perspectives in fulfillment of what E. G. White wrote), I will simply point out the core issues involved:

1) Ellen G. White wrote: “In the year 1840 another remarkable fulfillment of prophecy excited widespread interest” (*GC 334*). Notice that she speaks here of a remarkable fulfillment of *prophecy*, not about a fulfillment of Josiah Litch's prediction. Notice also that she makes reference to the year, not to a specific date in that year.

She also says “*another* remarkable fulfillment.” What were the other remarkable fulfillments of prophecy? As expected, these are also referred to in the context of that same chapter of the book *Great Controversy*, and include the stellar signs of the sixth seal (especially the last one that took place in 1833) and the fulfillment of the seventh trumpet in connection with the prophecy of the 2300 days of Dan 8 that took place in 1844. So this begs the question, was she also depicting those other *remarkable fulfillments of prophecy* as merely descriptions of what the Millerites believed without actually intending to endorse them either, or was she instead referring to the fulfillment of prophecy in those events? No wonder that some in our church, like Prescott in the former century, are now also neglecting these other fulfillments of prophecy!

2) In referring to Josiah Litch's interpretation she says: “According to his calculations” (1911), “which was purely a matter of calculation on the prophetic periods of Scripture” (1888). Here she is not necessarily endorsing everything that Josiah Litch wrote about this prophecy. Litch took the “hour” of Rev 9 as a prophetic period of time of 15 days as some former Protestant interpreters had done in the past (something exegetically acceptable, though perhaps not necessary), and in doing so he arrived at August 11, 1840. These were *his* calculations.

3) “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 335).

In this second statement she is referring to the prediction of one of the different expectations of Josiah Litch. History confirms that what happened at that time fulfilled the specific prediction referred to in her statement, in connection of course with what was expected to take place in that year according to the sixth trumpet.

4) A possible reading of the *Great Controversy* statement has been interpreted in this way:

“In the year 1840 another remarkable fulfillment of prophecy excited widespread interest... At the very time specified (by Litch), 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.”

We cannot necessarily infer from this statement that E. G. White adopted the view of Litch on the battle of Bapheus in July 27, 1299. She never forcibly confirmed the link between the two trumpets by Josiah Litch. She mentioned what Josiah Litch did, but she didn’t assume everything he did. For instance, she never said that the Ottoman Empire fell at that time. Let us take her for what she affirmed, not for what Litch suspected.

What is it that she affirmed, on which she did not accept correction, because she was right? That Turkey “placed herself under the control of Christian nations” in the year 1840. This is an undeniable historical fact. What happened at the conclusion of the 150 years and the beginning of the 391 years of the fifth and sixth trumpets? The last Byzantine emperor was crowned by placing himself under the leadership of the Turkish Sultan (in order to be crowned, he had to wait for his authorization). Again, this is historical fact.

“The event exactly fulfilled the prediction.” What prediction? The prediction of Josiah Litch or the prediction of the sixth trumpet? Both. It was fulfilled in the year 1840 as “another remarkable fulfillment of prophecy.” The fact that it took place on August 11, fulfilling Litch’s prediction *concerning the date*, doesn’t change the matter. The Pasha of Egypt rebelled, but had to surrender likewise to the European powers before the end of that same year 1840.

However, the inference that she confirmed the link of both trumpets is plausible, and seems to be implied. This was the way her statements were understood in the history of our church. And there is overwhelming evidence to prove the accuracy of the dates given for the events implied in the three specific dates: July 27, 1299 – 1449 – August 11, 1840.

Conclusion

The Millerite interpretation of the dates of the fifth and sixth trumpets was adopted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church soon after the great disappointment. It was confirmed at the General Conference session of 1883, and reaffirmed the next year at a new session. E. G. White endorsed that interpretation in her first edition of the book *The Great Controversy* (1888). Despite being advised to remove that view from the next edition in 1911, she was still more definite to declare that the prophecy was fulfilled in the year 1840.

It is true that she was not an authority regarding history, and she requested not to be presented to the world as such. The task to prove what she wrote from history belongs to others, and for that, she recommended the support of recognized historians. Some historical details and references could require refinement and verification for accuracy. But the historical facts she brought for consideration are not to be changed. We don’t have to mix sacred things with common or secondary matters. Concerning the prophetic dates, she never accepted correction.

Many of our brethren in the tradition of W. W. Prescott still presume that the historical facts witnessed to by our pioneers and confirmed by E. G. White cannot be proved by history. We need to place before them the historical evidence which overwhelmingly supports today what she wrote. We now have much more information to do so. The prophecies of the fifth and sixth trumpets were fulfilled in two separate phases, one between the years 1299 and 1449, and the other between the years 1449 and 1840 (with a perspective inclusive of 1843 to 1844). When linked together as a single unit, which gives to the “hour” a prophetic value, these prophecies also have an impressive fulfillment between the specific dates, July 27, 1299 and August 11, 1840.

There will not be a third Muslim expansionist wave capable of overpowering the influence of the United Nations. The Destroyer could continue working through Islamic entities to bring affliction on the world. But its time of dominion reached its end in 1840/44. What is coming now is a religious resurgence where Muslims and the religious world in general will participate to form the great apocalyptic Babylon whose head will be the Roman papacy.

In the end, the world will not pay heed to God’s historical warnings, the partial judgments He has brought against the last oppressing empire in its pagan and papal phases (see Rev 9:20-21). The earth will unite again in a world empire to dishonor God, making void the commandment which acknowledges Him as Creator, and supplanting it with another which honors the bishop of Rome. God will be then justified before the universe to send the seventh and final trumpet war which His angels will blast at the Second Coming of Christ (Matt 24:30-31; 1 Cor 15:56; Rev 11:15-19). That last trumpet which announces the judgment of God will be consummated with the coming of the heavenly army, which will destroy all the kingdoms of the world, and will establish the kingdom of the Lord forever (Dan 2:44-45; Rev 19:11-19).

This is the most extraordinary moment in history to preach on the trumpets of Revelation because we are living in the time when nations and religions are uniting without knowing the spiritual background of that convergence. The last attempt of the devil to unite the world to dishonor the Lord, making void the commandment which acknowledges him as Creator, and supplanting it with another which honors the bishop of Rome, will be unmasked and finally crushed by God.

We have, moreover, an extraordinary prophetic and historical legacy in the understanding of what those divine judgments mean. That legacy is confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy in our midst. Is it not time to reflect upon the warnings of the apostle Paul, when he said, “each one must be careful how he builds upon” the foundation received? (1 Cor 3:10). Is it not time to “stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it”? (Jer 6:16). Therefore, “since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders” (Heb 12:1-2), and let us give to the world the message of judgment that was entrusted to us. Let us lift the trumpet! Let us exalt the Lord, whom the universe will crown soon as King of kings, and Lord of lords! (Rev 17:15).

We are a prophetic movement called out by God to fulfill a specific mission. The prophecies that bring out the time and mission of our church are to be preserved. “Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed” (2 Chr 20:20). We need to be firm on these points, even if we can be flexible in facing opposition, by emphasizing first the year, and then the day. In order to facilitate the understanding and assimilation of the dated prophecies of the trumpets, we may start by placing the emphasis on the year 1840, without necessarily discarding a fulfillment in 1844. From there we can move into greater detail to demonstrate how through specific days in the year of fulfillment, that prophecy was also fulfilled.

Let us conclude with two statements of the Spirit of Prophecy written in 1893 and 1907 respectively.

“We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history... We are handling the mighty truths of the word of God” (*General Conference Bulletin*, 1893, 24; 3 SM 162). “The church is to increase in activity and to enlarge her bounds... While there have been fierce contentions in the effort to maintain our distinctive character, yet we have as Bible Christians ever been on gaining ground” (*Letter 170*, 1907; 2 SM, 396-7).