

INTERPRETING THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

A Paper Prepared for the
Daniel and Revelation Committee
of the General Conference of SDAs
March 5-9, 1986

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Berrien Springs, MI
February, 1986

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INTRODUCTION

The seven trumpets of Revelation have proven themselves to be among the most difficult passages in all of Scripture. They are filled with bizarre and cryptic symbols which resist meaningful interpretation. The first six trumpets (8:7-9:21) seem virtually devoid of typical NT themes. Here, of all places in Revelation, it is essential to apply as rigorous and scientific a method as possible if an understanding of the symbols is to be achieved. The method followed in the preparation of this paper is described in detail in my book Decoding Revelation's Trumpets.¹

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS IN CONTEXT

The Limits of This Study

The author explicitly begins the seven trumpets at Rev 8:2 where the seven angels who stand before God receive seven trumpets, presumably from God Himself.² Many commentators have felt that the seven trumpets actually begin with the opening of the seventh seal in verse 1.3 This is probably true in part as most transitional passages in Revelation point both forward and backward at the same time.⁴ But verse 2 provides the explicit introduction to the section so we are on reasonably safe ground to begin there.

The seven trumpets clearly end with either verse 18 or verse 19 of chapter 11. While this cannot be decided with certainty the evidence of the book's structure suggests that

verse 19 belongs to chapter 12 rather than the seventh trumpet.⁵ Thus we will end this study of the seven trumpets at Rev 11:18.

The interlude, Rev 10:1-11:14, breaks up the natural flow of the trumpets and prepares the way for what is to follow in Rev 12ff. The material in this section has been rather thoroughly interpreted by Ellen White and thus is less puzzling to Seventh-day Adventists than the rest of chapters 8-11. This paper will concentrate on the most enigmatic portions, 8:7-9:21 and 11:15-18. The interlude does contain, however, one point of major interest for our study of the trumpets. This is Rev 10:7 which relates the sounding of the seventh trumpet to the finishing of the mystery of God.

Basic Observations

The seven trumpets, like the churches and seals before them, are preceded by a view of the heavenly sanctuary (8:2-6). The scene in verse 2 is probably based on the fact that there were seven trumpet priests in the Old Testament cultus (1 Chr 15:24; Josh 6; cf. also 1QM 3:1-11; 7:7ff.).⁶ Their trumpet calls represented the prayers of God's people for deliverance in battle and forgiveness of sin (Num 10:8-10). Thus the prayers of the saints in Rev 8:3-5 are probably cries for deliverance

from the oppression visited by their enemies as depicted in the seven seals.

In Rev 8:3-5 "another" angel, presumably Christ, mingles incense with the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne.⁷ After the smoke of the incense has ascended before the throne combined with the prayers of the saints, the angel takes the censer, fills it with fire from the altar and throws it to the earth. The result of that act is thunders, noises, lightnings and an earthquake. This is immediately followed by the preparation of the seven angels for the sounding of their trumpets. Thus the activity at the altar is connected to the judgments which follow. What is the nature of this connection?

Two basic ideas are portrayed in Rev 8:3-5, mediation and judgment. Through Christ's mediation in heaven it is possible for the saints to maintain a relationship with God and to survive the plagues of the seven trumpets. While the altar stands this mediation continues, but wherever the fire falls the powers of the enemy take control. This passage contains a symbolic reminder both of God's care and concern for the believer and of His active participation in the judgments that fall on those who reject the gospel.

The daily service in the temple to which this passage points included the ministration of incense, the throwing of the sacrifice in the fire and the blowing of the temple trumpets. The blowing of the trumpets indicated that the sacrifice was complete. For the author of Revelation the sacrifice par excellence was the death of Jesus. Thus the events of the seven trumpets need to be seen in the light of the cross. It is the cross that makes mediation possible. It is rejection of the cross that brings down the wrath of God. To the extent that the trumpets portray the author's viewpoint of historical events, the beginning point is certainly the cross of Jesus Christ.

The seven trumpets themselves are, like the seals, divided into a 4-3 pattern or, perhaps more accurately, a 4-2-1 pattern. Just as the four horsemen are explicitly tied together as a unit, so are the three woes (8:13; 9:12; 11:14). The first four trumpets are set apart by Rev 8:13 and share a much briefer format than the last three. While the four horsemen specifically affect humanity, the first four trumpets fall on the natural world.

Another aspect of the seven trumpets as a whole is the apparent escalation of judgment. They increase in intensity as they progress. From plagues on the natural world, the trumpets

become demonic horrors which first harm (fifth trumpet) then kill (sixth trumpet) the inhabitants of the earth. They end in the consummation of God's wrath under the seventh trumpet.

There is a basic pattern shared by most of the trumpets. First an angel sounds the trumpet, then a form appears (hailstorm, falling star), then the effects are described (burning of greenery, defiling of the springs and rivers). Each plague is limited in its sphere of operation, usually in terms of a third of something.

The purpose of the seven trumpets is indicated by Rev 9:20,21 where the lament is raised that those who were not killed by the plagues of the sixth trumpet nevertheless failed to repent of their idolatry, sorcery or commandment breaking. This indicates that while the trumpets portray judgments on the enemies of God's people (cf. 9:4), their purpose is to lead to repentance, even though they do not succeed in doing so with the unsealed. This, combined with the partial character of the trumpets (affecting thirds of the earth or humanity rather than the whole as in the seven bowls), leads to the conclusion that they are preliminary or warning judgments which prepare the way for the end-time judgments of the latter half of the book.

The Structural Context

Relation to the Seven Seals

There is considerable recapitulation between the seals and the trumpets. Both begin with a scene from the heavenly sanctuary, describe a series of plagues and then end with a portrayal of the consummation. Rev 8:5 and 11:19 are parallel following each. Such recapitulation is typical of Hebrew style and indicates that the seals and trumpets are in relationship with each other.⁸

However, there are also significant differences between them. For one thing there is much less reference to heavenly things in the trumpets than in the seals.⁹ Second, the seals are on the whole normal, non-apocalyptic plagues, while the trumpet plagues are bizarre and demonic. Third, there is an apparent reversal of content. In the seals the general focus is on humanity with plagues on nature and heavenly bodies introduced only in the sixth seal. In the trumpets, on the other hand, plagues on the natural world are found in the first four while the fifth and sixth focus on humanity. Fourth, the seals affect quarter-portions of the earth (Rev 6:8) while the trumpets affect thirds.

Finally, and most significant, the seals clearly concern the people of God and their fate in a world that opposes the gospel.¹⁰ As such they form the counterpart of the account of the Unholy Trinity (dragon, beast and false prophet) and the remnant of the woman's seed depicted in chapters 12-14. The trumpets, in contrast, describe judgments on those who have opposed Christ through their opposition to His people and their message. Thus, the relationship between the seals and the trumpets involves both parallels and contrasts.

This relationship is, perhaps, best understood by examining the apparent connection between the fifth seal and the introduction to the seven trumpets (Rev 8:3-5). In the fifth seal (Rev 6:9-11) John sees martyred souls under "the" altar crying out "How long, O Lord, the Holy and True One, do you not judge and avenge our blood upon those who live on the earth (tôn katoikountôn epi tês gês)?"¹¹ These souls are given white robes and told to rest a short while until "the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed."¹²

Since the question "how long" is not really answered in the fifth seal, the reader anticipates that things will be clarified later on in the book. Thus it is not surprising that

there are later references to numbered groups of God's people (chapter 7), prayer (8:3-5) and those who dwell on the earth (8:13; 11:10; 13:8,14, etc.). Very significant is the reference in Rev 8:13, which stands at the structural center of the seven trumpets.¹³ This verse indicates that the trumpet plagues fall on "those who live on the earth," the same group which was martyring the saints, referred to in 6:9-11 as the "souls under the altar." The spiritual connection between the trumpets and the fifth seal is made in Rev 8:3-5 where incense from the golden altar is mingled with "the prayers of the saints (tais proseuchais tôn hagiôn)."¹⁴ This scene symbolizes Christ's intercession for His saints. He responds to their prayers by casting His censer to the earth, with frightful results.

This connection between the altar of 6:9-11 and that of 8:3-5 indicates that the seven trumpets are God's response to the prayers of the saints for vengeance on those who have persecuted and martyred them. The martyrs were anxious for the judgment to begin but it was delayed until all the seals had been opened.¹⁵

In verse 5 the altar which receives the prayers of the saints becomes the source from which judgments are poured out on the wicked in response (cf. 9:13-15; 14:18-20 and 16:4-7). When

the fire of purification from the altar contacts the earth, it provokes disasters.¹⁶ The same fire which purifies can also destroy. The censer of judgment and the censer of prayer become one. Thus the seven trumpets should be understood as God's judgment-response to the prayers of the martyrs, resulting in justice being done with respect to those who persecuted the saints.

Relation to the Rest of the Book

What relation do the seven trumpets have to the rest of the book of Revelation? In chapters 10 and 11, where the seventh trumpet is first mentioned, we have a vision which contains the first mention of a number of elements such as the "beast" and the "great city" which form a major part of visions in the latter half of the book. This element of "preview" is particularly prominent in 11:18 which offers a summary introduction of the final battle described in chapters 12 through 22.

Rev 11:18 contains five statements which point to five sections of the second half of the Apocalypse. "The nations were angry" (ta ethnê ôrgisthêsan) is elaborated in 12:17ff. where the dragon was angry with the woman (ôrgisthê ho drakôn)

and went away to make war with the remnant of her seed by means of the sea and land beasts which he calls up in chapter 13.

The next statement in 11:18, "and your wrath came" (kai êlthen hê orgê sou), is a reference to the seven last plagues in their context (Rev 15-18). These bowl plagues are summarized in 15:1: "And I saw another great and wondrous sign in heaven, seven angels having the seven last plagues, because in them the wrath of God is consummated (etelesthê ho thumos tou theou)."¹⁷ The two woes of Rev 9 are truly horrendous. The reader expects the most frightening plague of all with the arrival of the third woe in 11:15ff. But the seventh trumpet is mostly rejoicing and has only a minimal mention of negative events. Thus the third woe is the seven last plagues of the bowls.

With "the time to judge the dead" (ho kairos tôn nekrôn krithênai) we have an apparent reference to the judgment of the great white throne in Rev 20:11-15. This points the reader to the context of the millennium and its aftermath.

The time of rewards (dounai ton misthon tous doulois sou . . .) is mentioned again in 22:12 where Jesus rewards His faithful ones at His Second Coming. The contrasting reward "to destroy those who are destroying the earth" (diaphtheirai tous

diaphtheirontas t ên gên), is mentioned in 19:2 which summarizes the results of the plagues and the fall of Babylon.

It is clear from the above analysis that the seventh trumpet is a summary statement in advance of the contents of the rest of the book of Revelation. As such the seven trumpets have a certain structural relationship to the events portrayed in chapters 12-22. This relationship is especially striking in terms of the parallels and contrasts between the trumpets and the seven bowls.¹⁸

The Three Series of Plagues

In a study of the seals, trumpets and bowls, then, there is a tension between recapitulation and contrast. As noted earlier, one of the most significant contrasts is in the territorial limitations of the seals and the trumpets as opposed to the bowl plagues.¹⁹ Thus there is a dramatic crescendo of judgment in the seals, trumpets and plagues.²⁰ The seals and the trumpets are preliminary and partial in character in comparison with the bowls which consummate the wrath of God.²¹

Therefore, the trumpets should not be interpreted in terms of the final consummation, although they lead up to it. They are limited territorially to thirds of the earth, they are

limited to periods of time (five months) and they are limited in their destructive capacity (9:5,6). By contrast, the bowls are an advancement in the state of God's judgments. They are called the seven "last" plagues. In them God's wrath is for the first time brought to its full completion. They are poured out with reference to the beast while there is no mention of the beast in the trumpets until just before the seventh. The result of the plagues is that the redeemed, the product of the Christian era, stand by the sea. Thus the author intended the reader to see the plagues as the consummation of the end-time while the trumpets point to a series of events that lead up to the end-time.

Summary of Structural Context

The various structural elements that have been noted in the relationship of the trumpets to the material which precedes and follows indicate that chapters 4-11 of Revelation should be understood as parallel to 12-18. Both the seals and the crisis of chapters 12-14 are related to the experience of the church in its proclamation of the gospel despite severe persecution. The trumpets, on the other hand, are parallel to the bowls in their focus on the enemies of God's people who are being judged for

their rejection of the gospel and their persecution of those who proclaimed it.

By way of contrast, however, the seals and the trumpets share a partial and preliminary character in relation to the later descriptions. They are not dealing with the consummation but are leading up to it. Thus the author wants the reader to understand that the seals and the trumpets concern the character of the age leading from his day to the end, while the crisis of 12-14 and the bowls are concerned primarily with the end-time consummation itself.²² This series of inter-relationships in the heart of the book of Revelation can be illustrated by means of the following table:

		center of book		close of probation	
	3	3		3	
	3	3		3	
<u>Seals</u>	3	<u>Trumpets</u>	3	<u>12-14</u>	3
	3		3		3
Gospel and Church related	3	Judgment of wicked world	3	Gospel and Church related	3
	3		3		3
3	3	3			
Historical			End-Time Crisis		
<u>The Old Testament Context</u>					

Although there are nine different Hebrew words that refer either to the act of blowing a trumpet or to the instrument itself,²³ there is only one root structure for trumpeting in New Testament Greek.²⁴ This word group is found 134 times in the Greek Old Testament. Through a careful study of all the passages, the various usages have been grouped into the following categories:

Liturgy and Worship	54
Worship in the Context of Battle	22
Other battle usages	28
Warning	10
Coronations	9
Signaling	5
Theophany	<u>6</u>

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Liturgy and worship involve the use of the trumpet in the context of the temple rituals, hymns and related activities of corporate worship. In addition the trumpet also had a liturgical significance in battle. The battle trumpets of Israel were to be handled only by the priests. General references to battle trumpets and incidents where someone other than a priest used the trumpet are combined under the category Other Battle Usages. The category of Warning arises primarily from Ezek 33, although it may well play a subsidiary role in

some of the other usages as well.²⁵ The category of Signaling has primary reference to Num 10 which contains marching orders for the Israelite camp.²⁶ Trumpets were prominent also in the coronations of ancient Israel and in the enthronement Psalms (such as Ps 47) which looked forward to the time when God's kingdom would be established over the whole earth.²⁷ Trumpets were also associated with theophanies in Exodus 19 and Zech 9:14. While this association is rare in the OT, it becomes a predominant emphasis in the NT.²⁸

Thus, the predominant usage of trumpets in the OT is in a liturgical context. The key theological passage is Num 10:8-10:

The sons of Aaron, the priests, are to blow the trumpets. This is to be a lasting ordinance for you and the generations to come. When you go into battle in your own land against an enemy who is oppressing you, sound a blast on the trumpets. Then you will be remembered by the Lord your God and rescued from your enemies. Also at your times of rejoicing-- your appointed feasts and New Moon festivals--you are to sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, and they will be a memorial for you before your God. I am the Lord your God.

This passage clearly indicates that there was a liturgical significance to the blowing of the trumpet regardless of the context. Its use was confined to the priests. Whether in battle or in worship its use by God's people was to result in remembrance (nizkartem--v. 9, lezikkârôn--v. 10, root--zkr) on His part. In battle this remembrance took the form of deliverance from their enemies (v. 9). In worship this remembrance took the form of forgiveness and acceptance within the parameters of the covenant (v. 10--"I am the Lord your God."). Thus, theologically, Israel did not distinguish between battle and worship as far as the trumpet was concerned. The sounding of the trumpet became a symbol of covenant prayer. When the priests blew the trumpet they were reminding God of His covenant with His people. Thus, the predominant usage of the trumpet in the OT (80 times out of a total of 144 or 56%) is in a liturgical context and its primary theological significance is as a symbol of prayer.²⁹

In addition to their background in OT trumpeting, the seven trumpets point back to such OT events as creation,³⁰ the Exodus³¹ and the fall of Jericho.³² There is also frequent reference to the book of Joel³³ and "thirds" appear in a number of places.³⁴ Joel and the "thirds" are most closely related to

the themes of exile and return in the prophets, thus the seven trumpets point to aspects of the three major events of OT history, the Creation-Fall, the Exodus and the Exile/Return.³⁵

In a subtle manner the author of Revelation combines the plagues on Egypt with Joshua's attack on Jericho. As at Jericho, the trumpets precede the fall of a great city (cf. Rev 11 and 18), and the entrance of God's people into the promised land (cf. Rev 21 and 22). The trumpets, however, are also part of what Strand has called the "Exodus from Egypt / Fall of Babylon" motif.³⁶ While most of the plagues are based directly on the Exodus motif, we really have a blending of the Exodus with the Exile.³⁷ The extent of this blending can be seen in the fact that in Revelation Jericho has become Babylon. It is Babylon which falls after the blowing of the trumpet. As with the Exodus and the Return from Babylonian exile, the trumpets are a covenant execution on the part of God. He judges the wicked for their opposition to Him and His people, in the process delivering the righteous and preparing the way for their inheritance of the kingdom (cf. the shout of Rev 11:15).

The Intertestamental Background

A clear trend in the intertestamental period was the increasing association of trumpets with judgment.³⁸ This can be seen in a number of early paraphrases of the Hebrew text,³⁹ in Philo,⁴⁰ the Mishnah,⁴¹ and non-canonical Jewish apocalypses and hymns.⁴²

Trumpets were also associated during this period with signaling in battle,⁴³ and prayer,⁴⁴ but these themes play a minor role in the thought of the period as far as we can reconstruct it from the extant literature. The association of trumpets with judgment and the eschaton is the predominant emphasis with overtones of liturgical war, so common in the OT, only in the War Scroll of Qumran.

The New Testament Context

In the NT the salpigx/salpizein word group has taken over all the Greek and Hebrew meanings of trumpet and trumpeting which the NT writers considered pertinent to their writings. These two words appear in the NT a total of 23 times. Of these, two can be ignored for the purposes of our study.⁴⁵ Of the other 21 usages, 14 are found in Rev 8-11. Before we look at that passage we will study the other seven usages, which appear to fall into two groups.

Trumpets as theophany

Heb 12:19 alludes to Exod 19:13-19. The cloud, the darkness and the storm are all theophanic phenomena. The author of Hebrews contrasts the security of the one who accepts Christ (v. 22-24) with the terror and gloom of the mountain of the law. Another theophanic use of the trumpet can be found in Rev 1:10 cf. 4:1. In both passages there is a movement from theophany to Christophany. The NT writers came to equate Jesus Christ with the Yahweh of the OT.

Trumpets and the Parousia

Trumpets appear four other times in the NT in connection with passages dealing with the Parousia (Matt 24:31; 1 Cor 15:51,52; 1 Thess 4:16,17). The trumpets may have been understood as a symbol of the voice of Christ that awakens the dead (cf. John 5:28,29). In these four passages the language of theophany is associated with the Parousia and the end-time resurrection of the dead. Thus the predominant usage of trumpets in the New Testament outside the seven trumpets is in relation to theophany or, more accurately, Christophany.

New Testament Use of the Old

The interpreter of the seven trumpets must not only be aware of allusions to the NT in the seven trumpets but of the general impact the NT has on the use of the OT in the book of Revelation. Unless we see how the NT transforms the history and the symbolism of the OT we will tend to interpret Revelation in terms of the OT background rather than seeing the unique use that John has made of this OT material.⁴⁶

In the NT, the things of Yahweh and the things of Israel tend to be applied to Jesus Christ. Theophanies become Christophanies. The Day of Yahweh becomes the day of Jesus Christ. As the blowing of trumpets in the OT related to the things of Yahweh and Israel, so in the NT they are related to Jesus and His people.

The Exodus from Egypt is applied in the primary sense to the death of Christ on the cross and in a secondary sense to the experience of every believer in Christ (Rom 6:3-6; 1 Cor 10:1-13). As do the plagues of Egypt, the trumpet plagues precede an exodus, but it is not the exodus of ancient Israel or of the Jews of the author's day, it is the exodus of the church from exile in spiritual Babylon that is preceded by the trumpets.

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Instead of a literal-local-ethnic Israel surrounded by literal enemies such as Babylon, the NT Israel is a spiritual-worldwide-universal body of believers who have spiritual enemies such as spiritual Babylon which consists of all those who actively refuse to accept Christ and thus seek to persecute those who follow Him.

Thus when John, in the seven trumpets, alludes to the experiences of Israel in the OT, he has the church in mind. When he alludes to Yahweh, he generally has Christ in mind. When he alludes to Babylon, Egypt, Assyria or Edom he has the opposers of the gospel of Jesus Christ in mind. Thus, the author of Revelation is able to update the entire OT and make it relevant for the situations faced by followers of Jesus. The seven trumpets have a Christian message that was relevant to the churches in Asia Minor as well as to us.

EXEGESIS OF THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

Exegesis, by definition, involves the attempt to understand what the original writer meant in addressing the issues he faced, and the impact that his work might have had on the original audience. While the task of exegesis does not deny that God may have placed a special meaning in the text for today, the exegete limits himself to the original meaning of a passage, leaving to the Biblical or Systematic theologian (who should also be a skilled exegete) the task of building on that exegetical foundation.

Thus, it is the task of this chapter to unlock the meaning of the language used in the seven trumpets as it would have been understood in the first century. The interpretation of the passage from a 20th century perspective will be left for the next chapter. To accomplish this exegetical task, each trumpet will be translated into English, then relevant allusions

and symbols drawn from other literature will be listed.

Finally, an attempt will be made to show the deeper meaning behind the symbols that an intelligent first century reader would have understood.

The First Trumpet

The first angel sounded his trumpet; with the result that hail and fire mixed with blood were flung to the earth. A third of the earth, a third of the trees and all the green grass were burned up.

Rev 8:7

Parallels in Revelation

7:1-3	11:19
8:5	14:18
9:4	6:21
11:5	20:10,14,15

Old Testament Allusions

Reasonably Certain

Exod 9:23-26	Ezek 38:22
Isa 10:16-20	Zech 13:8,9
Ezek 5:1-4	

Moderately Certain

Exod 7:17ff.	Isa 30:30
Deut 32:22	Jer 11:16,17
Ps 18:13	Jer 21:12-14
Ps 80:8-11,15,16	Ezek 15:6,7
Ps 105:32	Ezek 20:47,48
Isa 28:2	Joel 2:30,31

Symbolic Concepts

Hail	Earth
Fire	Trees
Blood	Grass

Contemporary Literature

4 Ezra 5:8 in context	Sib Or V:376-378
Wis Sol 16:16-24	

New Testament Allusions

Reasonably Certain

Matt 3:10
Luke 23:28-31

Luke 12:49

Uncertain

Rom 8:20ff.
Jude 11,12

1 Cor 3:13,14

Exegetical Meaning

In the first trumpet John draws on the imagery of God's judgments on Egypt (Exod 9:23-26), Assyria (Isa 10:16-20), Gog (Ezek 38:22) and Jerusalem (Ezek 5:1-4). It is clear that the language of the first trumpet describes an act of God's judgment against a power that opposes Him. In the OT these judgments were covenant related, thus could be turned on God's own people when they broke the covenant (Deut 32:15-22). The later prophets, especially, applied the hail and fire of God's judgments more and more to Israel and Judah (Ps 80:8-16; Isa 28:2; Jer 11:16,17; 21:12-14; Ezek 15:65,7; 20:47,48).

In the OT, hail and fire symbolized weapons of God's wrath used in judgment on His enemies (Exod 9:23-26; Job 38:22; Ps 18:13; Isa 10:16-20; 28:2; 29:1-6; Jer 21:12-14).⁴⁷ Blood

symbolized violently destroyed life (Gen 9:5,6; 1 Kgs 2:5; Ps 79:3; Mic 3:10). The earth symbolized the habitable portion of the planet, and in contrast to the sea, the land of Israel itself (Isa 28:2; Lev 26: Jer 9:10-12). Fresh grass was a symbol of God's people while dry grass portrayed the fate of evildoers (Isa 44:3,4; Ps 37:1,2). Fruitful trees were particularly associated with the faithful followers of Yahweh (Ps 1:3; 52:8; 92:12,13; Isa 61:3) while dry or wild vegetation symbolized the unfaithfulness of Israel (Isa 5:1-7; Jer 2:21; Ezek 15:6,7; 20:47,48; Hos 10:1).⁴⁸

In Revelation, as in the OT, hail and fire are associated with heavenly things and with God's judgments on His enemies (Rev 16:21; 20:10,14,15) and the enemies of His people (8:5; 11:5). Greenery is also a symbol of God's people who are usually protected by His seal (7:1-3; 9:4). Thus the greenery here represents followers of God who are not protected and thus have probably forsaken the covenant. The thirds are best understood as portions of Satan's kingdom which has three parts (Rev 16:14,19).⁴⁹

Thus the first trumpet portrays a judgment of God, in response to the prayers of the saints, which falls on a portion of Satan's kingdom that may once have given allegiance to God's

kingdom. Do we have any idea with whom the readers of the Apocalypse would have identified this judgment? In Matt 3:10 trees were a symbol of fruitless Jews who had rejected John the Baptist's message and thus were exposed to the fire of Messianic judgment that Jesus would pour out (Matt 3:12; Luke 12:49). In Luke 23:28-31 Jesus applied the imagery of dying trees to the destruction of Jerusalem. If a righteous man such as He can be treated as He was what will be the fate of a rebellious and wicked nation, who crucifies its redeemer? These NT references make it virtually certain that John intended his readers to see in the first trumpet the fate of the Jewish nation that had rejected Jesus as its Messiah.

The Second Trumpet

The second angel sounded his trumpet; and something like a great mountain burning with fire was flung into the sea. A third of the sea became blood, and a third of the creatures that were in the sea, who have souls, died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

Rev 8:8,9

Parallels in Revelation

6:12-17	17:16
12:12	18:8,9,18
16:4-6	18:17-19
17:1-3	18:21
17:9	18:24

Old Testament Allusions

Reasonably Certain

Gen 1:20,21	Exod 19:16-20 Ps-J
Exod 7:19-21	Jer 51:24,25,41,42

Moderately Certain

Ps 46:2,3	Isa 10:16-18
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Symbolic Concepts

Mountain	Blood
Fire	Sea creatures
Sea	Ships

Contemporary Literature

1 Enoch 18:13-16	2 Baruch 10:1-3
1 Enoch 21:3-10	2 Baruch 11:1
1 Enoch 108:4-6	2 Baruch 67:7
4 Ezra 3:1,2,28-31	Sib Or V:143,158,159
4 Ezra 13:21-24	

New Testament Allusions

Matt 21:21	Luke 5:1-10
Matt 13:47-50	Luke 21:25

Exegetical Meaning

While the burning mountain might have brought the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD to the first century mind, the second trumpet is built primarily on the Old Testament. Gen 1:20,21 is the source of the language with which the author describes the fish that are destroyed in the sea. The bloody water and the dead fish are reminiscent of the plagues on Egypt (Exod 7:19-21). The Pseudo-Jonathan Targum to the Pentateuch causes one to suspect that John may have had the theophany on Sinai in mind as he wrote here (Exod 19:16-20 Ps-J). The most significant Old Testament allusion in the second trumpet is the reference to Jer 51. Just as the Euphrates River is the means by which the original Babylon fell, so the sea here swallows up another Babylon. In Isa 10:16-18 the reference is to the fall of Assyria. While the Old Testament background of the first trumpet suggests that the plague falls on a power that once followed God but has now broken the covenant, the Old Testament background to the second trumpet points to a judgment on Gentile nations rather than an apostate Israel.

As with the first trumpet, there are six symbolic concepts in Rev 8:8,9. A mountain can symbolize a nation (Isa

13:4; Jer 51; Isa 10), God's throne (Isa 2:2,3; 14:12-14; Ezek 28:14) or an obstacle to faith (Zech 4:7-10). Of the three the first is the most relevant to the context of the second trumpet. Fire, as in the first trumpet, is a symbol of violently destroyed life. In 1 Enoch (18:13-16; 108:4-6) the burning of a mountain indicates that it is subject to God's judgment as was the case with the mountain of Babylon in Jer 51. The sea is most likely to be understood in terms of nations in opposition to God (Isa 57:20; 17:12,13; Jer 51:41,42; cf. Rev 13:1ff.; 16:12; 17:15). Sea creatures are a symbol of people (Ezek 29:5; Hab 1:14). The destruction of fish is symbolic of God's judgment upon evildoers (Hag 4:3; Zeph 1:3). Ships are symbolic of the sources of a nation's wealth and its pride in being able to take care of itself (Ezek 27:26; 2 Chr 20:37; Isa 2:16). The destruction of ships leads to economic chaos resulting in the humiliation of that nation (Rev 18:17-19).

In Revelation "great mountain" clearly points to ancient Babylon as a symbol of the end-time opposers of Christ and His people (17:1-3,9; 18:21). This end-time Babylon is symbolically destroyed by fire as was the first (Rev 17:16; 18:8,9,18). The fact that there is only one mountain in Rev 8:8 and seven mountains in Rev 17:9 indicates that this plague does not fall

on the end-time Babylon of Rev 17 but on a preliminary manifestation of that Babylon.⁵⁰ The blood in the second trumpet probably represents a reversal of the persecution of God's people by the wicked (cf. Rev 16:4-6; 18:24). They receive in kind for what they have done. The sea appears to be a reference to the Euphrates, the waters of Babylon (9:14; 16:12; 17:1,15). In summary, the second trumpet is a judgment of God, in response to the prayers of the saints, which falls on an enemy of God's people. This enemy is represented by a great burning mountain which is identified with ancient Babylon.⁵¹ In judgment God burns the mountain and casts it into the sea of wicked nations, resulting in economic and commercial chaos for the ancient world.

Do we have any idea with whom the readers of the Apocalypse would have identified this judgment? It was common in first century Judaism to use Babylon as a cryptic reference to Rome.⁵² Would John have been likely to do the same? Matt 21:21 relates the moving of mountains to Christian faith. A mountain is any power that opposes the establishment of Jesus' kingdom. In Luke 21:25 the unruly sea represents the wicked nations of the world in an unsettled state. In Luke 5:1-10 and Matt 13:47-50 the fish of the sea represent individuals to whom

the gospel is preached. Thus the symbols are used similarly to the OT but in a Christ-centered context.

The mountain facing Jesus and His disciples in Matt 21 was the opposition of the Jewish nation to Jesus. By the time Revelation was written a far larger mountain had erected itself in the path of Christ's kingdom, Rome. Rome was not the end-time Babylon for John, but its persecution and ridicule hindered the preaching of the gospel and tempted many Christians to apostatize from the faith. Given the weight of evidence it is likely that a first century reader would understand the second trumpet as a prediction that the Roman Empire was soon to fall along with its entire social order. Although the Empire was used by God as the executor of His covenant on the Jewish nation, its hostility toward Christ and his people, and its persecution of them called for its ultimate downfall. When that time came it would apparently be as the result of universal revulsion. She would sink beneath the waves of a sea of nations. The result would be the devastation of the whole economic and social order.

The Third Trumpet

The third angel sounded his trumpet; and a great star burning with fire fell out of heaven. It landed on a third of

the rivers and springs of water. The star's name was called "Wormwood." A third of the waters became wormwood with the result that many men died from the waters because they had been made bitter.

Rev 8:10,11

Exegetical Meaning53

The main symbolism of the third trumpet revolves around the great falling star and the rivers and springs which it defiles. The falling star is particularly reminiscent of the Lucifer account (Isa 14:12-15) and the activity of the little horn (Dan 8:10,11) in the Old Testament. In both texts there is the attempt to usurp God's authority. In Isa 14 the falling of the star is the punishment for Lucifer's activity, in Dan 8 it is the result of the little horn's persecuting activity.

Rivers and fountains, when pure, are sources of life in the Old Testament (Deut 8:7,8; Ps 1:3). Thus they became symbols of spiritual nourishment (Ps 36:8,9; Jer 17:8,13; Prov 14:27; Ezek 47:1-12). Impure fountains, on the other hand, would have the opposite spiritual effect (Prov 25:26). Bitter water cannot sustain life and growth.

Wormwood and bitterness are associated together in Lam 3:15,19. In Deuteronomy wormwood represents anyone who turns away from Yahweh into idolatry (Deut 29:17,18). In Jeremiah it

symbolizes the punishment Yahweh was planning to mete out because of Judah's apostasy (Jer 9:15: 23:15). The Marah experience is also a close parallel to the third trumpet (Exod 15:23). The children of Israel were dying of thirst. With great anticipation, they approached the spring-fed oasis of Marah only to find that there was no life in the bitter water.

Other parts of the New Testament also contain parallels to the third trumpet. In Luke 10:18 Satan is the one who fell from heaven. Similar imagery is used in Rev 12 where the dragon's tail sweeps a third of the stars of heaven to earth before being thrown to the earth himself (Rev 12:3,4,9). In the Gospel of John "living" spring water is a symbol of what Jesus brings to the believer through the Holy Spirit (John 4:10-14; 7:37-39).

What was John trying to say with by means of these images? The overwhelming flavor of this account is one of apostasy. Stars and fountains are positive images in Scripture but here John drew on passages such as Isa 14 and Deut 29 where a good thing becomes evil due to apostasy. The little horn of Dan 8 also encourages apostasy in its usurpation of the sanctuary service. Such apostasy is the first step on the road to spiritual death in that it results in a distortion of the

source of spiritual nourishment, the Word of God. Through distorted views of God the Scriptures are made of no effect in giving life to the people.

The early church was aware that apostasy loomed large in its future (Acts 20:28-31; 2 Thess 2; 1 Tim 4:1ff.). It was also aware that pure doctrine can only be maintained with diligent effort (1 Tim 4:1,2; 1 John 4:1-3; Jude 3,4). The message of the third trumpet underlines these convictions. The removal of Rome and Judaism as effective opponents would have seemed to open the way for the church's advancement and growth. But John warns in apocalyptic language that such a removal only diverts Satan's attack. He then will concentrate on destroying the church from within, knowing that if the church's life-giving message can be subtly distorted, mankind will fail to find the spiritual nourishment it needs, but instead will find only bitterness. Indications that this iniquity was already at work in John's lifetime are found in New Testament books such as 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians and Hebrews.

The Fourth Trumpet

The fourth angel sounded his trumpet; and a third of the sun, moon and stars were smitten with a plague, resulting in a third of them being darkened so that a third of the day did not shine and the night likewise.

Rev 8:12

Exegetical Meaning

There is an apparent contradiction in this verse. The plague smites a third of the sun, moon and stars with darkness, which one would expect to result in a dimming of the intensity of the heavenly lights. Instead a third of the day and a third of the night are darkened as in an eclipse. Since the latter is more sound grammatically, the plague probably points to a darkening of the heavenly bodies for a third of the time.

This passage is strongly based on the darkness of the ninth plague on Egypt (Exod 10:21-23) and the lamentation over Pharaoh in Ezek 32:2-8. Darkness is one of the curses of the covenant (Deut 28:29). The sun is a symbol of the Word of God in the Old Testament (Ps 19; 119:105). The moon represents beauty and fertility (SS 6:10; Deut 33:14). Stars represent angels and the people of God (Dan 8:10; 12:3). The choice of symbolism points to a partial obliteration of the Word of God resulting in spiritual darkness.

John seems to be pointing to an attack on God's word and His people that is of a different nature than that of the third trumpet. While wormwood represented a distortion of the Word of

God the fourth trumpet results in the obliteration of that word. It is no longer visible. In the third trumpet people continued to drink from the springs, hoping to gain life, in the fourth trumpet the very presence of the life-giving sources is removed.

John seems to be pointing to a new power which would oppose the truth and the people of God in a more direct way. Perhaps the model for such a power can be found in the Pharaoh of the Exodus, who denied the very existence of Yahweh (Exod 5:2). It is difficult to know what kind of movement John would have had in mind, likely he was pointing to something completely new.

There is a seeming contradiction in that the trumpets are judgments of God on the enemies of His people, yet the third and fourth trumpets seem to be attacks on the gospel and those who proclaim it. But God's judgments come in two forms in the Bible. There is the judgment of open intervention as in 2 Kgs 19 where 185,000 Assyrians were slain. Similar is the sending of Cyrus to defeat Babylon in order to free Israel. On the other hand, as in Rom 1, God's judgments often come in the form of permitting people and nations to reap the consequences of their own actions (cf. Hos 4:17). Thus, while the direct enemies of the church are removed in the first two trumpets, God

permits an apostasy which results in two new enemies, one from within and one from without. In its apostasy the church, as with Judaism, becomes an enemy of God's true people.

Transition

I saw and heard a vulture flying in mid-heaven saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to those who live on the earth because of the rest of the trumpet sounds belonging to the three angels who are about to blow their trumpets."

Rev 8:13

The vulture is a symbol of God's covenant judgments (Hos 8:1; Ezek 32:4; Hab 1:8). God is moving to attack those who are spiritually dead as a result of the apostasy. The three woes indicate that the worst is yet to come. Now that the darkness has been unleashed, all the powers of darkness are freed to torment humanity until the end. For John, the road to the Parousia is a downhill road to destruction apart from Christ.

The Fifth Trumpet

The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was

like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man. During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lion's teeth. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months. They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.

Rev 9:1-11 NIV

Exegetical Meaning

The fallen star of verse 1 connects this trumpet with the third where the star actually fell. While the star, in its primary sense refers to Satan (cf. v. 11 and Isa 14), it is connected with apostasy in the third trumpet. Thus, in some sense, the apostasy of the third trumpet may be related to the unlocking of the abyss.

That God also had a hand in the unlocking of the abyss is clear for a number of reasons. 1) The divine passives (vv. 1,3,5). 2) The star fell from heaven. 3) The locusts receive exousia. 4) In Exod 19:18 the "smoke of the furnace" arises from the presence of Yahweh on Mt. Sinai. 5) Locusts in the Old Testament are a symbol of God's judgment.

The abyss is a symbol that has reference to the past, the present and the future. It is reminiscent of the earth in its precreation chaotic condition (Gen 1:2). Thus it could represent those who are in opposition to God's re-creation in Christ. On the other hand, the abyss is the abode of demons in the present (Luke 8:28-31). It also looks forward to the fate of the wicked (Gen 10:22 Pal Targ) and is associated with the beast of the end-time (Rev 11:7; 17:8).

The smoke which arises out of the abyss does not dim the sun, it eclipses it. The sun is still there but is no longer seen by the "earth-dwellers." This darkness is a connection to the fourth trumpet, which depicted the rise of a power which sought to blot out the knowledge of God. In Gen 19 the smoke of a great furnace describes the destruction of godless Sodom (cf. 11:8).

Verse 3 introduces locusts which have the power of scorpions. Locusts would symbolize quantity while scorpions symbolize harmfulness toward mankind. This heightens the terror of the description. In the ancient Near East locusts and scorpion men were symbols of the rulers of the underworld (cf. v. 11). The locusts here are not literal for they attack men,

not vegetation, and they have a king over them, unlike natural locusts (Rev 9:4,11 cf. Prov 30:27).

Locusts are used in the Old Testament as symbols of God's judgments (Ps 78:46; Deut 28:42,45; 1 Kgs 8:37). These are often directed at those who have apostatized from following Him (Joel 1:4-18; 2:1-11; Jer 4; Gen 6-9). As such they could only be turned back through repentance at the Sanctuary (1 Kgs 8:35-40; 2 Chr 7:13,14; Joel 2:12-17).

The locusts of the fifth trumpet arise from the abyss, which is devoid of vegetation (cf. targum to Gen 1:2), in order to turn the earth into an abyss like their own. But this God does not permit (Rev 9:4). God's people are safe from the demonic forces of Satan (Luke 10:17-20; 8:28-31) which arise out of the abyss. God has given them a mark of protection (Gen 4:15 cf. Ezek 9:4). On the other hand, the fate of those who have rejected Christ is horrible. The king of the abyss torments his own subjects as with scorpions (2 Chr 10:11,14). These torments are to be understood as spiritual not physical. In Ps 71:20,21 the abyss is paralleled to "many and bitter troubles." Death is sought by those in bitterness and grief, for whom life has lost its meaning.⁵⁴ This torment is to some degree self-inflicted.

Their unbelief has driven them into foolish practices which reap a harvest of despair (Rom 1:21-26).

It is possible to make too much of the elaborate description of the locusts. Perhaps they symbolize human beings inspired by Satan (Rev 9:7,8,11). Whether man or demon, these fiends "are as strong as horses, as powerful as kings, as cunning as the wildest man, as seductive as a beautiful woman, and they can cause pain like a scorpion."⁵⁵ In verse 11 Satan's names (Apollyon and Abaddon) are personifications of death, the fate of the wicked (Job 26:6; 31:12; Ps 88:11). This fits in with the character of one who was a murderer and a liar from the beginning (John 8:44). He exercises his lies through the tails of the locust-men (Isa 9:15). Just as his confinement to the abyss (Rev 20:1-3 restricts his deceptions, so the opening of the abyss is the release of his deceptions to do their deadly work. In those who reject Christ the light of truth is extinguished by Satan (cf. 2 Thess 2:9-12--with God's permission).

John apparently foresaw a time when the darkness of the fourth trumpet would become total and worldwide, limited only by a period of time (five months).⁵⁶ With God and truth totally eclipsed, sinful mankind is left to the demonic torment of

suicidal desires. Here in graphic terms the author of Revelation has portrayed the ultimate results of apostasy and opposition to God. In all this the only safety belongs to the sealed. In Christ they are free from darkness and despair. Regardless of when John's readers thought this plague would appear they would perceive a powerful appeal to stay true to the gospel no matter what the temporal consequences.

Transition

The first woe has passed. Behold two more woes come after this.

Rev 9:12

This transition verse, along with 11:14, makes it clear that the three woes are to be identified with the fifth, sixth and seventh trumpets.

The Sixth Trumpet

The sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." And 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 mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.

The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke

and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.

The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood--idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Rev 9:13-21 NIV

Exegetical Meaning

Verse 13 explicitly indicates that the events of the sixth trumpet occur in relation to the activity of intercession and judgment taking place at the golden incense altar. The commanding voice from the four horns of the altar is probably the voice of Christ.

In verse 14 there is an interesting contrast to Rev 7:1-3. Four angels are bound at the great river Euphrates. Their release brings great evil to mankind. On the other hand, in chapter 7 the angels are at the extremities of the earth and restrain evil by holding it back. Thus these two groups of angels are not the same. Since the winds of Rev 7 and the angels of 9:14 are both restrained and produce evil results when released, they may well be symbols of the same thing. If so it is likely that the sixth trumpet reveals a later development of

the situation in Rev 7:1-3. Thus, the events of this plague take place in the very shadow of the consummation.

The Euphrates River was the northern border of the land promised to Abraham (Gen 15:18; Josh 1:4, etc.). The language here is reminiscent of Isa 8:7,8 where the Assyrian invasion of Judah is described in terms of the Euphrates River overflowing its banks and flooding Palestine. Here again the Euphrates is the source of a great assault against God's people. This plague appears to be a gathering of the forces of evil for the final battle (cf. 16:13-16; 20:7-9).

It is arguable whether the hour, day, month and year of 9:15 are to be understood as successive periods of time or as the point of time at which the angels are released. The grammar leans in favor of the latter. In either case the time of release should probably be associated with the decisive moment of Rev 10:6 when chronos comes to an end.

As in Rev 7:4, John doesn't see 200,000,000 horsemen in 9:16, he hears the number. This is Satan's host in contrast to the sealed of God who number 144,000. In verses 17-19 the horsemen are equipped with material from the lake of fire. This plague is a composite with the fifth trumpet, for the horsemen not only harm men with the fire, smoke and sulphur which comes

out of their mouths but with their tails, which remind one of 9:10. The flavor of these images reminds one of the beasts of chapter 13 and the frogs which come out of their mouths in 16:13. Thus the sixth trumpet is related to the account of the final crisis in Rev 13-16.

In Rev 9:20,21 there are many references to the fall of Babylon in the Old Testament. The images of idolatry are drawn from Dan 5:4,23; a description of Babylon just before the Euphrates River dried up! Verse 21 is based on Isa 47:9-12, a prediction of Babylon's fall.

In summary, this trumpet is based on imagery that points in two directions. There are references to Babylon in the Old Testament and its river, the Euphrates. And there are many connections with the three-fold Babylon of the end-time crisis. Since the closest parallels are with Rev 16:12,13 it seems reasonable to suggest that John was here portraying the gathering of Satan's host which precedes the battle of Armageddon. With this plague we clearly enter the arena of final events.

Interlude

The view of Satan's host in Rev 9:13-21 is balanced by a view of the experience of God's people during this period in Rev 10:1-11:14. They are seen in terms of the fulfillment of Daniel's time prophecies (Rev 10:6 cf. Dan 12:7). Their task is the proclamation of the gospel to the world so that the end can come (Matt 24:14; Mark 13:10).

The Seventh Trumpet

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom
of our Lord and of his Christ,
and he will reign for ever and ever."

And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying:

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
who is and who was,

because you have taken your great power
and have begun to reign.

The nations were angry;
and your wrath has come.

The time has come for judging the dead,
and for rewarding your servants the prophets
and your saints and those who reverence your name,
both small and great--
and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

Rev 11:15-18 NIV

Exegetical Meaning

In Rev 10:7 it is stated explicitly that the "mystery of God (to mustêrion tou theou)" will be consummated (etelesthê) at that point in history when the seventh angel is about to sound

his trumpet (hotan mellê salpizein). The mystery of God is an acronym for the gospel in the New Testament (Rom 16:25,26, cf. Col 1:25-28; Eph 6:19). Thus, the sounding of the seventh trumpet signals the close of the great work of proclaiming the gospel to every nation, kindred, language and people (Rev 14:6,7). It ushers in the final events connected with the battle of Armageddon.

The seventh trumpet irreversibly sets the final events in motion. The Godhead reclaims the kingdom of the world to the rejoicing of heaven. The nations, led by the dragon, make their last attempt to prevent this. The battle of Armageddon, between the wrath of the nations and the wrath of God, is fought. The result is victory for Almighty God, reward for the saints and destruction for their enemies.

Thus the seventh trumpet contains a summary foretaste of the final victory of God and a summary introduction of the third woe, the climax of all evil. The seventh trumpet has set the stage for the complete outline of final events that begins in chapter 12.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

In New Testament interpretation the next step following exegesis is to attempt to outline the contribution that a given passage makes to our understanding of the author's theology and, ultimately, to the theology of the New Testament as a whole. This chapter is an attempt to make some suggestions along these lines.

In his Theology of the New Testament George Eldon Ladd suggests that there are three main elements in a theology of the book of Revelation: the problem of evil, the visitation of God's wrath and the coming of the kingdom of God.⁵⁷ While these suggestions sound a bit thin for the Apocalypse as a whole, they

seem to summarize the basic theology of the seven trumpets quite well.

The Problem of Evil

As has been pointed out, the trumpets are to be understood as a response to the prayers of the souls under the altar in the fifth seal. The cry "how long" has a rich background in the OT.⁵⁸ It is used there to represent how God's people feel when He seems slow to fulfill His promises to deliver them from their oppressors. "How long" summarizes in two words humanity's age-old complaint against God, "If You are so good, why does evil reign? How long will You permit it to continue? Are You evil Yourself, or just powerless?"

The problem was acute enough in OT times. But the NT heightens and intensifies the questioning. A change has come, the last days have arrived, a "new age" has dawned. All power has been given to Christ (Matt 28:18). The prince of this world has been cast out by the cross (John 12:31,32). Yet in spite of all these claims, evil still seems to reign. The NT would be a farce if it did not address this question. The intensity of the problem is certainly recognized in the book of Revelation:

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

`Now have come the salvation and the power and
 the kingdom of our God,
 and the authority of his Christ.
 For the accuser of our brothers,
 who accuses them before our God day and night,
 has been hurled down.
 They overcame him
 by the blood of the Lamb
 and by the word of their testimony
 they did not love their lives so much
 as to shrink from death.
 Therefore rejoice, you heavens and
 you who dwell in them!
 But woe to the earth and the sea,
 because the devil has gone down to you!
 He is filled with fury,
 because he knows that his time is short.'
 Rev 12:10-12 NIV

Here the tension is directly portrayed. Yes, the cross
 has fundamentally changed the order of the universe. Yes, the
 accuser of our brothers has been cast down. Yes, he is
 overcome. Nevertheless, he is still alive and his sting can
 still be felt, even unto death (verse 11). There are still
 martyrs and great tribulations. There are churches like Smyrna
 who are all but crushed out for the faith. What answer does the
 book offer to the question "how long?"

The seals and the trumpets seem designed to deal with
 this issue. Rev 5 sets the stage with the symbolic depiction of
 the cross followed by the enthronement of the Lamb (vv. 6,9-14).
 The scenes described are so glorious that one would expect them

to lead to the climax of all world history, the end of suffering and death. But it is immediately clear that this is not the case. Chapter 6 opens with a series of horsemen who spread carnage over the earth. That this carnage affects the Christian community is apparent from the fifth seal. How long will this carnage go on? Why is there a delay in enthroning the Lamb over the entire earth?

The flow of the book suggests that the seven trumpets provide the answer to the problem of evil as expressed in the fifth seal. The trumpets open the veil of history to show that God's hand is still in control in spite of the fact that, to human eyes, the world is out of control. Nothing is done without His permission. The very events of history which seem to indicate that things are out of control are seen to be under His control. The answer of the book of Revelation to the question of the fifth seal lies in the other theological themes of the seven trumpets.

The Visitation of Wrath

God's judgments of wrath have a long history in both the Old and the New Testaments. OT judgments consisted primarily of historical acts of God. Such judgments were always in relation

to God's covenant with His people, and provided an anticipation of the great final day of judgment.

In the NT the final judgment is divided into two great phases centered around the cross and the Parousia. In both cases judgment is in relation to Christ and the gospel. The judgments of the seven trumpets are also related to Christ. They are in response to the prayers of the saints; those who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb (5:9,10 cf. 21:11). The dividing line between the wicked and the righteous is drawn in relation to the cross of Christ. Judgments fall on those who have rejected Christ and His cross, while those who have accepted his seal (cf. Eph 1:13 and 4:30) are not harmed by these judgments (Rev 9:4-6).⁵⁹

Judgment in the trumpets is also covenant-related. Thus if God is acting in judgment in the trumpets, it is for the purpose of delivering the righteous. Although this is not explicitly stated in the passage, we must not forget that the trumpets are in response to a cry for deliverance. In the judgments on His enemies God is acting to bring justice and deliverance for His people.

Last, but not least, the judgment plagues of the seven trumpets of Revelation are all anticipations of the great final

judgment. They are moving toward a climax. This is shown by the intimate relationship they bear to the seven bowls, which are the consummation of the wrath of God. Each trumpet is a foretaste and a warning of the great final judgment.

In these judgments, the author of Revelation has sought to provide an answer to the problem of evil; although the saints cannot perceive it, God is in full control of history and nothing touches His people but with the permission of infinite love. Although invisible the kingdom of God is real. The divine passives clearly indicate that the trumpets are from God and are under His control. Although the saints suffer, God is still in sovereign control over history and both suffering and judgment are limited for the sake of His people.

The Kingdom Comes

The climax of the seven trumpets comes with Rev 11:15:

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ,
and He will reign for ever and ever.'

This depicts the enthronement of God and Christ over all the nations of the world. The passage finds its root in Exod 15:18 where Yahweh is said to reign forever and ever as a result

of the crossing of the sea. Prior to the events of the poem the Israelites were subjected to bitter bondage. God could not be enthroned as the ruler of His people until the oppression of the Egyptians had been brought to an end. Exod 15 was the celebration of that event.⁶⁰

This enthronement theme is expanded in a number of Psalms which have, therefore, been called "Enthronement Psalms." These Psalms have a "now and not yet" feature. Although in a sense Yahweh is already the king over all the earth, He is not yet acknowledged as such. The enthronement Psalms look forward to a time when God will be enthroned over all the nations and receive their willing obedience.⁶¹

In the NT this "now and not yet" feature is carried a step further. In Christ, God is enthroned over the nations and the usurper is cast out (John 12:31,32). The gospel becomes the proclamation that Jesus Christ is Lord. All who are willing to acknowledge His rule and obey His will are accepted as subjects of that kingdom. Yet even here it becomes clear that most individuals have not accepted God's rule over them personally. Phil 2:9-11 points to a future time when Christ's exaltation will be acknowledged by all.

The book of Revelation maintains this "now and not yet" feature right up to the consummation at the Parousia. Christ is already enthroned but that enthronement will not be acknowledged by all until the consummation (Rev 3:21; 5:9-14). He reigns in the hearts of His people but not publicly. The making public of the reign of God is pre-eminently the subject of the latter portion of the book of Revelation. But already here in the seven trumpets there is a marvelous foretaste of the final enthronement of Christ which will result in the complete subjugation of all that is evil and the permanent exaltation of all who are righteous (Rev 11:15). Thus the process of divine enthronement that began with a song by the Red Sea ends with the same song by another red sea (Rev 15:2-4).

Conclusion

The theology of the seven trumpets is a marvelously constructed unity. It consists of a question which recalls to our minds the problem of evil. It concludes with two answers to that question. The first is summed up by the theology of judgment which indicates that, although they are unaware of it, the prayers of the martyrs under the altar are already in the

process of being answered by the judgment wrath of God on those who have persecuted and slain them.

The second answer to the question raised in the prayer of the saints is summed up in the foretaste of the final enthronement which is found in the seventh trumpet. The mystical victory of God became a reality in the cross of Christ. Soon that victory will become a public event. In the glorification of Christ the saints will also be glorified. The saints are encouraged to be patient in the light of the glory to come.

In short the seven trumpets of Revelation are a fearful message of doom and warning to those who have rejected the gospel and persecuted the people of the Lamb, thus they are also a message of comfort to all who have sacrificed everything in order to follow Him, yet must endure suffering a little while longer. They are encouraged not to focus on the things of earth but rather on the songs of heaven, the sound of which is ever nearer as the long awaited consummation approaches.

ADVENTIST INTERPRETATION OF THE TRUMPETS:
A HISTORICIST PERSPECTIVE⁶²

Approaches to the Book of Revelation

Few commentators on the book of Revelation are content merely to outline what the book might have meant to its original audience in first century Asia Minor. As a part of the Biblical canon the Apocalypse invites us to search for the meaning in the book which is especially relevant today. To discover that meaning commentators have approached Revelation from three basic perspectives: preterist, futurist and historicist.

Preterism

The preterist approach treats Revelation little differently than it does the rest of the New Testament. Rather than being a prediction of the future, Revelation is considered a message to a particular group in a particular time and place.

As such it needs to be exegeted primarily in terms of its original context.

If the preterist interpreter does not recognize any divine element in the production of the book of Revelation, he/she will usually dismiss the book as one man's response to a crisis situation. Thus Revelation's value for today is judged by the interpreter's own present experience. He/she may even judge, as Adela Yarbro Collins does, that the author of Revelation exhibits a "failure in love," oversimplification, and vengeful aggression.⁶³

But many preterist interpreters do believe that Revelation is inspired by God and thus bears authority for our situation today. For them, Revelation is a pictorial unfolding of basic principles in the relationship between God, humanity and the forces of evil. Thus Revelation teaches truths that are applicable to any similar situation. This method of interpretation is similar to that used to contemporize other New Testament books such as Matthew and Romans, the main difference being the figurative nature of Revelation. Many readers will recognize in this brief description what some have called the idealist school of prophetic interpretation.

Futurism

At the opposite end of the spectrum is futurism which takes its cue from Revelation's repeated concentration on the consummation of all things (6:15-17; 11:15-18; 14:14-20; 19:11-21, etc.). Thus futurist interpreters contend that the bulk of the visions in Revelation focus on the end-time and are future from the interpreter's own perspective. Thus, in the direct sense, the book of Revelation is primarily relevant for the last generation of the earth's history. However, much as idealists do, futurist interpreter's find present meaning in the promises and general principles implicit in the end-time events described in Revelation.

Historicism

Historicist interpreters, seeing no indication in the book that the events of Revelation were to be confined to either the distant past or the distant future, argue that the book covers the entire history of the church and the world from the cross until the second coming. Historicism sees Revelation as portraying major events of history. In this way Revelation is made relevant to the reader who finds his place in the flow of history. Nevertheless, much of the book is thus made irrelevant

to the reader unless he too, like the preterist and futurist interpreter, adopts an idealist approach to much of the book.

Summary

Since the idealist approach is common to every interpreter who wishes to find present-day relevance in the book of Revelation, we are left with three basic approaches to the Apocalypse. The interpreter can approach it as a work of the past in a specific historical setting, as a prophecy of end-time events or as a prediction of the course of historical events during the Christian era.⁶⁴

The Adventist Approach

Traditionally, Adventism has shown little interest in preterism, futurism or idealism. The main Adventist approach to the seven trumpets has arisen out of our concern for our place in the flow of history. We see ourselves as a prophetic movement which has arisen at a certain point in history and is validated by the visions of Daniel and Revelation. Thus Adventist interpreters have been attracted to the seven trumpets primarily because they have seen in the sixth trumpet events that are related to the birth of our movement.⁶⁵ As a result, little interest has been shown in exegetical issues or

historical context where the study of the trumpets was concerned. With the exception of evangelistic sermons,⁶⁶ Adventist preachers have neglected the seven trumpets, not finding spiritual principles or timeless truths there.

Until recently Adventist interpreters have rejected any futurist understanding of the first six trumpets. In the last few years, however, some have suggested that the seven trumpets have an end-time fulfillment, either in addition to or in place of the historical understandings of the past.⁶⁷ This interpretation finds support in Ellen White's statement in letter 109, 1890,

Solemn events before us are yet to transpire. Trumpet after trumpet is to be sounded, vial after vial poured out one after another upon the inhabitants of the earth. Scenes of stupendous interest are right upon us.⁶⁸

C. Mervyn Maxwell's newly published commentaries on Daniel and Revelation are basically historicist in orientation. However, the very title of the pair, God Cares, indicates Maxwell's concern that every portion of these apocalyptic books speak as well to the everyday situation of Christians and their families. His book on Revelation thus shows an openness to idealism which has not generally been manifested in previous Adventist interpretations.

The scholarly world now considers historicism, the main approach of previous centuries, to be thoroughly discredited. The reasons generally given include the following: 1) The chaotic mass of conflicting interpretations offered by historicists. 2) Most historicist interpretations would have had absolutely no relevance to the original readers. 3) Old Testament prophecies of general scope were rarely fulfilled in the exact and detailed manner so typical of historicist interpreters.⁶⁹ 4) Historicist interpretation requires too much extra-Biblical knowledge to be evaluated by most people. 5) There is no evidence in Revelation that the author anticipated long ages of history. In the light of these powerful assaults on historicism many Adventist scholars have become more and more reluctant to affirm our traditional interpretations of prophecy and have become inclined to do the basic exegesis and leave the interpretation to the evangelists.

While the above arguments, especially two through four, carry considerable weight, the denigration of historicism is primarily due to certain understandings of the doctrine of revelation and inspiration. It is the contention of critical scholarship today that the authority and canonicity of the Bible can no longer be assumed but should be evaluated according to

the scholar's critically interpreted present experience.⁷⁰ If, as most critical scholars believe, traditional concepts of inspiration should not be applied to Revelation, then John could not possibly have known a detailed outline of 2000 years of history ahead of time.

A more moderate denial of traditional understandings of inspiration is found in encounter theology. Encounter theology can allow for God's involvement in the production of Scripture while denying that propositional truths (doctrines) are necessarily communicated there. Encounter theology has much to say about God's involvement in human experience as long as you can't put your finger on any details. Such theology finds offense in historicism's assertion that a) God is active in specific historical events and b) He revealed what He was going to do in specific terms before it happened. To summarize, it is evident from the above that SDA students of Revelation are exploring a number of options in search of solid ground on which to base their interpretations. Is it time to discard historicism and move toward a futurist, idealist or preterist approach? Or should historicism be rescued from the dust bin of tradition and history?

An Inductive Historicism

This is not the place to argue the issues of revelation, inspiration and authority. Seventh-day Adventists need to settle many of these issues for themselves. At this point in time, however, there is still a general consensus among us that the Bible is the Word of God and that, subject to the human frailty of the various writers, it succeeds in communicating truth about God that transcends what human beings could learn on their own.⁷¹ Thus, while being grateful for the genuine contributions of critical scholarship, we must not accept conclusions that are based primarily on presuppositions about revelation and inspiration that we do not hold.

If we believe that the book of Revelation portrays genuine visions inspired by God then the key to our approach must be based on an inductive study of Revelation itself. The author, through the text, must be allowed to guide us in our approach to interpreting the book. It is possible that various approaches to the material may be called for in various passages.⁷² What evidence is there in the seven trumpets that can point us to the proper approach to interpreting them for our situation today?

The fact that the author has portrayed the blowing of seven trumpets indicates his intention to point the reader to an interpretation in terms of successive historical periods. For one thing, the major images from the OT are drawn from settings in which successive events in time are depicted. The creation takes place on seven successive days with a Sabbath climax. The Exodus is made possible by a series of ten plagues which wear down the Egyptians so that the Israelites can escape. Seven trumpets are blown at the battle of Jericho where the people march in silence for seven successive days, on the seventh of which the city falls.⁷³ The Feast of Trumpets climaxes a series of seven new moon feasts which are celebrated at the beginning of each month. The Jubilee trumpet sounds after seven periods of seven years each. Thus, a series of successive time periods lies within the intention of the author of Revelation in his construction of the seven trumpets.

Another evidence of the author's intention lies in the nature of biblical judgment. Since the seven trumpets are expressions of God's judgments on the wicked, they can be expected to express God's continuing judgment activity in the NT era. God's judgments in the OT were always seen as historical acts. The wars of Joshua, for example, were understood in terms

of a covenant execution (Deut 9:4-7 cf. the plagues of Egypt-- Exod 6:6; 7:4). When God acted in judgment He often used people such as Nebuchadnezzar and the kings of Egypt and Assyria as His instruments in history. The Synoptic Apocalypse portrays God's judgments in a historical sense in the NT era as well. The armies of Titus are God's agents to judge the leaders of the nation for their rejection of Christ (Matt 23:29-39). Thus the writer of Revelation evidently intended the trumpets to signify God's guiding hand leading history on to its climax at the Parousia.

As has been shown earlier, the trumpets begin with the cross and end with the consummation. Thus the writer of Revelation appears to be outlining a series of seven judgments that are to fall on the wicked during the Christian era. These judgments are not general in nature but follow one another in a chronological sequence. Whatever meaning the original writer may have seen in the trumpets, the extension of time for some 2000 years points us to look for the major interventions in history that God wanted His people to recognize through the inspired vision of John. But can any historicist interpretation overcome the five major criticisms listed earlier?

1) It is true that historicist writers of the past have often failed to agree on the fulfillments of the trumpets, but this does not prove that there is no correct view. A misuse of a method does not invalidate the method.

2) It is true that the book of Revelation must have had meaning for the original readers. Thus historicist interpretation must arise out of the original meaning of the passage. This will prove to be a safeguard against fanciful interpretation.

3) It is also true that Old Testament prophecies of general scope were rarely fulfilled in an exact and detailed manner.⁷⁴ Thus, we must beware of an overly literal one-for-one correspondence in history for every detail of the trumpets. The overall flavor of each account will correspond to a major trend in history.⁷⁵

4) To be meaningful the interpretation should be readily discernible to anyone with a basic understanding of history, it must not hinge on obscure events or statements. The outline of history should be accurate and readily accessible to layman and historian alike.

5) It is probably true that none of the disciples foresaw the enormous length of the Christian era. The Lord

certainly could have come in the first century. But the passage of time has opened up new vistas in terms of the Lord's patience and purpose. Having foreseen the delay, would not God prepare His people to understand the great events by which He is bringing history to its climax? Our lack of foresight should certainly introduce an element of tentativeness into any historicist interpretation. Only from the perspective of the Parousia will history speak with perfect clarity. If time should last another 2000 years (God forbid!) the trumpets, which run from the cross to the second coming, will be stretched out beyond anything we could recognize now. Nevertheless, each generation must make the attempt to understand Revelation or risk being surprised by God's final acts (Rev 16:15 cf. 1 Thess 5:1-6).

What kind of historicist interpretation will do justice to the Biblical material? Certainly not the traditional variety which emphasizes minute details and "newspaper" exegesis while ignoring the plain meaning of the symbols in their original context. Perhaps it is time to introduce a "modified historicism." While God's judgments in the Old Testament were historical in nature the parallel between Old Testament and New Testament judgment is not exact. The Christ event has created

fundamental changes in the way God deals with mankind. His people are no longer a geographical, ethnic nation but are now a world-wide spiritual church whose existence and character are often invisible to human eyes. Thus the "historical" events for which we are looking are not likely to deal with politics and nations and ethnic groups as much as they deal with ideas and philosophies and great trans-national movements throughout the New Testament era. The message of the seven trumpets is that history is not an endless round of cause and effect, it has a purpose. While God's hand is not necessarily visible to the secular historian, it is discernible to the eye of faith. As the prophetic portion of the New Testament, the book of Revelation reveals in broad outline the great movement of nations and ideas over the expanse between the cross and the second coming. These events are alluded to for the purpose of showing their theological significance, so that God's people might be comforted with the knowledge that God is in full control from beginning to end regardless of what the historian might record as to the fate of God's people on earth.

This "modified historicism" is not at variance with Biblical revelation as a whole. God's judgments have always been historical in nature. A secular Westerner who experienced

the exodus or the cross would be hard-pressed to see either the hand of God or any theological significance in them. These events would be seen as the execution of a suspected revolutionary and the mass escape of a ragged bunch of slaves, taking advantage of a series of natural calamities. What makes these events significant to the student of the Bible is that they are seen as God's hand acting in judgment. Nevertheless both are historical in that they could be reported essentially as the Bible records them in the local newspaper but without the theological significance that revelation invests in them.

Thus Biblical prophecy has two main aspects. A historical event is mentioned, and an interpretation of that event is given. Whether the event is future or past is immaterial, the account is still considered prophecy. Unquestionably both testaments portray a God who is active in the affairs of men. It is pointless to pray for those in authority if God doesn't take an active role in history (cf. 1 Tim 2:1-4). Thus, the historicist view is, in principle, true to the way God's acts are portrayed in Scripture.

Is the author of Revelation open to a double fulfillment in which the trumpets would have an application, along with the seven bowls, to the end-time crisis? This appears to be

excluded by the fact that the seven bowls are the third woe of the seventh trumpet. This clearly places the trumpets prior to the bowls chronologically . The trumpets lead up to the end, they are not the end itself.⁷⁶

Since the text of the trumpets calls for a historicist interpretation the last two sections of this paper will provide an analysis and critique of previous Adventist attempts at historicist interpretation followed by the author's own suggestions.

Some Historicist Perspectives

Uriah Smith

The best-known Adventist interpretation of the trumpets is that of Uriah Smith in Daniel and the Revelation. He saw in the first six trumpets events related to the downfall of the Roman Empire. The first four trumpets depicted various of the barbarian invasions which put an end to the Western Roman Empire, while the fifth and sixth related to the fall of the eastern half of the Empire.⁷⁷ Although he says little about it, the seventh trumpet appears to represent the period from the mid-19th century to the end. In spite of the immense popularity of Smith's view, three major factors militate against the

usefulness of his outline, 1) a lack of personal examination of the text, 2) a dependence on sources whose interpretations were based on circular reasoning, and 3) these sources were straight-line historicists.

There is no real evidence that Smith worked with the text of the trumpets personally. Only one short paragraph could be considered exegetical in even the broadest sense.⁷⁸ More than 60% of the 42 pages of material on Rev 8:7-9:21 is quoted from commentators such as Keith, Elliott, Barnes and Litch. Most of the rest is a paraphrase of their works. These commentators merely relate historical events that are supposedly foreshadowed by the imagery of the trumpets. Thus, Uriah Smith bases his interpretation of the trumpets entirely on the work of others.⁷⁹ What was the quality of their work? How did they come upon their elaborate historical interpretations?

A study of Keith, Elliott and other historicists of the period shows an almost total lack of any exegetical concerns. The correspondence between the text and the historical events portrayed is merely assumed. It is George McReady Price who discovered the ultimate source of these interpretations.⁸⁰ They were based on the historical work of Edward Gibbon.⁸¹ Gibbon was a classicist who had virtually memorized the ancient corpus

of literature. In writing out his histories he continually utilized language drawn from the works of antiquity, especially the Bible.⁸² ed in the language of the classics. The events surrounding the fall of Rome called to his mind the language of the seven trumpets of Revelation, and he utilized that language as he wrote these events down. Thus, it is not surprising that historicist commentators saw in these events, as described by Gibbon, the fulfillment of the seven trumpets; not realizing, of course, that the language had merely come full circle.

Not only were the interpretations offered by Smith's sources based on a misuse of Gibbon, but they were part of the straight-line historicist method, which Smith rejected.⁸³ Thus, though Smith was a recapitulationist,⁸⁴ and understood the trumpets to cover the whole Christian era, he was forced to confine the whole essentially to the fall of the Roman Empire.

Thus, Uriah Smith's interpretation of the trumpets apparently tells us more about the mind of Edward Gibbon than the mind of John the Revelator. A serious exegesis of the trumpets will need to move beyond Smith's method and interpretations if it is to be true to the Biblical text.

Edwin R. Thiele

Thiele's syllabus on Revelation is far more exegetical than Uriah Smith's book.⁸⁵ In addition to numerous quotes from Ellen White, he examines parallels in the OT, the NT and elsewhere in Revelation. Especially in the introduction and the first three trumpets, Thiele places a great deal of emphasis on understanding the symbols within their entire Biblical context. In trumpets 4-6 there is less reliance on exegesis and more dependence on Smith.

Thiele sees the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem in the first trumpet . The second portrays the barbarian nations and the downfall of the Roman world. The third trumpet refers to the compromise between paganism and Christianity which resulted in the corruption of Biblical doctrine in the early years of the Middle Ages. The later years of the Middle Ages are foreshadowed by the darkness of the fourth trumpet.

With the fifth trumpet Thiele returns to the basic perspective of Uriah Smith. Thus, although he puts more exegetical effort into his exposition, he essentially underlines Smith's association of the fifth and sixth trumpets with the Saracens and Turks. The seventh trumpet, likewise, covers the period of investigative judgment from 1844 to the end.

The exegesis of chapter two of this paper is very supportive of Thiele's outline for the first three trumpets. The fall of Jerusalem, the fall of Rome and the apostasy of the church are clearly compatible with the imagery chosen by John the Revelator. Some questions arise with regard to the last four trumpets, however. If the fourth trumpet portrays the darkness of papal supremacy, why does the comparable darkness of the fifth trumpet represent the Mohammedan scourge? Can the full range of images in the fifth and sixth trumpets truly be applied to the Islamic attacks of the Middle Ages, or is there not something far more comprehensive in view? With regard to the seventh trumpet does it not portray the events of the final consummation, which follow the worldwide proclamation of the gospel, rather than the age of final proclamation itself? (cf. chapter two on Rev 10:7 and the seventh trumpet.)

All criticism aside, Thiele's work is a tremendous advance over previous efforts within Adventism. All who follow will be building on his pioneering efforts.

C. Mervyn Maxwell

Maxwell's outline of the trumpets essentially builds on Thiele's work, although he advances considerably in his idealist

use of the images, making the trumpets relevant to every situation. Thus, Maxwell's book has a powerful devotional appeal. In terms of scholarly accuracy, however, Maxwell's work essentially shares both the strengths and the weaknesses of Thiele's approach.

Roy Naden

The first Adventist, of which I am aware, to break in print with the Islamic interpretation of the seven trumpets is Roy Naden. The main obstacle to such a departure has been the apparent endorsement of the Litch-Smith view by Ellen White in GC 334,335. Naden points out, however, that many E. G. White scholars, including Arthur White and Robert Olson, do not consider her language to be an endorsement of the Islamic view.⁸⁶ While the official position of the SDA church is that our positions are based on exegesis of Scripture rather than on the writings of E. G. White, most SDAs would be uncomfortable rejecting her view on an issue where she stated it clearly and unequivocally. Thus, Naden feels that the lack of endorsement offered to the Islamic interpretation by Ellen White opens the way to other, more exegetical options.

Naden begins his exposition with a synopsis of the OT background and parallels with other NT books and the book of Revelation itself. Though brief, this synopsis shows a breadth of exegetical understanding that goes beyond anything that has previously been written. Naden's basic thesis is that the seven trumpets, in covering the same period as the Synoptic Apocalypse, also follow the same basic outline.

Naden thus has no problem with Thiele's exposition of the first four trumpets. In wrestling with the difficulties of the fifth trumpet, however, he suggests that it portrays Satan's attack on the Reformation by the Counter Reformation from 1535-1685. While this position is fresh and intriguing he offers little justification for it in the text itself.

Naden then connects the point in time of Rev 9:15 with the day and hour of the Parousia mentioned by Jesus in Matt 24:36. Thus he sees in the sixth trumpet the time of the final crisis, from the mid-18th century to the close of probation. Therefore, he sees the seventh trumpet as the consummation, running from the close of probation to the second coming. In the sixth and seventh trumpets Naden stands on firmer exegetical ground than in his interpretation of the fifth trumpet.⁸⁷

Summary

This examination of representative interpretations shows a development toward a more exegetically sound approach to the seven trumpets. The task is to base every aspect of our interpretation on the original intent of the author of Revelation as clarified by exegesis of the text itself. The last section of the paper is the author's attempt to build on and complete the progress which has been made in the Adventist understanding of the seven trumpets.

The Trumpets and History

We have concluded earlier that John, in writing out the vision of the seven trumpets, utilized language and imagery that point the reader to major historical acts of judgment carried out by God in the course of the Christian era. These judgments follow one another in chronological sequence. They fall, in response to the prayers of the saints, on those who have opposed God and His people . The 2000 year length of Christian history further indicates that these judgment events must be major trends in history not just minor details.

It is not surprising that Adventist writers have reached a consensus on the first three trumpets. Lying closest to the

time of the author of Revelation, they can be easily related to John's situation.⁸⁸ Since the sixth and seventh trumpets are fairly easy to plug into the abundance of material on final events elsewhere in Revelation, it should not be difficult to eventually attain consensus there as well. The most difficult portion of the trumpets, then, is the fourth and fifth which come between the time of the author and the time of the end. Here, especially, careful attention must be paid to the flavor of the various details.

With regard to the first trumpet, exegesis has shown that God's judgment is being poured out on a power that to all appearances belongs to His kingdom. But judgment often begins with the house of God (1 Pet 4:17; Ezek 9). Increased knowledge leads to increased responsibility (Jer 25:29; Amos 3:2; Rom 2; John 3:18-21; James 4:17). The first trumpet sets the basic theme of the synoptic apocalypse in the context of a series of judgments to befall the whole world before the end comes (cf. Matt 23:37,38; 24:1,2,6-8). Thus, the first trumpet should be interpreted as the fall of Judaism in reaction to the Jewish nation's rejection of Christ and the gospel. It covers a period beginning with the desolation of the temple (Matt 23:37,38) in AD 31 and ending with the failure of the Bar Kochba revolt in

135 AD. From then on Judaism's influence in the Empire, and its power to persecute Christians, was minimal.⁸⁹

It is fitting that the object of the second trumpet is Rome. Thus, with the first two trumpets God has dealt with the two powers, one religious and the other civil or secular, who crucified Jesus. Satan's goal in every crisis is to unite his disparate forces against Christ and/or His people (cf. Rev 16:13,14). Although bitter enemies, only a temporary union of Rome and the Jewish nation could have succeeded in destroying Christ. From the conversion of Constantine through the decline of the Byzantine Empire, secular Rome was on a downhill road to oblivion.

The third trumpet exudes an overwhelming flavor of apostasy, which perverts the truth of God. This is rightly associated with the church's compromise with paganism and the corresponding rise of the papacy as a scourge on those who had moved away from the Word of God to the doctrines of men.

At this point, Thiele, Maxwell and Naden all consider the fourth trumpet to be an extension of the third, the papal-ruled Dark Ages. Yet the imagery of the fourth is more closely related to the fifth than the third. The attack on God's word is of a different nature than that of the third trumpet.

Could it be that the third and fourth trumpet depict the rise of two new enemies of God's people, replacements for the religious and civil powers that oppressed Christ and His people in the first century? Perhaps the fourth trumpet portends the rise of a power that, like Rome and the Pharaoh of the Exodus, opposed God's truth and His people in a more direct way. I would like to suggest that the fourth trumpet depicts the rise of secularization, a process with roots in Hellenism and the Middle Ages but which sprouted openly in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment and blossomed into full force with the French Revolution. While this darkness was not total at first it has deepened until it threatens every faith on all continents today.

The key to this suggestion is the interpretation of the fifth trumpet with its abundance of imagery. The abyss is unlocked by the fallen star of the third trumpet. It is also connected with Rev 11:7. It is intriguing that Ellen White blames the secular-atheism of the French Revolution on the suppression of God's word by the papacy in France.⁹⁰ She also associates the French Revolution with the beast from the abyss of Rev 11. Though she does not comment on the fifth trumpet these associations suggest that it is not foreign to her way of

thinking to interpret the fifth trumpet in terms of the secularization of the world from the French Revolution on.⁹¹

It was E. G. White's hint in Great Controversy that first led me to consider the possibility that the fifth trumpet might be a symbolic portrayal of the secular philosophy that dominates the world today. This interpretation has also been suggested by a number of non-Adventist scholars.⁹² Note the fundamental meaning of the symbols. Locusts were used in judgment on Egypt (Exod 10:1-22) and Babylon (Jer 51:14,27). The context in both was religious liberty for God's people. The fifth trumpet falls on those who don't have the seal of God, the sealed are not harmed. The torments of the plague are spiritual, not physical, life has lost its meaning. The agent of the despair is the scorpion's tail, a symbol of lying prophets (Isa 9:15). It is false doctrine that brings the anguish, not a military scourge. The blotting out of the sun is an excellent symbol of the attempt of Satan to obscure God in the minds of the people. Things become so bad mankind loses the will to live.

All these images point to modern-day secularism. Beliefs such as Marxism, evolution and rationalism have full control of the media with the result that this generation has no

God, no morality, no meaning and no hope. In the words of Camus the only logical action to take is suicide. Such a condition is far worse than a literal locust-plague. Communism oppresses many. Ecumenism waters down the faith. Secularism and materialism feed the hunger for God's word with ashes. The final result is spiritualism, when people turn to demons to fulfill their spiritual longings.⁹³

But in all of this God's people need not fear (Rev 9:4) for secularization is not an unmitigated evil. There are limits. God uses Satan in the fifth trumpet to bring blessing to His people. Through the Enlightenment religious toleration was introduced. The encouragement of education led to the formation of the great Bible societies. Scientific progress has shed much light on God's Word through archeology and linguistic studies such as Kittel's Theological Dictionary. There is a golden opportunity for evangelism.⁹⁴ In the midst of the darkness of rejection, Christ can be preached as never before (John 3:18-21; Rom 8:35-39). God loves to bring strength out of apparent weakness.

If this identification of the third through fifth trumpets is correct then the third and fourth trumpets depict the rise of two new enemies of God's people, one religious and

one secular. The fifth and sixth trumpets probably portray the activities of these two powers as the end-time approaches. The sixth trumpet portrays the rise of end-time Babylon, Satan's gathering of all his forces for the final battle with Christ and His people (cf. 16:12-16; 17:14). As at the cross, Satan must unite his disparate forces in order to have any hope for success at the battle of Armageddon (summarized in Rev 11:18). The sixth trumpet portrays such a unification in that the power of the mouth is added to the power of the tail (cf. 9:10,19).⁹⁵

The same events which lead to a final revelation of evil in the world also usher in the consummation of the gospel (Rev 10:7). When the entire world is brought to a point of decision (Rev 14:6-12) the final events will be rapid ones (Rev 11:15-18). Then it will not be long before the redeemed stand on the sea of glass to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev 15:3,4).

END NOTES

¹ Jon Paulien, Decoding Revelation's Trumpets, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, Vol. 11 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1988), pp. 155-194.

2. The passive verb "were given" (edothêsan) is probably a "divine passive" Jews were reluctant to pronounce the name of God in the first century for fear of blasphemy. Thus, in addition to substitute names (such as Adonai for Yahweh), they often referred to God's activity by means of passive verbs with God being the implied agent of that activity.

3. Note the grouping of verses in the 3rd Edition of the United Bible Societies Greek text.

4. Rev 3:21 comes at the climax of the seven churches, yet the reference to Christ's enthronement with the Father is a foretaste of the events depicted in chapters four and five. Rev 11:18 is the climax of the seven trumpets, yet it contains a summary statement of the content of the rest of the book (see below for a fuller treatment). Rev 17:18 connects the two accounts of chapters 17 and 18 into one by identifying the harlot with the great city.

In the case of Rev 8:1, it is clearly the climax of the seven seals, yet there are indications that it points forward as well. For one thing, the connection between silence in heaven and the prayers of the saints is found in Jewish tradition which may indicate that John was drawing on a familiar association (cf bChagigah 12b). John also follows the description of silence in heaven with a kai (and) which usually joins two sentences rather than dividing them. When the author wishes to make a distinct break in a vision he usually uses meta tauta: 4:1; 7:1,9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1.

5. The various sections of Revelation usually begin with a view of some aspect of the heavenly sanctuary. A view of the seven candlesticks precedes the seven churches. A view of the heavenly throne-room is the prelude to the seven seals. The activity at the golden altar precedes the seven trumpets and the seven bowls are poured out from the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven. This suggests the likelihood that Rev 11:19 provides the sanctuary setting for chapters 12-14. Since 11:19 is parallel to 8:5 the verse probably has a purpose similar to 8:2-6 and, likewise, bears a relationship to what follows.

6. There may also be a reference to the Jewish tradition of seven archangels referred to in 1 Enoch 20 and other places. These may have been divided into a group of four and a group of three (cf 1QM 9:14-16).

7. The angel plays a high priestly role in the use of the censer. Could any mere angel give efficacy to prayer?

8. Perhaps this is why there is a soft break between verses 1 and 2 of Rev 8.

9. Chapters 4, 5 and 7 compared with 8:2-6 and 11:15-18.

10. The seals are remarkably parallel to Lev 26 and the Synoptic Apocalypse. Lev 26 describes the covenant woes that fall on God's people when they forget Him and His instructions.

Mt 24 and parallels focus on the persecution God's people face as they attempt to preach the gospel.

11. This latter phrase is a figure of speech for "the wicked" in Revelation. cf 3:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8,14; 14:6; 17:8.

12. The last quoted sentence is drawn from the New International Version. The word "number" is not found in this passage, rather the verb plêrôthôsin, "they were filled, completed, made full." The NIV is correct, however, in seeing that an anticipated full number of martyrs is implied.

13. Dividing the first four trumpets from the three woes.

14. While the cries of the martyrs are not described in those words, the same wording (hai proseuchai tôn hagiôn) is used in 5:8, which is part of the sanctuary background that informs the interpretation of the seals. Thus the cry of the fifth seal is portrayed as coming up before God in 8:3-5, presumably seeking action on God's part.

15. These prayers for vengeance have a number of parallels. Several occur in 1 Enoch (1 En 47:2,4; 99:3; 104:3). In Luke Jesus is portrayed as commending such prayers in connection with the parable of the unjust judge (Lk 18:6-8). And in Matt 24:20-22, Jesus particularly encourages his disciples to pray in times of affliction and persecution.

But the strongest and most helpful parallel is found in the Exodus narrative, where the prayers of the children of Israel precipitated the plagues on Egypt (Ex 3:7,8). Thus the connection between the fifth seal and the introduction to the seven trumpets seems related to the Exodus motif which lies in the background of much of the book of Revelation.

16. This altar fire is reminiscent of Eze 10:1ff and the experience of Nadab and Abihu.

17. Since Rev 17:1 and 17:18 indicate that chapters 17 and 18 are related to the events of the bowl plagues, the whole of chapters 15 through 18 are summarized in the brief statement of 11:18--"your wrath has come."

18. The plagues of the first four bowls and the trumpets fall, respectively, on the earth, the sea, the rivers and springs, and heavenly bodies. The fifth of each series involves darkness, the

sixth, the Euphrates River, and the seven, the consummation. Also the terms for God used in 11:17 are repeated in the context of the bowls in 15:3; 16:5,7,14.

19. The four horsemen operate in quarter-portions of the earth (6:8). The trumpets, on the other hand, fall on thirds of the earth. The bowl plagues fall on the earth as a whole.

20. This is further indicated by the fact that only four seals describe apocalyptic plagues while six trumpets and all seven bowls do.

21. It is interesting to note that in Jewish tradition the wrath of God in the time of Enos flooded a third of the world, but this was only a foretaste of the time of Noah when God in His wrath flooded the whole earth. Cf. Mechilta Exod 20,3.

22. It is recognized that elements of chapters 12-14 are historical in nature but the main focus of the section is the war between the dragon and the remnant which is yet to reach its final conclusion.

23. The translators who produced the LXX saw references to trumpets and trumpeting in nine different Hebrew words. Six of these words referred to the instrument itself: chatsôtserâh, yôbêl, qeren, shôphâr, tâqôa` and terû`âh. Three of the words referred to the act of blowing the trumpets: chatsôtsêr, rûa`, and tâqa`. In addition to these words there appear to be a few minor instances of Hebrew words carrying the meaning of trumpet or trumpeting but not so understood by the translator. Friedrich (In TDNT 7:78) cites Exod 19:13; Lev 25:9; Josh 6:5 and 1 Chr 16:42 as examples. There are also a few places where the LXX failed to see the trumpet meaning in some of the nine basic words cited above (Judg 7:8; 2 Sam 15:10; 1Kgs 1:41 and Hos 8:1).

24. salpigx = the trumpet as an instrument. This word is used in the LXX to translate all six Hebrew words for a variety of instruments. The verb form, salpizein (= the act of blowing the trumpet), translates the three Hebrew verb forms.

25. Toward the end of the OT era this usage of the trumpet came to be associated more and more with the Day of the Lord. The blowing of trumpets symbolized God's present judgments which were a warning of greater judgments to come. A case in point is Ezek 7:14. This verse is in the context of God's visit to the temple of Jerusalem for the purpose of judgment. In the MT it reads as a simple call to battle, but in the LXX it reads, "Sound ye the trumpet and pass judgment

on all together." Here both the noun and verb form of *salpigx* are used in the context of judgment (*krinô*). This is connected with the liturgical usage of trumpets since the blowing of the trumpet in the temple courts became associated with the call for revival and reformation (Joel 2:12-17; cf. 1 Chr 15).

26. Signaling does not appear to have attained a theological meaning in OT times with the possible exception of its association with the warning judgments of Eze 33.

27. Since the king was understood to be Yahweh's servant and representative, the coronation trumpet became a proclamation of Yahweh's future kingdom. As with judgment, this understanding of trumpets became increasingly important in NT times.

28. Since the Sinai incident of Ex 19 is the first mention of trumpets in the OT, it would tend to infuse this category with more importance in the minds of later readers than would otherwise be the case.

29. It is interesting that in more than half of the battle passages which do not mention the involvement of priests (15 out of 28), the trumpet is blown in behalf of Israel by a character who was often depicted as taking things into his own hands when God didn't seem to be producing as promised (The 15 usages occur in the accounts of Gideon, Saul, Joab and Absalom).

30. The trumpets portray the disastrous effects on creation of the Fall (Gen 3). To some extent each trumpet corresponds to a day of creation; 1) earth (Gen 1:1), 2) sea (Gen 1:6,7), 3) rivers and springs (1:9), 4) sun, moon and stars (1:16), 5) locusts (1:21), 6) man (1:26-29), 7) kingdom (2:1-3). The trumpets obscure light (9:2), foul the air (9:2), destroy vegetation (8:7), darken sun, moon and stars (8:12), kill the creatures of the sea (8:9), kill men (8:11; 9:18) and undo the Sabbath rest (9:5,6,20,21). While the specific order is not followed, the acts of the creation account are reversed in an overwhelming "de-creation."

31. The first trumpet is especially reminiscent of the hail plague (Exod 9:22ff.). The second and third recall when Moses turned the waters of Egypt to blood (Exod 7:14ff.). The third also recalls the bitter waters of Marah (Exod 15:23). The fourth and fifth recall the plague of darkness (10:21ff.). The fifth also contains reminiscences of the plague of locusts (10:12ff.). The seventh trumpet recalls the events related to the Song of the Sea in Exod 15. Only the sixth trumpet is not clearly based on the Exodus and even here it is possible that the author intended the death of a third of mankind to be reminiscent of the plague on the first-born of Egypt (Exod 11; 12:29ff.).

32. In Josh 6 the account begins with the marching orders (6:3-5). Accompanied by the signals of the trumpet priests and the ark of the covenant, the people march around Jericho once a day for six days and then seven times on the seventh day. They were to march in absolute silence (6:10) until the time when the signal was given. At the sound of the trumpet all the people shouted and the walls fell down (6:20).

By comparison, the trumpets begin with silence in heaven (8:1) and end with a great shout there (11:15). Each blast of the trumpet consists of a plague until the seventh which includes within itself the full seven plagues of the bowls. In Rev 11:19 the ark of the covenant appears for the only time in the book of Revelation. Like the battle for Jericho, the trumpets climax with God's rulership over a specific place. Thus the account of the seige of Jericho should be seen as a structural parallel running behind the whole passage.

33. Note the following list of parallels (which is by no means an attempt to be exhaustive) between the book of Joel and Rev 8, 9 and 11:15-18:

Book of Joel		Book of Revelation
1:4; 2:5-7,25	Locusts	9:1-11
1:5,13,14; 2:12-17	Calls for Repentance	9:20,21
1:7,10-12; 2:3	Ruined Vegetation	8:7
1:15;2:1,11,31;		
3:14	Day of the Lord	Imagery
1:19,20; 2:3,5,30	Devouring Fire	8:7,8
2:1,15	Trumpet Call	Repeatedly
2:2,10,31; 3:15	Darkness	8:12; 9:1-11
2:4,5,7	Locust Horses	9:7-11, 16-19?
2:5	Burning Mountain	8:8
2:6	Anguish	9:5,6

2:17	Sanctuary, Altar	8:3-5; 9:13,14
2:30,31; 3:15	Heavenly Signs	8:12
2:30,31	Blood and Fire	8:7-9
3:2,12	God's Judgment	Theme
3:18-21	God's Kingdom	11:15-18

34. Eze 5:1-4,12; Zech 13:8,9. The concept of thirds may also be related to groups of three in the Old Testament, of which there are many that could be further explored.

35. If the seven trumpets are based on the plagues of Egypt why didn't the author portray ten plagues instead of just seven? The answer probably lies in the fact that the first three of the plagues on Egypt fell on the land of Goshen (where the Israelites lived), the last seven did not. Thus seven of the Egyptian plagues fell solely on the Egyptians just as the seven plagues of the trumpets fall only on those who oppose Christ and His followers. Perhaps seals two, three and four are seen as combined plagues which fall on both the righteous and the wicked along the lines of the first three plagues on Egypt.

36. See Kenneth A. Strand, "The Two Witnesses," Andrews University Seminary Studies 19 (1981):128-129.

37. The second trumpet is clearly based on the account in Jere 51. Several trumpets, especially the fifth, allude to the book of Joel which is written with the Exile and Return in mind (esp. 3:1ff). There are also significant allusions to the book of Ezekiel, which contains a theology of the Exile. (The concept of "thirds" is based on Eze 5:1-12 and 21:27, the fall of the censer reflects Eze 10:2 and the battle against Gog in chapter 38 is alluded to often.) And the explicit mention of the Euphrates River signals, according to Strand, a preoccupation with the Exile/Babylon motif which continues through Rev 14:20. (cf "The Two Witnesses, p. 128.)

38. No doubt building on the Day of the Lord theme in the prophets.

39. Compare the LXX of Eze 7:14 and the Pseudo-Jonathan Aramaic Targum of Num 29:1 with their equivalents in the Masoretic Hebrew text. Judgment language is added in the paraphrasing of the original.

40. Note, for example, The Special Laws, Book I, 187 and The Decalogue, 33.

41. Rosh Hashanah 1.2.

42. Psalms of Solomon 8:1-3; Sibylline Oracles IV, 171-190; 4 Ezra 6:18-23; and the Apocalypse of Moses, section 22. A striking example is 4 Ezra 6:18-20,23:

(18) Behold the days come and it shall be,

When I am about to draw nigh

to visit the dwellers upon the earth,

(19) And when I require from the doers of iniquity

(the penalty of) their iniquity:

(And when the humiliation of Sion

shall be complete,)

(20) And when the Age which is about to pass away

shall be sealed

then (will I show these signs): the books shall be

opened before the face of the firmament,

and all see together.

(23) And the trumpet shall sound aloud at which all men,

when they hear it,

shall be struck with sudden fear.

43. Philo, The Special Laws, Book II, 190; The Scroll of the War 3:1-11.

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44. Philo, The Special Laws, Book II, 192.
45. 1 Cor 14:8; Mt 6:2. Both passages are related to the signaling role of the trumpet. In Cor 14:8 Paul uses the importance of clear signals in preparing for war as an illustration of the superiority of prophecy over tongues. In Mt 6:2 there is a tongue-in-cheek comment that trumpet calls are not in order where giving is concerned! Neither usage is imbued with theological significance.
46. The reader is referred to the earlier paper "Exegesis and the Problem of Language in the Book of Revelation" for a more comprehensive discussion of the NT's impact on Revelation.
47. This is also true of Wis Sol 16:16-24 and 4 Ezra 5:5-8.
48. The intertestamental literature is supportive of this general summary but does not add anything of relevance to the first trumpet, so is not discussed further.
49. Since the seven seals concern the experience of God's people in the world it is likely that the white horse represents Christ and/or the church in its proclamation of the gospel, while the red, black and pale horses represent the three parts of Satan's kingdom which opposes the church and thus comes under the judgment of God's wrath.
- Why is all the green grass burned up instead of only a third? It is uncertain but the reference may be to all the green grass in that portion of the earth where the plague occurs.
50. The object of the plague should probably be equated with one of the seven heads of the beast in Rev 17.
51. It could be objected that the mountain in the second trumpet is the agent of judgment rather than the recipient of it (cf the hail, fire and blood of Rev 8:7). However, not all the trumpets have agents (cf. 8:12; 11:15-18), and the mountain is associated with Babylon as a recipient of judgment in the Old Testament, Jewish apocalyptic literature and the book of Revelation. I am not aware of any passage where a mountain is used as an agent of judgment.
52. 4 Ezra 3:1,2,28-31; 2 Bar 10:1-3; 11:1; 67:7; Sib Or V:143-161.

53. The material presented as exegesis and interpretation of trumpets three through seven is the product of nearly seven years of study. However, the author has recently made a number of breakthroughs in the area of exegetical method (outlined in the earlier paper Exegetical Method and the Problem of Language in the Book of Revelation). Trumpets three through seven have not yet been examined in the full light of the advance in method. The author believes that the overall flavor of the interpretation offered here will prove to be accurate, but he is not yet ready to make a final determination on what is or is not an allusion in the respective trumpets.

54. Rev 9:6 is reminiscent of 6:15-17; the despair of those who know that they are lost.

55. Roy Naden, Studies in Revelation. Lecture Manual #3 (Arroyo Grande: Concerned Communications, 1981), p. 36.

56. The fact that this period is mentioned twice is an apparent reference to the Flood account in Gen 7:24 and 8:3. Thus the five months would be a reference to the comprehensiveness of God's judgments even when they are limited.

57. George Eldon Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 619-632.

58. It is used by saints who feel that God has forgotten them (Ps 13:1,2). They accuse Him of being partial to the wicked (Ps 82:2). They fear that delay in God's acting in judgment will bring reproach on His name ("where is their God?" Ps 79:10). They are frustrated by the fact that their most earnest prayers are often answered by apparent silence (Hab 1:2). They are distressed by the continuing victory of the enemies of God and His people in spite of all God's promises (Dan 8:13 cf 10-12,24,25).

59. Notice that in Lk 10:18,19 the disciples of Christ are given the power to tread on snakes and scorpions. Although Christians are seen in the book as persecuted and suffering greatly, they do not suffer from the curses of the trumpet plagues, which are so bad that men would rather die than live.

60. The enthronement of Yahweh brought in its train all the blessings of His kingdom; the sanctuary, the promised land, protection, guidance and security. Dt 33:2-5 and Ps 114:1,2 make it clear that in a very real sense Yahweh was first enthroned over Israel in the Exodus experience. That enthronement was ratified on Mt. Sinai with the blowing of trumpets. Yahweh was king of the world by creation, but He was now king over Israel by redemption.

61. A good example is Ps 47. At the beginning of the Psalm Yahweh is depicted as the "great king" or emperor over the nations. But Israel is still His special people, distinct from the outer circle of nations (Ps 47:2-4). But after the enthronement there are no more outsiders. All the nations of the earth are His special people (Ps 47:9).

62. The writer considers the content of this chapter to be extremely tentative. It is an attempt to wrestle with some serious issues that are rarely addressed among Seventh-day Adventists. In doing so the author does not intend to condemn any particular person within Adventism nor is he particularly set in the ideas he presents here. The purpose of this chapter is to utilize the forum of this committee to refine the content so that it can make a useful contribution to the current discussion.

63. Adela Yarbro Collins, Crisis and Catharsis. The Power of the Apocalypse (Phil.: Westminster Press, 1984), pp. 165-175.

64. The writer does not deny that it is possible to combine all three approaches to some extent, this may, as so often, be the approach that is most true to the text. Nevertheless, these three approaches do manifest some basic philosophical differences.

65. Cf the following writings of E. G. White: GC 334,335 on Rev 9; 2 SM 107,108 on Rev 10 and GC 266-288 on Rev 11. It should be mentioned at this point that another Adventist motive for studying the trumpets is to validate the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures. Since the seven trumpets seemed to outline certain historical events far in advance, they must have been more than just a human product.

66. In evangelism there is a great need to validate both the authority of the Bible and the divine leading in the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

67. I have not yet seen such a position in writing but dozens of my students have been exposed to this view in recent years, so I am convinced that it will play a major role in future discussions on the seven trumpets in Adventism.

68. Quoted in 7BC 982.

69. For example, the prophets predicted the Exile in the language of the Exodus, but the fulfillment was radically different from that indicated by an explicit reading of the predictions.

70. Cf Yarbrow Collins, p. 167.

71. This is not an outright denial of encounter theology. It has helped us to better understand the phenomenon of inspiration. But Adventist thought does not accept a total rejection of propositional content in Revelation.

72. For example, the strong parallel between the seven seals and the Synoptic Apocalypse may indicate a more idealist approach for the seals while the historicist approach is clearly indicated as the proper approach to Daniel 2.

73. Note that the Israelites marched around the city seven times on the seventh day before it fell. Just as the seventh seal unfolds in seven trumpets, so the seventh trumpet contains the seven bowl plagues.

74. Who could have predicted in advance the exact course of Christ's life from the multitude of types and Messianic prophecies?

75. Historians will readily point out that the fall of Rome cannot be fixed to a single date but began in the late second century and was fully and finally completed with the fall of Constantinople in 1453. In the west, however, the process was essentially complete by the mid-5th Century.

76. How then shall we assess Ellen White's statement in 7BC 982? The statement is very general and uses the term trumpet as part of a collection of statements concerning the terrors of

the end. There is no indication in her language that her statement is intended to offer a guide to the interpretation of the seven trumpets.

77. Since the eastern half of the Empire was brought down by the forces of Islam it is not surprising that the Saracens and Turks are equated with the imagery of the fifth and sixth trumpets respectively.

78. The brief comment on Rev 8:13 on p. 491 of the revised edition (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1944).

79. Cf pp. 475, 493, 505 where Smith notes his reliance on the work of others.

80. George McCready Price, A New Commentary on Daniel and the Revelation (Pre-Publication MS. Loma Linda, CA, 1951), pp. 92,93.

81. Notice Uriah Smith's approving quotation of the following from Keith on pp. 475, 476:

“None could elucidate the texts more clearly, or expound them more fully, than the task has been accomplished by Gibbon. The chapters of the skeptical philosopher that treat directly of the matter, need but a text to be prefixed and a few unholy words to be blotted out, to form a series of expository lectures on the eighth and ninth chapters of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.”

82. Note the following quotation:

“The arms of the Republic, sometimes vanquished in battle, always victorious in war, advanced with rapid steps to the Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, and the ocean; and the images of gold, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively broken by the iron monarchy of Rome.”

83. Straight-line historicists believed that Revelation was a continuous outline of the Christian era, running from chapter one through chapter 22. The reason they saw an outline of the fall of Rome in the trumpets is that their interpretation of prior chapters had reached that point in history.

84. One who sees successive outlines of the Christian era running from the cross to the second coming in the churches, seals, trumpets and crisis of 12-14, for example.

85. Edwin R. Thiele, Outline Studies in Revelation (Class Syllabus, Pacific Union College, Angwin, CA 94508), pp. 159-184. All criticism of Uriah Smith's work must be tempered with a recognition of the scholarly limitations of both Smith and the age in which he lived. For his time he did a noble and monumental work. In 100 years, if time should last, the scholarship of our time will probably deserve to be judged far more harshly.

86. She uses such neutral terms as "according to his calculations," and "the event exactly fulfilled the prediction." This leads many to suspect that she was uncertain as to the true meaning of the passage and reported Litch's view because of its historical significance. She points out that as a result of the fulfillment of Litch's prediction multitudes were convinced of the correctness of the Millerite principles of prophetic interpretation, and many men of learning and position united with Miller.

87. In a recent conversation, Naden felt that this analysis was accurate and expressed no discomfort with this writer's interpretation as outlined in the last section of this paper.

88. The fall of Judaism and Rome and the apostasy of the church are all foreseen to a greater or lesser degree in less-apocalyptic portions of the NT.

89. The judgment on the Jewish nation is not of the direct variety. From the first century Christian perspective, God gave the nation over into the hands of the Romans. This is not incompatible with the hostility toward Rome that most scholars see in the last half of the book of Revelation. In the OT era God often used Gentile nations to chastise His people and then turned on them when His people repented. Rome is an enemy

of God's true people in Revelation, but is nevertheless under God's control and can be used by Him to accomplish His purposes.

90. GC 265-269.

91. Perhaps most significant is the statement in Education p. 228:

"Anarchy is seeking to sweep away all law, not only divine, but human. The centralizing of wealth and power; the vast combinations for the enriching of the few at the expense of the many; the combinations of the poorer classes for the defense of their interests and claims; the spirit of unrest, of riot and bloodshed; the world-wide dissemination of the same teachings that led to the French Revolution--all are tending to involve the whole world in a struggle similar to that which convulsed France."

Although not explicit, the language of this reference is reminiscent of the communist ferment in Russia at the time. Clearly she saw the philosophy of the French Revolution playing a major role in the final crisis. If this is so, would not God have placed a hint of this somewhere in the book of Revelation?

92. Unjhem, p. 106; Rissi, p. 101; Ellul, p. 76; Schick, pp. 88-91; Kent, pp. 62-65.

93. The Soviet Union is the world's leader in the study of parapsychology.

94. The greatest missionary movements of all time have taken place during this period of secular domination. If our church can learn to reach the secular mind, we will have an inroad into virtually every nation and culture.

95. There may be a remarkable parallel to the fifth and sixth trumpets in Dan 11:40-45. There the king of the south (Egypt--a symbol of secular-atheism? Ellen White uses it in this way to refer to France during the revolution) attacks the king of the north (perhaps the period of domination referred to in the fifth trumpet) successfully for a time. But then the king of the north (Babylon--a symbol of false religion in the end-time) strikes back with a vengeance conquering the entire then-known world (sixth trumpet?). All that is left to conquer is the city of Jerusalem (symbol of God's people in the end-time) when Michael intervenes by standing up (close of probation--seventh trumpet?).

If the fifth and sixth trumpets are being correctly interpreted, the fifth refers to the period of secular dominance in which we are now living. The sixth points to a great religious backlash (deadly wound healed?) that is yet to come which will overcome all opposition to religion and unite the world on the basis of some common religious denominator. Could recent events in Poland and Iran be a first fruits of that great end-time backlash?

How could secular-capitalism, communism, Islam and the third world ever be united with any form of Christianity? The answer given in both Revelation and Great Controversy is the miracle working power of demons. Rev 13:13,14; 16:13. cf GC 588,589. Even an atheist will believe when confronted with irrefutable proof of the supernatural.