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INTERPRETATION OF REVELATION 13 IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN WHITE

The origin and development of the Adventist Church was based on eschatological interpretations of the apocalyptic books of the Bible. Ellen White, one of the co-founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, played a prominent role in the interpretation of prophetic texts. In this article, I highlight her interpretation of one of the most controversial passages in the book of Revelation – the thirteenth chapter – in which John writes about the Antichrist. I show that Ellen White took a historical approach to the interpretation of apocalyptic prophecies. White interpreted the beast from the sea as a symbol of the papacy, and the beast from the earth as a symbol of Protestant America. White argued that the image of the beast would be a separate authority, a union of church and state in the United States, a kind of counterpart to the papacy. The restoration of the power of the papacy and its alliance with Protestantism will lead to the loss of religious freedom and persecution. The article highlights that the mark of the beast, according to Ellen White, symbolizes the celebration of Sunday – a false and idolatrous Sabbath. This spiritual sign will be activated in a future eschatological spiritual battle that will take place in the matter of worship and faithfulness to God's commandments. White wrote about Sunday laws in the historical context of the United States, where they were hotly debated and even passed in some states. I argue that White was not limited by historical context, but was making a statement about future Sunday observance legislation on a worldwide scale, with other countries following the US's example. The article shows that Ellen White also interpret-

ed the Antichrist individualistically, by indicating the personal appearance of the devil in the form of Jesus Christ at the end of time.

Keywords: *Revelation 13, beast from the sea, beast from the earth, prophecy, book of Revelation, Apocalypse, Adventists, hermeneutics, Eschatology, New Testament.*

The book of Revelation is unique in the New Testament because it is written in an apocalyptic style and contains deep symbolism with eschatological motifs. It is strongly associated with the book of Daniel and reveals the cosmic conflict between good and evil. The visions of the book of the Apocalypse have always attracted the attention of biblical scholars, and as a result, many commentaries and interpretations have been created. Apocalyptic visions play an important role in the Seventh-day Adventist Church as well. The Advent movement itself originates from the study of the prophetic books of the Bible. Ellen White, one of the founders of the Adventist Church, also paid attention to the interpretation of the book of Revelation. She wrote that «there is need of a much closer study of the Word of God; especially should Daniel and the Revelation have attention as never before in the history of our work» [12, p. 576]. The thirteenth chapter of the book of the Apocalypse is especially interesting because it contains a prophecy about the Antichrist and his plans for the inhabitants of the earth. Ellen White has devoted a considerable amount of material in her writings to explain this chapter.

Warren A. Shipton in two articles «Ellen White, Health, and the Third Angel's Message» considers the message of the three angels (Rev. 14:6-12) in the context of the principles of a healthy lifestyle [4; 5]. The main emphasis is not on the exegetical analysis of the biblical text, but on the visions of Ellen White, medical issues, and the connection of spirituality with health. Denis Fortin in his article «Ellen White's Interpretation and Use of the Seven Letters of Revelation» raises the issue of interpreting the vision of the «Seven Churches» (Rev. 2-3) [1]. He analyzes the hermeneutic principles of Ellen White's interpretation of apocalyptic prophecy and shows how she understood and explained the letters to the seven churches. Don Leo M. Garilva in his

article «The Development of Ellen G. White's Concept of Babylon in The Great Controversy» reviews Ellen White's interpretation of the idea of Babylon (Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17; 18) in various editions of the book «The Great Controversy» [2]. The author compares Ellen White's view with the interpretations of both theologians of that time and modern ones. An important study is «Ellen G. White's Use of Daniel and Revelation», which was written by George E. Rice in the series «Daniel and Revelation Committee Series», published by the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists [3]. In it, the author defends the historical method of interpreting the prophecies of the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and Ellen White. He analyzes the «recapitulation» principle and some of Ellen White's controversial quotes related to it.

It should be noted that although the mentioned researchers analyze certain passages of the book of Revelation in the writings of Ellen White, however, such visions as «the beast rising out of the sea» (Rev. 13:1-10) [25] and «the beast rising out of the earth» (Rev. 13:11-18) have not been separately investigated by scholars. Therefore, the absence of a theological analysis of Ellen White's interpretation of the thirteenth chapter of the book of the Apocalypse necessitates the study of her theological ideas. Therefore, we will reveal the characteristic features of the interpretation of the 13th chapter of Revelation in the writings of Ellen White, as well as analyze her hermeneutic principles.

The purpose of the article is to highlight the interpretation of the 13th chapter of the book of the Apocalypse in the writings of Ellen White. The implementation of this goal involves the solution of the following tasks: a) to reveal the meaning of the passages «the beast rising out of the sea» (Rev. 13:1-10) and «the beast rising out of the earth» (Rev. 13:11-18) in the writings of Ellen White; b) to analyze the hermeneutic principles of the commentator; and c) to study the theological ideas of an Adventist writer.

The Beast Rising Out of the Sea (Rev. 13:1-10)

Identification of the Beast Rising Out of the Sea

Ellen White believed that all Christians should carefully study Rev. 13 because «it concerns every human agent, great and small» [18, p. 424]. Ellen White wrote an extended commentary on the 13th chapter of the book of Revelation in the book «The Great Controversy». She supported the common Protestant position that the beast from the sea (Rev. 13:1-10) symbolizes papal authority, «which succeeded to the power and seat and authority once held by the ancient Roman empire» [14, p. 439]. Commenting on the characteristics and actions of the leopard-like beast, White linked it to the prophecy of the book of Daniel. She wrote that «this prophecy, which is nearly identical with the description of the little horn of Daniel 7, unquestionably points to the papacy» [14, p. 439]. In «The Story of Redemption», Ellen White states that «by this first beast is represented the Roman Church, an ecclesiastical body clothed with civil power, having authority to punish all dissenters» [21, p. 381].

The following characteristics of the Antichrist, such as the reign of forty-two months (Rev. 13:5), the mortal wound (Rev. 13:3), and the mention of captivity (Rev. 13:10), are interpreted by Ellen White in the context of certain historical events in Christianity. In particular, she said that the prophetic period of 42 months is the same period of 1260 days from Dan. 7 and that this is

«the time during which the papal power was to oppress God's people. This period... began with the supremacy of the papacy, A.D. 538, and terminated in 1798. At that time the pope was made captive by the French army, the papal power received its deadly wound, and the prediction was fulfilled, "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity"» [14, p. 439].

Ellen White noted:

«in the sixth century the papacy had become firmly established. Its seat of power was fixed in the imperial city, and the bishop of Rome was declared to be the head over the entire church. Paganism had given place to the papacy. The dragon had given to the beast "his power, and his seat, and great authority" Revelation 13:2» [14, p. 54].

White believed that in the sixth century AD, a prophetic period of 1260 years of severe persecution of the faithful followers of Jesus Christ began: «Christians were forced to choose either to yield their integrity and accept the papal ceremonies and worship, or to wear away their lives in dungeons or suffer death by the rack, the fagot, or the headsman's ax» [14, p. 55]. In her opinion, this is the fulfillment of the words of the Son of God (Luke 21:16, 17) that relatives and the whole world will hate true believers for the name of Christ [14, p. 55]. In addition, Ellen White drew a parallel with the prophecy about the flight of the church woman in Rev. 12: «for hundreds of years the church of Christ found refuge in seclusion and obscurity. Thus says the prophet: "The woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three-score days" Revelation 12:6» [14, p. 55].

The Role of the Beast from the Sea in Recent Events

However, Ellen White warned that although the mortal wound was inflicted on the Catholic Church, this is not the end of its power, since «prophecy foretells a restoration of her power» [14, p. 579]. Firstly, «the influence of Rome in the countries that once acknowledged her dominion is still far from being destroyed» [14, p. 579]. Second, John provides for the healing of the mortal wound (Rev. 13:3). Thirdly, «Paul states plainly that the "man of sin" will continue until the second advent. 2 Thessalonians 2:3–8. To the very close of time he will carry forward the work of deception» [14, p. 579]. Fourth, in Revelation 13:8, John says that after the mortal wound is healed, all the inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast, and this will happen «in both the Old and the New World» [14, p. 579]. Ellen White wrote that «The Scriptures teach that popery is to regain its lost supremacy, and that the fires of persecution will be rekindled through the timeserving concessions of the so-called Protestant world» [19, p. 418]. White related Rev. 13:18 to the ministry of the Apostle Paul:

«For three successive Sabbaths Paul preached to the Thessalonians, reasoning with them from the Scriptures regarding the life, death, resurrection, office work, and future glory of Christ, the 'Lamb slain

from the foundation of the world.' Revelation 13:8. He exalted Christ, the proper understanding of whose ministry is the key that unlocks the Old Testament Scriptures, giving access to their rich treasures» [6, p. 229].

The Beast Rising Out of the Earth (Rev. 13:11-18)

Identification of the Beast from the Earth

Ellen White commented on Rev. 13:11 and pointed to the difference between the beast from the earth and the beast from the sea. She wrote that «both the appearance of this beast and the manner of its rise indicate that the nation which it represents is unlike those presented under the preceding symbols» [14, p. 439]. She contrasted the nature and character of the beasts of the book of Daniel, where in the seventh chapter they are presented as predators, and as having entered the world stage as a result of the struggle. White pointed to Daniel 7:2,3, which says that «the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another» [14, p. 439, 440]. The sea is a symbol of the nations (Rev. 17:15), and the winds are «a symbol of strife. The four winds of heaven striving upon the great sea represent the terrible scenes of conquest and revolution by which kingdoms have attained to power» [14, p. 440]. However, the second beast in Rev. 13 arose from the earth, which indicates the peaceful nature of the government and the territory where there were no significant military conflicts – «it must be sought in the Western Continent» [14, p. 440].

In addition, Ellen White drew attention to the appearance of the second beast. It was supposed to appear after the end of the 1260 years of dominance of the papacy. In her opinion, only one force meets the criteria and characteristics outlined in the biblical text: «the application of the symbol admits of no question. One nation, and only one, meets the specifications of this prophecy; it points unmistakably to the United States of America» [14, p. 440]. Interestingly, White drew attention to the unconscious quotation or paraphrase of the biblical prophecy about the rise of the beast from the earth (Rev. 13:11) in the writings of historians and authors. She recalled the opinion of some translators that «the

word here rendered “coming up” literally signifies “to grow or spring up as a plant”» [14, p. 441]. She then quoted several authors describing the rise of the United States of America:

«A prominent writer, describing the rise of the United States, speaks of “the mystery of her coming forth from vacancy,” and says: “Like a silent seed we grew into empire.” – G. A. Townsend, *The New World Compared With the Old*, page 462. A European journal in 1850 spoke of the United States as a wonderful empire, which was “emerging,” and “amid the silence of the earth daily adding to its power and pride.” – *The Dublin Nation*. Edward Everett, in an oration on the Pilgrim founders of this nation, said: “Did they look for a retired spot, inoffensive for its obscurity, and safe in its remoteness, where the little church of Leyden might enjoy the freedom of conscience? Behold the mighty regions over which, in peaceful conquest, ... they have borne the banners of the cross!” – *Speech delivered at Plymouth, Massachusetts*, Dec. 22, 1824, page 11» [14, p. 441].

Another characteristic of the beast from the earth, which was embodied in the government of the USA, is the presence of two horns, similar to those of a lamb (Rev. 13:11). For White, «The lamblike horns indicate youth, innocence, and gentleness, fitly representing the character of the United States...» [14, p. 441]. Since many of the refugees who came to the United States had had negative experiences of religious persecution, they decided to create a «government upon the broad foundation of civil and religious liberty» [14, p. 441]. The author recalled the Declaration of Independence reflecting these principles and wrote:

«Republicanism and Protestantism became the fundamental principles of the nation. These principles are the secret of its power and prosperity. The oppressed and downtrodden throughout Christendom have turned to this land with interest and hope. Millions have sought its shores, and the United States has risen to a place among the most powerful nations of the earth» [14, p. 441].

Union of Two Beasts

The next characteristic of the beast from the earth is that he spoke like a dragon and made all the inhabitants of the earth worship the first beast (Rev. 13:12). Ellen White explained:

«The lamblike horns and dragon voice of the symbol point to a striking contradiction between the professions and the practice of the nation thus represented. The ‘speaking’ of the nation is the action of its legislative and judicial authorities. By such action it will give the lie to those liberal and peaceful principles which it has put forth as the foundation of its policy» [14, p. 442].

In her opinion, this indicates the emergence of cruel persecution perpetrated by the dragon and the first beast in the history of Christianity. The words of John that the second beast will force the world’s inhabitants to bow to the first beast symbolizes «that the authority of this nation is to be exercised in enforcing some observance which shall be an act of homage to the papacy» [14, p. 442]. White wrote that such actions are contrary to the principles laid down in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. She quoted the words of the Constitution on religious freedom and approved of the separation of church and state [14, p. 442].

The Image of the Beast

The next symbol in Rev. 13 is the image of the beast (Rev. 13:14, 15). Ellen White devoted much to explaining this symbol. She wrote that this prophecy «clearly presented a form of government in which the legislative power rests with the people, most striking evidence that the United States is the nation denoted in the prophecy» [14, p. 442]. The image of the beast is the image of the first beast, and the second beast will create it. Accordingly, for a correct understanding of the image, it is necessary to study in detail the history of the papacy and the characteristics of its power [14, p. 443]. White explained:

«When the early church became corrupted by departing from the simplicity of the gospel and accepting heathen rites and customs, she lost the Spirit and power of God; and in order to control the consciences

of the people, she sought the support of the secular power. The result was the papacy, a church that controlled the power of the state and employed it to further her own ends, especially for the punishment of “heresy.” In order for the United States to form an image of the beast, the religious power must so control the civil government that the authority of the state will also be employed by the church to accomplish her own ends» [14, p. 443].

According to Ellen White, the essence of the problem of all religious persecution is the union of church and state. Because, «Whenever the church has obtained secular power, she has employed it to punish dissent from her doctrines» [14, p. 443]. White accused not only Catholics of religious persecution but also Protestants, who also used secular power to suppress dissidents. Ellen paralleled the «image of the beast» symbol (Rev. 13:14,15) with the apocalyptic passage of 2 Thess. 2, which says that «the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed» (2 Thess. 2:3) [14, p. 444]. She argued that just as the apostasy in the early church led to the development of the institution of papal authority, so in the future the spiritual decline of Christianity will prepare the way for the creation of the image of the beast [14, p. 444]. In her opinion, this interpretation is consistent with Paul’s prophecy in 2 Tim. 3:1-5, 1 Tim. 4:1, and 2 Thess. 2:9-11, where the Apostle describes the immoral spiritual condition of people living before the second coming of Jesus Christ. White concluded that «When this state of ungodliness shall be reached, the same results will follow as in the first centuries» [14, p. 444].

Ellen White drew attention to the movement among Protestant churches to unite based on common doctrines and beliefs. She cited a sermon by Charles Beecher, who in 1846 warned of the possibility of creating «Another general council! A world’s convention! Evangelical alliance, and universal creed!» [14, p. 445]. Such allied tendencies will only lead to «a step to the resort to force» [14, p. 445]. White claimed:

«When the leading churches of the United States, uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common, shall influence the state to enforce their decrees and to sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an image of the Roman hierarchy,

and the infliction of civil penalties upon dissenters will inevitably result» [14, p. 445].

A little further, she repeated that «The “image to the beast” represents that form of apostate Protestantism which will be developed when the Protestant churches shall seek the aid of the civil power for the enforcement of their dogmas» [14, p. 445]. White clearly stated that «The image of the beast will be formed before probation closes; for it is to be the great test for the people of God, by which their eternal destiny will be decided» [15, p. 164]. It is at this time or after that the miracles of the Antichrist mentioned in Rev. 13:14 will occur. Loyalty to the Law of God will become the «test that the people of God must have before they are sealed» [15, p. 164].

Fake Miracles

Ellen White pointed to a warning in Rev. 13:13 that the devil through power will work signs and wonders. She wrote that «Satan will come in to deceive if possible the very elect. He claims to be Christ, and he is coming in, pretending to be the great medical missionary. He will cause fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men to prove that he is God» [15, p. 208]. White claimed that the scale of these miracles is the whole world. Many sick people will be healed and therefore, «We must all now seek to arm ourselves for the contest in which we must soon engage. Faith in God’s word, prayerfully studied and practically applied, will be our shield from Satan’s power and will bring us off conquerors through the blood of Christ» [15, p. 208].

Ellen White wrote that although there are fakes, the devil can also work real miracles. She drew attention to the prophecy that «The coming of the Lord is to be preceded by “the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness” 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10» [14, p. 553]. She also quoted John, who

«describing the miracle-working power that will be manifested in the last days, declares: “He doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he

had power to do” Revelation 13:13, 14. No mere impostures are here foretold. Men are deceived by the miracles which Satan’s agents have power to do, not which they pretend to do» [14, p. 553].

White linked these texts to the spiritism movement in the United States. However, she believed that full enforcement will be in the future:

«Fearful sights of a supernatural character will soon be revealed in the heavens, in token of the power of miracle-working demons. The spirits of devils will go forth to the kings of the earth and to the whole world, to fasten them in deception, and urge them on to unite with Satan in his last struggle against the government of heaven. By these agencies, rulers and subjects will be alike deceived. Persons will arise pretending to be Christ Himself, and claiming the title and worship which belong to the world’s Redeemer. They will perform wonderful miracles of healing and will profess to have revelations from heaven contradicting the testimony of the Scriptures» [14, p. 624].

Ellen White claimed that «As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ... In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13–15» [14, p. 624]. She continued:

«The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld... The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands and pronounces a blessing upon them, as Christ blessed His disciples when He was upon the earth. His voice is soft and subdued, yet full of melody. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Saviour uttered; he heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are blaspheming his name by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion» [14, p. 625].

Ellen White wrote that «If God has ever spoken by me, you will before long hear of a wonderful science – a science of the devil... Some will exalt this false science, and through them Satan will seek to make void the law of God. Great miracles will be performed in the sight of men in behalf of this wonderful science» [18, p. 408]. She warned that the devil works through those people who reject the influence of the Holy Spirit. The devil «is to work miracles; and this wonderful, miracle-working power is to sweep in the whole world. It is now just beginning» [17, p. 50]. White wrote that evil spirits first bring illness to people, and then they are taken away and an impression of miraculous healing is created, and «This Satan has done again and again» [17, p. 50]. She argued that one must have a correct understanding of the state of the dead and take a biblical point of view on this issue. The devil and his angels will perform miracles, disguise themselves as the souls of the dead, convince people to change Saturday to Sunday, and promote other false teachings [10, p. 87]. An important criterion that helps to recognize false miracles and false prophets is the Law of God: «The sheep's clothing seems so real, so genuine, that the wolf can be discerned only as we go to God's great moral standard and there find that they are transgressors of the law of Jehovah» [13, p. 45].

The Mark of the Beast

After this, Ellen White moved on to interpreting Rev. 13:16,17 where John writes about the «mark of the beast». White did not believe that the mark of the beast was a visible physical sign. She claimed that «This is not a visible mark» [19, p. 423]. She pointed to the immediate context of the call not to worship the beast and his image – Rev. 14:12 – where the faithful followers of Christ are represented, faithful to Him in keeping the commandments of God. White concluded that if the characteristic of true worshipers is the commandments of God, then the violation of the commandments is associated with the image and mark of the beast [14, p. 445, 446].

Ellen White pointed to the special characteristic of the Antichrist – the change of the law. She referred to two passages – Dan. 7:25 «shall think to change the times and the law» and 2 Thess. 2:3,4,7 «the man of

lawlessness» [14, p. 446]. White argued that when the papacy changed the law, it placed itself above God, and therefore «whoever should understandingly keep the law as thus changed would be giving supreme honor to that power by which the change was made. Such an act of obedience to papal laws would be a mark of allegiance to the pope in the place of God» [14, p. 446]. White then gave examples of changing the law. She referred to the removal of the second commandment from the Catholic Decalogue but noted that this change is not intended in the prophecy: «The change in the fourth commandment exactly fulfills the prophecy. For this the only authority claimed is that of the church. Here the papal power openly sets itself above God» [14, p. 446]. Accordingly, respect for the fourth commandment, which is «sign of His creative power and the witness to His claim upon man's reverence and homage» characterizes faithful Christians, and the praise of Sunday as «the Lord's Day» and the humiliation of Saturday is a sign of the papacy [14, p. 446, 447].

However, according to White, the seventh day is the Sabbath (Mark 2:28; Isa. 58:13). She rejected the idea that Jesus Christ changed the day of worship as contrary to his own words (Matt. 5:17-19) [14, p. 447]. White drew attention to the Protestants' own claim that «the Scriptures give no authority for the change of the Sabbath» [14, p. 447]. Ellen White referred to Catholic sources, in particular to the catechism, which says that it was the Catholic Church that changed Saturday to Sunday with its power and that the veneration of Sunday by Protestants is a recognition of the authority of Rome [14, p. 447, 448]. She wrote:

«The enforcement of Sunday keeping on the part of Protestant churches is an enforcement of the worship of the papacy – of the beast. Those who, understanding the claims of the fourth commandment, choose to observe the false instead of the true Sabbath are thereby paying homage to that power by which alone it is commanded. But in the very act of enforcing a religious duty by secular power, the churches would themselves form an image to the beast; hence the enforcement of Sunday keeping in the United States would be an enforcement of the worship of the beast and his image» [14, p. 449].

Ellen White wrote that the purpose of the devil is to destroy people who celebrate the Sabbath. All methods and means will be used, such as wealth, education, power, reputation, threats, and ridicule [23, p. 450]. Lack of arguments from the Bible will lead to violence. She wrote: «To secure popularity and patronage, legislators will yield to the demand for a Sunday law... On this battlefield comes the last great conflict of the controversy between truth and error» [23, p. 450]. Ellen White claimed:

«By the decree enforcing the institution of the papacy in violation of the law of God, our nation will disconnect herself fully from righteousness. When Protestantism shall stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of the Roman power, when she shall reach over the abyss to clasp hands with spiritualism, when, under the influence of this threefold union, our country shall repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and republican government, and shall make provision for the propagation of papal falsehoods and delusions, then we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan and that the end is near» [23, p. 450].

Ellen White drew a parallel with the warning of Jesus Christ recorded in Matt. 24:15-20 [23, p. 451]. Thus, the law of celebrating Sunday is a special sign and warning of the approach of the last and final events. According to Ellen White, it is becoming clear that passing laws to celebrate Sunday will be a certain process that will take some time and will be with progressive punishment. She wrote: «Secular rulers and religious leaders will unite to enforce the observance of the Sunday; and as milder measures fail, the most oppressive laws will be enacted» [15, p. 188].

Ellen White also drew a parallel with another prophecy from the Old Testament. White wrote: «The people of God will then be plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress which prophets have described as the time of Jacob's trouble» [23, p. 451]. White linked Rev. 13:11-18 with the story recorded in Dan. 3. She wrote:

«History will be repeated. False religion will be exalted. The first day of the week, a common working day, possessing no sanctity whatever, will be set up as was the image at Babylon. All nations and

tongues and peoples will be commanded to worship this spurious sabbath. This is Satan's plan to make of no account the day instituted by God, and given to the world as a memorial of creation» [19, p. 419].

Ellen White saw the beginning of the fulfillment of the Bible prophecy of Rev. 13 at the time. She wrote that such an interpretation has been proclaimed since the middle of the nineteenth century, and

«In the events now taking place is seen a rapid advance toward the fulfillment of the prediction. With Protestant teachers there is the same claim of divine authority for Sunday keeping, and the same lack of Scriptural evidence, as with the papal leaders who fabricated miracles to supply the place of a command from God» [14, p. 580].

She warned that people will accuse believers of cataclysms (God's judgments) for violating the celebration of Sunday, and «a movement to enforce Sunday observance is fast gaining ground» [14, p. 480].

Since Sunday laws were introduced in the United States during Ellen White's time, the question arose of how Adventists should behave. White urged to be careful and not provoke people, but rather to do missionary work on Sunday [20, p. 69]. She claimed that abstaining from work on Sunday will not lead to taking the mark of the beast: «One does not receive the mark of the beast because he shows that he realizes the wisdom of keeping the peace by refraining from work that gives offense, doing at the same time a work of the highest importance» [24, p. 232]. In order not to cause unnecessary prejudice, on Sunday one can engage in missionary activities. White made recommendations: «On this day open-air meetings and cottage meetings can be held. House-to-house work can be done. Those who write can devote this day to writing their articles. Whenever it is possible, let religious services be held on Sunday» [24, p. 232]. She urged avoiding persecution whenever possible. White drew attention to the words of Jesus Christ in Matt. 10:23 «When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next»: «If it can be avoided, do not put yourselves into the power of men who are worked by the spirit of antichrist. Everything that we can do should be done that those who are willing to suffer for the truth's sake may be saved from oppression and cruelty» [24, p. 230].

Ellen White noted that the Sunday celebration law will be worldwide. White wrote: «The decree enforcing the worship of this day is to go forth to all the world. In a limited degree, it has already gone forth. In several places the civil power is speaking with the voice of a dragon, just as the heathen king spoke to the Hebrew captives» [19, p. 419]. She suggested: «Foreign nations will follow the example of the United States. Though she leads out, yet the same crisis will come upon our people in all parts of the world» [15, p. 210]. Ellen White claimed: «The Sabbath question is to be the issue in the great final conflict, in which all the world will act a part... Each Sabbath institution, both true and false, bears the name of its author, an ineffaceable mark that shows the authority of each» [19, p. 420; 26]. She drew a parallel with the means used by King Nebuchadnezzar and the means of papal power:

«Force is the last resort of every false religion. At first it tries attraction, as the king of Babylon tried the power of music and outward show. If these attractions, invented by men inspired by Satan, failed to make men worship the image, the hungry flames of the furnace were ready to consume them. So it will be now. The papacy has exercised her power to compel men to obey her, and she will continue to do so. We need the same spirit that was manifested by God's servants in the conflict with paganism» [19, p. 419].

Ellen White equated the celebration of Sunday with idolatry and named the first day of the week «idol sabbath» [19, p. 419]. She quoted the words of the devil about his intentions for the day of worship:

«I will work at cross-purposes with God. I will empower my delegate, the man of sin, to take down God's memorial, the seventh-day Sabbath. Thus will I show the world that the day sanctified and blessed by God has been changed. That day shall not live in the minds of the people. I will obliterate the memory of it. I will place in its stead a day bearing not the credentials of heaven, a day that cannot be a sign between God and His people. I will lead the people who accept this day, to place upon it the sanctity that God placed upon the seventh day. Through my vicegerent I will exalt myself. The first day shall be extolled, and the Protestant world shall receive this spurious sabbath as

genuine. Through the non-observance of the Sabbath God instituted, I will bring His law into contempt. The words, “A sign between me and you throughout your generations,” I will make to serve on the side of my sabbath. Thus the world will become mine. I will be ruler of the earth, prince of the world. I will so control the minds under my power that God’s Sabbath shall be an object of contempt. A *sign*? I will make the observance of the seventh day a sign of disloyalty to the authorities of earth. Human laws shall be made so stringent that men and women will not dare to observe the seventh-day Sabbath. For fear of wanting food and clothing, they will join with the world in transgressing God’s law; and the earth will be wholly under my dominion» [11, p. 1171, 1172].

Ellen White noted that the law to celebrate Sunday will be accompanied by persecution of those who keep the seventh day, the Sabbath. She wrote that the US authorities will introduce «oppressive power to bear against those who keep the seventh-day Sabbath... and national apostasy will be followed by national ruin» [19, p. 420]. She argued that closing the doors of grace and ending the restraining power of the Holy Spirit will result in the implementation of laws such that only a shortening of time will save believers [15, p. 268]. White wrote that she:

«saw that the four angels would hold the four winds until Jesus’ work was done in the sanctuary, and then will come the seven last plagues. These plagues enraged the wicked against the righteous; they thought that we had brought the judgments of God upon them, and that if they could rid the earth of us, the plagues would then be stayed. A decree went forth to slay the saints, which caused them to cry day and night for deliverance. This was the time of Jacob’s trouble» [15, p. 268].

Ellen White had discovered future events and described them as follows:

«I saw the leading men of the earth consulting together, and Satan and his angels busy around them. I saw a writing, copies of which were scattered in different parts of the land, giving orders that unless the saints should yield their peculiar faith, give up the Sabbath, and observe

the first day of the week, the people were at liberty after a certain time to put them to death.» [15, p. 268].

Ellen White wrote: «The decree will go forth that they must disregard the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, and honor the first day, or lose their lives; but they will not yield, and trample under their feet the Sabbath of the Lord, and honor an institution of papacy» [22, p. 353]. She pointed out that according to the laws, a certain time will be chosen for the destruction of those who keep the law. However, some sinners will try to do it earlier, but they will not succeed, because God will protect His children [15, p. 268].

Ellen White found a connection between the end-time events described in Rev. 13:11-18 with the story presented in Ezek. 9. The prophet saw seven people, one of whom put a sign on the followers of God, and the other six killed sinners. Something similar will happen before the second coming of Jesus Christ. Christians will receive the seal of God, and sinners will be forced to impose the mark of the beast [23, p. 214]. However, White cautioned and said that not all Sabbath keepers will receive a seal of God. Based on the vision of Ezekiel, she called for fidelity to God in all Christian virtues: «The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts» [15, p. 216]. Ellen White drew a parallel to the future events envisaged in the passage of Rev. 13:11-18 with the history of the book of Esther. She wrote:

«The decree that will finally go forth against the remnant people of God will be very similar to that issued by Ahasuerus against the Jews. Today the enemies of the true church see in the little company keeping the Sabbath commandment, a Mordecai at the gate. The reverence of God's people for His law is a constant rebuke to those who have cast off the fear of the Lord and are trampling on His Sabbath» [16, p. 605, 606].

It also provides an answer to the question that arises with such an interpretation. For centuries, Christians have celebrated Sunday – does

this mean that they received the «mark of the beast»? She answered «No»:

«when Sunday observance shall be enforced by law, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome, will thereby honor popery above God. He is paying homage to Rome and to the power which enforces the institution ordained by Rome. He is worshiping the beast and his image. As men then reject the institution which God has declared to be the sign of His authority, and honor in its stead that which Rome has chosen as the token of her supremacy, they will thereby accept the sign of allegiance to Rome – “the mark of the beast.” And it is not until the issue is thus plainly set before the people, and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, that those who continue in transgression will receive ‘the mark of the beast’» [14, p. 449].

Ellen White warned that the celebration of Sunday will only be familiar to the beast in the future. She wrote: «Sunday keeping is not yet the mark of the beast, and will not be until the decree goes forth causing men to worship this idol sabbath. The time will come when this day will be the test, but that time has not come yet» [19, p. 420].

White believed that the name of the church «Seventh-day Adventists» accurately and vividly reflects the essence of the latest conflict. She wrote:

«The name Seventh-day Adventist is a standing rebuke to the Protestant world. Here is the line of distinction between the worshipers of God and those who worship the beast and receive his mark... The name Seventh-day Adventist carries the true features of our faith in front, and will convict the inquiring mind. Like an arrow from the Lord’s quiver, it will wound the transgressors of God’s law, and will lead to repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ» [22, p. 223, 224].

Economic Sanctions

Ellen White wrote that the countryside is a better place to live given the future events foreseen in the book of Revelation. She says:

«Again and again the Lord has instructed that our people are to take their families away from the cities, into the country, where they can raise their own provisions; for in the future the problem of buying and selling will be a very serious one. We should now begin to heed the instruction given us over and over again: Get out of the cities into rural districts, where the houses are not crowded closely together, and where you will be free from the interference of enemies» [7, p. 141].

Ellen White warned that trade and economic alliances would play an important role in recent events. She wrote: «The trades unions will be one of the agencies that will bring upon this earth a time of trouble such as has not been since the world began» [8, p. 10]. Giant monopolies will be created and «Trades unions will be formed, and those who refuse to join these unions will be marked men» [8, p. 10]. White warned against joining «labor unions» as it is prohibited by the Lord [8, p. 12]. Commenting on Rev. 13:17, she wrote that the time will soon come when Adventists will be unable to buy or sell and will be left without earthly support. Therefore, White called for sacrifice and wise management of resources, so that the treasury of God would serve many [15, p. 183]. She wrote: «The time of trouble was upon us. I saw our people in great distress, weeping and praying, pleading the sure promises of God, while the wicked were all around us mocking us and threatening to destroy us» [18, p. 427]. She wrote that sinners

«had cut off our resources so that we could not buy or sell, and they referred to our abject poverty and stricken condition. They could not see how we could live without the world. We were dependent on the world, and we must concede to the customs, practices, and laws of the world, or go out of it. If we were the only people in the world whom the Lord favored, the appearances were awfully against us. They declared that they had the truth, that miracles were among them; that angels from heaven talked with them and walked with them, that great power and signs and wonders were performed among them, and that this was the temporal millennium they had been expecting so long. The whole world

was converted and in harmony with the Sunday law, and this little feeble people stood out in defiance of the laws of the land and the law of God, and claimed to be the only ones right on the earth» [18, p. 427, 428].

Ellen White ended her interpretation of Rev. 13 on a positive note. Although the union of church and state will lead to severe oppression of God's people, they will remain faithful to God and will not accept the «mark of the beast». John saw in a vision the conquerors of the forces of the kingdom of the devil (Rev. 15:2, 3) [14, p. 450]. When all the people on earth make their final decision and take one of two sides, «God will arise in His power, and the mouths of those who have blasphemed against Him will be forever stopped. Every opposing power will receive its punishment» [15, p. 191].

Commenting on Rev. 13:11-17, Ellen White expressed words of encouragement and recalls God's promises to help Christians endure in the last great conflict between good and evil. The faithful will have «every earthly support cut off. Because they refuse to break His law in obedience to earthly powers, they will be forbidden to buy or sell. It will finally be decreed that they shall be put to death» [9, p. 121, 122]. However, there is no need to be discouraged, for the promises are left: Isa. 33:16; Ps. 37:19; Hab. 3:17,18. They will assure true worshipers that God will keep them alive [9, p. 121, 122].

Conclusion

An analysis of Ellen White's writings shows that she adhered to the historical method of interpreting apocalyptic prophecies. She believed that what John described refers to the history of the church from the first coming of Jesus Christ to his second coming. White shared the general Protestant belief that Rev. 13 contains the characteristics of the Antichrist, unmistakably pointing to the papacy. She used the day-year hermeneutic principle in her interpretation of time periods. In particular, 42 months, in her opinion, meant 1260 years of the dominance of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. In interpreting the visions of John, Ellen White referred to Old Testament texts and also linked them to the prophecies of the book of Daniel. White claimed that the mortal wound

of the beast from the sea will be healed and the papacy will regain the lost power it had before the French Revolution. The renewal of power will take place both in Europe and in the US through an alliance with Protestantism.

Ellen White interpreted the beast from the earth as a symbol of the United States of America and Protestantism. In her opinion, this country is blessed by God through the desire to build a government based on democratic principles and religious freedom. However, White said that she foresaw future persecution, which will take place when the alliance of the papacy with Protestantism will be made, since the prophecy predicts the combining efforts of two beasts. White argued that the image of the beast is a copy of the papacy within Protestantism in the United States. This is a certain form of government that arises through the union of church and state. The image of the beast, in her opinion, will be formed before the closing of the doors of grace, and at this time the devil will perform special false miracles. He will not only counterfeit, but also perform real miracles to deceive even the elect. The culmination of satanic miracles will be the counterfeiting of the second coming of Jesus Christ, when the devil will appear before the rulers of the planet and lead them to destroy the faithful remnant.

The mark of the beast, according to Ellen White, symbolizes the celebration of Sunday – a false and idol Sabbath. It is the Sabbath that will become the main issue in the spiritual conflict of the end times. This doctrine will divide the people of the whole world into two camps – those who are faithful to the commandments of God and those who keep the laws of the papacy. Sunday celebration laws will start with the US and then the rest of the world will follow suit. That is, all countries of the planet will be involved in this struggle. The law will not only force the celebration of Sunday but will also be associated with a forced violation of the observance of the seventh day of the week – Saturday. However, the very celebration of Sunday will not be considered the mark of the beast until this issue becomes key in the final spiritual battle between good and evil. Only when these laws come out and all the inhabitants of the earth receive the knowledge, the faithful will be sealed with the seal of God, and the sinners will receive the mark of the beast.

Although these events will come suddenly, there will be a certain process where the rulers will start with soft measures and end with the death penalty. Ellen White warned of economic sanctions because she understood the phrase «no one can buy or sell» literally (Rev. 13:17). Living in the countryside will make it easier to get through these difficult times. Although White saw the beginning of the fulfillment of prophecy during her lifetime, she wrote until her death that the final fulfillment will be in the future.

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26. Cf. «Every nation will be involved (Revelation 18:3-7)» [15, p. 188].

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Інтерпретація Об'явлення 13 в працях Еллен Уайт

Анотація

Зародження адвентистської церкви було основане на тлумаченнях апокаліптичних книг Біблії. Помітну роль в інтерпретації пророцтв відіграла Еллен Уайт, одна з співзасновників церкви Адвентистів сьомого дня. В цій статті я висвітлюю її тлумачення одного з самих спірних уривків книги Об'явлення – тринадцятий розділ. Я показую, що Еллен Уайт дотримувалася історичного герменевтичного підходу та інтерпретувала звіра із моря як символ папства, а звіра із землі як символ протестантської Америки. Уайт стверджувала, що образ звіра буде окремою владою, союзом церкви і держави в США, свого роду копією папства. Відновлення влади папства та його союз з протестантизмом призведе до втрати релігійної свободи та переслідувань. Стаття висвітлює, що знак звіра на думку Елен Уайт символізує святкування неділі – фальшивої та ідолоської суботи. Цей духовний знак стосується майбутньої есхатологічної духовної битви, яка відбудеться щодо питання поклоніння і вірності Божим заповідям.

Ключові слова: *Об'явлення 13, звір із моря, звір із землі, пророцтво, книга Об'явлення, Апокаліпсис, Адвентисти, герменевтика, есхатологія, Новий Завіт.*