

## CHAPTER 3

# APPROACHES TO REVELATION

### 3. PRELIMINARIES

This Chapter discusses the four major approaches to Revelation (Preterism, Futurist-Dispensationalism, Idealism and Historicism), which contain a good deal of information on seal/sealing. The Historicism approach, which is part of the bone marrow of this investigation also contains the concept of *continuum* and is linked in some instances with the Recapitulation and the straight-line modes. There is also a brief explanation of seal/sealing in Revelation 7:1-3 and its school approach interpretation. As part of the discussion of the Historicist approach, there is a preview of questions and answers on this specific method, which will be developed and discussed in detail in Chapter 4. At the end of this Chapter there is also an explanation of the presence of six less common approaches to Revelation known as: the Patristic, Higher Criticism, Kabbalistic, Aesthetic, Literalist (which includes ten literary figures), and the Astral prophecy approach. In some of these six approaches the concept of seal/sealing is mostly vague and absent in its description. A list of thirty-two symbols found in the Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰωάννου, are included to indicate the existing connectivity with the same type of symbols also present in the Old Testament.

### 3.1 THE FOUR MAJOR APPROACHES TO REVELATION

#### 3.1.2 A brief description of the four approaches

Regarding the most known schools of studying and interpreting Revelation, the Apocalypse can be situated within four major schools. They are Preterism, Futurism, Historicism, and Idealism.

The first of these schools of interpretation for Revelation is Preterism (from the Latin *praeter* = past). This school emphasizes the idea that Revelation contains a

message exclusively for John and the Christian church members of Asia Minor. According to Paulien (2004:28-29), certain portions of Revelation indeed fit this description (Rv 1:9-11; 22:16). Hyper-Preterism is also another approach in this school (in Mathison 2004:1-63, 121-155).

The second school of interpretation for Revelation is Futurism. This school contends that the content of the Apocalypse is exclusively for the final crisis of earth's history. Its relevance is primarily for the final generation and is associated with Dispensationalism (Anders 1997:47-74; Paulien 2004:28-29; La Haye 1999:60-74, 110).

The third possible major approach for interpreting Revelation is the Historicist method. According to Historicism, Revelation portrays a sequence of history or *continuum*, from the time of John until the second coming of Christ. This approach is grounded in the book of Daniel, in which such historical sequences can be indicated. The Recapitulist thought in prophecy is also associated with Historicism (Paulien 2004:28-29; see [www.historicism.com](http://www.historicism.com); MacArthur 2002:55, 93, 98, 99, 100, 102, 104, 209, 233; Wholberg 2001:1-71; Greeve 2006:57, 59, 63, 94, 97, 104).

The fourth major approach to the study of Revelation is the Idealist method. Primarily, this method suggests that Revelation is not merely historical, futurist or Preterist. Instead, it contains timeless truths in symbolic forms, principles that can be applied in any time and any place (Paulien 2004:28-29; Hanegraff 2007:7-9; see also [www.idealistarchive.com](http://www.idealistarchive.com)).

According to Paulien, all of these four approaches have validity when related to the doctrine of Inspiration. He points out that:

For the preterists have a point because Revelation also speaks to an original audience. Futurists will prove to be at least partly right in the sense that the book describes important events that are still in the future in our day—the Second Coming of Jesus and even beyond. At the same time,

Revelation describes a sequence of events from the time of the apostle John to the end of the world (such as Rev. 12). Finally, the book of Revelation contains many themes applicable to any age (Rev. 2:7).

(Paulien 2004:29)

As was stated earlier, the remaining content of this Chapter will proceed with a discussion on each of these four methods of interpretation applied to the book of Revelation. This discussion is important because it shows the different concepts of sealing, depending on the school chosen for its view and consideration. This discussion also includes the principles and forms ruling each approach. Likewise, this Chapter shows how these four approaches of interpretation influence the study of Revelation 7:1-3, the kinds of questions asked when Revelation 7:1-3 are analyzed, and the kinds of answers that are produced.

## 3.2 PRETERISM

### 3.2.1 The Preterist approach to Revelation

In the Preterism way of thinking John exclusively addressed real churches that faced problems in the first century CE. Two quandaries in particular provided the impetus for the recording of the book, according to the Preterist school of interpretation. These two quandaries have two fundamental purposes related to its original (*praeter*) hearers:

Preterism is comprised of two camps in the fulfillment of Revelation that is:

(1) To steel the Church against the gathering storm of persecution which was reaching an unnerving crescendo of therefore unknown proportions and intensity. This brought the entrance of the Imperial Rome into the scene. The first historical persecution of the Church was by Nero Caesar from A.D 64 to A.D 68.

(2) To brace the Church for a major and fundamental reorientation in history needing the destruction of Jerusalem the center not only of Old Covenant Israel but of Apostolic Church (chaps. Ac.1:8; 2:1ff; 15:2) and the temple (chaps. Mt. 24:1-34 with Rev. 11), takes place in the first century A.D. with the fall of Jerusalem and, finally the fall of Rome in the fifth century.

(Gentry 1989:15-19)

A modern representative of the Preterist view is Elizabeth Schüssler. For her, John's Apocalypse is a "prophetic interpretation of the situation of the Christians in Asia Minor at the end of the first century" (Schüssler 1976:43). Her book concentrates solely on her position of Revelation, on the universal political conflict between Christ's claim as Lord and the Roman civil religion and its imperial cult that claimed totalitarian power and divine honors: Caesar is Lord and God. In this approach, the basic message of Revelation is that Christians must resist the idolatrous totalitarianism of any oppressive world power, because they share in the kingship of Christ. In such a perspective, mainline Christianity has reduced end-time salvation to a purely spiritual deliverance of the soul from this world. As a consequence, the mainline churches have accepted the theological policy of John's opponents: "adaptation of the present societal ruling powers" (in Schüssler 1976:51-60).

For his part, LaRondelle (in Holbrook1992b:151-154) says Preterism is attractive for its religious-moral application to this present age. However, its difficulty is that the Roman Empire does not fulfill *all* the described features of the beasts in Revelation 13 and 17. LaRondelle (1992b:152-154) points out that there is a new spiritual and political power that will rise up, the new Babylon. This power will play a major role in the final events, leading up to the judgment of the seven last plagues and Armageddon (Rv 16), and therefore cannot be restricted to the ancient Roman Empire and its emperor worship (LaRondelle, in Holbrook 1992b:153-154).

Preterism is an attractive tool for all kinds of theology. For the conservative it provided a seemingly more workable principle of interpreting Scripture. After all, the prophets of the Old Testament knew what they were talking about when they predicted an age of peace and righteousness. Man's increasing knowledge of the world and scientific improvement, which were coming, could fit into this picture. On the other hand, the concept was pleasing to the liberal and skeptic too. If they did not believe the prophets, at least they believed that man was now able to

improve himself and his environment. They too believed in a golden age in future (Wolvoord 1993:20).

Within Preterism, there are some hybrid approaches to Revelation, such as Preterism-Futurism, that are necessary to describe next.

### **3.2.2 Preterism-Futurism**

The origins of post millennialistic Preterist nascent can be traced to some of the Church Fathers like Origen, Eusebius, Athanasius, and Augustine. However, Preterism as an interpretation method is attributed to Diego de Alcázar (who died in 1613), a Spanish Jesuit who produced a monumental work titled *Investigation of the hidden sense of the Apocalypse*, which was published posthumously in 1614 (Holbrook 1992a:5).

It is possible to also find a combination of various schools of interpretation. One of those mingling ways of thinking is called Preterist-Futurist. This approach looks at Babylon as the pagan city of Rome in the past and, more specifically, as a pagan Rome again in the future. To mend this gap, Ladd (1972:13-14) talks about double fulfillment. “Rome was historical forerunner of Antichrist.... The beast is both Rome and the eschatological Antichrist” (Ladd 1956:4-30). Some other similar statements on this futuristic Apotelesmatic approach can be found in Rivera, Viegas, Malvenda, Cornelius of Lapide, and Manning (see From 1948a:486-505, 736-737).

Historicist LaRondelle (in Holbrook 1992b:153-154) says that this futurism does not agree with the prophetic sweep of prophecy. He opines that John the Revelator outlines an unbroken succession of persecuting powers from pagan Rome until the final judgment, symbolized by the seven successive “heads” on the beast. The interpreting angel explained, “They are also seven kings (or kingdoms), five of them have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come (Rv 17:9-10). No gap of time is suggested here. Ladd (1972:13-14), nevertheless, tried to

combine both opposing views in his arrangement of a double fulfillment: “Rome was historical forerunner of the Antichrist.... The beast is both Rome and the eschatological Antichrist and ... any demonic power which the church may experience in the hands of the world, whether by first century Rome or by later evil powers” (Ladd 1972:13-14).

Ladd opts for the method of blending the Preterist and the Futurist method; thereby he accepts a wide gap of many centuries of church history. Thus, the Christian era remains largely outside the focus of Revelation. Ladd’s view of a “moderate futurism” recognizes the validity of both the contemporary and the end-time focus of prophecy, that is to say, the familiar double-focus perspective of the Old Testament prophets. But he ignores the unique style of a *continuum* of history in Daniel’s prophetic outlines. Ladd’s methods for the main prophetic model of John’s Apocalypse are the unique Danielic pattern of a *continuous historical perspective* that culminates in the end-time events of the divine judgment and the restoration of the kingdom of Israel’s God (LaRondelle, in Holbrook 1992b:154). This theological system is known as “postmillennialism,” which teaches that Christ will return after the millennium, a period of bliss on earth brought about by the conversion of the nations because of the preaching of the gospel. The credit for formulating the postmillennial doctrine is usually given to Whitby (who died in 1726), a Unitarian minister from England, and Thomas Brightman (who died in 1607) who popularized this method (Wolvoord 1993:19-20).

Such is the acceptance on the part of many theologians, liberal and conservative, in today’s world also. Influenced mostly by the rising tide of intellectual freedom, science and philosophy, coupled with humanism, have enlarged the concept of human progress and painted a bright picture of the future. Whitby’s view of the golden age for the church was just what people wanted to hear. It is not strange that theologians scrambling for readjustments in a changing world could find in Whitby just the key they needed (Wolvoord 1993:20).

According to Roy (1998:32) the optimistic humanism progress that sustained the well-being of humanity by good human moral efforts and actions alone, culminating with an earthly millennium of prosperity and human peace, suffered a crash and collapse when the two World Wars took place during the twentieth century.

### **3.3 FUTURISM**

#### **3.3.1 Futurism as approach to Revelation**

Most popular mass futurism interpretation for Revelation started during the Middle Ages. They were introduced by Francisco Rivera (who died in 1591) and Luis de Alcázar (who died in 1613) in order to diminish and blurry the teaching of the Reformers, presenting the Catholic system as the beast of Daniel 7 and Revelation chapters 13 and 17 (Holbrook 1992a:5). As occurred with Preterism and its hybrid ways of interpreting Revelation, Futurism has been mixed with Dispensationalism to form another approach in Revelation.

Jesuit scholar Francisco Ribera (1537-1591) started the futurist interpretation by publishing a 500-page commentary on the book of Revelation (Froom 1948a:500-520). Ribera took the last “week” (seven day-years) of the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9:25, divided it into two 3½ year periods, and applied it to a future Antichrist, while avoiding any application to the papal system.

Ribera’s views would have fallen away quickly if not for Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), a cardinal who promoted Ribera’s ideas. His lectures were published as *Polemic lectures concerning the disputed points of the Christian belief against heretics of this time*. Froom describes these lectures as “the most detailed apology of the Catholic faith ever produced.” Froom (1948a:500-520) also says they “became the arsenal for all future defenders and expositors.”

Below there is a diagram made by another Spaniard Jesuit, named Luis de Alcázar. He wrote a monumental work entitled *Investigation of the hidden sense of Apocalypse*. This book was published post-mortemly in 1614. In the following

diagram, Alcasar depicts his creation of the preterism-futurism approaches developed in 1604.

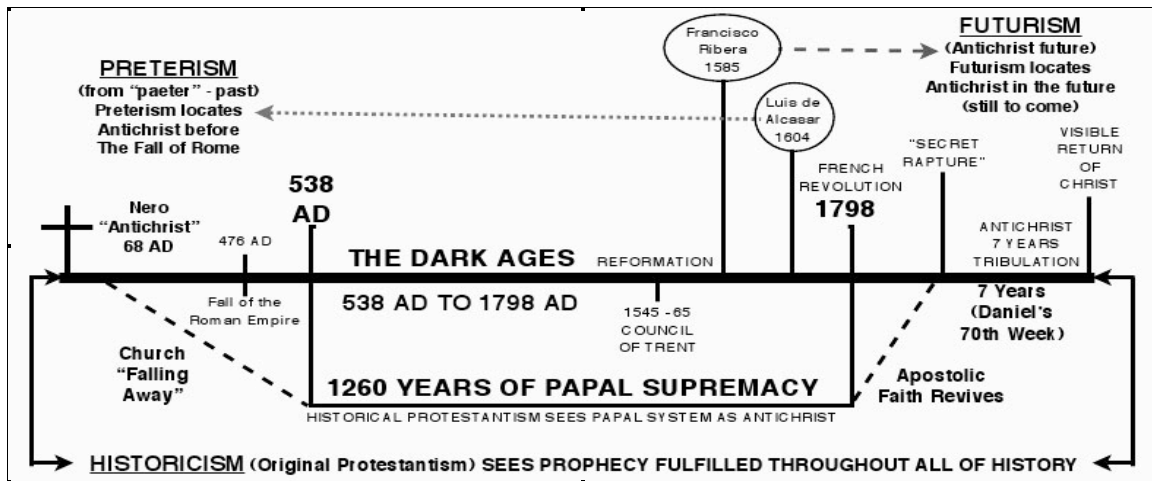


Diagram of Preterism and futurism by Diego de Alcázar

(Froom 1948a:508; see also Diego de Alcázar in [www.rekindlingthereformation.com/2009.06.16-1081.html](http://www.rekindlingthereformation.com/2009.06.16-1081.html)).

His book, *Investigation of the hidden sense of the Apocalypse*, was published in 1614. Froom states:

Applying the New Jerusalem to the Catholic Church, Alcazar contended that the Apocalypse describes the twofold war of the church in the early centuries—one with the Jewish synagogue, and the other with paganism—resulting in victory over both adversaries.” Revelation 1 to 11 he applied to the rejection of the Jews and the desolation of Jerusalem by the Romans. Revelation 12 to 19 Alcazar allotted to the overthrow of Roman paganism and the conversion of the empire to the church, the judgment of the great Harlot being effected by the downfall of pagan idolatry; Revelation 20 he applied to the final persecution by Antichrist, and the day of judgment; and chapters 21 and 22, referring to the New Jerusalem, he made descriptive of the glorious and endless triumphant state of the Roman church.

(Froom, in Alcázar & Ribera 2009: [www.rekindlingthereformation.com/2009.06.16-1081.html](http://www.rekindlingthereformation.com/2009.06.16-1081.html))

### 3.3.2 Futurism-Dispensationalism as approach to Revelation

In the twentieth century one of the varieties for premillennialism derived from the Biblical word “dispensation”, a term referring to the administration of God’s earthly

household (1 Cor 9:17; Eph 1:10; 3:2; Col 1:25). Dispensationalists divide salvation history into historical eras or epochs in order to distinguish the different administrations of God's involvement in the world. Scofield, after whom the enormously popular Scofield Bible was named, defined a dispensation as a "period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God" (Ryrie 1965:74).

During each dispensation, humankind fails to live in obedience to the divine test, consequently bringing that period under God's judgment and thus creating the need for a new dispensation. Read this way, the Bible can be divided into the following eight dispensations (though the number of names varies to the different schools of thought): innocence, conscience, civil government, promise, Mosaic law, church and age of grace, tribulation, and millennium. Some are talking now about the Old and New Covenants (Scofield 1986:128). The hallmark of Dispensationalism has been its commitment to a literal interpretation of prophetic Scripture. This has resulted in three well-known tenets cherished by adherents of the movements:

(1) A distinction between the prophecies made about Israel in the Old Testament and the Church in the New Testament must be maintained. The Church has not replaced Israel in the plan of God. The promises He made to the nation will occur. The Church is only a parenthesis in the out working of the plan. The dispensationalism distinction between the Church and Israel is solidified in many by two major historical events on Israel's behalf. The Holocaust elicited by many a deep compassion for the Jewish people and the rebirth of the State of Israel in 1948.

(2) Dispensationalists are pre-millennialists: Christ will come again and establish a temporary, one reign of a thousand on earth from Jerusalem.

(3) Dispensationalists believe in the pre-tribulation rapture, that is, Christ's return will occur in two stages: the first one for his church, which will be spared the Great Tribulation; the second in power and glory to conquer his enemies.

(Pate and Grundy1998:29)

Another author that has contributed to the thought of pretribulationism/dispensationalism is Wolvoord in his book titled *The revelation of Jesus Christ: A commentary*.

Holbrook (1992b:6) adds that this particular approach normally interprets Revelation 4:1-19 as occurring in the seven years period still future to us – a period beginning with a “secret rapture” and marked as its close by the glorious visible appearing of Christ. The pre-tribulationists/dispensationalists consider this seven years period as the seventieth week of years in the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27.

Holbrook (1992b:151-77) mentions that prolific literature has been produced by exponents of this view beginning with its originator Darby of Ireland, who put together the essence of pretribulationism/dispensationalism during the late 1820s and the 1830s. Darby was most prominent for his activity in England (he is usually considered to be the founder of the “Plymouth Brethren” movement), but personally also promulgated his views on the European continent and in North America, taking six trip to the United States. The Scofield Reference Bible has had considerable influence in popularizing the view, enhanced in recent years by publications of Hal Lindsay. The pre-tribulation thinking of Alva McClain (2001:442-519) also espouses this view.<sup>1</sup>

## **3.4 IDEALISM**

### **3.4.1 The Idealism school’s interpretation of Revelation**

The origin of this school is traced to the allegorical method of symbolic hermeneutics exposed by the Alexandrian Church Fathers, especially Clement and Origen. Some also suggest that Cyril (368-444), bishop of Alexandria, followed the Idealist approach (see [www.preteristarchive.com/](http://www.preteristarchive.com/))

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<sup>1</sup> See Ladd (1956:19, 22, 23, 25, 37, 112-126) who offers a critique on pretribulationism/dispensationalism.

Idealism/index.html).<sup>2</sup> These Alexandrians were under the influence of Hellenism and the traditional allegorical school, which came to a head in Philo (Charles 1913:11-12).

One of the modern earlier proponents of this idealist approach to Revelation in the Western world was Samuel Lee (1851:XXI), who wrote that “in all which cases it should be remembered, that language is the mere vehicle of things conceived of, or entertained, in the mind and that the things themselves, so entertained, are the great objects of our inquires and hence, that we should not confuse ourselves and others, inconsiderately mistaking one for the other.”

Attached to the spiritual significance of the text, Clements of Alexandria, for instance saw τέσσαρας πρεσβύτερους in Revelation 4:4 as a symbol of the quality of Jew and Gentiles within the church, and interpreted ἀκριδόν, ἔχουσιν ὄνυρα σκορπίοις in Revelation 9:7-10 as the destructive influence of immoral teachers (Charles 1913:11-12). Likewise, Origen, along with his opponent Methodius, rejects as Jewish, the literal interpretation of Chapter 20, and in the hands of his followers, the entire historical contents of the Apocalypse were lost sight of. This Idealistic school of interpretation of the Apocalypse is also called the spiritualist view of Revelation. It interprets the book in a totally symbolic way. The ongoing conflict of good and evil does not have immediate historical connection to any social or political event (Charles 1913:11-12). Another interesting example regarding Idealism in Revelation is found in the interpretation of Revelation 12:5 and 14, that is, the 1260-day prophecy. Preterism applies this to the escape of the Palestinian church to Pella at the outbreak of the Jewish war in 66 CE. God's children have often been in flight (Mounce 1977:200). Historicism, for its part, will utilize this prophecy using a symbolic time (= 1260 years) and apply it to the great persecution of the true church during the Dark Ages (538-1798). Futurism will apply this same prophecy by saying the woman in Revelation 12 is not the church, but Israel and its existence in the last days during the great tribulation

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<sup>2</sup> For additional comments on Cyril Idealism regarding Christ, see McGukin (2004:50-350).

period. The 1260 days element is literal time but the period occurs at the opposite end of the Christian Age. Such a futurist interpretation produces a great gap, not solved by this approach (Wolvoord 1966:191; in Holbrook 1992a:344). Instead, Idealism applies this period to the Christian Age in general. Hughes (1990:137) makes the following comment on this approach:

There, *nourished* by God, she is enabled to survive for *one thousand two hundred and sixty days*, otherwise defined, in verse 14 below, “as a time ant times and a half a time” and in 13:5, as “forty-two months,” that is, for a period of limited duration which is short in comparison with the limitless eternity of peace and freedom that will follow in the new heaven and earth.... The symbolism in St. John’s vision depicts the history of the people of God for whom the wilderness is the world in its fallenness and its hostility to the truth.

(Hughes 1990:137, in Holbrook 1992a:344)

Some authors think that using the Apocalypse in a symbolic approach is a false claim. For example, Calkins (1920:3) says that “to use Revelation in this way is to abuse it, for the book it self makes no claims to be a key to the future.”

The book of Revelation itself, however, uses different Greek words for time in the sense of future fulfillment (Rv 1:3, ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς; Rv 12:12 εἰδὼς ὅτι ὀλίγον καιρὸν ; Rv 22:10, ὁ καιρὸς γὰρ ἐγγύς ἐστίν). However, symbols in Revelation are not solitary planets. They do belong to a prophetic structure that, according to Historicism for instance, are a representation of the *continuum* controversy between good and evil throughout history.

The Idealistic approach, however, suggests that Revelation does not contain historical correspondence and thereby denies that the prophecies in the book are predictive except in the most general sense of the promise of the ultimate triumph of good at the return of Christ (Pate and Grundy 1998:24). Akin to the Alexandrian interpretation of Revelation was the a-millennial view propounded by Dionysius, Augustine, and Jerome. Thus the Alexandrian School, armed with the a-millennial method, became the dominant approach to Revelation until the Reformation (Pate and Grundy1998:24). Following the Idealistic thought, some

have seen in the book of Revelation a present exodus, related to the liberation of the poor inhabitants of the third world. Latin American theologians like Gutierrez (1983:219) and Bonino (1979:1-69) see in Revelation a liberation from dependence on poverty.

### **3.4.2 Idealism and Preterism**

It is appropriate to recollect here some of the Idealist/Preterist authors and their different statements favoring this approach. Pieters (1954:44) says that “today scholars are prevailing in favor of this system ... preterist either unchanged or combined with the ideas of the philosophy of history (spiritual) idealistic school.” For his part, Steve Gregg (1997:2-3) views Revelation as “spiritual or recurrent, finding representative expression in historical events throughout the ages, rather in one time, specific fulfillments. The prophecy is thus rendered applicable to Christians in any age.” Hendricksen (1998:43-5) affirms that “seals, trumpets, bowls of wrath, and similar symbols refer not to specific events with particular happenings or details of history, but to principles of human conduct and of divine moral government that are operating throughout the history of the world, especially in the new dispensation.” Garland (2004:2, 3, 12) associates the term idealism with “timeless.” He also adds the term “eclectic” or “mixed” (Garland 2004:2, 5, 24) in which there is a mixing of the Idealism/Preterist posture. Garland suggests that Idealists avoid the obvious implications of a horrified time setting present in Revelation (Garland 2004:2, 3, 12).

## **3.5 HISTORICISTCISM**

### **3.5.1 Historicist approach in Revelation**

This posture considers that history is a *continuum* under God’s control, moving ever closer to that glorious consummation when God’s own kingdom of righteousness will be established for eternity. Besides Christ (Mt 24:15, 16-30, 37-39) and the apostles (2 Th 2:1-7), Mussies (1997:2) says the earliest known person to use the so-called recapitulation approach was Victorinus of Pettau (who died in 303). He implies that each of the successive groups of visions, namely

those of the seven seals, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls, foretells one and the same sequence of events (see Mussies 1997:2). He also refers here to Hugo Grotius (Mussies 1997:2), who supposed the Apocalypse to be a combination of originally separate visions, which he maintained, however, have been seen by one and the same man. One Reformation writer of the historic-prophetic method is Rupert of Deutz (who died in 1129; Backus 2000:xvi). Nicolas of Lyra (1270-1349), a Franciscan who wrote a commentary on the Apocalypse, interpreted Revelation 7 as the consolation of the Christian church under Constantine after the persecution. Lyra saw two sections here for his time: the consolation of the militant church and the triumphant church (Lyra 1997:93). An example of this approach is found in some of Rupert of Deutz's comments on Revelation 4 where the celestial church service receives an historical-based interpretation. John's vision of the door in heaven thus signifies heavenly life, which Christ, through his resurrection, guaranteed for the church, which also rose with him. The first resurrection is the resurrection of Christ, which also caused the church to rise to life. The twenty four ancients around the throne pose a problem to Rupert, as he notes that the figure was variously interpreted by the Church Fathers. Jerome saw the twenty four ancients as representing the twenty four books of the Old Testament. Others, notably Primasius and Bede, took the figure to symbolize twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles, the church of the New Testament and its precursor in the Old Testament. Rupert, for his part, sees the twenty four elders as representative of the history of Israel. These are the twelve Judges (Rupert includes Samuel) who preceded David. The other twelve are those who succeeded David's direct descendant Christ – in other words, the twelve apostles. The "sea of glass" evokes to Rupert the crossing of the Red Sea in the Old Testament and baptism in the New Testament. Both denote liberation. The Christocentric nature of his commentaries, coupled with his interest in the Old Testament and in the story of the early church in general, was probably what made Rupert's commentary popular with Reformers like Sebastian Mayer (Backus 2000:xv-xxii).

### 3.5.2 Two sequential approaches of the Historicist method

Historicism observes that Revelation is (1) a sequence of events through history climaxing at Christ's coming in a process of recapitulation that (2) has the same ground form, from the prophet's own time until the climax of history. Next, there is a short explanation of these two historical approaches (see Holbrook 1992a:2-6).

### 3.5.3 Straight-line approach within Historicism

The straight-line approach sees Revelation portraying a sequence of events that begins in the Apostolic Era and continues on step by step until the grand eschatological climax. According to Holbrook (1992a:4-6), a number of well-known interpreters from an earlier generation, people such as Barnes (see Garland 2004:121), Clark (see Newport 2000:239), Elliot (in 1862:562-563 in <http://historicist-historicism.com/> and Keith (see Wholberg 2004:119), were adherents of this view. Keith for example, defines historicism as

that view which regards the prophecy (of Revelation – CM) as a prefiguration of the great events that were to happen in the church, and the world connected with it, from St. John's time to the consummation; including specially the establishment of Pope doom, and reign of Papal Rome, as in

some way or other the fulfillment of the types of the Apocalyptic Beast and Babylon.

(Keith 1832:564)

Newport (2000:174) discusses the presence of an eisegetic hermeneutic in the Adventist historicism approach. In regards to the historicist method of interpretation to the seals in Revelation, Barnes, for example, treats the seven seals as belonging to a sequence of events in the early post-Apostolic Era, the seven trumpets as beginning with Visigoth's sack of Rome in 410, the little book opened in Revelation 10 as the open Bible at the time of the sixteenth-century Reformation, and the seven last plagues as reflective of the French Revolution of the late eighteenth century (Holbrook 1992a:4-5).

### 3.5.4 The Recapitulation approach within Historicism

This second historicist approach interprets the various visions in Revelation as going over the same ground from the prophet's own day until the end time. In either case the prophecies are understood to meet their fulfillments in historical time between the days of John and the establishment of the eternal kingdom.

The Recapitulation approach was popularized by Tyconius (Johnson and Webber 1993:458-459) and practically canonized by Augustine in his renowned work *The city of God*, written under the impact of Alaric's conquest of Rome in 410 CE (Hamilton 1995:1; O' Daly 1999:53-67, 160-196). However, some consider Irenaeus as the one who introduced the Recapitulation approach (see Berardino & Studer 1996:132). Explaining the Recapitulation mode, Augustine referring to Tyconius said: "He speaks by recapitulating, as returning to that which he had omitted, or rather had deferred.... That is, therefore, what I have said, that by recapitulating he returned to that which he had passed over" (Düsterdieck 1887:13). Mulholland (1959b:397) explains Recapitulation as going back and describing something previously mentioned and violating the chronological order of the book. This method is used by Augustine to remove the chief difficulties he finds in the Apocalypse. Regarding the seals, Collado (in Düsterdieck 1887:14) considered that in the seals, trumpets, and vials the same thing is always described, and it is described as such that while the seals contain only a brief sketch, the trumpets and vials always afford the more detailed images. The final conclusion in comparing those visions is the final judgment.

Berardino and Studer (1996:132-135), using the writings of Irenaeus, develop the concept of Recapitulism with five concepts. These concepts are to be found in the life of Jesus and his work for humanity:

1. Recapitulation as *cosmic redemption in the reality of the new Adam* (Haer 3.16.6; see Berardino & Studer 1996:132). The work of Christ does not

merely contradict, but is the antithesis to the sum of all apostasy in the devil (*Haer.* 3.23.3, 5, 8; 4; see Berardino & Studer 1996:132).

2. Recapitulation as *summary, inauguration, and redemption*. Christ summarizes humankind in himself and at the same time gives a compendium of salvation. All the types of the past are fulfilled in Him (*Haer.* 3.18.1, see Berardino & Studer 1996:133).
3. Recapitulation gives *the meaning of the whole history of salvation* in the one Christ (*Haer.* 3.16.6, see Berardino & Studer 1996:133). This event takes effect in humanity. As a true mediator, He joins humanity to God (*Haer.* 4.20.4, see Berardino et al 1996:133).
4. Recapitulation as *restoration and life* (*Haer.* 5.18.2.3; Dt 28:66, see Berardino & Studer 1996:134). Ἀφθαρσία is regained by the recapitulation which takes place at the cross where our life hangs on a tree.
5. A *Gnostic belief* is linked, according to the author (Berardino & Studer 1996:135), to the communion of early Christianity when he declared that “salvation was not reconciliation of humanity with God, but the reconstitution of the divine fullness from the divine sparks scattered in the world.” An additional brief description on the term recapitulation, using Ireneaus’ writings and, related to the work of Jesus, is also expressed in the following terms:

The question “what is recapitulation?” runs into the question “who recapitulates?” and the answer is “the word made flesh.” Recapitulation consists in summarizing or making a statement, and he is the statement that covers every age, from childhood to maturity (*Haer.* 2.22.4). Our new birth follows his mysterious birth from a virgin (*Haer.* 4.34.4). Through him, humanity enters God and God enters humanity (*Haer.* 4.33.4) so that the detail of his life is important as a moral example (*Haer.* 2.22.4) and as the means by which we may share in his likeness (*Haer.* 3.22.1).

(Berardino & Studer 1996:134)

Where the Bible and history are concerned, the Recapitulation model has been a standard type of interpretation for Seventh-day Adventists. As Holbrook explains (1992a:4-22), still perhaps the best known example of a Recapitulation pioneer

author is Uriah Smith (1832-1903). Another Recapitulation author well known in Adventism is Ellen White (1827-1915).

In modern times, Adventist writers such as Goldstein (1995:3-143; 2003:7-174); Timn, Baldwin, Hasel, Canale van Bemmelen, Diop (see Reid 2005:5-153); Japas (1980:128); Maxwell (1989:17-537); Shea (1996:1-171); Treiyer (1992:10-337); Treiyer (1985:1-103); Veloso (1998:11-226) and others, have also reaffirmed the Recapitulation approach as part of Historicism.

Outside of Adventism, there are no other writers that work with this approach, except for a partial or incomplete use of the method in incomplete repetitions of sequences that are set forth (see Morris 1983:53-289; Hendricksen 1998:7-215).

Holbrook clarifies that an apocalyptic approach to history is not unique with the book of Daniel for instance. The extracanonical apocalypses have indications of the same approach. For example, the brief *Apocalypse of weeks* in Ethiopic Enoch 91:12-17 and 93:1-10 divides history into ten successive periods, the last one embracing the final judgment and introducing the eternal age (Holbrook 1992a:5, 16). Another illustration is Baruch's parable of a thundercloud in chapters 53-74, which rains down clear and inky waters in twelve alternately bright and dark periods, finally reaching the eschatological consummation. And there are a number of other examples as well, including the vision of the multi-winged eagle in 4 Ezra 11-12, and the dream-vision of bulls and sheep (plus a wide array of other animals) in Ethiopic Enoch 85-90 (Holbrook 1992a:17).

Holbrook (1992a:17) asserts that sequential developments or processes are also apparent in the divinely inspired book of Revelation, for example, the sequence of the seven seals and of the seven trumpets, the seals being broken *in succession* and the trumpets being blown *in succession*. Likewise, the depiction of the animosity of the dragon in Revelation 12 embraces a sequence, for he first attacks the man-child, then the woman, and finally the remnant of the woman's offspring. Also indicative of the same sort of sequential perspective is the reference in Revelation 17:10 to the seven heads of the beast as being *seven*

*kings*, of whom five “have fallen” “one is (in John’s time),” and “the other has not yet come.” This is a “horizontal continuity” dimension of the apocalyptic, for two reasons: 1) It is absolutely central to the apocalyptic portrayal of history as a succession of events, and 2) because of the writings of Ladd and Morris, prominent evangelical scholars that have confused the apocalyptic view of history with the classical-prophecy approach of “dual fulfillment” or “two foci” (Holbrook 1992a:17).

It is necessary to remember here that classical prophecy has an emphasis on the prophet’s own day and an occasional “two foci” perspective, and never elaborates on the events leading up to the great “day of the Lord.” In classical prophecy there is no reference to an upcoming, end-time Antichrist power (Holbrook 1992a:18-19). Ladd sets forth the idea that the book of Revelation envisages the leopard-like sea beast of Revelation 13 as a symbol of both the ancient Roman Empire of John’s day (Preterism) and an Antichrist still to come (Futurism; Ladd 1972:13; see also La Haye 1999:11-125; Blomberg 2006:518).

## **3.6 THE USE OF SYMBOLS IN THE HISTORICISM APPROACH TO REVELATION**

### **3.6.1 The presence of symbols in Revelation**

The English word for symbol is derived from the Greek *σύμβολον* which originally referred to each of the two halves or corresponding pieces of a tile which two strangers or any two contracting parties broke between them and kept so that later they could match the pieces to prove the identity of the holders. Then, the *σύμβολον* came to be used on other devices used for identification, for example, a seal impression on wax. The adjective form frequently meant symbolical (Liddell 1954:1676, in Mulholland 1959b:293). The word *συμβολή* is used for the Hebrew *חבר*, which means to unite or join and for *טבר*, which means a seal or a seal ring. Thus, both the ancient Greek and Hebrew support the idea of a symbol as a visible representation (Hatch and Redpath 1954:258, 317-318). In Revelation the use of symbols to illustrate prophecies and messages is attested. Mulholland

(1959b:278), citing Ironside (1919:12-13), says that the claim of the use of symbols has been made and that John's use of *σημαίνω* (*ἐσήμανεν* in Rv 1:1, third, singular, aorist, active, indicative) demonstrates the symbolic character of the book. Ironside (1919:13) states "He is said to have signified it: that is he made to bear this in mind. This book is a book of symbols." Mulholland (1959b:278, citing Arndt and Gingrich 1957:755) says that while both the Authorized Version and the American Standard Version used the translation "signified," the Revised Standard Version more properly translates it "made known." The verb is used in all ancient Grecian literature to mean "make known" or "indicate" except that Plutarch has Heraclitus say concerning the Delphic Oracle, οὔτε λέγει, οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει ("neither declares nor conceals, but communicates by symbols"). A similar usage can be found in Epictetus and Josephus (Arndt and Gingrich 1957:755). Tenney (1957:186) refers to Xenophon who carries relationship in symbols to the word *σημαίνω*. "Socrates thought that they (the gods) know all things ... that they are present everywhere and grant signs (*σημαίνεν*).

Mulholland (1959b:375) describes the following symbols for which interpretation is given within the Apocalypse itself: seven stars (angels of the seven churches, Rv 1:20); seven lamp stands (the seven churches, Rv 1:20); seven lamps of fire (the seven spirits of God); seven horns and seven eyes (seven spirits of God sent forth into all the world, Rv 5:4); incense (the prayers of the saints, Rv 5:8); a great multitude (they that came out of tribulation, Rv 7:9, 14); a star from heaven (there was given to him the keys of the abyss, Rv 9:1); the great dragon (the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, Rv 12:9); the great harlot (the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth, Rv 17:1, 18); many waters (people, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues, Rv 17:1, 15); the beast (was, and is not; and is about to come out of the abyss, himself also an eighth, and is of the seven, Rv 17:3, 8; 17:11); seven heads (seven mountains and seven kings Rv 17:3, 9, 10); ten horns (ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet, Rv 17:12); fine linen (the righteous acts of the saints, Rv 19:8); and the wife (the bride of the Lamb, Rv 21:9-10). These symbols are part of the whole narrative

structure of the Apocalypse (Rv 1:20; 5:1-5; 6:1-17; 8:1-13; 9:1-21; 10:1-11; 11:1-14; 11:15-19; 12:1-17; 13:1-18; 14:1-20; 15:1-8; 16:1-21; 17:1-14, 15, 16-21; 18:1-24; 19:1-21; 20:1-15; 21:1-27; 22:1-20). According to Mulholland (1959b:374), the presence of symbols in Revelation is involved in three of the following categories:

### **3.6.1.1 Symbols declared to be symbols**

Scroggie (1920:90) includes in this subdivision those elements of the text which the author declares to be symbolical, but can only be accepted as such by the interpreter. Mulholland (1959b:374) cites Arndt and Gingrich (1957:755) who declared to be signs or “terrifying appearances in the heavens, never before seen, as portents of the last days (Lk. 21:11, 25; Ac 2:19): “a woman arrayed with the sun” (Rv 12:1), a “great red dragon” (Rv 12:3) and “seven angels having the last plagues” (Rv 15:1).

### **3.6.1.2 Symbols explained by other texts in Scripture**

Mulholland (1959b:376-379) explains that other Biblical symbols, literal accounts, and doctrines provide much information necessary for the comprehension of the symbols in the Apocalypse. Tenney (1957:187) lists only ten of these apocalyptic symbols explained by other texts in Scripture, the first five of these are imagery of verbal expression, figures of speech; not symbols. Some examples: the tree of life (Rv 2:7), hidden manna (Rv 2:17), the rod of iron (Rv 2:27), the morning star (Rv 2:28) and the key of David (Rv 3:7). Mulholland (1959b:376-379) gives thirty two symbols that are explained by other texts in Scripture. They are as follows:

#### **Symbols related to Scripture**

##### **From Revelation**

1. Candlestick (Rv 1:12-13, 20; 2:1, 5)

##### **From the Old Testament**

(Ex 35:14; 27:20; 25:36:37:23;  
1 Ki 7:49; Zch 4:2; Mt 5:14;



- Phlp 2:15; Heb 8:2, 5; 9:2, 23).
2. Son of man (Rv 1:13; 14:14) (Dn 7:13; Ezk 1:26; Mt 24:30).
  3. 24 elders (Rv 4:4, 10-11; 5:6, 8-10, 14) (1 Chr 24:7-19; Dn 10:13; Is 24:23; Tt 1:5).
  4. A Lamb (Rv 5:6, 8, 12; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9) (Is 53:4, 7; Gn 22:13; Jn 1:29; Mt 8:17; 1 Pt 1:19; 1 Jn 3:5).
  5. Four horsemen (Rv 6:2) (Zch 6:2-7; Ezk 1).
  6. Mountain (Rv 6:14) (Jr 51:25; Is 2:2; Dn 2:35, 44).
  7. Four winds (Rv 7:1) (Ezk 7:2; 37:9; Jr 49:36; Zch 6:4; Mt 24:31).
  8. Sealed of Israel (Rv 7:4) (Ezk 9:4; 7; 2 Tm 2:19; Dn 12:1; Mt. 21:43; Dt 29:18-21; Lv 24:10-16).
  9. Thunders, fire (Rv 8:5) (Lv 26:12; Ezk 10:2; 38:22; 39:6; Hs 8:14; Am 1; 2:5; Dt 32:22).
  10. Burning mountain (Rv 8:8) (Ex 7:20; Jr 51:25; Hs 4:1-3; Zph 1:3; Is 2:16).
  11. Burning star (Rv 8:10) (Jr 9:13-15; 23:15; 8:14; 9:15; Lm 3:15; Ex 7:18-24).
  12. Eagle (Rv 8:13) (Dt 28:49; 2 Sm 1:23; Is 40:31; Jr 4:13; Hs 8:1;



- Hab 1:8).
13. Locusts (Rv 9:1-11) (Ex 10:5; Pr 30:27; Ezk 9:4-6; Jl 1:6; 2; Jr 51:27).
14. Two witnesses (Rv 11:3-13) (Zch 4; MI 3-4; Mt 11:13; 17:11-13; Lk 1:17; 2 Ki 1:10; Jr 5:4; Ps 79).
15. The woman (Rv 12:1-17) (Gn 37; Mt 24:15-28; Mk 13:14-23; Hs 2:14-15; Zph 2:3).
16. The man-child (Rv 12:5) (Ps 2:7-9; Ac 1:9-11; Heb 1:3).
17. The beast (Rv 13:1-18) (Dn 2; 7; 9:27; 11; Ps 52; Jr 43:11; 15:2; Mt 24:9-27; 2 Th 2:1-12).
18. The false prophet (Rv 13:11-17) (Gn 3:1; 49:17; Dn 3. Mt 24; Mk 13:22; 2 Cor 11:3).
19. The 144 000 (Rv 7:4-8; 14:1-5) (Jl 2:32; Zch 14:2; Is 24:23; Mi 4:7; Heb 12:22; Gl 4:26).
20. The harvesting (Rv 14:14-16) (Ps 21:3; Jr 51:33; Jl 3:13; Mt 13:37, 41 24:37-42; Jn 5:27).
21. The winepress (Rv 14:17-20) (Dt 32:32-33; Is 34:1-18;



- Jl 3:12-15; Zph 3:8).
- 22.** Babylon the great (Rv 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21) (Is 13:19-21; 21:9; 34:13-15; Jr 50:39; 51:37; Dn 4:27; Zch 5:1-11; Zph 2:1-15).
- 23.** The great harlot (Rv 17:1, 3-7, 18) (Is. 1:21; 23:17; Ezk 16:15; Hs 2:5; Nah 3:4).
- 24.** Many waters (Rv 17:1, 15) (Jr 51:13).
- 25.** The scarlet color beast (Rv 17:3, 8, 11; 19:19-20) (Is 41:2; Dn 2; 7; 9:21; 11:23).
- 26.** Seven heads (Rv 17:3, 7, 9) (Jr 51:25; Dn 2:35; 7; Zch 4:7).
- 27.** Ten horns (Rv 17:3, 12-14, 16-17) (Dn 2; 2 Th 2:11).
- 28.** Rider on a white horse (Rv 19:11-16) (Ps 45:3-6; Is 63:1-6; 9:5; Zch 9:9; Lk 19:27; Jude 14-15).
- 29.** Lake of fire (Rv 19:20; 20:14) (Dn 12:2; Mt 25:41, 46; Mk 9:43; Jn 5:29).
- 30.** Binding of Satan (Rv 20:1-3) (Mt 13:30, 39-42; 1 Pt 5:8; 2 Pt 2:4; Jude 6:1).
- 31.** The millennium (Rv 20:4-6) (Ps. 122:5; 49:14; Is 9:7; 24:23; 29:18; 32:1; 33:6, 24; 65:20-23; Jr 3:17; 23:5;



Ezk 43:7; Dn 7; 12:2; Mi 4:7;  
Jl 3:12; Zch 14:9; Matt 19:  
28; 25:30-31; Lk 14:14; 22:30,  
34-36; Jn 5:29; 11:24-26;  
1 Cor 15:51; Phlp 3:14; 1 Th  
4:16-17; 1 Tm 3:16; Heb  
11:35).

**32.** The holy city (Rv 21:1-22:5)

(Is 60:3, 14, 19-20; 64:11-12;  
Ezk 40-48; Eph 5:25-33; Heb  
11:15-16; 12:22).

There are some specific uses of other symbols as well. The palm frond, for instance, in the Greco-Roman world was traditionally a representation of victory (Ferguson 1954:36).<sup>3</sup> According to Ferguson (1954:180), the scroll, besides being used in place of a book, also suggested the gifts of an individual as a writer. As it was discussed in Chapter 2, the concept of sealing can be associated with the mark, or signature, of the owner. In the Apocalypse of John, the symbol of the seal signature is applied to God (Ferguson 1954:180).

Another symbolic aspect found within the original audience of Revelation is the cryptic character of Rome. This is justifiable because of the danger of Roman government persecution. Richardson (1939:12-13) explains that John concealed his imprecations against Rome in the cryptic imagery of beasts and the harlot. He is presented as using recipients of the message because Christians, especially Judeo-Christians, knew these symbols from the Old Testament (see e.g., Daniel 7-8) and other Jewish apocalyptic literature (see Nicklesburg 2005:73, 260-270, 123, 290-295; Michelsen 1970:24). The safety of the reader and the author obeyed this imagery and symbolic concealment depiction. Summers (1951:5) said that such imagery was incomprehensible and unknown to outsiders, but it

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<sup>3</sup> For an additional description of the palm, see Horn (1995:893).

was revealed to the insiders or initiated. On this same symbolic realm, some authors also see John extracting Old Testament experiences and applying them to the Christian church. To this end, Anderson (1962:177-195) suggests that Isaiah 65:17-19 is expanded by John when he describes the New Earth of Revelation 21:1-3. Von Rad (1965:243-250) points out that there can be no doubt that in Revelation John is evoking the Exodus and transporting it as a symbolic event: the exodus of the redeemed from Babylon as the counterpart in the saving history to Israel 's departure from Egypt in the far-off past.

### **3.7 THE FOUR APPROACHES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE INTERPRETATION OF REVELATION 7:1-3**

#### **3.7.1 Preterist reading of Revelation 7:1-3**

Thomas and Barker (1992:465), commenting on the seals of Revelation 6, says that the first six seals represent the early stage of the Jewish war, wherein Vespasian fought his way through Galilee toward Jerusalem. But before he had an opportunity to besiege Jerusalem, the action paused as the angels sealed 144 000 from the twelve tribes of Israel (Rv 7:3). Before the Jewish war reached and overwhelmed Jerusalem, God providentially caused a brief cessation of hostilities, allowing the Jewish Christians in Judea to escape (as Jesus urges in Mt 24:16-22). This happened when the emperor Nero committed suicide (68 CE), which caused the Roman general Vespasian and Titus to cease operations and withdraw for a year because of the turmoil in Rome. Later he returned to Judea and captured Jerusalem (Thomas and Barker 1992:465)

Thomas and Barker (1992:465-466) talks about the Hebraic terminology of Matthew 24:15 as occurring when “you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near (Lk 21:20), and at that time his followers are to flee (Lk 21:21; cf Mt 24:16). In 68 CE general Vespasian and Titus “had fortified all places around Jerusalem ... encompassing the city round about on all sides” (Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, 4.9.1). But when Vespasian and Titus were “informed that Nero was dead (*Jewish Wars* 4.9.2) they did not go with

their expedition against Jews (*Jewish Wars* 4.9.2, cf *Jewish Wars* 4.10.2) until after Vespasian became emperor in 69 CE. Then “Vespasian turned his thoughts to what remained unsubdued in Judea (*Jewish Wars* 4.10.15). With this approach the ones that escaped to the city of Pella in the year 66 CE would have been the “sealed ones” before the horrors and destruction of 70 CE took place.

### **3.7.2 Futurist reading of Revelation 7:1-3**

As Morris (1983:129) suggests in his futuristic exegesis on the sealing how the angel will affix the seal to the foreheads of the servants of God and what insignia it will be like is not revealed. He proposes that the angel could be Christ. He refers in this regard to the parallel found in Ezekiel 9:4.

Futurism argues that multitudes will turn back to God during the first years of the tribulation period. Especially will this be true in Israel, where the remarkable deliverance from Gog (Russia) will have had a traumatic effect on the whole nation even before the period of judgment begins. Many such believing Israelites will go further, believing in Christ as the Messiah and Savior. Then, before it is too late, a forthright witness for him will begin in the manner of Psalm 2:10-12 and Romans 1:16-17, which is probably one of those upon whom the Lord, through the angel, places his seal (Morris 1983:129).

Dispensationalism and progressive dispensationalism (which has three different stages throughout history; see Pate and Grundy 1998:30-33) within the field of Futurism accept this meaning that a literal interpretation or approach of the 144 000 servants of God, for instance, must be accepted. According this posture, there is an ethnic Israel, physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The first example in history that the church is being called Israel exists in 160 CE (Pate and Grundy 1998:227).

It is appropriate to re-observe here that there are different approaches in Dispensationalism. Classical Dispensationalism, as it was mentioned previously,

was articulated by the Irish Anglican clergyman John Nelson Darby (Ryrie 2007:14, 67, 158).

The doctrine of Dispensationalism was spread across the United States with the publishing and circulation of the 1909 version of the Scofield Bible. Some important developments unfolded within this movement during the twentieth century: 1) The earliest stage for Dispensationalism was propounded by Darby and Scofield. This period emphasized the dispensations themselves. 2) A second stage emerged in 1960, thanks to the work of Ryrie (2007:79-197). With this second development two noticeable changes transpired: Faith was highlighted as the means of salvation in any of the dispensations (against the old Scofield Bible's statement about works being the means of salvation in the Old Testament), and the individual dispensations were no longer the focal point; rather the emphasis development arose, commonly called progressive dispensationalism. This thought interprets the prophecies of the Bible literally in their fulfillment, therefore, it is perceived as still future. The key verse is Revelation 1:19, "what you have seen," and "what is now and what will take place later" (Rv 4:22). Classical Dispensationalism believes that the lack of mention of the church from Revelation 4 onward indicates that it has been rapture to heaven by Christ before the advent of the Great Tribulation (Rv 6-18). This postulate presents a pessimistic view of world history.

Progressive Dispensationalism appeared when by 1980 certain theologians launched a rethinking of the system and developed what has been called "progressive" or "modified" Dispensationalism. They use the term already/not yet hermeneutic. Such term It was first popularized by Oscar Cullmann (Pate and Grundy 1998:31). Cullmann (1963:297-306, 319-338), a Swiss theologian of a generation ago, views in this system the first and the second coming of Christ through the lens of eschatological tension. The first talks about the kingdom inauguration; the second refers to its full realization. Until then, Christians live in the tension of the age to come. They believe that: 1) Jesus began his heavenly

Davidic reign at the resurrection (Ac 2:22-30, 36; Ps 110:1); 2). The church is not a parenthesis in the plan of God. It forms a part of the one people of God (Rm 2:11, 26-28; Gl 6:16; Eph 2:11-22; 1 Pt 2:9-10); 3) The New Covenant is fulfilled in the church's beginning (2 Cor. 3:1-4:6). The end of history is also experiencing partial realization in the church (Rm 15:7-13).

### **3.7.3 Idealist reading of Revelation 7:1-3**

The Idealistic approach does not restrict the contents of Revelation to a particular historical period, but rather sees apocalyptic symbols that are multivalent in meaning and, without specific historical reference the application of the book is limitless (Pate and Grundy 1998:24). Schüssler Fiorenza claims that her purpose in writing on Revelation is to “liberate the text from its historical captivity and rescue the message of Revelation for today” (Schüssler Fiorenza 1991:24-25). For Schüssler Fiorenza (1991:27-28), the meaning of Revelation is not to be sought in the first century, nor in the remote events of the end time, but rather in the ongoing struggle between those disadvantaged socio-politically and their oppressors. Thus understood, Revelation would be a powerful tool in the hands of liberation and feminist theologians for throwing the joke of capitalism and chauvinism, respectively. For example, in the idealistic viewpoint of Revelation 17:18, Thanksgiving Day in the United States is the sad description of the Third World that is possessed by the Babylonian power of America (Schüssler Fiorenza 1991:22-28). In this feminist idealistic concept, the United States of America resembles the ancient destructive power of Babylon/Rome. Julia Esquivel (1982:79-83) cited by Schüssler Fiorenza (1998:227-228), describes this position in a poem entitled *Thanksgiving Day* where she expresses poetically the politics of interpretation that animates a reading strategy critical of all forms of domination. Julia Esquivel, a Guatemalan refugee, looks into the eye of Babylon/Rome, and does not see a woman. Rather she sees the imperial power of the United States of America that has been and still is so destructive of all native peoples:

In the third year of the massacres by Lucas and the other coyotes against the poor of Guatemala, I was led by the Spirit in to the desert. And on the eve of Thanksgiving Day I had a vision of Babylon: the city sprang forth arrogantly.... Each day false prophets invited the inhabitants of the Unchaste City to kneel before the idols of gluttony, money and death: Idolaters of all nations were being converted to the American way of life.... The Spirit told me in the River of death flood the blood of many peoples ... the blood of the Indian ancestors who lived on those lands, of those who even now kept hostage in the Great Mountains and the Black Hills of Dakota by the guardians of the beast.

(Esquivel 1982:79-91)

Another of the defenders of this theological Idealism position is Lohmeyer (1953:138-147), cited by LaRondelle (in Holbrook 1992a:154). In his view, he opines that the great prostitute of Revelation 17 could not symbolize Rome or any historical city, because all cities would have been destroyed during the seventh plague, recorded in Revelation chapter 16. Consequently, the harlot must signify a demonic figure, the satanic power of the apostate world, as in ancient mythology (LaRondelle, in Holbrook 1992b:154).

The contemporary hermeneutic procedure to interpret Revelation within the concept of Idealism is in a certain way an expression of the insufficient character of the rules of interpretation expressed by some actual theologians. As for them, the correct interpretation is only possible through the situation of the interpreter itself, which accede to the text with their own presuppositions (*Vorverständnis*, “previous intelligence” or “pre-comprehension”) to produce a dialogue in which, the interpreter, from his personal emotive situation, asks the text and, at the same time the text questions the interpreter. This is called the “hermeneutic circle” in which the interpreter acquires a new understanding that modifies and perfects their concepts by the “fusion of horizons”: 1) the personal horizon of the interpreter and 2) the one that corresponds to the text. The interpreter, then, feels appeased by the content of the text (Gadamer & Weinsheimer 1989:213, 245-246, 252, 305, 306, 337, 370, 390, 398 cited in Treiyer 1996:3-6).

The traditional hermeneutic procedure works with the text, using the words, the context, their literary style, and its historical background. The “hermeneutic circle” insists upon the importance of the interpreter according to its personal context. There is danger in this approach because it sometimes does not lead to an honest interpretation of the text, but to an adaptation of the text to the philosophic-religious conceptions of the interpreter (Gadamer & Weinsheimer 1989:213, 245-246, 252, 305, 306, 337, 370, 390, 398 cited in Treiyer 1996:4). The major challenge for idealism when it forms an approach totally separated within the context of the passage is the endless interpretation possibilities that may result from imagination. Thus, for Idealism, sealing in Revelation 7:1-3 could have endless and timeless applications.

### **3.8 QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE HISTORICISM APPROACH**

#### **3.8.1 History: bone marrow of prophecy**

Historicism recognizes that Daniel and Revelation reveal a divine lordship and mastery regarding the onward movement of history beyond the prophet’s own time – and a future history when God will establish His eternal kingdom on earth.<sup>4</sup> Because Historicism considers history as the bone marrow of prophecy (in this context, history is fulfilled prophecy and prophecy is history not yet fulfilled), it is necessary to discuss some of the differences between it and the other approaches in the interpretation of the Apocalypse. There are various elements in discussion: 1) The *continuum* emerging in Revelation and its difference when it is compared to classical prophecy; 2) the prevalent opinion found in Idealism and Futurism upon the idea of repeated fulfillments and 3) the conditionality in Revelation. These three issues/questions are discussed next in order to establish an answer when it comes to justifying the reason for the Historicist approach of interpretation chosen to analyze Revelation 7:1-3.

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<sup>4</sup>The discussion of the Historicism approach of Revelation 7:1-3 will be considered in Chapter 4, where an exegesis and various commentaries will be used to explain the meaning of Historicist thought within the sealing prophecy of Revelation 7:1-3.

### **3.8.2 Why does the concept of historical *continuum* emerge in apocalyptic in distinction from the “two foci” concept of classical prophecy?**

It is suggested that a specific background from Biblical literature itself serves as the pattern for this characteristic of apocalyptic, namely the Old Testament historical narratives. Apocalyptic prophecies project into the future a continuation of the Bible’s historical record. Strand (in Holbrook 1992a:11-34) remarks that God’s sovereignty and constant care for His people are always in the forefront of the Bible’s portrayal of the historical *continuum*, whether it is depicted in past events (historical books) or in events to come (apocalyptic prophecy; Strand, in Holbrook 1992a:19).

Daniel and Revelation reveal a divine lordship and mastery regarding the onward movement of history beyond the prophet’s own time – a future history that will culminate when the God of heaven establishes his own eternal kingdom that will fill the whole earth and stand forever (Dn 2:35, 44-45; Rv 21, 22). Theological interpretation of Revelation, in order to be sound, must be compatible with this historical perspective. Revelation embraces, as does the book of Daniel, a step-by-step progression through history, not a polarized focus on either the ancient period or the eschatological climax or both. Those commentators who wish to combine Preterism and Futurism as the best approach to Revelation, says Holbrook, fly right in the face of the very nature of the book itself as an apocalypse. Expositors who accept a historicist fulfillment (in the past) of certain visions of Daniel and Revelation, but who then opt for a second and primary end-time fulfillment of the same, come under this structure as well (Strand, in Holbrook 1992a:19).

### **3.8.3 Does the Apocalypse contain the concept of repeated fulfillments?**

Strand (in Holbrook 1992a:19-21) posts some other interesting questions about the multiple fulfillments in Revelation. Can there be repeated fulfillments in

apocalyptic prophecy? There is a certain “philosophy-of-history” perspective in this kind of prophecy. According to Holbrook, “philosophy-of-history” does not mean the “value-philosophy” approach that sets forth philosophical considerations or “ideals” without touching historical reality. It must be emphasized that apocalyptic prophecy deals with *real events* and *developments* in the historical *continuum* from the prophet’s time onward to the end of time (Strand, in Holbrook 1992a:19).

Any approach that divorces fulfillment of apocalyptic forecasts from real history is contrary to the very essence of apocalyptic historical portrayal. This kind of “philosophy-of-history” to which attention is called has a certain kind of recurring application. There is a need to first look for evidences and/or illustrations of the phenomenon; and second, we will note the type of material to which the phenomenon is applicable. In the book of Baruch there is an indication that “history repeats itself.” This non- canonical apocalypse, in its parable of the thundercloud divides its historical *continuum* in *alternately* “clear” and “inky” periods. There is, indeed, an almost “sing-song” pattern of historical repetition. In the canonical book of Daniel, the rise and fall of kingdoms conveys the same thought with regard to repetitiveness in history, especially so in view of the under girding statement that God “removes kings and sets up kings” (Dn 2:21). The concept is expressive of the “blessings-and-cursing” formulary of Deuteronomy 27-28 and finds graphic illustration in Israel’s own history. This is well illustrated, for example, in the book of Judges (Strand, in Holbrook 1992a:19-21).

Whenever Israel failed in its covenant commitment, oppression by foreign nations resulted. Deliverance came whenever Israel turned to the Lord in sincere repentance. Although each instance was a different episode, with a different judge leading the deliverance, the *kind* of historical phenomenon in each case was the same. Thus, it may be said that Israelite “history repeated itself” in principle, though not in specific detail. In the book of Revelation there are found

similar suggestions of repetitive patterns, such as in the four-three division within various septets (Strand, in Holbrook 1992a:19-21).

One may think, for example, of the striking similarities that occurred in the letters to Ephesus and Sardis and again in those to Smyrna and Philadelphia (the first and fifth churches and the second and sixth churches, respectively in Revelation 2-3). Furthermore, the very manner in which symbolism is used in Revelation implies at times a repeated (and possible a continuous) application. Particularly impressive is the expression in Revelation 11:8 “the great city” which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt, where their (the two witnesses) Lord was crucified. Here we find three places (Sodom, Egypt, Jerusalem) brought together and identified in such a way as to carry our minds back to events both in the *distant past* and in *much closer time*. These events were also separated geographically (Strand, in Holbrook 1992a:20). White (2000:588), in commenting on John’s vision, makes some remarks indicative of this kind of historical repetition in the following statement:

Looking down through long centuries of darkness and superstition, the aged exile saw multitudes suffering martyrdom because of their love for the truth. But he saw also that He who sustained His early witnesses would not forsake His faithful followers during the centuries of persecution that they must pass through before the close of time.

(White 2000:588)

There is not a single instance where this author in her writings indicates dual or multiple fulfillments of the little horn or any of the beasts of Daniel or Revelation and their time periods. Those entities come into existence once and once only. Their kind of service as vehicles for Satan’s attack upon God and God’s saints may readily, however, lead to a *repetition of the general processes* used, whether these are deceptions or persecutions (see Jn 8:44). But apocalyptic prophecy is not understood to embody dual or multiple fulfillments in and of itself. What this text tells (Rv 11:8) is not that there is going to be a second or even a third fulfillment of Sodom or multiple fulfillments of the ancient Egypt that held Israel in

oppression. Rather, the message is that these three distinct entities can be identified in a sort of “togetherness”; they fittingly serve in a symbolic way for the “great city” that embodies and repeats a similar character of wickedness and oppression (Strand, in Holbrook 1992a:20).

#### **3.8.4 Is there any conditionality in apocalyptic?**

This third question is also crucial since Dispensationalism occupies a vast theological realm among many Protestants today. To respond to this question, Holbrook declares that apocalyptic prophecy sets forth an historical progression that allows no room for variability, as God foretells what “must shortly come to pass” (Rv 1:1; KJV). There is, for example, no question whether the four horsemen of Revelation 6 are going to ride; they will *indeed* go forth in the progression indicated. The same holds true with the trumpet warnings, the plagues of doom and the destruction of Babylon. These are all things John is shown and told would happen. There simply is no element of contingency involved (Strand, in Holbrook 1992a:21-22).

Some argue that there is an element of conditionality in the letters to the seven churches. This is indeed so. The whole concept of these letters has conditionality as an underlying frame of reference. But this particular conditionality does not relate to the historical portrayal of the churches’ situations, but to how churches and individuals in them will respond to Christ’s appeal, how they will decide to stand in the future regarding their covenant relationship with the Lord. The hortatory nature of epistolary comes to the fore. The fact that Revelation is a letter as well as an apocalyptic prophecy gives it a certain flavor of exhortation. But this exhortation is limited to appeals (see, e g, Rv 16:15; Strand, in Holbrook 1992a:22).

The exhortation does not apply to the specific type of prophetic forecast that is part and parcel of the natural apocalyptic literature. The book of Daniel, too, has elements of conditionality in its historical sections and in any appeals that are

made. Neither Daniel nor Revelation is the prophetic forecast itself subject to conditionality. The events are fixed and the prescribed time periods are definite and invariable. These elements fit the patterns of what Daniel said to King Nebuchadnezzar: “God has made known to the king what shall be hereafter. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure” (Dn. 2:45; Strand, in Holbrook 1992a:22).

### **3.9 A PREVIEW OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE HISTORICIST APPROACH FOR THE ANALYSIS OF REVELATION 7:1-3**

#### **3.9.1 Questions on the preview analysis**

After discussing the above discussion of the different approaches for the interpretation of Revelation, it is appropriate to ask the questions that will comprise the analysis of Revelation 7:1-3 within the Historicist method of interpretation in Chapter 4 of this study. The questions that will be discussed in this matter in Chapter 4 are:

- What is the historical background of the first century CE that can be traced within Historicism in Revelation 7:1-3 related to slavery, sealing and Babylon?
- Is there any Historicist relationship between the Emperor cult and the historicist *continuum* applied to the future in Revelation 7:1-3?
- Is there some symbolism extracted from the Old Testament present in Revelation 7:1-3?
- What is the seal of God in Revelation 7:1-3 according to the Historicist approach?
- What are the connections between the holistic Sabbath and the Trinity?

- What is the implication between the Holy Trinity and the ἑξακόσιοι ἑξήκοντα ἕξ (χξς = 666) in the phrase ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς ἡλίου from Revelation 7:2 and Revelation 16:12?
- What is the concept of the code number hypothesis for χξς?
- What is the relationship between Exodus 12:7 and the metaphorical meaning of σφραγίς?

In Chapter 4, the following aspects will also receive attention:

- The presence of spiritual Babylon as a spiritual religious power that enslaves and seals.
- The historical record that shows that Roman religion during the first century CE was woven into the State politics and the Emperor Cult.
- The symbolism extracted from Exodus 12 and the Passover, Ezekiel 9 and the judgment in connection with Revelation 7:1-3, including all of the New Testament verses for sealing. The various words that offer a field of a symbolic study such as τέσσαρας, ἀνέμους, γῆς, θαλάσσης, δένδρον, ἀνατολῆς ἡλίου, δούλος and μετώπων. These Greek words are full of biblical symbolism that Adventist historicism uses to describe the process of sealing.
- The presence of the holistic Sabbath meaning of sealing.
- The connection and counterpart between Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Ezekiel. 20:12, 20; Mark 2:27, 28; Hebrews 4:1-10; Revelation 7:1-3; 2 Corinthians 3:1-3; Galatians. 4:19; 2 Timothy 2:19; Revelation 7:1-3; Revelation 13:18; and Revelation 16:13.
- An explanation of the Hebrew verbs “blessed,” “rested” and “sanctified” of Genesis 2:1-3. These three verbs will be discussed within the LXX language as well. There also will be a parallelism consideration between the holistic Sabbath and marriage according to Genesis 2. This section will also include a description of Revelation 16:13 and the concept of maligned Trinity. This section includes the exegetical study of the phrase ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς ἡλίου found in Revelation 7:3 and 16:12.

- The code number hypothesis resides in the sense of considering the meaning of ἕξακόσιοι ἑξήκοντα ἕξ (χξς) within Revelation 13:18 and other Biblical contexts such as Isaiah 45:1-3 and Revelation 16:12-13.

Notwithstanding this research considers the four major approaches to Revelation, as being the most important tools to study the Apocalypse, it is useful also to be informed about other interpretations for this particular book. As it was declared at the beginning of the present Chapter, there are at least six others approaches to Revelation. Next, there is a brief discussion of such list of schools in the study of the Ἐποκάλυψις Ἰωάννου.

### **3.10 THE SIX MINOR APPROACHES TO REVELATION**

#### **3.10.1 PATRISTIC APPROACH TO REVELATION**

As it is known, the study of Revelation has had different groups of consensus interpretation throughout its theological consideration. Käsemann (in Berardino et al 1996:72), for instance, suggested that the apocalypse was the mother of all apocalyptic theology (Berardino & Studer 1996:72). Similarly, Käsemann pointed out that hope in the Lord's coming was one of the factors that contributed to the development of New Testament theology (Käsemann 1967:137). According to Berardino and Studer (1996:71), the Biblical apocalyptic approach was entirely something inherited from the Jewish world. Referring to the Patristic approach to Revelation, we may start by saying that one of the most important contributions of this approach to the study of the Scriptures was to translate Semitic genres into Hellenistic genres without excessively altering the content of the message (Berardino & Studer 1996:72). The term "Fathers" was used in two different ways during the Patristic period: 1) "Fathers" were regarded as transmitting spiritual life and, 2) they were thought to have an authoritative place, especially in the area of doctrine. During the fourth century, however, a new dimension was added to the "Fathers" – that of calling the participants in the Council of Nicaea "Fathers." To these "318 Fathers," such as Athanasius, were gradually added to the reliable interpreters of the Nicene faith. Thus, the act of the Synod of Ephesus speaks of

the phrase “*sententiae Patrum*” (“testimonies of the Fathers”). During the same period, the title “Father” began to be given to renowned theologians of the past, of whom almost all were bishops. The historical evolution of the concept of Father becomes clear chiefly from the testimony of the following writers: Augustine; Athanasius; Basil of Caesarea; Cyril of Alexandria; Eusebius of Caesarea; Jerome; and Theodore and Vincent of Lermis (Berardino & Studer 1996:368-369).

During the Patristic period Jerome, Augustine, and some other authors worked with the Patristic approach to Revelation which mixes spiritual reality and heavenly worship. With this in mind, some theologians argued that Revelation alludes to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Han 2007:10, 12, 16, 56, 141, 185). Berardino and Studer (1996:369-370) also explain that the Patristic Fathers developed “the patristic method of argumentation,” which aims to explain Biblical truths using other author’s writings. Augustine, for instance (see *Ep* 147.f in Berardino 1996:587), was one of the first who interpreted Ambrose with the help of other particular texts. Basil elaborated in the belief in the Spirit, not only through the apostolic tradition but also by citing some other Fathers’ texts (Berardino & Studer 1996:369, 586). Basil (Travers 2003:95-106, 131-140. 212), argues about the terms *sub-numeration* and *con-numeration* for the Spirit. On the first term Basil situates the Spirit as Servant, Master. *Con-numeration* is employed for the Spirit’s quality as the Father and Son. Basil favors the *sub-numeration* concept. The way the Bible considers Trinity equality for the Father and the Spirit (Ac 5:3, 4) questions such Basil approach. Depending on Silvas (2005:95) the only Capadocian Father to teach the Holy Spirit was ὁμοίωσις with the Father was Gregory Nazianzen. Justin (*Dialogue with Triphon* 90.2, in Berardino & Studer 1996:125) is cited referring to prophecy as spoken parables and types that hide the truth and require strenuous study. In the Patristic period there is discussion on eschatology regarding the millennial concept. Ireneaus, Justin, and Tertullian saw a materialistic reign of the just on earth with Christ before the final judgment. However, Origin opposed this view, saying that

Revelation 20 must be considered using a spiritual interpretation of an allegorical kind, and Dionysius dedicated attention to the Apocalypse of John from the same perspective (Berardino & Studer 1996:193; Kelly 1960:41-48). The concept of sealing is vague in the writings of the Fathers, and intends mostly to show the divine protection from evil (Berardino & Studer 1996:193, Kelly 1960:40-48).

### 3.10.2 HIGHER CRITICISM METHOD TO REVELATION

This method is a branch of literary analysis that investigates the origin of texts in terms of chronological answers about when and who wrote the text (Burkert & Raffan 1985:1-20). It is Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536) that is usually credited as the first to study the Bible using this method (Durant 1961:125,162, 201). In the eighteenth century, German Bible scholars from the Tübingen School at first viewed Revelation from the historical-critical method approach. Regarding this approach, scholars thought that Revelation and its message happened within the first-century CE context with the genre of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature. According to the historical-critical method, the time setting for Revelation is exclusively for the seven churches of Asia Minor cited in the book and takes place during that period. There are no future events taking place, only *praeter ex vaticinia* (see Higher criticism in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higher\\_criticism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Higher_criticism)). In this context scholars discuss the genre of Revelation in terms of whether its literary function was the fact that it was written by the apostle John during the first century CE or if it was just a proactive apocalyptic literature against the Roman Empire exclusively (Bauckham 1993:1-17; Beale 1999:37-43; Mazaferri 1989:53, 54).<sup>5</sup> Recently Ratzinger (2007:xiii), in citing Schnackenburg (1995:318), explains that “the efforts of scientific exegesis to examine these traditions and trace them back to what is historically credible” draws us “into a continual discussion of tradition and redaction history that never comes to rest.” According to Ratzinger (2007:xiii), the work of Schnackenburg “is intended to help believing Christians ... who have been made insecure by scientific research and

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<sup>5</sup> For the use of a modified version of the historical-critical approach by Adventist scholars, see Rodriguez (in Reid 2006:339-353).

critical discussion, so that they may hold fast to faith in the person of Jesus Christ as the bringer of salvation and Savior of the world.” In this respect, Mercatante (1988a:359-361) includes Jesus among the many world myths and legends. Another area, which uses higher criticism is the examination of the text of Revelation with regard to the text itself, its variations problem and its transmission through history. Aland and Aland (1987:4) discuss one typical example of such data found in Erasmus. He was unable to find in Basel any manuscript of Revelation of John so he borrowed one from his friend Johann Reuchlin. Because its last portion was lacking, Erasmus simply translated Revelation 22:16-21 from Latin back into Greek (introducing several errors). Erasmus relied on manuscripts of the twelfth or thirteenth centuries represented by the Byzantine imperial text. The translation of Erasmus is considered one of the most careless translations ever produced (Aland and Aland 1987:4).

In the Higher Criticism School of studying Revelation the sealing in Revelation is strictly viewed under the siege period of the second Jewish war when the Jerusalem temple was completely destroyed by the Romans during the year 70 CE (Düsterdieck 1887:78-80; Russell 1999:365-406). A posterior explanation on this critical study associated with Preterism, will be discussed later in this Chapter.

### **3.10.3 KABALISTIC OR ESOTERIC APPROACH TO REVELATION**

There are also some esoteric schools that see Revelation in terms of multiple levels of meaning. The understanding of Revelation is then associated with Kabalistic symbols. This term is attributed either to Salomon Bin Bariral (1021-1058) or to the thirteenth Spanish Kabalist by the name of Bahya ben Asher. The presence of Kabalistic symbols is related to early written works known as *Heichalot* and *Sefer Yetzriah* (dated in the first- or second-century CE). The Kabalistic approach is related to the study of esoteric knowledge and practice in the Jewish writings contained in the Torah (Matt 1996:23-165). This esoteric study sometimes is linked to magic (Christopher 2006: 353-359, 315-331). This

secret knowledge was acquired in four different levels: 1) The *Peshat*, which was the simple meaning of the text, 2) *Remez* or biblical allusions or allegory, 3) *Peshat midrash* (Rabbinic scriptural exegesis), and 4) *Sof* or the *kabalah*, the secret meaning of the Torah. Blabastky, Eliphas Levi, Steiner, and Aun Weor are some of the defenders of this position that view the Scriptures in terms of layers of wisdom (Leet 1999:75-113, 117-164, 380-412). For Kabbalistics, the Bible is an encrypted document with not just information but infinite spiritual energy lies in potential awaiting man connection (Berg 2008:7).

This school considers Revelation to have secret codes of interpretation that have an infinite variety of meanings comprised within the four levels of kabalistic knowledge. Therefore, the concept of sealing is also understood in any of those four levels of interpreting prophecy.

### **3.10.4 AESTHETIC APPROACH TO REVELATION**

Another approach to Revelation is the Aesthetic and literary mode of interpretation. This approach considers Revelation within the realm of art and imagination, viewing the imagery as symbols that contain depictions of timeless truths and the victory of good over evil. Aesthetic thought in Revelation is considered by Roman Catholic writers, such as O'Connor and Percy (in Sykes 2007:1, 136), as being one thought expressed in a secret desire for the end of the world, hoping that a universal catastrophe would bring renewal. This liberation is seen through a dramatized variety of lenses and focuses in aesthetic memory that has characterized fiction in Revelation. An example of this is *Love in the Ruins* (Percy 1980:1-416), in which the author tells the fictional story of a faithful Roman Catholic member named Tom who is struggling in a badly polarized United States where the Roman Catholic Church has split into many factions. He remains faithful to Rome and walks a middle road between political extremes. Sykes justifies this view, saying that Maritian Art and Scholasticism emphasizes the idea that the virtue of the artist lies in the skill peculiar to his kind of making, rather than in some extrinsic moral end (O'Connor, in Sykes 2007:4). As a

marginal point, Simpson suggests that the work of O'Connor and Percy represented a new direction for literature from the American South (Simpson 1997:1-290, in Sykes 2007:1). Within Catholicism, Catechism teachings also find their way into the Apocalypse (Hardon 1975:87-88).

The Aesthetic approach to Revelation is also used by some Jewish authors such as Braiterman (2007:xvii-xxx). He says that art and aesthetics will cast religion in a new unfamiliar light, tossing its thought away from an exclusive preoccupation with epistemology and ethics by underscoring the shape of revelation in physical sensation and the visual imagination. In this way, Braiterman applies some of the Jewish modern history experience, including World War II, the Holocaust and Zionism, among others. There are many historical scenarios, including the history of the modern pilgrimage of the Jewish people (Braiterman 2007:3, 9, 35,133, 141, 154, 165, 73-74, 190-191,199-206). In this sense, sealing could be contemplated as a new reassurance of protection and favor to the risen nation of Israel.

### **3.10.5 LITERALIST APPROACH TO REVELATION**

The literalist approach considers the prophecy of Revelation as being literally fulfilled. Actually, the tension is between lesser and greater degrees of spiritualization. For example, some authors, such as Chevrier (2005:2-70) and Amirault (see <http://www.tentmaker.org/Dew/Dew6/D6-Understanding Scripture.html>) suggest that the literalist approach ignores the concept that languages of the Bible use many communication techniques. The Hebrew language in particular contains various language expressions. These language expressions include parables, metaphors, symbols, hyperboles, similes, litotes, repetition, euphemism, apostrophes, anthropomorphisms, metonymy, irony, allegory, hypocatastasis, antithesis, allegory, fables, riddles, typology and synecdoche. One typical example of symbolism in Revelation is the Euphrates, which according to Beale (1999:828) cannot be considered a literal river in the book of Revelation. "A figurative interpretation of the Euphrates is also suggested

by the figurative use of “sea,” “river,” and “water” in the renewed exodus plagues of the second and third bowls, as well as elsewhere in the book in conjunction with the dragon, the beast, or their followers (see on 16:3-4, as well as 12:15, 16; 13:1; 15:2; 17:1, 15” (Beale 1999:828; see also Prigent 2001:246).

Based on what has been said above, the literalist approach to Revelation thinks of sealing as being fulfilled in the literal context of the Preteristic and critical school, as well as a protection exclusively applied to the Jewish people in the first- and second-centuries CE. For example, a literalist neglects the various literary communication techniques used throughout Revelation which implies also a figurative and symbolic context within the book itself. Therefore, regarding the presence of those communication techniques attested to in the Apocalypse of John, it is necessary to cite and explain ten communication techniques, which appear (not exhaustive) in that book. These literary forms are:

### **3.10.5.1 Metaphor**

By definition, a metaphor is an implied comparison which does not use the word “like.” These include eighteen anthropomorphisms (Rv 1:5; 2:23; 3:5, 14, 21; 5:5, 6; 7:17; 13:8; 17:8, 20:12, 15; 21:7, 22; 22:16; Mulholland 1959:193).

### **3.10.5.2 Hypocatastasis**

According to Lord (1857:61, in Mulholland 1959a:196) this literary form appears 100 times in the first chapters of Isaiah. By definition, hypocatastasis is the artificial use of an act that is used for illustration, not the use of the word. In the Apocalypse of John, it occurs more than ten times in the first three chapters (Rv 2:17, 22, 24, 25; 3:2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11; 16:15; 18:6).

### **3.10.5.3 Metonymy**

Metonymy is the denomination of something by a noun that is the proper name of something, with which it is intimately connected (Lord, in Mulholland 1959a:196-197). In the book of Revelation this appears twenty five times (Rv 1:5, 10, 12;

2:13, 22, 24; 3:4, 7, 7, 14; 5:9; 6:8; 7:14; 8:3; 11:8, 13; 14:13; 19:6, 11, 13, 15; 20:2; 21:6; 22:13).

#### **3.10.5.4 Synecdoche**

Synecdoche is defined as the use of a term that properly denotes only part of a thing. It is mentioned some twenty one times in the Apocalypse (Rv 3:1, 4, 10; 5:11, 13; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9; 9:17; 14:11; 16:3; 18:6, 8, 10, 17; 20:4,15; 22:15, 16; Mulholland 1959a:197).

#### **3.10.5.5 Apostrophe**

By definition, apostrophe is a turning away from the present discovery and addressing a person or object (Rv 18:1-4; Lord, in Mulholland 1959a:197-198).

#### **3.10.5.6 Simile**

A simile is a comparison that uses the particle “like.” According to Mulholland (1959a:183), similes occur fifty six times in the book of Revelation (Rv 1:13, 14, 15, 16, 17; 2:18, 27; 4:1, 3, 6, 7; 5:6; 6:1, 6, 12, 13, 14; 8:8, 10; 9:2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 17, 19; 10:1, 3; 11:1; 12:15; 13:2, 3, 11; 14:2, 3, 14; 15:2; 16:15; 20:8; 21:11).

#### **3.10.5.7 Personification**

Personification is a technique which is used for inanimate beings that are spoken of as animate, or endowed with life and volition (Dungan 1888:322-324, in Mulholland 1959a:183-184). It is cited three times in Revelation (Rv 6:9-10; 14:2; 18:5).

#### **3.10.5.8 Hyperbole**

Hyperbole is an exaggerated statement of things as greater or less in dimensions, more or less in number, or better or worse in kind. It occurs once in Revelation 14:20.

### **3.10.5.9 Interrogation**

Interrogation means affirming or denying with great force a rhetorical question (Dungan 1888:326). It appears three times in the Apocalypse of John (Rv 7:13; 13:4; 18:8).

### **3.10.10 Polysindeton**

Polysindeton is defined as the use of the word “and” to emphasize the elements which are connected (Mulholland 1959a:222-223). It is used ten times in Revelation (Rv 1:11; 3:17; 6:15; 11:17-18; 12:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17; 13:1-9; 18:12-13; 20:9-15; 21:8, 22-27; 22:1-6, 17).

### **3.10.11 Asyndeton**

By definition asyndeton occurs when the “ands” are excluded so the reader can hurry over the details and attend to the great climax (Mulholland 1959a:223). It is used three times in Revelation (Rv 3:7-8; 7:5-8; 21:18-20).

The parable and the allegory, which is an extended metaphor, do not appear in Revelation.

The presence of the literary forms referred to above, which are present in Revelation, give evidence against a total Biblical literalism. In terms of prophecy and symbolism, the application that Babylon symbolizes merely latter-day Rome is inconsistent (Beale 1999:1013). Referring to the terms “spiritualize” and “spiritualization,” Berckof (1951:151, in Mulholland in 1959a:5-9) carefully avoided the mentioning of such words in his hermeneutical text and heartily supported the literal concept that “as a rule, the languages of the prophets should be understood literally.” The literalist approach destroys symbolism and the different literary forms present in Revelation (Rissing 2004:27, 85, 94-98, 193, 125, 175, 183, 184). Arguing against literalism, Pieters (1950:127) says that the promises to Israel were fulfilled spiritually in the Church. There are some religious cults, such as the Rastafarians, that combine the literalist approach when applying

Revelation to their leaders. This religious group emerged out of the peasant black people in Jamaica in 1930. They consider their founder to be Haile Selassie I, the former emperor of Ethiopia, who was considered to be an incarnated god, called “Jah.” The term “Ras” is an Ethiopic word meaning “Head” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book\\_of\\_Revelation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Revelation)).

### **3.10.6 ASTRAL PROPHECY APPROACH TO REVELATION**

Another popular approach to Revelation is called Astral prophecy. Maier (2002:10) points out that “John is an astral prophet. His prophecies were rooted in reading the sky by means of observations, sky visions.” According to Malina (1995:12-13), Revelation can be understood only within the astronomy and astrology approach. History tells us that the Greek philosopher Theophrastus (370-287 BCE) is credited with calling the study of the stars and their impact on the earth and its inhabitants “astronomics” (τὰ ἀστρονομικά; *On Weather Signs* 1.1, in Malina 1995:11-15). The one who introduced to the modern world this method of study for the Apocalypse was Charles Francois Dupuis in the eighteenth century (Dupuis 2001:342-408). He believed all religions were rooted in the worship of the sun (Bradlaugh 1895:60-63). This position was proven wrong later (Malina 1995:11-18). Franz Boll in 1914 also attempted an astronomical interpretation for the major scenarios of the book of Revelation. He was neither a Bible scholar nor a theologian. However, his contribution on the study of ancient stars was of an erudite. His work was discontinued after the First World War (Malina 1995:11-18).

Malina (1995:13) mentions that the work of Boll catapulted some other contributions in that same field. Wilhelm Gundel, Wilhelm Kroll, and Andre Festugière (Malina 1995:10-30) among others, wrote about the value of astronomics, especially for understanding the first-century CE view of the cosmos. Freuendorfer (in Malina 1995:146) points out that in the Hellenistic world, specifically in the time of Revelation, the Babylonian worldview and the Athenian worldview were closely focused together into a new worldview which

governed the beliefs and ways of dealing with life and the environment. Boll intended to demonstrate that John's visions were "literary fictions," purely literary constructs and translations of astral objects and motifs. The main concern of ancient sky scholars was the impact of celestial bodies on human beings (Malina 1995:26). For a contraposition view on the Astral approach to Revelation see Seiss (2009:1-178).

### 3.11 SUMMARY

The various approaches on Revelation give evidence of the complexity of the interpretation of Revelation. The six minor schools view the meaning of Revelation according to some other traditions of human thought. Critics of the German world of the eighteenth century consider Revelation as a mere literature tradition, exclusively for the original audience during the Roman Empire of the first century CE. After Apostolic times, the Patristic writers were very vague and general in defining the concept and function of sealing. Modern thinkers such as Malina have rediscovered and published much older writers from the second decade of the 1900. Those authors absorbed ancient Greek astronomic and astrological concepts. In recent years, Jewish scholars have seen Revelation as a reproduction of the pilgrimage of Israel since 1948 and they portray that imagery into Revelation. Some other Jewish scholars have concentrated on four study methods described by some Rabbis. Within this approach, the Kabalistic approach tends to divide the concept of meaning and knowledge by the phrase layers of study and understanding. The Aesthetic approach defends the idea that Revelation can be understood in a certain way through art and imagery.

The four major schools of interpreting Revelation is Preterism, Futurism, Idealism and the Historicist approach. Preterism mostly agrees with German criticism. Futurism is mixed sometimes with Preterism and Dispensationalism. Idealism does not consider any prophetic period or *continuum* necessary, nor a Recapitulation approach or straight-line mode as a Historicist does. Paulien

(2004:29) has reminded us that in a certain way all of these four major approaches have a certain point of validity. However, the internal evidence suggest that Revelation – which includes at least ten literary figures and about thirty two symbols (that are attested in many Old and New Testament writings) – requires an extensive evaluation beyond the original audience approach that some claim as the only way of interpreting the book. As was described above, there is an obvious reason why Francisco de Rivera and Diego de Alcázar crafted Futurism during the Medieval Period. Reformers made Roman Catholics' hair stand on end in the use of the Reformation Historicist approach. Idealism, on the other hand, has been recently adapted by modern theologians that introduced the concept of “fusion of horizons,” in which the reader may feel or see one interpretation that not necessarily follows the context or the exegesis but, instead goes after the personal feeling application of what the text or the book is telling the reader or what the reader feels about the text meaning.

Historicism recognizes that Scripture is related in purpose and meaning. This approach to Revelation delineates a conflict between good and evil that goes throughout human history and that has certain particular historical patterns and recapitulist parallelisms forming part of that *continuum* that is shown through signs and events. Historicism also recognizes the presence of symbols and their application within the announcing and fulfillment of events. It pays attention to the historical-grammatical method of interpretation developed by the Reformers during the sixteenth century.

The next chapter will analyze and discuss the historical symbolism present in Revelation for seal/sealing and its meaning. It will make use of an exegesis oriented in the holistic meaning of seal/sealing.