

“ABYSMAL” INCONSISTENCIES:
A NOTE ON THE BEASTS OF REV 11,17
IN ADVENTIST INTERPRETATION

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Rev 11:7 describes the fate of “two witnesses,” who prophesy for a period of 1,260 days: “Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them.” Ellen White identifies the beast as the government of France during the Revolutionary period:

As [the two witnesses] were approaching the termination of their work in obscurity, war was to be made upon them by the power represented as “the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit....”

...

According to the words of the prophet, then, a little before the year 1798 some power of satanic origin and character would rise to make war upon the Bible. And in the land where the testimony of God's two witnesses should thus be silenced, there would be manifest the atheism of the Pharaoh and the licentiousness of Sodom.

This prophecy has received a most exact and striking fulfillment in the history of France. During the Revolution... (GC 268-269)

John identifies this beast (in passing) as “the beast that comes up from the bottomless pit” (τὸ θηρίον τὸ ἀναβαίνον ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου; Rev 11:7), without providing any further details concerning it. An extended discussion of this entity appears in Rev 17:8, where John again references (and describes) “the beast... about to ascend from the bottomless pit” (τὸ θηρίον... ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου).

Strangely, Adventist have historically failed to correlate these two passages, though they clearly describe the same entity. For example, Ellen White identifies the beast in the latter passage (Rev 17) as a last day confederacy of the Papacy and apostate Protestantism (7BC 982-3), rather than the French Revolutionary government she assigns to Rev 11:7. However, no textual evidence justifies the disassociation of the two “beasts” (as

if they refer to different historical subjects); to the contrary, all linguistic indications correlate the two. On strictly exegetical grounds therefore, White's assumption (shared by all historic Adventist interpreters) proves untenable.

Work Cited

Ellen G. White Comments. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary Series 7a. Ed. Francis D. Nichol. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald.

White, Ellen G. 1950. *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (1911). Nampa ID: Pacific Press.