

# Why Is the Book of Hebrews a Problem?

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## Introduction

The book of Hebrews is a problem for Seventh-day Adventists because it appears to state in chap. 6, and again in chap. 9, that Christ went directly to the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary after His ascension, bypassing the first apartment, whereas Seventh-day Adventists have always taught that His second apartment ministry did not begin until 1844. It is a problem because men like Albion F. Ballenger and others have magnified the difficulties, pressing the point. And it is a problem because, through a lack of study, we have rendered ourselves unable to meet the challenges brought against us. We should understand the book of Hebrews better than we do. This is perhaps the largest single factor. It is not enough to know what other people have thought the issues were. We must know the book for ourselves.

## Preliminary Excursus: Learning from the Mistakes of Others

William Miller was wrong, long ago, in saying that the earth is the sanctuary, by which he meant that the part of the sanctuary cleansed on the day of atonement was the earth and that the cleansing of the sanctuary was therefore the second coming of Christ. He thought the second coming would occur at the end of the 2300 day/year prophecy of Dan 8:14 in 1844. So the Millerites were wrong on the point to which they gave the greatest emphasis. And yet there is much to learn from their experience. Let us consider it briefly.<sup>1</sup>

The Millerites had the witness of the Holy Spirit before and during 1844 and there is a sound biblical precedent for what they underwent in the disciples' disappointment after Christ's death. In this comparison the years immediately prior to 1844 correspond to the years that the disciples spent with Jesus and the great disappointment of 1844 corresponds to the great disappointment of A.D. 31 when the disciples, standing as close to the cross as they dared, saw all their hopes bleed and die. Both groups had been wrong. Or were they really wrong?

The disciples were not given an explanation; they were given an experience, which they initially misinterpreted. Later, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, they formulated their accounts of what had happened and recorded their more mature understanding of those events. But the events themselves came first. Christ's earliest followers expected their Lord to sit on the throne of David and expel the Romans. That is not what happened. And so we find two of those followers saying (to Jesus), "but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21). Unless we are prepared to discount what the disciples wrote (because until after Christ's death they had proceeded under a gross misunderstanding of His mission), we should not lightly set aside the insights of those who went through a similar experience involving identically the same issues in 1844.

## Revelation 10

One reason why we can be very sure that the disciples' experience was not a mistake is that the events surrounding it were predicted in Scripture many long years before they occurred (see 2 Pet 1:19). The same is true for the Millerites. In Rev 10:5-11 John, personifying the remnant church of a later day, is given a scroll and told to eat it, which tastes sweet in his mouth but turns bitter in his stomach.

In 1844 Jesus was expected to come to the earth but He did not come. That is, He did not come to the earth. A parallel to Rev 10:6 is Mal 3:1 ("Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; . . ."). Both passages were fulfilled exactly as stated. The Scriptures were true, the timing was right, but the people were looking in the wrong place (the earth) for a fulfillment and so misunderstood the event.

The initial sweetness of the scroll is explained in vs. 6: "And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, 'There will be no more delay!'" The subsequent bitterness, on the other hand, is explained in vs. 11: "Then I was told, 'You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings.'" The people in question had thought their work was over. In heaven there is no need to prophesy. But now they learn that there is still a work of proclamation to do.<sup>2</sup> Their books and papers were yet to be scattered everywhere "like the leaves of autumn."<sup>3</sup> Their schools and hospitals were yet to encircle the globe. The experience described in Rev 10 is that of the Millerites, who looked for Christ's return in 1843 and again in 1844, and those who would carry forward what they had begun and actually perform the work of proclamation that many of the Millerites became too discouraged to do.

## Revelation 14

Notice that the episode involving a scroll in Rev 10 is stated in language reminiscent of the three angels' messages of Rev 14. On the one hand the angel "swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, 'There will be no more delay!'" (Rev 10:6).<sup>4</sup> And on the other hand the first angel's message says:

(6) Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth--to every nation, tribe, language and people. (7) He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water." (Rev 14:6-7)

Both messages emphasize the creatorship of God, both are given by an angel or angels,<sup>5</sup> and in both cases the message is related to time (a delay, the hour of judgment). The parallel is not between isolated phrases in Rev 10:6 and Rev 14:7 but between the entire text of both passages, with similar emphases.

## Revelation 3

Another passage that should be mentioned here is the letter to Philadelphia, in which Christ says, "I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars--I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you" (Rev 3:9). Something happens during the time in question

to make it seem (incorrectly) that God had not loved His faithful remnant. Whatever that might be it makes the remnant seem wrong and their opponents seem right. In Rev 3:9 God promises to correct this misunderstanding.

Who are these people who put forward some apparently dreadful miscalculation just before the period of Laodicea (the last of the seven churches) begins? Is there any relationship between the mistake referred to in Rev 3:9, the sudden bitterness of the scroll in Rev 10:10, and the call for God's people to go everywhere preaching a judgment hour message in Rev 14:6-7 just prior to Christ's return? When we finish answering these questions we will have a better idea of the prophetic credentials with which the Millerite experience in and around 1844 comes down to us in the New Testament.

From the foregoing discussion I conclude that whatever valid insights those might achieve who knowingly reject the message of 1844, there is none that would justify rejecting it. So if such persons do genuinely see something in crucial passages of Scripture and yet interpret it wrongly, my question is, How can we interpret it right? How can we benefit from the legitimate insights of those we otherwise know to be wrong?

## Albion F. Ballenger and Heb 6

(19) We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, (20) where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. (Heb 6:19-20)

One person who may serve as a test case in this regard is Albion F. Ballenger--himself at one time a Seventh-day Adventist minister. Around the turn of the century he started gathering an impressive array of evidence by which he sought to demonstrate that the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of 1844 and the sanctuary was fundamentally misconceived.<sup>6</sup> Ellen White does not deny that Ballenger's proof texts say what they say but comments that, "His proofs do not belong where he places them, and although he may lead minds to believe his theory in regard to the sanctuary, there is no evidence that his theory is true."<sup>7</sup> "The words are right but misapplied to vindicate error. We must not give countenance to his reasoning."<sup>8</sup> Ballenger's proofs do not demonstrate what he says they do. What then do they demonstrate? Not that 1844 was a mistake, but what? If the same evidence had fallen into friendlier hands, what constructive use could have been made of it?

The church has been able to learn from the friendly error of the Millerites. How and in what way can it learn from Ballenger's more hostile errors? At the very least we should learn how to defend ourselves against them intelligently--a goal which so far has eluded us. There have been defenses, to be sure, but none that answers Ballenger in such a way that he stays answered. We flail at him from time to time or ignore his assertions altogether but he is still there when we finish. Ballenger deserves both more and less attention than this. In the end one reason for our frustration with him might be that he has something to say. But which part is the bait and which part is the hook? Surely, knowing the difference will not put us in any greater danger than we are already in.

Approaching the problem at close range will take keen discernment and an open mind, but the result will repay the effort. In the process conservative Seventh-day Adventists will have

to learn how to deal with evidences they would rather ignore and liberal Adventists will have to accept conclusions they have so far tried to deny.

Based on the way the Greek words of Heb 6:19-20 are used in the Septuagint, Ballenger shows that "the inner sanctuary behind the curtain" (Heb 6:19) is a reference to the second apartment rather than the first. He then pits Heb 6 against Dan 8, arguing that if Christ's ministry in the second apartment began in A.D. 31, it cannot also have begun in 1844 as Seventh-day Adventists teach. This is a powerful argument. Not only so, but every Adventist writer after Ballenger who has written on the topic in enough depth to show that he understands what is involved has felt the force of Ballenger's criticisms.<sup>9</sup>

Right from the first--starting with E. E. Andross<sup>10</sup> and coming on down to such later conservative scholars as A. L. Andreasen<sup>11</sup>--what we have challenged (or avoided) is Ballenger's assertion that the language of Heb 6:19-20 refers to the second apartment. The question we have always asked is, Which apartment was the author talking about? We then try to show that Heb 6:19 does not require a second apartment application. But we are not ready at this point in the book to ask about apartments.

There is a prior question to raise and until we have addressed it there is no basis for saying anything about apartments. That question is, Which sanctuary is the author talking about? In the earthly sanctuary the only way to get to the second apartment was through the first apartment. When did Christ minister in that apartment if He entered the second apartment at His ascension? Or did He pass through the first apartment without pausing, completely ignoring all the symbolism of the services performed there? If that is so, Why did He instruct Moses to perform them?

The question will not go away. What do we do with the first apartment if Christ ministers only in the second? And what do we mean when we speak of the first apartment? Is it merely the system of earthly types, as B. F. Westcott supposes?<sup>12</sup> Then the type of the first apartment is itself the antitype of the first apartment and the first apartment of the sanctuary in heaven is not in heaven. Personally I find such logic exhausting. But if it is not the case that the author of Hebrews is talking about a structure located in heaven, what other structure is he talking about? Or is he talking about a structure at all? Just what is he trying to say?

He is saying that Christ entered heaven before us, which gives us a strong basis for confidence that we also will enter the same place after Him. Here the promise given in John 14:1-3 is stated in terms borrowed from the sanctuary. But that does not mean we must bring them back to the sanctuary for their application. Heb 6:19-20 makes no statement of any kind about the sanctuary in heaven. Pointing out that Christ went to heaven and claiming that He went to one specified part of a structure located in heaven are two different assertions. It is a separate question, not taken up in chap. 6, what Christ does in heaven after He arrives there. This might help to explain Ellen White's exegesis of the passage in *Great Controversy*, pp. 420-21, which offended Ballenger so badly.<sup>13</sup>

Ballenger is not wrong in his reasoning but in the assumptions which underlie his reasoning. Thus, if we accept what he assumes, it will be very difficult to avoid what he concludes. Ballenger is truly wrong. But we need to know with exact precision where he is wrong and where he is not, and why.

From the outset Ballenger takes for granted that if the author of Hebrews uses second apartment imagery in reference to anything other than the earthly sanctuary he must be talking

about the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. This just does not follow. Paul uses temple imagery to describe both the church and the human body (see 1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21). Heb 6:19-20 is on the same level, as is Heb 10:19. If we do not accept the possibility that there is a third way, we place the first two on a collision course with each other.

In my view Christ could be outside the city enjoying the beautiful flowers and still be in "the inner sanctuary behind the curtain" in the sense of Heb 6:19. What Christ entered on our behalf, having "become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 6:20), is just heaven--at this point in the discussion. Later we learn that there is a sanctuary in heaven (chap. 8) and are shown how many apartments it can be expected to contain (chap. 9). But let each thing be taken in its proper order. The author's thought unfolds gradually.

## Walter Martin and Heb 9

(11) When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. (12) He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place [ta hagia (plural), "the holy places"] once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. (Heb 9:11-12)

### An embarrassing failure

Before discussing the above passage let me share a very frustrating set of events relating to it, which occurred while the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, was under preparation.<sup>14</sup> The person speaking in what follows is Walter Martin, author of *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism*.<sup>15</sup> In the following excerpt Martin has just been asked whether he considers *Questions on Doctrine* to be a clarification of positions Seventh-day Adventists always held or a theological shift on their part to other different positions.

Martin: "The people I dealt with maintained that it was a clarification, that their position could be defended from Adventist writings, and they vigorously maintained that they were not changing anything which they thought was basic to the Adventist message. I think they did, however, admit--(and I can recall the day it happened, when Dr. Murdoch and Dr. Heppenstall were present, and the question came up). They had brought them in because we were exegeting [interpreting the biblical passages] on the sanctuary doctrine, the holy place, the Most Holy Place, and so forth in the [book of] Hebrews. And George Cannon accompanied me on these [occasions]. He's professor of Greek at Bethel Seminary. He was then professor of Greek and Theology at Nyack Missionary College and has a doctorate from Union Seminary in Greek, and is a brilliant scholar. And George, I remember, went head-to-head with Dr. Heppenstall and Dr. Murdoch with the Greek New Testament there, and they went line upon line through the text, and as they got to the crucial point there, everybody was listening carefully to what they said. Cannon looked at them and said, 'There is just no sense debating the issue any further. The text is clear. At His resurrection, Jesus Christ entered into the Second Apartment of the sanctuary, into the Holiest of all, with His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us. This could not, did not, take place in 1844.'

"And the gentlemen looked very long and hard, and Cannon said, 'The text says He went into the Second Apartment, didn't He?' And Dr. Heppenstall said, 'Yes, into the Second Apartment, into the Holiest of all, with His own blood at the resurrection. The text says so.'

"Murdoch said the same thing. Now, you can read Desmond Ford on this in great detail. He's probably one of your most articulate, and surely one of your most brilliant men I've met on Adventism and on general

theology. I think you'll find that he's done a very commendable job of exegeting this as well, but that was admitted at that time [in the 1950s]. . . .

"Now if you read Questions on Doctrine on this, they went very clearly and in depth to explain what Jesus did from their perspective of clarification. Now, I don't really care whether you say, 'clarify' or 'reverse field,' the important thing is, you get back to what the text says. The ultimate point of contention is 'what does the text say?' Not what somebody says the text says. I had enough of that in Romanism. I had enough of it in my upbringing of the Church. I don't care what somebody says the text says. That's why I learned the language to find out what the text says. And I know what it says. And it says it didn't happen in 1844. . . . You can believe it if you want to, but it isn't there. Now that's clarification, or reversal, but it sure is truth."<sup>16</sup>

From this much it will be clear that as a church we have some growing to do. Peter says, "Always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Pet 3:15). We need to get past the stage where our best and brightest scholars are unable to fulfill this requirement and progress to a stage where every person in the pew from Earliteens on up is able to do so.<sup>17</sup>

At the outset we can be sure that the Holy Spirit is not trying to deny in Hebrews what He has asserted previously in Daniel. We must know how to relate the one book to the other without forcing them to have identically the same point of view. They do not. But both are the work of the same Spirit and as such they must be allowed to speak with one voice, even when they express themselves with differing emphases. The two sources do not contradict each other. That is the main point to draw from all of this. If we do not know how to bring the various passages together in a cohesive manner, we do not understand what they mean. It is that simple.

So what went wrong?

Our argument that Christ has been in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary since 1844 is not controversial, except insofar as most Christians do not believe there is a sanctuary in heaven or, if there is, that it has two apartments. But assuming there is a sanctuary in heaven and if it has two apartments, Christ ministers in its second one. This is not the problem. The problem is that if He began ministering in the second apartment in 1844, He was somewhere else prior to 1844--i.e., in the first apartment. Thus, the position we are at pains to defend is that Christ performs a first apartment ministry first and a second apartment ministry second. If this is so, then the two phases of His work for us in heaven before and after 1844 serve different though complementary functions and contrast with each other in important ways, with all that that implies.<sup>18</sup>

It is the work of the little horn to take the "daily" away (see Dan 8:11). Seventh-day Adventists refuse to accept any position which does this. Does the book of Hebrews give aid and comfort to the little horn in the above work? Seventh-day Adventists reject that premise as well. If one's interpretation of Hebrews makes it appear that this is happening, it is the wrong interpretation. God does not send His Spirit to fight His Spirit. He is not divided against Himself (see Luke 11:17-20).

*What does the text say?* Chapter nine divides naturally into two parts, one of which describes, while the other explains, certain features of the sanctuary. Structurally the dividing line between the two sections comes at vs. 11. Thus, with exceptions as noted below, vss. 1-10 are the description and vss. 11-28 the explanation. Below I argue that the author uses his terms differently in these two sections. They do not disagree but should be distinguished from each

other nevertheless. Thus, to determine what the text of Heb 9 says it is imperative that we keep straight which part of the text says it.

The Greek word *skēnē* occurs in both parts of the chapter--in Heb 9:2, 3, 6, 8, 11, and 21. In vss. 2, 3, and 6 it obviously refers to the first apartment of the earthly sanctuary as contrasted with the second apartment. In vs. 8 the reference is no longer to the earthly sanctuary and so there is a question how *skēnē* is used there. The real issue, however, is how the word is used in vs. 11, which in turn will largely determine our understanding of vs. 12--the passage on which Murdoch and Heppenstall were challenged in the narrative quoted above.

Another term used in chap. 9 is *hagion* "holy [place]," also *hagia* (plural) "holy [places]." This is the word used in vs. 12. But it also occurs in vss. 1, 2, 3, 8, 24, and 25. In vs. 1 it is singular and refers to the entire earthly sanctuary. In vs. 2 the first apartment of that sanctuary is called *Hagia*. And in vs. 3 the second apartment is called *Hagia Hagiōn*.

Thus, in vss. 1-7, where the reference is clearly to things on earth, forms of the same word *hagion* "holy" ("sanctuary"), *Hagia* "Holies," or *Hagia Hagiōn* ("Holies of Holies") span the gamut semantically, referring in turn to the structure as a whole and to both of its parts. In the latter cases the word is used as a name so those two references might be considered unusual. Apart from their names, however, when either apartment is referred to individually the word used is *skēnē* "tent." There is a first "tent" (*skēnē . . . hē prōtē*, vs. 2) and a second "tent" (*tēn deuteran [skēnēn]*, 9:7). These facts are summarized in table 1.

Table 1  
Sanctuary Terminology in Heb 9:1-10

Ref.	Term	Literal Gloss
First Apartment		
9:2	<i>skēnē . . . hē prōtē</i>	the first tent
9:2	<i>Hagia</i>	Holies
9:6	<i>tēn prōtēn skēnēn</i>	the first tent
Second Apartment		
9:3	<i>skēnē</i>	tent
9:3	<i>Hagia Hagiōn</i>	Holies of Holies
9:7	<i>ten deuteran [skēnēn]</i>	the second [tent]
Other (Sanctuaries)		
9:1	<i>hagion kosmikon</i>	earthly sanctuary
9:8	<i>tōn hagiōn</i>	of the holies
9:8	<i>tēs prōtēs skēnēs</i>	the first tent

Note: At Heb 9:7 I have supplied the word *skēnēn* "tent" from context.

As regards the two terms from Heb 9:8, I have separated them from the references to the earthly sanctuary as being on a different level, which they obviously are, and have put them

together as being counterparts of each other without creating a fourth category. We return to vs. 8 below.

In vss. 11-28 at least this much is clear: One group of passages describes earthly things (whatever those things are) and another group describes heavenly things (again without saying what they are in advance). See table 2.

Table 2  
Sanctuary Terminology in Heb 9:11-28

Ref.	Term	Literal Gloss
Things on Earth		
9:21	tēn skēnēn	the tent
9:24	eis cheiropoiēta . . . hagia	into hand-made holies
Things in Heaven		
9:11	tēs meizōnos kai teleiōteras skēnēs ou cheiropoiētou	of the greater and more perfect tent not hand-made
9:12	ta hagia	the holies
9:24	tōn alēthinōn [hagiōn]	of the true [holies]
Other (Apartments)		
9:25	ta hagia	the holies

Note: At Heb 9:24 I have supplied the word *hagiōn* "holies" from context.

*What does the text mean?* In table 2, one of two references to things on earth uses *skēnē* "tent" (see vss. 8, 21) and two of three references to things in heaven use *ta hagia* "the holies" (see vss. 8, 12). But in vs. 24 the "man-made sanctuary" is called *ta hagia* and in vs. 11 the "greater and more perfect tabernacle" is called *skēnē*. Thus, unless we give the "greater and more perfect tabernacle" an earthly application or the "man-made sanctuary" a heavenly application, we will have to conclude that the terms *hagion* and *skēnē* are being used interchangeably.

In vss. 1-10 the distinction is primarily between apartments, whereas in vss. 11-28 it is between earthly things and heavenly things--whatever those might be. The terms are the same in both sections but they are used differently. Thus, in vs. 11 "the greater and more perfect tabernacle [*skēnē*]" is not the first apartment and "the Most Holy Place [*ta hagia*]"--despite all appearances to the contrary based on its mistranslation in NIV and some other versions--is not the second apartment.<sup>19</sup> It is not a matter of choosing apartments. That is not the distinction.

In support of this conclusion, notice that the first group of references within vss. 11-28 corresponds to *ta men hupodeigmata tōn en tois ouranois* ("the copies of heavenly things," vs. 23) and the second group corresponds to *ta epourania* ("the heavenly things themselves," vs. 23), also *auton ton ouranon* ("heaven itself," vs. 24).<sup>20</sup>

None of us has seen the heavenly sanctuary but, as regards the corresponding earthly sanctuary, what we are talking about here is all of it. First, with regard to vs. 21 ("In the same



way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle [*tē skēnēn*] and everything used in its ceremonies"), the word is *skēnē* (accusative *skēnēn*) "tent." Does *skēnē* refer only to the first apartment here? The sprinkling of blood<sup>21</sup> was an act of consecration. Was only the first apartment consecrated for use?

Second, with regard to vs. 24a ("a man-made sanctuary [*cheiropoiēta . . . hagia*"]), how much of the ancient sanctuary was man-made? Desmond Ford, addressing the point before us, writes, "I argue that the expression *ta hagia*, 'the holies,' of Hebrews 9:3, 8, 12, 24, 25, Hebrews 10:19, and Hebrews 13:11 is a plural with singular meaning; it refers exclusively to the Most Holy Place."<sup>22</sup> This is one of the verses he cites. Is it true that *ta hagia* refers "exclusively to the Most Holy Place" in Heb 9:24? Was only the second apartment man-made? How did the first apartment come into existence? And consider Heb 8:5, which says, "This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: 'See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.'" If the assertion needs demonstrating, Heb 8:5 shows that Moses and the people with him were to "make everything," i.e., every part of the structure about to be built. The reason why God was speaking to Moses at all in the above passage was to commission him to build it. The whole structure was man-made.

Anyone can make a slip. So we should give Ford every opportunity to correct this one. But then what does that do to the rest of his argument? Or that of George Cannon? Or whomever? The issue is not one of personalities. Why should we not interpret *ta hagia* as a plural with plural meaning? What grammatical facts would prevent us from doing that and what implications would follow as a result? Clearly the term does refer to both apartments of the earthly sanctuary in Heb 9:24. If this is so, by what logic can we argue that it does not also refer to both apartments of the heavenly sanctuary in Heb 9:12?

And third, with regard to vs. 24b ("that was only a copy [*antitupa*] of the true one"), how much of the ancient sanctuary was a copy of the true one? According to Heb 8:3-6 we must bring the whole sanctuary into this comparison, omitting none of its major features. In my view the distinction between two apartments qualifies as a major feature.<sup>23</sup>

(3) Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. (4) If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. (5) They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." (6) But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. (Heb 8:3-6)

The contrast in much of Heb 9:1-10 is between two apartments. (This is not the case in vs. 8.) The contrast in Heb 9:11-28, on the other hand, is between two sanctuaries--the first on earth, the second in heaven. Human priests minister in the one, Christ ministers in the other. There is an old covenant governing the entire earthly cultus and a new covenant governing the entire heavenly cultus--the entire system of Christian worship. Why are these things so hard to understand? The contrast is simple and clear and as distinct as the difference between heaven and earth.

*More on vss. 8.* In this context the words *tēs protēs skēnēs* refer in vs. 6 to an apartment (the first apartment) but in vs. 8 to a sanctuary (the first or earthly sanctuary).<sup>24</sup> The same words occur in both passages but they are used differently. Despite the fact that vs. 8 is structurally in

the first part of the chapter, this conclusion is required by the words, "The Holy Spirit was showing by this . . ." (vs. 8). Whenever the author deals with heavenly things, as in vs. 8, he contrasts them with earthly things. What Christ enters ("the Most Holy Place" [NIV], lit. "holy places") is in heaven. By contrast, what He does not enter ("the first tabernacle") is on earth.

Verse 8 is an isolated example of the contrast between the heavenly and earthly sanctuaries in a section which deals mostly with the contrast between apartments in the earthly sanctuary. Similarly, vs. 25 ("the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own") is an isolated example of the contrast between two apartments in a section which deals mostly with the contrast between sanctuaries. But the rule that these exceptions are exceptions to is that vss. 1-10 has in view a contrast between apartments while vss. 11-28 has in view a contrast between sanctuaries.

## Discussion

In this context it can be seen that it was a fatal error on the part of Heppenstall and Murdoch to allow the discussion to stop at vss. 11-12. That is just where it should have begun in earnest. When the literary structure of the chapter is taken into account--and it is always unwise not to take it into account--the most appropriate context for the terms used in vss. 11-12 is not what precedes but what follows.<sup>25</sup> If the second part of the chapter had been given the same level of attention as the first, or had received any attention at all, the above encounter would have ended differently than it did.

Let me clarify that I do not wish to dissociate the sacrifices offered on the day of atonement from what happened on the cross. If all the sacrifices in the ancient sanctuary pointed forward to Jesus, then those offered on the day of atonement would certainly be included. But my point is that all the others must not be excluded. No blood offered in the sanctuary at any time throughout the ceremonial year can have any conceivable reference other than to Christ on the cross. There is only one sacrifice for sin. But many different types and symbols of it occupied the priests throughout the entire ceremonial year, not on one day only (see Heb 1:1). Let us not omit any of them. In this context it should be clear that when a biblical writer relates the day of atonement sacrifices to Jesus' death on the cross, that does not imply that the day when Jesus died on the cross was the antitypical day of atonement.

## Discussion: Significance of the Issues

Seventh-day Adventists base their expectation that Christ will soon return on their understanding of His second apartment ministry just before His coming. If we were to extend the beginning of His second apartment ministry back two thousand years in time, we could just as easily extend the end of it forward two thousand years. In this way the nearness of the second coming loses all its meaning. If such an interpretation does not imply, "My master is staying away a long time" (Matt 24:48), what kind of interpretation would?

Nor does forcing a first apartment ministry into the second apartment make it a second apartment ministry. In their respective functions the two ministries are poles apart. They serve different, though complementary, functions.<sup>26</sup> By transferring the function of the first apartment into the second apartment, we make the end time endless and remove any value that term

might have had. More importantly we remove the immediacy of the second coming and defer it indefinitely. Doing this does not reflect a biblical perspective.

If Christ ministers not only for all time but for all eternity, He will never reach a point where He can stop ministering and return to the earth. But in this event we will never be with the Lord because the promise that we will be with Him corresponds to His promise that He will come again. So if we deny the nearness of the second coming, we must either give up our hope of being with Christ in heaven any time soon or find some other way of going there. The popular view is that we go to be with the Lord immediately at the moment of death. In this way Christ need never come--at least He would never need to come in order for His people to be with Him in heaven. Evangelicals assert that He will return, but it is an isolated assertion. There is nothing in their understanding of the sanctuary or the state of the dead which requires this.

The above theory appears to solve one problem but in fact it creates another. What do we do with the resurrection, having rendered unnecessary the second coming which makes it possible? That there will be a resurrection is firmly biblical. But if we can be free from the prison house of flesh at the point of death, why should we look forward to being sent back into it at the resurrection of the body when Jesus comes? In such a model the second coming becomes positively distasteful--something not to look forward to but to dread. There is nothing biblical about this perspective either. Paul looks forward with longing to what Jesus will do on "that day," i.e., on the day when He returns in glory:

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Tim 4:8)

There is no second method for getting to heaven (see 1 Thess 4:17). We do not go there automatically when we die. And because there is not any other way, His return ought to be something we look forward to with eager anticipation, as Paul did. Let me add that understanding the theory behind it ought to be something we try to make work instead of trying to frustrate or evade.

The end of what we now have should be a welcome thing in view of the reward to which we look forward. I have argued elsewhere that the church is the heir of all the promises and blessings given to Abraham.<sup>27</sup> Just here is the proper context for this claim. Our reward is Christ--to be with Him and to enjoy all the blessings that He has inherited on our behalf. We should desire not His possessions but Him (see 2 Cor 12:14).

"Do not be afraid, Abram.  
I am your shield,  
your very great reward." (Gen 15:1)

The sanctuary--and especially those features of the sanctuary that some object to most strenuously, i.e., those which deal with bringing the ceremonial year to a final end--represents this same promise through types and shadows. The end of what we have now is the beginning of what we are soon to receive. And what we are to receive, above all else, is the unbroken privilege of companionship with Jesus. These are not teachings that any Christian should want to obscure or resist. On the contrary, they should be grasped and laid under heavy emphasis. If the sanctuary implies that an end will come, then let it remind us of that precious promise.

## Conclusion

The claim of this paper is twofold. First, Heb 6:19-20 has in view only the fact that Christ is in heaven, and not His relative location within the heavenly sanctuary once He arrives there. I challenge the assumption that Heb 6 is speaking of what we call the heavenly sanctuary--a physical structure in heaven. On biblical evidence there is a physical sanctuary structure in heaven, but here our author is not talking about it. Even if he were, the distinction between apartments is not systematically introduced until later, in chap. 9.

And second, Heb 9:11-12 tells us the sanctuary, not the apartment, where Christ ministers upon His ascension. That sanctuary is in heaven. The contrast throughout the second part of chap. 9 is between heaven and earth. The same thought carries over into chap. 11.

(13) All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. (14) People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. (15) If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. (16) Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. (Heb 11:13-16)

The primary emphasis in the book of Hebrews is not on what would take place eighteen centuries later but on what was happening at the time the book was written. From this it follows that Seventh-day Adventists should not try to use Hebrews to prove that the events of 1844 are biblical, nor should it be used by those critical of the Seventh-day Adventist position to prove that those same events are not biblical. It is good to realize that there are two apartments (see Heb 9:1-7) but that is not the author's emphasis in vss. 11-28. It is enough here to show that what the Holy Spirit led the author of Hebrews to write is consistent with what He led Daniel to write. These two men had different points of view and expressed themselves differently. But they do not contradict each other.

Having said this, let me clarify that the agreement between the above books is an underlying agreement. It does not always lie on the surface. If nothing new needs to be added to our understanding of Heb 6 and 9 in order to articulate this view, then I invite the person who thinks so to take his or her seat across the table from George Cannon along with Heppenstall and Murdoch and improve on their answer without going beyond their assumptions. It is not enough to repeat existing positions, stating them louder than before. That is not the same as learning something. We must grow in our understanding until we can bind together those strands of truth whose interrelationships have eluded us so far. This need not involve either opening the door to novel interpretations or discarding proven points of doctrine. But it does mean allowing the Holy Spirit to penetrate our minds. To the extent that we do this we can advance in knowledge and yet remain on safe ground theologically.

Note: All Scripture quotations in this paper, except when noted otherwise, are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright (c) 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society.

<sup>1</sup>It would be a misuse of Scripture to say, on the basis of Isa 8:20, that because the Millerites were wrong in their interpretation of the sanctuary they were not speaking according to "the law and to the testimony" and that there was therefore "no light in them" (KJV). Every morning I come to the Scriptures expecting to learn something from them. If I am in darkness

before learning whatever the Holy Spirit teaches me on a given morning, how can I account for the fact that He is the One who leads me to learn it? The word of the prophets is like "a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Pet 1:19). "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day" (Prov 4:18). How can we account for these facts in view of Isa 8:20? The Millerites were wrong. In some degree we are all wrong, because at any given time we cannot know what the Holy Spirit will teach us tomorrow. But we should remain open to His leading. Some of the Millerites did this and they learned from their mistake. If we fault them, should it be for having the experience that they did or for learning from it--both under the leading of the Holy Spirit?

<sup>2</sup>Here is the context for our early misunderstanding of the closed door. It took time for Seventh-day Adventists to realize just what was involved in prophesying again. See P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 103-64. It took time for the apostles to realize what was involved in Christ's statement, "The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom." (Matthew 13:38). We have all had painful lessons to learn (see Heb 12:7-11). But this is not proof that those confronted with such lessons are illegitimate children and not true sons. The absence of disciple demonstrates that.

<sup>3</sup>"The message of truth is to go to all nations, tongues, and people; its publications, printed in many different languages, are to be scattered abroad like the leaves of autumn" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. [Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1948], p. 79).

<sup>4</sup>This passage must be taken together with Rev 12:12 ("He [the devil] is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short"). It is short because "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ" (vs. 10). In the context of proposing an alternative system of government for the universe and expecting that system to establish itself and last indefinitely, "short" means not lasting indefinitely. It means being limited as opposed to being unlimited. And indeed in terms of the starry universe it does not take long for our earth to go around its sun two thousand times. But in Rev 10:6 "no more delay" (*chronos ouketi estai*) does not mean that the church would have nothing more to do. Otherwise, how do we explain vs. 11 ("Then I was told, 'You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings'")? One explanation would be that no prophetic time period extends beyond this point in history. In either case, time is viewed here from a more than human perspective.

<sup>5</sup>The parallel does not break down because John is told that he (not the angel) must prophecy again. When Christ fed the five thousand He gave the food to His disciples and it was they who distributed it. In Rev 14 also the message is of heavenly origin but it is preached by ordinary people.

<sup>6</sup>See Roy Adams, *The Sanctuary Doctrine: Three Approaches in the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 1 (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1981), pp. 95-104.

<sup>7</sup>Quoted in William G. Johnsson, "The Significance of the Day of Atonement Allusions in the Epistle to the Hebrews," Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner, eds., *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Theological Studies* (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1981), p. 392, n. 28.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 393.

<sup>9</sup>Andross meets the issues head on, Andreasen appears to avoid some of them. For the latter see Adams, *Sanctuary Doctrine*, pp. 180-85.

<sup>10</sup>Andross, *A More Excellent Ministry*. Let me say just a word about this book. It is a pity that it is so often brushed aside. Andross had a keen mind and a good understanding of his subject. Of course what he wrote does not silence Ballenger or answer all the questions we ourselves might wish to ask but his book is well worth reading. Anyone who does so will come

away with a better understanding of the sanctuary than before and that is one way in which the author's success must be measured.

<sup>11</sup>Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1947; originally published, 1937); *The Book of Hebrews* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948).

<sup>12</sup>No less a commentator than B. F. Westcott misses this point. "The comprehensive sense which has been given to *ta hagia*, as including both the Holy and the Most Holy place, explains the use of *hē prōtē skēnē*. This phrase has been used just before (v. 6; comp. v. 2) of the Holy place as the vestibule, so to speak, of the Divine presence-chamber; and it is very difficult to suppose that it should be suddenly used in another sense for 'the first (the Mosaic) tabernacle' as opposed to 'the heavenly archetypal tabernacle' (v. 11). . . . Thus the outer sanctuary was the representative symbol of the whole Tabernacle as the place of service" (*The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprint ed. 1980], p. 252). The reason why he misses it is that his emphasis is on earlier verses (i.e., verses from an earlier section) rather than those later ones which fall within the same section as the verse he is dealing with. <sup>13</sup>Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1950. This is not the only place where Ellen White uses Heb 6:19-20. She uses the term "anchor" fourteen times in this connection and "veil" (in earlier sources spelled "vail") seventeen times, with two additional references possible though not certain (*Early Writings*, p. 253; *SDA Bible Commentary* 7:930). Both of these terms occur in vs. 19. In reference to vs. 20 she uses the term "Melchizedek" in one place (*Review and Herald* 1:115). And there is one possible use of the term "holiest" in this same connection (*Review and Herald* 2:569). In *Great Controversy* pp. 420-21 she explicitly applies Heb 6:19-20 to the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. Doing that offended Ballenger badly. And yet in *Early Writings* p. 72, speaking of the same passage, she states, "We must send up our petitions in faith within the second veil and let our faith take hold of the promised blessing and claim it as ours." Is she right in *Great Controversy* and wrong in *Early Writings*, right in *Early Writings* but wrong in *Great Controversy*, or is there some point that formulations like this lead us to miss? How are both applications possible? If the passage simply refers to Christ's being in heaven and does not declare on the nature of His work there at any given time, which is my position, then there is no conflict. The antitypical first apartment is in heaven and so is the antitypical second apartment. Christ ministers in both of them. When He does, in either case, His work falls within the scope of what the author of Hebrews is saying in the vexed passage under review. I submit that this concept is reasonable as an interpretation of Heb 6:19-20 and is also reasonable as an interpretation of Ellen White's comments on the passage. These comments are discussed at greater length in a forthcoming paper.

<sup>14</sup>Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957.

<sup>15</sup>Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960.

<sup>16</sup>Quoted in Dave Fiedler, "Adventism and Walter Martin, Part Four: January-June, 1989," *Our Firm Foundation*, February 1990, pp. 21, 30. In Fiedler's article a comment on the last ellipsis was inserted in the text, but is omitted here.

<sup>17</sup>Having agreed with Martin and Cannon at "the crucial point" (Heb 9:8-12), one can only consider Heppenstall's extensive rebuttal of their position in *Ministry* magazine an exercise in theological diplomacy. We are not called to be Christ's diplomats, but His ambassadors. The prototypical example of this is John the Baptist. There was nothing remotely diplomatic about his message. He just told the truth.

<sup>18</sup>See Hardy, "The Problem of the First Apartment in Seventh-day Adventist Sanctuary Theology," *Historicism* No. 17/Jan 89, pp. 2-17.

<sup>19</sup>The two verses (9:11, 12) say identically the same thing. Christ "went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made" (vs. 11). In chap. 8 this structure is called "the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man" (8:2). It serves as a "pattern" for the

two-apartment "copy and shadow of what is heaven" (8:5) made by Moses and his assistants. In vs. 12 Christ "entered the Most Holy Place" (NIV), from *ta hagia*, lit., "the holies"--i.e., the two holies, consisting of a first and a second apartment, just as in the earthly type. This assertion goes beyond what we find in Heb 6:19-20. There He simply enters heaven. Here He enters a sanctuary in heaven. But we are still not talking about which part of that sanctuary He ministers in first. The book of Hebrews does not address that question. For such additional information we must consult the books of Daniel and Leviticus.

<sup>20</sup>Verse 24 must be taken in the context of vs. 23. In vs. 23 we have not "heaven itself" but "heavenly things," i.e., things in heaven, things that one part of heaven but not the whole. If we make the heavenly sanctuary into something no more specific than heaven in general, we also make the earthly copy of that sanctuary into a copy of heaven in general. Thus, all heaven is portrayed in the sanctuary. Or, putting the same thing another way, there is nothing more in heaven than what we find portrayed in the sanctuary--on a grander scale, to be sure, but nothing more on that grander scale than what we find on a lesser scale in the sanctuary. No one would make such a claim. So let us avoid getting ourselves into exegetical corners. The type is a reflection of the antitype, but the reality it is a reflection of will be only one small part of what we find when we get to heaven. There is more in heaven than a temple. Indeed, by the time we get to heaven there will be no temple (see Rev 21:22).

<sup>21</sup>In a footnote to Heb 9:21 NIV gives Exod 24:8 as a reference. But what Moses sprinkled in Exod 24:8 was not the sanctuary or anything used in its ceremonies, much less everything used there. It was a stone altar erected at the base of Mount Sinai with "twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel" (Exod 24:4). That is not what the author of Hebrews was talking about. Similarly, Exod 29:16 and 20 deal only with the altar outside the sanctuary in the court. The sprinkling mentioned in Heb 9:21 brings to mind the events of Exod 40, where anointing oil was used rather than blood: "Take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and everything in it; consecrate it and all its furnishings, and it will be holy" (Exod 40:9). In Exod 40 all the articles of the sanctuary are enumerated.

<sup>22</sup>Ford, "Daniel 8:14 and the Day of Atonement," *Spectrum* 11:2 (November 1980), p. 33).

<sup>23</sup>See Hardy, "The Problem of the First Apartment in Seventh-day Adventist Sanctuary Theology," *Historicism* No. 17/Jan 89, pp. 2-17; "A Context for the Sanctuary Terminology of Ezek 41," *Historicism* No. 20/Oct 89, pp. 49-50, 69-70.

<sup>24</sup>This does not mean that there was a sanctuary on earth before there was one in heaven. Heb 8:5 will not allow such an interpretation. But the one on earth was to be superseded by the one in heaven.

<sup>25</sup>See n. 13 above.

<sup>26</sup>See Hardy, "*w'nišdaq* in Dan 8:14, Part 3: The Context of Atonement," *Historicism* No. 5/Jan 86, pp. 32-37.

<sup>27</sup>See Hardy, "Jerusalem Symbolism," *Historicism* No. 24/Oct 90, pp. 34-36.