

The Assumptions of DARCOM and other Sources in Defending 1844

By Roy Ingram.

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Preface

The teaching of an investigative judgment in heaven commencing in 1844 is the one doctrine unique to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. No other denomination has ever taught this doctrine or discovered it in the Bible. Because it is our unique doctrine we claim it as evidence of our special calling that gives us our identity and legitimacy for existence.

The Daniel and Revelation Committee (DARCOM) have produced seven volumes in defence of this position. Of the over 2400 pages in these volumes, only 3.5 per cent deal with the central issue of establishing the biblical bases for the date 1844. In defending this teaching, DARCOM and the other sources, base their defence on a series of assumptions, rather than on Scripture alone. These assumptions are fully documents in this paper.

It is an overstatement to say that the relevance of our message and our right to exist are diminished or denied if we admit that the 1844 investigative judgment is not biblical. We have a message, when centred in the everlasting gospel that is very relevant for today's world.

Ellen White say: "The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. *No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.*" (*Councils to Writers and Editors*, page 35).

The appeal to the church is to re-assess this unique teaching in the light of Scripture.

The Assumptions of DARCOM and Other Sources in Defending 1844

By Roy Ingram

No one who is familiar with the Seventh-day Adventist Church would question that 1844 is a significant date in the history and thinking of the church. The year 1844 was established from the prophecies of Daniel 8 and 9 using the historicist method of prophetic interpretation. Our pioneers were greatly disappointed when Jesus did not return on October 22 of that year. Out of the pain of that great disappointment developed the view that, instead of it being the second coming, the event foretold was Jesus moving from a first apartment ministry in the heavenly sanctuary to a second apartment ministry in the Most Holy Place, commencing an investigative judgment of professed believers.

This teaching is said to be our one “unique” doctrine that gives Adventists their “self identity” and “validates” their presence “in the world and ... in the Christian Community.” As such, this teaching has drawn criticism from non-Adventist scholars, as well as from within our own ranks.

Because it is our “unique” doctrine and the rationale for our existence it is vitally important that we give an absolutely clear and unambiguous defence from the Bible of this teaching.

In 1981 the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists established the Daniel and Revelation Committee (DARCOM) to investigate these criticisms and to establish whether this teaching is truly biblically based. This

included questions raised by Dr Desmond Ford at Glacier View (1980).

DARCOM met between 1981 and 1992, produced seven volumes, said to be “the finest studies on sound ways to interpret the great apocalyptic prophecies.”* These volumes are said to have “confirmed the historic Adventist understanding of the biblical material” “on exegetical and theological grounds,” providing biblical answers to the critics.

The Central Issue

The central issue of this teaching is the establishing of the “correct commencement date” for the 70 weeks prophecy that gives the starting date for the 2300 days prophecy. This central issue involves the relationship between the two prophecies and the 70 weeks being “cut off” from the beginning of the 2300 days; the year-day principle being biblical; and the word “vision” (Dan 8:13) applying to the entire vision (verses 3-14), not just to the activities of the “little horn” (verses 9-12).

Of the over 2400 pages in the DARCOM volumes, only about 3.5% deal with the central issue. The rest, while containing some excellent material, deals with peripheral issues.

What is most disturbing is that at every stage in dealing with the central issue, DARCOM and subsequent writers use conjecture speculation and assumption, rather than clear biblical exegesis. Then, what is even more disturbing; the matter is treated as though it has been proved from the Bible, when actually it has only

been assumed. In a more recent article Adventist archaeologist William H. Shea says, because Artaxerxes’ decree (Ezra 7) “does not specifically authorize the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem,” he postulates that it was Ezra who issued the decree in the summer/spring of 456 B.C. after dealing with the problem of foreign wives. **This completely undermines our traditional position!**

Instead of acknowledging that there is no biblical base for this teaching, writers have rationalized the “uniqueness” of this doctrine (“because no one else teaches this”), into “evidence” of our “special calling.”

While the mandate for DARCOM was “to focus on the Scriptural basis for belief,” one can only conclude Ellen White, who endorsed this teaching, was followed instead. That Ellen White had the prophetic gift is not under question. It is evident from Scripture that those with this gift can misinterpret events. Prophets are not infallible; they are products of their time. For example, John the Baptist and the disciples, being influenced by the popular culture, misunderstood Jesus first Advent. Spiritual gifts are to be tested by the Word and the Bible alone is to be our rule of faith and practice.

The New Testament

Perhaps the greatest problem with the doctrine of the 1844 investigative judgment is that it is not taught in the New Testament. The NT interprets the OT, not the other way around, as dispensationalist would have it. DARCOM concluded that the book of

Hebrews, the main NT book dealing with the sanctuary, neither affirms nor denies the two phase sanctuary ministry of Jesus. For Hebrews *not* to affirm this teaching *is* to deny it.

It is an overstatement to say that the relevance of our message and our right to exist are diminished or denied if we admit that the 1844 investigative judgment is not biblical. We have a message, when centred in the everlasting gospel that is very relevant for today's world. But without the gospel we are just another sect.

We are counselled: "There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation." (Ellen G White. *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 35).

We can not claim to be "people of the Book" and heirs of the Reformation's *sola scriptura*, while we "go beyond what is written" in Scripture (1 Cor 4:6). While this situation remains we detract from the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus and the completed atonement at the cross and undermine the assurance of salvation for many Adventists who believe they have to reach a certain level of holiness before they are ready for heaven. We also sap the energy and morale of pastors who know that this doctrine is unscriptural. This I believe is stifling our mission, especially in Western countries among thinking people.

This paper is an appeal to the church to re-assess this unique teaching in the light of Scripture.

DARCOM Series and Adventist Identity

The seven-volume Daniel and Revelation Committee (DARCOM) series are considered "the finest studies on sound

ways to interpret the great apocalyptic prophecies."

(www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/bookshop.htm)
"They contain a collection of biblical studies prepared by a large number of Adventist theologians who firmly believe that our teachings on the sanctuary are biblically based." (Angel Manuel Rodríguez Nov. 1997. "Response To: 'The Investigative Judgment: A Bible Based Doctrine?' The Watchtower, July 15, 1997." BRI, 1. www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/).

The self-identity of the Advent movement is said to be directly connected to our sanctuary doctrine.

The historical significance of the doctrine of the sanctuary is not something that should be ignored or considered a fossilized result of the eighteenth-century approach to apocalyptic prophecies having little or no relevance for us today.

The prophecy is disturbing to some modern readers because the prophet had the imprudence, the audacity, or, perhaps better, the naivety to predict an event that was to take place 2,300 years later (457 BC-1844 AD). One can easily understand how this could be a stumbling block for many in the contemporary world. *The historical contribution of the doctrine of the sanctuary is directly connected to the self-identity of the Adventist movement, its message, and its mission, and has been reaffirmed on exegetical and theological grounds.*^{*1} (Angel Manuel Rodríguez. "God's Presence in the Sanctuary: A Theology of His Nearness." *Biblical Research Institute Documents*. On CD. (n.d), 1-2). (*Emphasis supplied throughout unless otherwise stated).

Footnote 1 to the above quotation says:

1. The best source of information is found in the series titled Daniel and Revelation Committee series (Frank B. Holbrook, ed.), which includes the titles *Symposium on Daniel* (Washington, D.C., BRI, 1986); *idem., 70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy* (Washington, D.C.; BRI, 1986); *idem., Issues in the Book of Hebrews* (Washington, D.C.: BRI, 1989); Arnold V. Wallenkampf and Richard Leshner, eds., *The Sanctuary and the Atonement* (Silver Springs, Md.: BRI, 1989); and the articles on "Divine Judgment" and the "Sanctuary" in Raoul Dederen, ed., *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist*

Theology (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000).

Above it is said that our message "has been reaffirmed on exegetical and theological grounds." *Exegesis* is the act of drawing the meaning out of the text itself (Greek preposition *ex* = 'out'). It is the "process of careful, analytical study of biblical passages undertaken in order to produce useful interpretations of those passages. ... The goal of exegesis is to know neither less nor more than the information actually contained in the passage. Exegesis, in other words, places no premium on speculation or inventiveness;" (*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*).

Eisegesis (Greek preposition *eis* = 'into'), on the other hand, is "an interpretation ... that expresses the interpreter's own ideas, bias, or the like, rather than the meaning of the text." (*Dictionary.com*).

In the *Handbook* (2000) it is stated that the fulfilment of Daniel 8:14 in 1844 is said to provide the church with a historical identity and validates our presence in the world.

The Adventist understanding of Christ's priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is significantly different from that of other Christians. There have also been dissenters on the topic within the church: Albion Fox Ballenger (1861-1921), W. W. Fletcher (1879-1947), Louis Richard Conradi (1856-1939), E. B. Jones (fl. 1919-1949), and during the 1980s Desmond Ford. At approximately the same time the General Conference was inaugurating a Daniel and Revelation Committee, assigned to re-examine the teachings of these books and the Adventist understanding of them. Although the committee's work was broad in scope, it included questions raised by Ford. They continued to be of interest for church members as evidenced by the publication and sales of popular books on the subject. Some of the writers put great emphasis on the symbolism of almost every detail of the ritual, while others concentrated on the typological significance of its services.

The doctrine of Christ's priesthood, together with the prophetic

interpretation of Daniel 8:14, provides the Seventh-day Adventist Church with a historical identity. Adventists see their movement, not as a historical accident, but as the result of God's special intervention in human affairs. *The fulfilment of Daniel 8:14 in 1844 validates the presence of Seventh-day Adventists in the world, and particularly in the Christian community.* As the initiation of Christ's heavenly ministry coincided with the outpouring of the spirit on the fledgling church (Acts 2:33), so the beginning of the antitypical day of atonement coincided with the birth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. (Angel Manuel Rodriguez (2000). "The Sanctuary," 405-406).

The DARCOM volumes are said to confirm the historic Adventist understanding of Daniel 8:14 and the pre-advent investigative judgment.

As the storm of debate over the truthfulness of the sanctuary doctrine has swirled in the Adventist Church throughout the past decade, many have been constrained to re-examine the evidence for the veracity of the sanctuary message proclaimed by the Adventist movement since 1844. **The Daniel and Revelation Committee has produced seven volumes** during this decade, with much of the material directly relating to the sanctuary. Fresh, exciting insights have emerged from this intense period of intellectual inquiry, *which have confirmed the historic Adventist understanding of the biblical material.* The basic pillars of this doctrine—the historicist view of prophecy, the year-day principle, the beginning and ending dates for the 2300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14, the ongoing pre-Advent investigative judgment in the most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary since 1844—all these stand even more firmly in the light of the closest scriptural investigation. (Richard M Davidson. "A Song for the Sanctuary. Celebrating its goodness, its truth, its beauty." *Adventist Review*, July 2, 1992, p. 9).

Our teaching on the Investigative Judgment and our understanding of the work of Christ in the Heavenly sanctuary commencing in 1844 is considered to be our one unique contribution, as stated in the Adult Sabbath School lesson for the third quarter of 2006.

As Adventists, many of our "unique" doctrines are not, really, unique. ... Except one: the 1844 pre-Advent judgment.

For some, this fact is worrisome: *Why don't more Christians see it, as well?** For others, the uniqueness of the doctrine points even more powerfully to the *special calling* of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *It's precisely because no one else teaches this judgment that we have been raised to do so.* From this doctrine, perhaps more than any other, *our distinct identity* as Seventh-day Adventists arises. (**Author's emphasis*) (Clifford R. Goldstein, Editor and principle Contributor. "The Gospel, 1844 and the Judgment." April to June, 2006, p. 2).

Because we claim it is our "unique" doctrine and the rationale for our existence it is vitally important that we are able to give an absolutely clear and unambiguous defence from the Bible of what we believe in this area. It is commendable that this was the mandate of the writers of the DARCOM volumes.

The DARCOM Chairman W. Richard Leshner and Secretary Frank Holbrook (also editor of volumes 2-7) said in their final report:

Although the writings of Ellen G. White were carefully considered by the individual authors, the committee was requested to focus on the Scriptural basis for belief. Consequently, the Ellen G. White writings are footnoted only occasionally. (Daniel and Revelation Committee: Final Report, *Symposium on Revelation – Book II*. Silver Springs, MD, USA, BRI, 1992, Volume 7, 452).

As Adventists we have adopted the Historicist approach to apocalyptic prophecy. Our position is:

- That a day in apocalyptic prophecy symbolises a year.
- That the 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel 9 is "cut off" from beginning of the 2300 days/years.
- That the starting date of the 70 weeks is the starting date for the 2300 days.
- That 70 weeks (490 days) prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 confirms the year/day principle.
- That the decree of Artaxerxes I, as

recorded in Ezra 7, is the decree to "restore and rebuild Jerusalem" and marks the starting date for the 70 weeks prophecy and therefore the 2300 day/ year prophecy.

- That the decree of Artaxerxes I was given in his 7th year, which was 457 B.C.
- That Jesus baptism took place in A.D. 27, at the end of the 69 weeks (483 years from 457 B.C.) of Daniel 9:25.
- That the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 (Unto 2300 days then shall the sanctuary be cleansed), using a year for a day, extends from 457 B.C. to October 22, 1844.
- That this date (1844) is the commencement date of the "cleansing of the sanctuary", which is the "Investigative" or "Pre-advent judgment".
- That the word "vision" in the question of Daniel 8:13, and the subsequent answer "unto 2300 days..." (verse 14) applies to the whole vision (verses 3-14) and not just to part, namely, the activities of the "little horn" of Daniel 8:9-12.

The Central Issue

I have not studied in any detail criticisms of our position, but recently I have been studying at length the DARCOM volumes and other sources supporting our position. There is much excellent material presented in these books and many scholarly articles providing background material relating to the sanctuary, judgment and prophecy, etc.

In his editorial synopsis of Arthur Ferch's article "Commencement Date for the Seventy Week Prophecy" (in *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy*. Volume 3), Frank Holbrook says:

"The messianic prophecy of the 70 weeks, which also forms the first part of the longer 2300 day time span, *finds genuine meaning only if its correct commencement date can be established.*" (1986, 64).

In other words, the validity of the prophecy of 2300 days/years ending in 1844 depends on the commencement date being correct.

This is the central issue in the whole debate over our one “unique” doctrine – establishing the beginning date for the 2300 day prophecy! This central issue involves the year-day principle being a biblical principle for use in apocalyptic prophecy; the relationship between the 2300 day prophecy and the 70 weeks prophecy; and the 70 weeks being “cut off” from the beginning of the 2300 day prophecy; the beginning date for the 70 weeks being the beginning date of the 2300 day prophecy. Also related is the question concerning the word “vision” in Daniel 8:13 and the subsequent answer “unto 2300 days” applying to the entire vision from Persia to the cleansing of the sanctuary and not to part of the vision, namely, the activities of the “little horn” of verses 9-12.

DARCOM on the central issue

In answer to criticisms in recent years the DARCOM writers have gone to great lengths and in intricate detail, often with highly technical language, to defend our position that the investigative, or pre-Advent judgment began in October 22, 1844.

There are 69 articles and 12 appendices in the DARCOM series. Eight of the articles address the central issue. (One of the appendices in volume 6, a reprint of a journal article by William Shea, also deals with this issue. This reprint is referred to below). Of the over 2400 pages, only 84 pages (3.5 per cent), deal with this central issue.

Three articles, in volume 3 (Frank B. Holbrook, ed. 1986. *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy*), deal directly with the dates and times of the 70 weeks prophecy:

DARCOM Volumes	No. of pages
Gerhard F. Hasel. “Interpretations of the chronology of the seventy weeks.” (pp. 3-63). Most of this article deals with an analysis of non-Adventist theological views not related to the central issue. Seventeen pages present the historicist position (pp. 47-63).	17
Arthur J. Ferch. “Commencement	10

Date for the Seventy Week Prophecy.” (pp. 65-74). All ten pages deal with the central issue.	
William H. Shea. “The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27.” (pp. 75-118). Twelve pages have to do with dates and times of the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 (pp. 84-89, 99-105). Another 4 pages are about the relationship between Daniel 8 and 9 and the meaning of the word “determined” in Daniel 9:25 (pp. 105-108).	12

In volume 2 of the series (Frank B. Holbrook, ed. 1986. *Symposium on Daniel*), two articles are relevant to the central issue.

William H. Shea. “Unity of Daniel.” (Chapters 8, 9, and 11, pp. 220-255). Six pages (225-230) deal with the relationship between Daniel 8 and 9 and the meaning of the word “determined” in Daniel 9:25.	6
Gerhard F. Hasel. “The ‘Little Horn,’ The Heavenly Sanctuary and the Time of the end: A Study of Daniel 8:9-14.” (pp. 378-461). Seven pages (433-439) deal with the word “vision” (Daniel 8:13) applying it to the entire vision (verses 3-14).	7

Volume 1 of the series is authored by William Shea:

<i>Selected studies on Prophetic Interpretation</i> . 1981 (137 pages). Pages 56 to 92 deal with the day for a year principle (38 pages). Five of these pages (pp. 80-84) address the meaning of the word “vision” in Daniel 8:13.	38
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All together this adds up to 84 pages out of the DARCOM series that deal with the central issues of dates and relationship between the 2300 days and the 70 weeks prophecies.

84 pages out of 2400 pages = 84/2400 = 3.5%.

The book *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies* by editors Arnold V Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner,

contains 30 articles. Only one article has bearing on the central issue:

William H. Shea. “The Relationship between the Prophecies of Daniel 8 and Daniel 9.” (pp. 228-250).

The two articles mentioned above: “Divine Judgment” and the “Sanctuary” in the *Handbook* (Raoul Dederen, ed. 2000), only make very brief references to the central issue and will be referred to below. The article by William Johnsson (“Biblical Apocalyptic” pages 784-814), has 1 ½ pages dealing with the year-day principle.

Other articles and books relating to this central issue

Siegfried H. Horn. & Lynn H. Wood, 1953. *The Chronology Of Ezra 7*. Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Review and Herald Publishing Association Washington, D.C.

F. D. Nichol, ed. 1955. “Chronology of the Exile and Restoration,” Commentary on Ezra 7:7. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. Volume 3, 85-110, 365.

F. D. Nichol, ed. 1955. “A Basis for New Testament Chronology,” *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*.. Volume 5, 235-266.

Angel Manuel. Rodríguez. April 1994. *The 70 Weeks and 457 B.C.* Biblical Research Institute. Silver Springs, MD. (www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/).

Angel Manuel. Rodríguez. 1994. *The Sanctuary and Its Cleansing*. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church. Silver Springs, MD.

William H. Shea. 1991. “When did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24-27 Begin?” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 2 (issue 1), 115-138. (Reprinted in Frank B. Holbrook, ed. 1992. *Symposium on Revelation – Book 1*. Silver Springs, MD: BRI. DARCOM Vol. 6, Appendix B, 375-394).

William H. Shea. 2001. “Supplementary Evidence in Support of 457 B.C. as the Starting Date for the 2300 Day-Years of Daniel 8:14.” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 12/1 Spring, 89-96.

After studying in detail the above articles I must stress that I am deeply and profoundly disturbed by what is presented by our scholars concerning the central issue. At each crucial point in defending our teaching, the writers use conjecture, speculation and assumption rather than clear, unambiguous statements from Scripture. Terms such as “assuming”, “appears”, “circumstantial”, “suggests”, “deduce”, “possibilities”, “if”, “probably”, “it is only reasonable to conclude”, “it seems reasonable” “supports the idea”, “seems most likely”, “the only logical conclusion”, “favour”, “do not fully prove,” “seems to be,” “an unexpressed but understood relationship,” etc. are used extensively.

What is even more disturbing, they, along with subsequent writers, treat the matter as though it has been proved from the Bible, when actually it has only been assumed. It may be, because most of the articles are on issues peripheral to the central issue, the writers and reviewers were not aware of how much conjecture is used when dealing with the central issue?

Daniel 9:24-27 a key passage

The prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 is a key passage in our interpretation of the 2300 day prophecy of Daniel 8:14. A number of writers highlight the difficulties in understanding this passage, which indicates that there is some ambiguity in the text and therefore, caution needs to be exercised in being dogmatic in interpreting it.

The passage of Daniel 9:24-27 is *one of the most controversial in the entire OT*. It has been stated in 1980 that “in the history of the interpretation of Daniel no other passage has been treated with greater care and with as much controversy as this one.” (Hasel 1986, “Interpretations of the chronology of the seventy weeks,” 5).

Extreme divergency also exists on the question of the *beginning (terminus a quo)* and *end (terminus ad quem)*, as well as on the subdivisions of the time period as shall be seen in our discussion below. (Hasel 1986. “Interpretations,” 7).

It is evident that *each* of the four major current schools of interpretation [Amillennial, Dispensational, Historical-Critical and Historicist] of 9:24-27 *has certain weaknesses*. (Hasel 1986. “Interpretations,” 62-63).

The problems regarding the exegesis of Dan 9:24-27 are of two kinds. They have to do with the *difficulty of the text and the multiplicity of interpretations*. (Jacques Doukhan. “The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9: An Exegetical Study,” in A. V. Wallenkampf, and W. R. Leshner, editors. 1981. *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, 251.

Determining the commencement date for Daniel’s 70 week prophecy (Dan 9:24-27) *has been one of the questions to challenge students of prophecy*. (Ferch 1986. “Commencement Date for the Seventy Week Prophecy,” 65).

As Adventists we follow the Historicist School of interpretation, which Hasel above is stating, along with the other schools, “has certain weaknesses”. It should be of great concern to us that “extreme divergency” “exists on the question of the beginning ... and end” of the 70 weeks prophecy, and that determining the commencement date for the 70 weeks prophecy “has been one of the questions to challenge students of prophecy.”

Questions

Following are a series of questions about crucial points in our position on the dates and times of the 2300 day prophecy and the 70 weeks prophecy and the relationship between them, with the answers expressed by our scholars from the DARCOM volumes and the other sources. It is the answers given by our scholars that are so disturbing and which give no certainty from the Bible about our one unique teaching.

1. Can we be absolutely certain that Artaxerxes of Ezra 7 is Artaxerxes I?

“Assuming that this king is Artaxerxes I, we note that Ezra and a considerable company of people – priests, Levites, singers, gate-keepers, and temple servants - left Mesopotamia in 457 B.C. and, after a journey lasting several months, arrived at Jerusalem.” (Ferch 1986. “Commencement Date,” 68).

2. Assuming that it is Artaxerxes I can we be certain that the decree of Ezra 7 is the one to “restore and rebuild Jerusalem”?

“Although the actual wording of the command of Artaxerxes I of 457 B.C. *makes no explicit mention* of any order to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, this is actually what *appears* to have been the intent so far as the understanding of the Jews to whom it was given is concerned.” (Hasel 1986. “Interpretations,” 51).

The evidence whether this decree included the rebuilding of Jerusalem is *circumstantial*. (Hasel 1986. “Interpretations,” 57)

Determining the commencement date for Daniel’s 70 week prophecy (Dan 9:24-27) *has been one of the questions to challenge students of prophecy*. According to verse 25a the event marking its onset was to be “the going forth of the word to restore (or return] and build Jerusalem. ...” [RSV]

Unfortunately, no explicit proclamation is known. The investigation is further hampered by *the sparseness of the information available* for this segment of history. Interpreters, therefore, have been *obliged to deduce* from the biblical and historical evidence which “word,” that is, which of several decrees, should be regarded as the appropriate one. (Ferch 1986. “Commencement Date,” 65).

Since the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem is specified in Daniel 9:25, it would appear that *the decree of Cyrus does not qualify as the starting point for the 70-week prediction*. ... *Since the rebuilding of Jerusalem is not mentioned* in this decree, *the edict of Darius I – as a fulfilment of the “word to restore and [re]build Jerusalem” – is also ruled out*. (Ferch 1986. “Commencement Date,” 67).

The decree [Ezra 7] (which may be accurately dated to 457 B.C.) mentions *nothing* about the rebuilding of Jerusalem. (Ferch 1986. “Commencement Date,” 69).

“... *no explicit proclamation* detailing the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem is available, (Ferch 1986. “Commencement Date,” 74)

Why did Ezra start rebuilding the city when the decree granted to him *doesn’t explicitly mention it* (Ezra 7)? *Here we can only cite the possibilities*: (1) He was given

permission to rebuild the city *orally* along with the decree; (2) Another supplementary, written decree (*not recorded in the Bible*) conveyed such an authorization. For a *possible* parallel here compare the differences present in the two decrees of Cyrus in Ezra 1:2-4 and 6:3-5; (3) Ezra understood the authority to build to fall within the limits of what was afforded to him in the decree. *Lack of additional biblical information bearing on this point prevents us from narrowing these possibilities down further.* We can only observe what occurred historically: Ezra did indeed begin to build the city according to the evidence from Ezra 4. (Shea 1986, "Unity of Daniel," 87).

The above is an incredible statement. The decree doesn't mention the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem so the writer has speculated on what is "*not recorded in the Bible,*" or anywhere else.

The specific mentioning of the name "Jerusalem" [Daniel 9:25] helps avoid confusion with the rebuilding of the temple within Jerusalem. *A city is not a temple and a temple is not a city,* though a city may contain a temple or be located near one. This distinction is important because *the decree of Cyrus in Ezra 1:2-4 specifically mentions authorization for the rebuilding of the temple but does not mention the city.* (Shea 1991, "When did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?" 379 [page number for DARCOM Vol. 6, Appendix B]).

Two final questions about these events arise before we turn to more specifically chronological matters. The first question is, *Why did Ezra undertake the rebuilding of the city when it was not specifically mentioned in the authorizing decree from Artaxerxes?* The second question is, *Why did Artaxerxes stop the rebuilding [Ezra 4:7-23] if he authorized it and was so favorable to Ezra?* (Shea 1991, "When did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?" 383-84).

The above writers consider that the decrees of Cyrus and Darius do not fulfil the requirements of Daniel 9:25 as the starting date for the 70 weeks prophecy, as they do not mention the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Yet, *inconsistently,* it is still claimed that the decree of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7), that also does not mention the

rebuilding of Jerusalem, is the decree that authorises the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

William H. Shea has probably written more on the subject than any other. He has championed the defence of our position that the decree of Artaxerxes I (Ezra 7) is the decree to commence the 70 weeks prophecy. In a more recent article ("Supplementary Evidence in Support of 457 B.C. as the Starting Date for the 2300 Day-Years of Daniel 8:14." *JATS*. 12/1 Spring 2001: 89-96), he still holds that this decree has "*to do with the reconstruction of the city,*" but he admits "*it is still awkward that the decree does not specifically authorize*" this.

The first two decrees [Cyrus' decree in Ezra 1, Darius' decree in Ezra 6] deal with the rebuilding of the temple, and the last two [the decree of Artaxerxes I in Ezra 7, and the letter of the same king to Nehemiah in Neh 2] have *to do with the reconstruction of the city.* It is, therefore, from the first of the last two decrees that the date for the prophecy of Dan 9:25 should be dated. ...

Thus, there are internal grounds for using the decree of Artaxerxes in Ezra 7 for the starting point of the 70 weeks of Dan 9:24-27. *Nevertheless, it is still awkward that the decree does not specifically authorize the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem.* (Shea 2001, "Supplementary evidence," 89, 94).

It seems to me it cannot be both! If it "*does not specifically authorize the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem*" it cannot be said to have "*to do with the reconstruction of the city.*" Shea, as do the other writers, is reading into the passage what it doesn't say.

Adventist theologian Gerhard Hasel in the article entitled "Divine Judgment," (*Handbook* 2000), makes the following statement:

Both of these decrees [of Cyrus (Ezra 1:2-4) and of Darius I (6:1-12)] deal with the rebuilding of the Temple but not with the specifications of Daniel 9:25.

The next major decree known from Scripture *is the one given in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I and*

recorded in Ezra 7:12-26. *This decree qualifies as the fulfilment of the one mentioned in Daniel 9:25, because it speaks of both the rebuilding and the restoration of Jerusalem.* ... The decree of Artaxerxes I, given in his seventh year, also qualifies because it fulfills the "*building*" aspect of Jerusalem (see Ezra 4:7, 11-16).

The decree given by Artaxerxes is the only one which meets the two qualifications of Daniel 9:25, the *restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem.* (page 838).

There are several blatantly incorrect assertions made in the above statement.

1. While Cyrus's and Darius' decrees do not meet the specifications of Daniel 9:25, it is incorrectly stated that Artaxerxes' decree does.

2. Artaxerxes' decree is undated. We do not know that it was given in his seventh year. (See question 6 below)

3. Artaxerxes' decree does not mention "*the rebuilding and the restoration of Jerusalem.*"

3. **Can we be certain that Ezra 4:7-23 follows Ezra 7 and that Artaxerxes, who stopped the building of the city, is the one who ordered it to be rebuilt in the first place?**

If this report [Ezra 4:7-23] comes from a time later than the command of the seventh year of Artaxerxes I, namely, a period of uncertain political conditions for the Persian monarch after the Egyptian revolt of 448, (106) then one may safely conclude that the command issued in 457 B.C. related to the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem. (Hasel 1986, "Interpretations," 51).

The return of Ezra and his group of fellow Jews described in Ezra 7 *appears to be related to the events recorded in Ezra 4:7-23.* (Ferch 1986. "Commencement Date", 69).

The sequel to the Samaritan letter to Artaxerxes is *puzzling.* Why should the monarch who had signally favored the Jews in granting them considerable religious and civil privileges (under Ezra) suddenly reverse his decision? And then why should he change his mind again some years later and give his blessing to Nehemiah's trip to Jerusalem to repair the city? (Ferch 1986. "Commencement Date," 71).

Hence, it would *appear* that although *no explicit proclamation* detailing the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem is available, the situation described in Ezra 4 – complemented by the events recorded in Ezra 7 – *best fits* the historical setting envisaged in Daniel 9:25. (Ferch1986. “Commencement Date,” 74).

The answer to this letter given by the king [Ezra 4] *suggests* that the Jews had been authorized by Artaxerxes to rebuild the city. (Rodríguez April 1994. “The 70 Weeks and 457 B.C.” 4).

One of the reasons why some scholars have been loathe to accept Ezra as the leader of this group of returnees [Ezra 4] has to do with the long-discussed question of the sequence of Ezra and Nehemiah. Did Ezra precede Nehemiah or did Nehemiah precede Ezra? Scholars unsure of the answer to this question are, of course, unsure about the identity of the group that preceded Nehemiah back to Jerusalem during the reign of Artaxerxes. *But if one agrees to the idea that Ezra preceded Nehemiah*, then Ezra and his fellow returnees are the only *logical* candidates to fit the text. (Shea 1991. “When did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?” 382).

Arthur Ferch has the following statement acknowledging that *the restoration of the city of Jerusalem*, as well as the temple, *began in the time of Cyrus*. This is in line with Isaiah’s prediction that Cyrus would say of Jerusalem, “Let it be rebuilt” (Isaiah 44:28).

This passage ([Ezra 4] vss. 7-23) is part of a larger narrative which unfolds the theme of persecution and frustration which the Jews encountered in *their restoration of the temple and city from the time of Cyrus* (ca. 537/536-530 B.C.) on to the reign of Artaxerxes I (465-423 B.C.). (Ferch1986. “Commencement Date,” 70).

This is supported by Haggai, (520 B.C.) who said: “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in you panelled houses, while this house remains a ruin?” (1:4) The SDA Bible Commentary on this verse says “God rebukes the Jews for allowing their comfortable living in well-appointed houses to blind them to the need of rebuilding the Temple.” (1955, Vol. 4:1076).

E G White had a different understanding as to who was the Artaxerxes of Ezra 4 and she includes the “forbidding” of the rebuilding of the “city” as well as the temple.

During the reign of Cambyses the work on the temple progressed slowly. And during the reign of the *False Smerdis (called Artaxerxes in Ezra 4:7)* the Samaritans induced the unscrupulous impostor to issue a decree forbidding the Jews to *rebuild their temple and city*. (*Prophets and Kings*, 572-573).

The kings of Persia that reigned for the period covered in Ezra and Nehemiah:

Cyrus	539-530
Cambyses	530-522
Smerdis	522
Darius I (the Great)	522-486
Xerxes	486-465
Artaxerxes I	465-423

4. Assuming that the decree of Ezra 7 is the right decree, can we be certain Ezra used the Jewish fall-to-fall calendar (fall 458- fall 457 B.C.) and not the Persian-Babylonian spring-to-spring calendar (spring 458- spring 457 BC)?

Most scholars date the seventh year of Artaxerxes mentioned in Ezra 7:7 to 458 B.C. instead of 457 B.C. ...*The difference between 458 and 457 is based on the type of calendar used to calculate the years. If we use the Persian-Babylonian calendar the date would be 458 B.C.; but if we employ the Jewish calendar the date would be 457 B.C.* The Persian calendar was based on a spring-to-spring civil year while the Jews used a fall-to-fall one. *The basic question is, what calendar was Ezra using when he referred to the seventh year of Artaxerxes?* (Rodríguez 1994. “The 70 Weeks and 457 B.C.” 7).

All four of these lines of chronological evidence [Olympiad Dates, Ptolemy’s Canon, Elephantine Papyri & Babylonian Cuneiform tablets] point unanimously and harmoniously to the fact that *the seventh regnal year of Artaxerxes I extended from Nisan (month I) in the spring of 458 BC to Adar (month XII)*

in the spring of 457 BC. ... Nehemiah [Nehemiah 1:1; 2:1] employed his fall-to-fall calendar ... Since Ezra was a contemporary of Nehemiah, *it is reasonable* to apply the same fall-to-fall calendar to the dates in Ezra. (Shea 1986, “The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27,” 100, 101).

Is there any evidence from his [Ezra’s] book that he used a fall calendar? Unfortunately, there is not; however, we have precisely that kind of information in Nehemiah 1, 2. Because Nehemiah was a contemporary and compatriot of Ezra’s, the use of a fall calendar in Nehemiah’s book *can be taken as very strong evidence* that Ezra used it too. (Shea 1991, “When did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?” 390).

Ezra *probably* counted the 7th year of Artaxerxes according to the Jewish custom, that is, in terms of the Jewish civil calendar year, which began in the fall (see Vol. II, pp. 110, 112, 138, 140). Hence, the 7th regnal year of Artaxerxes I began in the fall of 458 BC and ended in the fall of 457. (SDA Bible Commentary 1955. Vol 3, 365).

5. What event gives us the starting point for the 70 weeks prophecy? All writers who deal with the Daniel 9:24-27 prophecy agree that the commencement of the 490 years is the issuing of the decree to “restore and rebuild Jerusalem”. They see this as finding fulfilment in the decree of Artaxerxes I as recorded in Ezra 7.

The beginning point for the “seventy weeks,” according to the historical-Messianic interpretation, is the “*going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem*” (vs. 25, RSV). This took place in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I (Ezra 7:7-8) when he *issued* his first “decree” (vss. 11-26). The seventh year of Artaxerxes I now is established firmly as 458/457 B.C., with the return of Ezra in 457, and not 458 B.C. (Hasel 1986, “Interpretations,” 49).

Determining the commencement date for Daniel’s 70 week prophecy (Dan 9:24-27) *has been one of the questions to challenge students of prophecy.* According to verse 25a the event marking its onset was to be “*the going forth of the word to restore (or return) and build Jerusalem.* ...” [RSV] (Ferch 1986. “Commencement Date,” 65).

From this discussion it is concluded here that *the decree* or word that went

forth for the restoring and rebuilding of Jerusalem, as specified in Daniel 9:25, finds its fulfilment in the decree given by Artaxerxes I to Ezra in the seventh year of his reign. *This decree provides us with the starting point for the 70 weeks.* (Shea 1986, "The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27," 88).

Daniel 9:25 states that *the starting point* was to be a going forth of a "word" (Hebrew *dabar*) to restore Jerusalem. (Shea 1991 "When did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?" 377).

The date for the beginning of this period of the prophecy *must coincide* with the *going forth or issuing of the word or decree* that led to the commencement of the reconstruction of Jerusalem. According to the *interpretations* discussed above, the decree that led to that commencement can be identified as the decree which Artaxerxes I gave to Ezra. (Shea 1991. "When did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?" 384-385).

The prophecy of Daniel pointed to a *decree* to restore and rebuild Jerusalem as the *starting date* for the prophecy of the seventy weeks. (Rodríguez 1994. "The 70 Weeks and 457 B.C.," 8).

6. Assuming that Ezra did use the Jewish calendar and this is the right decree issued by Artaxerxes I, do we know clearly when Artaxerxes issued the decree? It is undated in the Bible.

The date for the beginning of this period of the prophecy [70 weeks] *must coincide* with the *going forth or issuing* of the word or decree that led to the commencement of the reconstruction of Jerusalem. According to the *interpretations* discussed above, the decree that led to that commencement can be identified as *the decree which Artaxerxes I gave to Ezra. Now that decree needs to be dated.* (Shea 1991. "When did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?" 384-5).

In Ezra 7 ... Artaxerxes' decree is undated, but the journey is definitely placed in the 7th year. (*SDA BC* 3:97 footnote).

These correlations indicate that the *decree* recorded in Ezra 7 was issued *sometime* in the year that *began* in the fall [October 2] of 458 B.C. and ended in the fall of 457 B.C. This is the year in which the commencement of Daniel's 70 weeks should be dated. (Shea 1986, "Daniel 9:24-27," 101).

The "correlations" Shea is talking about are the Olympiad Dates, Ptolemy's Canon, Elephantine Papyri & Babylonian Cuneiform tablets, used to establish when was the 7th year of Artaxerxes, *not* when the decree was given. He *assumes* it was given in that year.

But *if* these events are calculated *according to the Jewish civil year*, which began with Tishri 1 in the fall of 458 B.C., then the decree would *probably have been given during that winter* of 458-457 B.C., and the journey took place during the spring and summer of 457 B.C. (In the case of the fall-to-fall year, the month numbers do not change, they run VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, I, II, III, IV, V, VI). (Shea 1991. "When did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?" 389).

Notice that Shea can only give a *probability* as to when the decree was given, and that is "*if these events are calculated according to the Jewish civil year.*" We really do not know when the decree was given. Therefore we have no exact starting date for the 70 weeks prophecy and therefore no certainty.

In the more recent article referred to above (Shea 2001. "Supplementary Evidence), Shea is more specific in his speculations.

The decree that was given by Artaxerxes to Ezra is recorded in Ezra 7:11-26. *The month in which it was given is not recorded*, but it was given in time for Ezra and those with him to depart on the first day of the first month of Nisan (Ezra 7:7-8)....

The decree which led to this return *undoubtedly* was given during the winter, *probably January or February*, in order for them to be ready for a departure in March-April or Nisan, the first month. *This locates these three events on the following time scale: The decree* of Ezra 7:11-26 in the *winter* of 458/457 B.C., *the departure in the spring* of 457 B.C., and the *arrival in the summer* of 457 B.C. This was then followed by the fall New Year of 1 Tishri in September-October of 457 B.C. This completed the Jewish fall-to-fall calendar year from 1 Tishri in September of 458 B.C. to 1 Tishri in September of 457 B.C. This was the 7th year of Artaxerxes *according to Jewish reckoning.* (Shea 2001, Supplementary Evidence," 89-96).

Shea says, "The decree which led to this return *undoubtedly* was given during the winter, *probably January or February*, in order for them to be ready for a departure in March-April or Nisan, the first month." Unfortunately this is speculation! We do not know how much time lapsed between the issuing of the decree and the commencement of Ezra's journey.

It is obvious from the above references that our scholars do not know when Artaxerxes issued this decree. As spring was the best time to make such a four-month journey, to avoid the wet season, it could have been issued anytime during the previous twelve months or more, that is, 458 B.C. or earlier. That is "if these events are calculated according to the Jewish civil year." If a Persian/Babylonian calendar was used it is possible that the decree was given before the spring of 459 B.C. It would need to have been early enough to allow for time to prepare for such a long journey (approximately 900 miles, 1449 km).

Josephus records that Ezra sent a copy of Artaxerxes' decree to Jews "that were in Media; and when these Jews had understood what piety the king had towards God, and what kindness he had for Esdras [Ezra], they were all greatly pleased; nay, many of them took their effects with them, and came to Babylon, as very desirous of going down to Jerusalem; ..." (Antiquities 11:5:2).

How long did it take for the copy of the decree to reach the Jews in Media? How long did it take for it to be circulated among them? How long did it take them to prepare for and make the journey to Babylon? Depending on where they were in Media, the Jews there would have had several hundred miles journey just to arrive at Babylon, before they even started on the 900 mile journey back to Jerusalem.

The *SDA Bible Commentary* estimates that about 8000 people returned with Ezra, including women and children,

with all their household goods. All of this would have taken some time to organise.

No matter how much evidence we muster to support Ezra's journey occurring in 457 B.C. that still doesn't tell us *when* the decree was issued. That Ezra's journey occurred in 457 B.C. can only be supported if we *assume* Ezra used a Jewish spring-to-spring calendar in calculating Artaxerxes' 7th year.

7. Why do we assume that the decree of Artaxerxes I was issued in 457 B. C. in his 7th year when the decree is undated, as indicated by our scholars above? Even using a Jewish calendar, three months of Artaxerxes' seventh year would be in 458 B.C.

If the auditory revelation of 9:24-27 begins with the *issuance of the first decree of Artaxerxes in his seventh year – 458/457 B.C.* – with the return of Ezra in 457 B.C. (Ezra 7:7-9),³⁵ *this would mark the starting point of the 2,300 evenings-mornings of 8:14.* Then the end point of the 2,300 year-day prophecy falls in the year A.D.

1844. (Hasel 1986, "The 'Little Horn,' The Heavenly Sanctuary and the Time of the end: A Study of Daniel 8:9-14," 438).

The beginning point for the "seventy weeks," according to the historical-Messianic interpretation, is the "*going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem*" (vs. 25, RSV). (vss. 11-26). *This took place in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I (Ezra 7:7-8) when he issued his first "decree"* (vss. 11-26). The seventh year of Artaxerxes I now is established firmly as 458/457 B.C., with the return of Ezra in 457, and not 458 B.C. (Hasel 1986, "Interpretations," 49).

The *decree* [Ezra 7] (*which may be accurately dated to 457 B.C.*) mentions *nothing* about the rebuilding of Jerusalem. (Ferch 1986. "Commencement Date," 69).

From what has been recorded above (Question 6) it is incorrect to say that the decree can "*be accurately dated to 457 B.C.*"

These correlations indicate that the *decree* recorded in Ezra 7 was issued *sometime* in the year that *began* in the fall [October 2] of 458 B.C. and ended in the fall of 457 B.C. This is the year in which the commencement

of Daniel's 70 weeks should be dated. (Shea 1986, Daniel 9:24-27," 101).

As mentioned above, the "correlations" Shea is talking about are the Olympiad Dates, Ptolemy's Canon, Elephantine Papyri & Babylonian Cuneiform tablets, used to establish when the 7th year of Artaxerxes was, *NOT* when the decree was given. The writers above are *assuming* it was given in that year.

Through these two chronological procedures, a search for an absolute date for the regnal years of Artaxerxes and an examination of the question of which kind of calendar Ezra used, *we have arrived at 457 B.C. as the date for the decree of Artaxerxes in Ezra 7. Because this was the decree which led to the commencement of the reconstruction of the city of Jerusalem, we have come to an absolute date for the specification for the prophecy of Daniel 9:25.* That text may now be paraphrased here to identify its starting point as, "*From the going forth of the word (the decree of Artaxerxes I) to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem (by Ezra according to the decree of Ezra 7 and the actions of Ezra 4), in 457 B.C.*" (Shea 1991. "When did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?" 392).

Because it really was the first decree [Ezra 7] of the second set, *the one given to Ezra in 457 B.C.*, which led to the commencement of the construction of the city, is the decree to which we should look for *fixing the point for the beginning of the prophetic and historical period outlined by Daniel.* (Shea 1991. "When did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?" 393).

This decree is dated to the 7th year of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:7), according to the Jewish fall-to-fall reckoning employed by Nehemiah (Neh 1:1; 2:1), Ezra's contemporary and fellow worker (Neh 8:1, 9). This extended from Tishri or September-October in 458 B.C. Since the events described for this year fell in the winter, spring, and summer of 457 B.C., Seventh-day Adventists have used that year as the basis for their calculations. (Shea 2001, "Supplementary Evidence," 89).

In the article "Divine Judgment" in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (2000, 839), Gerhard Hasel says:

Based on classical historical sources, an Egyptian astronomical source, a Babylonian astronomical source, Egypto-Jewish historical sources and Babylonian historical sources, *the decree and the return are dated to 457 B.C.* (Shea 1991, 121-126). The year 457 B.C. is the beginning of the 490 years of Daniel 9 and likewise the beginning of the 2300 years of Daniel 8, from which the 490 years are "cut off."

Hasel gives the impression that *the decree* can be accurately dated to 457 B.C. The sources referred to, help to establish when is Artaxerxes' 7th year, *NOT* when he issued the decree! He cites 'Shea 1991, 121-126' as the source for confirmation of this. Shea does not do this. Shea only speculates that the decree was given in 457 B.C. Yet Hasel is stating it as if it were a proven biblical fact! We have already quoted Shea under question 6, where he says:

But *if* these events are calculated according to the Jewish civil year, which began with Tishri 1 in the fall of 458 B.C., then *the decree would probably have been given during that winter of 458-457 B.C.*, and the journey took place during the spring and summer of 457 B.C. (Shea 1991. "When did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?" 389).

Speculating that the decree was given in 457 B.C. doesn't make it correct. What the writers above are categorically stating—that the decree was issued in Artaxerxes' seventh year (457 B.C.)—is what we need to establish from the Bible—assuming it is the right decree?

Even if we assume the decree was given early in Artaxerxes' seventh year, in January or February of 457 B.C. and that this is the right decree for the starting date of the 2300 day prophecy, then, to be precise, the 2300 years would be eight or nine months short of October 22 1844.

8. Daniel 9:25 says, "From the issuing of the decree..." NOT "When the decree goes into effect."

The above writers agree (question 5):

1. The starting point of the 490-year prophecy is "the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem."

2. This finds fulfilment in the decree of Artaxerxes I (Ezra 7). On what basis then do we assume that the 70 weeks prophecy begins when the decree of Ezra 7 goes into effect in the fall of 457 B.C. and not when it was issued? Ezra arrived in summer on the 1st day of the fifth month (Ab 1 or approximately July 23).

The 7th year of Artaxerxes would then extend from the fall of 458 to the fall of 457. *The specifications of the decree were not carried out until after Ezra returned from Babylon, which was the late summer or early fall of 457 BC. ...*

The day of departure in terms of the Julian calendar was most probably March 27, 457 BC. The time occupied on the way was nearly four months (see p. 108). The exiles arrived at Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month (AB), or approximately July 23, 457 BC. (*SDA Bible Commentary* 1955, 3:365).

Beginning with the autumn of 457 BC, when the decree went into effect, 69 prophetic weeks, or 483 years, reach to the baptism of Jesus in 27 AD. (*SDA Bible Commentary* 1955 4:853).

The purpose of this study is to examine the chronological basis of the time prophecy of the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14. Seventh-day Adventists for over one hundred years have given an important place to the prophecy of the cleansing of the sanctuary in the time of the end (Dan. 8:14, 17), after 2300 prophetic days. *They have identified the starting point with the beginning of the seventy weeks (Dan. 9:24-27), at "the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem," and like many prophetic expositors before them, located this in the time of Ezra, who journeyed from Babylon to Palestine "in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king (Ezra 7), an event that had long been dated in 457 BC by Biblical expositors generally.*

The fall of 457 was taken as the time when this decree of Ezra 7 became effective, hence the point of origin from which the 2300 years were reckoned. Seventh-day Adventists had originally taken over the dates (though not the interpretation of the closing events) of the 2300-year prophecy from the Millerites and other earlier expositors, and so have

continued to use them. (Horn and Wood 1953, *The Chronology of Ezra* 7, 4).

The above references have the starting point for the 2300 days/years as the fall of 457 B.C. when the "decree of Ezra 7 became effective." This contradicts Daniel 9:25 and what has been quoted above (point 5) that it is the *issuing* of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem that begins the 70 weeks prophecy? Ezra arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month Ab (July 23). The fall would be the seventh month Tishri (the end of September), which is about two months later. **What happened in the Fall of 457 B.C. that we use that as the starting point of the 2300 days/years, other than it fits in with October 22, which is the fall of 1844?**

Another question is begging for an answer: Why have we "taken over the dates" "from the Millerites and other earlier expositors" and "continued to use them" when our scholars cited above have not been able to establish these dates from the Bible? We rightly criticise other churches for following tradition and not the Bible. Are we not doing the same?

Referring again to Shea's article "Supplementary Evidence," he states:

Seventh-day Adventists have used that year [457 B.C.] as the basis for their calculations. These are correct but, according to the *additional* details examined below, more *evidence* can be adduced in support of their accuracy. (Shea 2001, "Supplementary Evidence," 89).

The additional evidence in support of their accuracy is startling! After saying that Artaxerxes' decree (Ezra 7) was "to do with the reconstruction of the city" and constitutes "the starting point of the 70 weeks of Dan 9:24-27" Shea admits that "Nevertheless, it is still awkward that the decree does not specifically authorize the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem." He then says:

There may be an exegetical way to make the application more specific. It requires an examination of the word used for the order to rebuild in Dan 9:25. (Shea 2001, "Supplementary evidence," 89, 94).

The author's "may be" "exegetical way to make the application more specific" is to postulate (this is NOT exegesis!) that "the 'going forth of the word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem' in Dan 9:25 was Ezra's word, *not* the decree of Artaxerxes." The date for this he assumes was the late spring, early summer of 456 and that the fall 457 to fall 456 is the first year of the 2300 years. This is again based on-speculation!

The one who sent out the word to begin the reconstruction of Jerusalem was Ezra. It was not issued by a Persian king from Pasargadae or Persepolis, it was sent forth from Jerusalem by Ezra. Just as his "voice" or word went throughout the land to gather at Jerusalem to deal with the issue of foreign wives, so his word was sent forth after the episode to call the people back to Jerusalem for its reconstruction. Thus the "going forth of the word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" in Dan 9:25 was Ezra's word, not the decree of Artaxerxes. Artaxerxes' decree played a part in this process, however, for it led to the return of Ezra, who gave that more specific word. Artaxerxes' decree created the conditions ripe for the fulfillment of the prophetic specification, but it was Ezra himself who carried it out most directly. That raises the question of when Ezra sent forth this word to rebuild Jerusalem. In the chronology developed above, it was noted that this could only have taken place after the issue of foreign wives was dealt with. That process was completed by the first month of Nisan in 456 B.C. The going forth of Ezra's word to rebuild should have taken place soon after that, in the late spring or early summer of 456 B.C. All of this still falls within the Jewish fall-to-fall calendar for the eighth year of Artaxerxes. (Shea, 2001, "Supplementary evidence," 96).

It now appears Shea is saying we have several starting points:

1. The issuing of Artaxerxes' decree (which does not mention the rebuilding of the city and is undated), that Shea speculates was issued in the winter of 457 B.C.

2. The fall of 457 B.C. after Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the summer.
3. The call by Ezra to rebuild supposedly in late spring or early summer of 456, after he had dealt with the issue of foreign wives.

I'm not sure if Dr Shea understands the implications of this so called "supplementary evidence!" **what is being said here completely undermines our traditional view** (that Artaxerxes' decree is the one fulfilling Daniel 9:25). **it also renders invalid the view that artaxerxes' decree went into effect in the fall of 457 B.C., commencing the 2300 years.**

9. **While the death of Jesus and the end of the 490 years is undated in the NT, the baptism of Jesus is recorded as taking place in the 15th year of Tiberius. Can we be certain that Luke used the Jewish method of calculating the fifteenth year of Tiberius?**

According to the NT Jesus was baptized and anointed by the Holy Spirit in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1, 21).

*Dates for Tiberius were reckoned in several different ways.*⁷ What we have here in Luke 3:1 is a date formula written in an eastern style, in the Scriptures which are themselves of eastern origin. *It seems reasonable, therefore, to reckon this date in the manner date formulae were employed in that region. Such a method dates Tiberius' fifteenth year to A.D.*

*27/28, fall-to-fall.*⁸ (Shea 1986, "Daniel 9:24-27," 102).

In the above quotation, Shea in footnote 7 cites J. Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Princeton, 1964, pp. 259-73) to indicate that the baptism of Jesus took place in A.D. 27. Hasel, who also cites Finegan to support the date A.D. 27, in a footnote says Finegan "states that it is A.D. 26 or 27, depending on the nonaccession or accession year systems respectively." (Hasel 1986, "Interpretations," 49). Therefore, Finegan can not be cited to support an absolute date of A.D. 27 for the baptism of Jesus.

In footnote 8 Shea cites "*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 5:235-40" in support of Tiberius' fifteenth year being "A.D. 27/28, fall to fall."

Following are two quotations from volume 5 of the Commentary.

The only New Testament mention of a specific year (the 15th of Tiberius) has been subject to *varying interpretations*. . . .

What calendar year did Luke use? Did he count as Tiberius' year 1 the year in which the king came to the throne, or the beginning of the reign from Augustus' death or from a coregency beginning earlier? We must know all this in order to answer the question: What did Luke mean when he said "fifteenth year"? *Unfortunately we do not know all this.* From the source evidence available the answer can have, *at best, only a high probability of accuracy.* (*SDA Bible Commentary* 1955, 5: 235, 244).

10. **Can we be certain that the 490 years is cut off from the beginning of the 2300 days/years and that both time periods have the same starting point? What clear unambiguous biblical evidence do we have for this?**

If the first auditory revelation (8:13-14) points to the end of the long time period of 2,300 evenings-mornings, it would seem that the second auditory revelation of 70 weeks in 9:24-27 would give its starting point.** Its termination point could then be determined on the basis of such information. (**Authors emphasis*) (Hasel 1986. "A Study of Daniel 8:9-14," 438)

The customary location for time elements in Daniel's prophecies is toward the end of their visions or the end of their interpretations (cf. 7:25, 8:14, and 12:7, 11-12). Chapter 9 is unique in this regard since its prophecy begins with a time period, and time elements are distributed all the way through it. This has the effect, in terms of literary structure, of juxtaposing the 70 weeks (the beginning of the Daniel 9 prophecy) up against the 2300 days (the end portion of the Daniel 8 vision). This literary juxtaposition *suggests* these time elements should be regarded as directly related to each other. (Shea 1986, "Daniel 9:24-27," 106).

According to the angel interpreter, 70 weeks were "determined/cut off concerning your people and your holy city." The verb used by Daniel is *chathak*, and this is its only occurrence in the Hebrew Bible. . . . The more common meaning in . . . [Canaanite and Jewish Hebrew writings] *seems to be* "to cut, to cut off." The *possibility* that the meaning of the verb in Daniel is "cut off" is strengthened by the fact that, as we have seen, there are clear links connecting the time periods in Daniel 8 and 9. *One could then suggest* that the 70 weeks were cut off from the 2300 years mentioned in Daniel 8. (Rodríguez 1994. *The Sanctuary and Its Cleansing*).

Thus, these three lines of evidence – (1) root meaning ["cut off"] over extended meaning ["decree, determined"], (2) the case of a Ugaritic cognate [13th century B. C. that of cutting, not decreeing or determining], and (3) the predominant meaning in later Mishnaic sources ["cut off"] – all *favour (but do not fully prove)* that this verb should be translated "cut off" here. Its *apparent meaning emphasizes the idea* that the 70 weeks were understood to be cut off from the 2300 days mentioned in the preceding prophecy. (Shea 1986, "Daniel 9:24-27," 107).

Shea has an extended, highly speculative and intricate discussion on the meaning of the word *hatak* [*chathak*] in his article "The Relationship between the Prophecies of Daniel 8 and Daniel 9" (In Arnold Wallenkampf ed. 1981. *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*. Parts 1 & 2, 241-248). He sums up by saying:

It was *suggested* above that information available about *hatak* from two lines of extra-biblical evidence [Mishnaic Hebrew and ancient Ugaritic] *favors* translating this verb with the meaning of "cut off" here in preference to the meaning of "determine, decree." Those two lines of evidence *were merely suggestive, however, not conclusive.* (Shea 1981. "Relationship between the Prophecies," 247).

Shea refers to the masculine plural ending of the word "weeks" in Daniel.

One possibility why this unusual masculine form of the word for *week** was used in Daniel in contrast to its gender in the rest of the OT is that it was used to designate ***an***

unexpressed but understood relationship to the evening-mornings of the preceding prophecy. ... In this case the 70 weeks of Dan 9 would not be 70 weeks of prophetic days (historical years) in general but 70 weeks, more specifically, of that unit expressed as evening-mornings. ... Although this explanation **remains hypothetical** at the present time such a connection would - **if correct** - naturally tie the 70 weeks directly to the 2300 days. [**Author's emphasis*] (Shea 1981. "Relationship between the Prophecies," 246-47).

One could speculate at length about "unexpressed but understood relationships," but if it is unexpressed how can we know what it is? We surely need to establish our doctrine on better evidence that what is "unexpressed" in the Bible?

As was stated earlier the two articles in the *Handbook*, only briefly mentions the central issue that we've been discussing.

The verb "decreed" in 9:24 also means "to cut off," as is seen in **Mishnaic Hebrew** and in texts found in the city of **Ugarit** (1300 B.C.). The *implication* is that the 490 years were "cut off" from the 2300 years. The 490 years began with the decree to rebuild Jerusalem made by Artaxerxes in 457 B.C.; that decree is also the starting point for the 2300 years. The end point of that period would fall in A.D. 1844. Then the sanctuary would be cleansed/vindicated. At this particular time within salvation history Christ would begin the second aspect of His mediatorial work in the heavenly sanctuary, as described in Hebrews 9:23. (Angel Manuel Rodriguez. "The Sanctuary" 396).

As was pointed out by Shea earlier, evidence from Mishnaic Hebrew and ancient Ugarit is "*merely suggestive*," "*not conclusive*." The above reference says that the "*implication* is that the 490 years were "cut off" from the 2300 years." The point is where is it *explicitly* stated in the Bible? Even if the word *chathak* means "to cut off" what *biblical evidence* is there that the 70 weeks are cut off from the beginning of the 2300 days? The prophecy states that the time period is "cut off", "determined" or

"decreed for your people and your holy city."

The other article, "Divine Judgment," from the *Handbook* says:

The year 457 B.C. is the beginning of the 490 years of Daniel 9 and likewise the beginning of the 2300 years of Daniel 8, from which the 490 years are "cut off."

Based on Daniel 9:24, 25, where it is stated that the "seventy weeks" or 490 years began in 457 B.C and were "cut off" from the 2300 years, it follows that the 2300 years also commence in 457 B.C. They conclude in "the time of the end," in A.D. 1844. (Gerhard F. Hasel. "Divine Judgment," page 839).

Where is it stated in Daniel 9:24-25 that the "490 years began in 457 B.C. and were 'cut off' from the 2300 years? It is very disturbing to find incorrect dogmatic statements being used to support our doctrines!

The Issue with chathak ("cut off", "decreed")

The issue is not whether the word *chathak* should be translated as "cut off" rather than "determined" or "decreed," but to what does Daniel 9:24 say it applies? It does not say, the 490 years are "cut off" from the beginning of the 2300 years. It says "cut off", "determined," "decreed" "*for your people and your holy city*." The 490 years, as well as pointing to the greatest event in human history since the Fall—the coming of the Messiah—is probationary time for the Jews and Jerusalem *nationally*. They already have had 490 years of which the 70 years captivity was a seventh. "The land enjoyed its Sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfilment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah" (2 Chronicles 36:21).

The 70 years captivity was a consequence of the increasing apostasy and idolatry of the previous 400 years. God sent prophet after prophet to them but they would not listen. God said through Jeremiah,

"I will pronounce my judgments on my people because of their wickedness in forsaking me, in burning incense to other gods. And worshiping what their hands have made." (1:16). "But if you do not obey me to keep the Sabbath day holy by not carrying any load through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle an unquenchable fire in the gates of Jerusalem that will consume her fortresses." (17:27).

The Babylonian Captivity cured the Jews of idolatry. In their zeal to honour God and avoid idolatry many Jews, and especially the religious leaders, went to the other extreme and became legalistic and self-righteous. They "sought to establish their own" righteousness, "not by faith as it were but by works" (see Romans 9:30-33; 10:1-5). The majority rejected the Messiah and so the Jewish nation lost the privilege of being God's holy nation.

Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit." Quoting Psalm 118:22 and alluding to Daniel 2:34-35, 44 Jesus says, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." "When the chief priest and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people; held that he was a prophet." (Mat 21:42-44; Luke 20:17-18).

As a nation their probation ended after they crucified Christ. In A.D. 70 the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and over a million Jews perished. Many Jews, of course, did accept Jesus as the Messiah and formed the faithful remnant that became the Christian church (Rom 11; Eph 3:6; Gal 3:29).

11. Where in the Bible is the principle of a day symbolising a literal year clearly presented as applying to the apocalyptic time prophecies in Daniel and Revelation?

It is of interest for any evaluation of the historicist position, therefore [in comparison to “preterists and futurists” who “interpret the time elements in these prophecies as literal time.”], to determine whether or not this principle has been established through *reasonable* interpretations of Scripture. (Shea 1982, *Prophetic Interpretation*, 56).

In this study twenty-three biblical reasons validating the application of the year-day principle to the time periods in the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation have been reviewed. These lines of evidence have been divided into three main categories covering the spectrum of thought from the more general or least specific to the most specific reasons. (Shea 1982, *Prophetic Interpretation*, 85).

What is not presented in giving these so-called “twenty-three biblical reasons” is a clear and unambiguous principle that in the apocalyptic prophecy of Daniel and Revelation a day symbolises a year in literal time. The fact that Shea refers to establishing the year-day principle “through *reasonable* interpretations of Scripture” indicates that there is no clear year-day principle in Scripture that applies to apocalyptic prophecy.

This agrees with the Glacier View *Consensus Document*, which says:

The year-day relationship can be Biblically supported, although it is not explicitly identified as a principle of prophetic interpretation. (*Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary Consensus Document*. Sanctuary Review Committee, 1980. Reprinted in Frank B. Holbrook, ed. 1989. *Doctrine of the Sanctuary A Historical Survey (1845-1863)*. Silver Springs, MD: BRI. DARCOM Vol. 5, Appendix E, 225-233).

A very long bow, indeed, is drawn, to make some passages teach a year-day principle. For example:

This [Leviticus 25:1-7] is the earliest biblical text in which the year-day principle is reflected... It is clearly implied in Lev 25:1-7 that the sabbatical year is modelled from the sabbatical day, that is, from the weekly Sabbath. ... Thus there is a direct relationship between the “day” and the “year” since the same terminology was applied to both... (Shea 1982, *Prophetic Interpretation*, 69, 71).

The problem with the above statement is that nowhere in Lev 25:1-7 does it mention the word “day.” It only says that after “six years” of farming that “in the seventh year the land is to have a Sabbath rest” (verse 4).

The Year of Jubilee is treated in the same way.

A literal translation of the opening clause of Lev 25:8 reads: “You shall count seven sabbaths of years, seven years seven times, and to you the days of the seven sabbaths of years shall be forty-nine years.” ... a sabbath of years is to be understood as a *period** of seven years. The Sabbath was the seventh day of the week. In this passage the seventh day has been taken to stand for a *seventh year*.* As the seventh and concluding day of the week, the Sabbath has been taken over here to stand for the *seventh year* of a period of seven years. (**author’s Italics*) (Shea 1982, *Prophetic Interpretation*, 71).

Nowhere in this verse does it say that the seventh day Sabbath stands for a seventh year! Moses, in verses 1-7, has just outlined that the land is to rest every seventh year. In verse 8 he outlines how to calculate the Year of Jubilee, which is the fiftieth year after seven sabbatical years, or 49 years. Shea is reading the seventh-day Sabbath into this verse. He then transfers this understanding and reads it into Daniel 9.

Sabbatical-year terminology is applied to the 70-year period (Lev 25:1-7; 2 Chr 36:21; Dan 9:2). Since the land “enjoyed” a Sabbath every seven years, it is evident that the 70-year period of captivity contained ten sabbatical years. In like manner, jubilee terminology is linked to the 70 weeks, for a jubilee period was also measured in terms of “weeks” (“seven weeks [Sabbaths] of years,” or 49 years). The 70 weeks, or literally the 490 years, therefore, contained ten jubilees. (Shea 1982, *Prophetic Interpretation*, 79).

The jubilee was not measured in terms of “weeks.” It was measured in terms of seven sabbatical years, which were seven year periods.

The two passages that are traditionally used to support the year-for-a-day

relationship are Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6.

³⁴ According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day a year, you shall bear your iniquity, forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.” Numbers 14:34 (NRSV)

⁵ For I assign to you a number of days, three hundred ninety days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment; and so you shall bear the punishment of the house of Israel. ⁶ When you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah; forty days I assign you, one day for each year. Ezekiel 4:5-6 (NRSV)

In Numbers the days are past literal days and the years are future literal years. In Ezekiel the days are future literal days and the years are past literal years.

Shea refers to both these passages as examples of the year/day principle. The problem is, where in the Bible does it say that these verses are to be applied to *apocalyptic prophecy* and that a day is to symbolise a year *in the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation*? In the interpretations of the prophecies given to Daniel, where does it say that a day symbolises a year? We can no more use these passages as applying to Daniel and Revelation than we can use Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8, where there is a day / thousand year relationship.

Shea argues that the word *sabua* (Dan 9:24-27, “weeks” KJV) can not be translated as “sevens.” That is, as “seventy times seven” and thus implying “seventy times seven years,” instead of seventy “weeks.”

Two main but significantly different approaches have been taken toward this matter [*sabua*, “weeks” KJV in Daniel 9]. The first is to translate the word as “weeks” and to derive the prophecy’s time periods from the “days” which compose them. The calculation is done on the basis of the year-day principle. Thus each day of these “weeks” is viewed as a prophetic day standing for a historical year. ... The second approach is to translate this word as “sevens” ... it is

then held that *sabua* carries with it directly implied “years,” time. ...

From both Semitic sources and the LXX it may be concluded, therefore, that the best linguistic evidence currently available supports translating *sabua* as “weeks” in Dan 9:24-27. This word thus carries the year-day principle along with it in the 70-weeks prophecy. Furthermore, this application there *may be reasonably extended* to the other time prophecies of Daniel. (Shea 1982, *Prophetic Interpretation*, 74-77).

It is an assumption, that may or may not be true, that this application in Daniel 9:24-27 “*may be reasonably extended* to the other time prophecies of Daniel.”

The two main evidences that are given from the book of Daniel itself for the year-day principle are: (1) Because the context of the time periods are symbolic, therefore, the time periods must be symbolic, and (2) The pragmatic test in Daniel 9:24-27. Using the seventy weeks as 490 symbolic days that equal 490 years and then reasoning that if the “year-day principle” works here it is *reasonable* to apply it to the other time prophecies in Daniel.

Symbolic Context

The symbolic context does not help us to know that a day = a year in apocalyptic prophecy.

Apocalyptic prophecy, on the other hand, generally makes much greater use of symbols that is the case in classical prophecy. ... The time periods of Daniel are connected with these symbolic figures and their actions. ... The same point can also be made about the symbolic contexts of the time periods mentioned in Revelation. These thoroughgoing symbolic contexts *strongly suggest* that we would also treat their time units as symbolic. (Shea, 1982. *Prophetic Interpretation*, 61).

Not only do apocalyptic time periods appear in symbolic contexts, but they also are expressed on occasion in unusual time units.

The “evening-mornings” of Dan 8:14 presents an example of this. ... It *probably* was selected for this prophecy because it was particularly appropriate for the sanctuary activity

and the symbolism involved with it. ... The use of unusual time units that were not ordinarily employed for the computation of time, such as “evening-mornings,” “times,” and, to some extent, even “week,” *lends support to the idea* that something more than just literal time is involved here. (Shea 1982, *Prophetic Interpretation*, 61-62).

The symbolic language employed for these figures and the symbolic activities connected with them emphasize the *probability* that the related time period should also be interpreted symbolically as standing for a longer period of actual historical time. (Shea 1982, *Prophetic Interpretation*, 64).

Again the 3 ½ ‘*iddan* or “times” of Dan 7:25 are not the normal expressions of the Bible writers to denote time units. Although some commentators hold that this term is simply another word for “years,” there is *no lexical evidence* from either biblical or extra-biblical sources to support such a contention. (Shea 1982, *Prophetic Interpretation*, 62).

After saying that there is “*no lexical evidence*” to support “times” as “simply another word for ‘years,’” on the next page Shea refers to Dan 4:25 where the word “times” is the same word as in Dan 7:25.

Nebucadnezzar recovered his sanity “at the end of the days” (4:34 [31]) when the period involved covered *seven times* (4:25 [22]) *or years, as this unit is probably best interpreted*. (Shea 1982, *Prophetic Interpretation*, 63).

The period of 2300 “days” in Daniel 8:14 is considered a symbolic time period.

...prophetic time periods which span kingdoms must be taken to stand *symbolically* for longer periods of actual calendrical time in order for them to extend through the historical epochs of those kingdoms. ... The 2300 days of Dan 8:14 present a similar but broader picture [to the prophecy of Dan 9:24-27]. (Shea 1982, *Prophetic Interpretation*, 80).

The most obvious problem with applying a day for a year in Daniel 8:14, is that the word “day” does not occur in this verse. The text says 2300 “evenings-mornings.” This is considered, by some, as a reference to the evening and morning

sacrifices. Because of this, some interpret the time period as 1150 days.

That this period is symbolic, spanning several epochs of kingdoms, depends on the word “vision” in the question of verse 13 and the answer “unto 2300 days then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” applying to the whole vision and not just to the activities of the little horn. Any ambiguity here relegates the argument that the 2300 “evenings ~~and~~ mornings” symbolising years to the realm of speculation. If the word “vision” in v. 13 applies only to the activities of the little horn and not to the entire vision, then the view that the 2300 evenings-mornings symbolically represent historical years, confirming the year-day principle, vanishes. This is a very crucial point that is discussed further under question 12.

Pragmatic Test

The only real evidence that the year-day relationship is a biblical principle applying to apocalyptic prophecy is the pragmatic one. If we take “weeks” as the only meaning for the word *sabua* in Daniel 9:24-27 and then multiplying the 70 “weeks” (*sabua*) by seven to get 490 days, then applying the year for a day we get 490 years. This time frame approximately fits into the time from Ezra and Nehemiah’s time to the coming of the Messiah.

Weeks of Daniel 9

Two main but significantly different approaches have been taken toward this matter. The first is to translate the word as “weeks” and to derive the prophecy’s time periods from the “days” which compose them. The calculation is done on the basis of the year-day principle. Thus each day of these “weeks” is viewed as a prophetic day standing for a historical year. This is the approach taken by the historicist school of thought.

The second approach is to translate this word as “sevens, besevens, heptands, hebdomads” or the like. From this purely numerical kind of translation it is then held that *sabua* carries with it directly implied “years,” that is, it is taken to mean “sevens (of years),” literal and not symbolic time.

At the outset it is important to recognize that these temporal references occur in symbolic contexts. Hermeneutical consistency, therefore, demands that the time elements be treated in the same way as the rest of the symbolic imagery.

... (Shea 1982, *Prophetic Interpretation*, 74-75).

One of the main problems with deducing the year-day principle from the above pragmatic approach is that the word “day” does not occur in the text and “days” have to be construed from the “weeks”, but only if we interpret *sabua* as “weeks” and not as “sevens.” The fact that there is some ambiguity here renders dogmatism out of the question. It is a similar case with Daniel 8:14, as mentioned above, where the word “day” does not occur. The time period is “2300 evenings-mornings.”

William Johnsson, in his article, “Biblical Apocalypse,” in the *Handbook of Adventist Theology* has 1 ½ pages on the year-day principle. Contrary to Shea he interprets the term *sabua*, in Daniel 9:24, as “sevens” and refers to the time period as “seventy sevens.” As have others, Johnsson sees the connection between verse 2, where Daniel refers to the 70 years captivity predicted by Jeremiah, and verse 24. “In effect, Daniel says that the time allocated to the events mentioned in Daniel 9:24-27 would amount to *seven times ‘seventy years,’* of which Jeremiah spoke.” This contradicts the view that the time period should be interpreted as 490 days symbolic of 490 years.

The vision of Daniel 9:24-27 begins with a time period that literally reads “seventy sevens” or “seventy weeks.” The “seventy sevens” commences with the going forth of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem and continue until the coming of an Anointed One, His death, and the destruction of the city and sanctuary.

Both historico-critical and conservative scholars believe that the period of “seventy sevens” must be understood in terms of years in order to allow sufficient time for the fulfilment of the various aspects specified in verses 24-27. The unfolding of events detailed in this

passage requires more time than the one year, four months, and 10 days that a reading of “seventy sevens” in terms of days (i.e., 490 *days**) would allow. It is for this reason that commentators generally and some Bibles (e. g., the RSV) supply the word “years” after “seventy sevens” and read seventy weeks of years.”

This interpretation of the “seventy sevens” or “seventy weeks” receives support from the larger context. From Daniel 9:2, verse 24 takes up the concept of “seventy years” that Jeremiah predicted Israel would spend in Babylon (cf. Jer. 25:11, 12: 29:10). In effect, Daniel says that the time allocated to the events mentioned in Daniel 9:24-27 would amount to *seven times ‘seventy years,’** of which Jeremiah spoke. The reference to “seventy years” in Daniel 9:2 therefore suggests that the word “seventy” in verse 24 should also be understood in terms of years. (**Author’s emphasis*) (William Johnsson 2000. *Biblical Apocalyptic. Handbook* page 798).

12. Can we be certain that the word “vision” (Dan 8:13) applies to the whole vision and not to only part, namely, the activities of the little horn? THIS IS NO SMALL MATTER! OUR ENTIRE VIEW OF THE 2300 DAY/YEAR PROPHECY DEPENDS ON THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION.

It is important to decide just what vision is referred to in the initial clause of this question, *since it is the length of that vision which is measured off by the time period* given in answer to this question in Dan 8:14. *There are two alternatives here: Either the vision in question is the whole vision that the prophet has seen up to that point (vs 3-12), or it is only that portion of the vision which has to do with the little horn (vs 9-12).*

The interpretation adopted here is that the word “vision” in the question of v. 13 refers to the entire vision seen by the prophet up to that point, the vision that is described in the text from v 3 through v 12. The following reasons may be offered in support of this interpretation:

A. The elements in the question are recited in an order that is the reverse of what is found in the preceding description. The order in Dan 8:13 is: (1) *tamid* + *desolation*, (2)

sanctuary, and (3) *host*. In the description of the vision in vs 10-12 the order is: (1) *host*, (2) *sanctuary*, and (3) *tamid* + *desolation*. The reverse order of these elements cited in the question *leads naturally back* into those elements of the vision which *were not explicitly cited in the question*, and in its present position the word for vision becomes a summary of all of them.

B. If one applies the word “vision” in Dan 8:13 only to the activities of the little horn described beginning with v. 9, then one really has two visions...

C. The use of the word vision” (*hazon*) elsewhere in Dan 8 *supports the idea that this occurrence in v 13 refers to the whole vision of vs 3-12.* ... The prophet then reacted to the scenes that had passed before him by stating, “When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it” (v 15). The whole vision *appears to be in view* here since, in response to Daniel’s search for understanding, Gabriel’s explanation began with the Persian ram (v 20). In his further references to understanding the vision (v 17) and sealing it up (v 26) Gabriel *also appears to be* referring to the whole vision of vs 3-12.

The word “vision” or *hazon* occurs seven times in Dan 8: three times before the question of v 13 (vs 1-2) and three times after it (vs 15, 17, 26). In all six of these occurrences the reference *seems most likely to be* to the whole vision of vs 3-12. (Shea 1982, *Prophetic Interpretation*, p. 80-81).

This raises some important questions. For example, Does the time period span the entire vision (the ram, he-goat, and “little horn” periods)? Or is the time span of the vision limited to only the “little horn” period? Fortunately, the text provides an answer to these questions. ...

The textual evidence of this *technical vocabulary* is pivotal for answering the question of the time span covered by the vision. In short, *the time span covered by the hazon-vision in the question of verse 13 includes the entire range of events* the prophet was shown in verses 3-12.

Contextually and terminologically it is not limited to the “little horn” period. (Hasel 1986, “A Study of Daniel 8:9-14,” 433, 434).

...the description of verse 13 covers the entire vision of verses 3-12,

indicating, thereby, that the 2,300 evenings (and) mornings cover the period *all the way from the ram*, and he-goat, through the activities of the “little horn,” to the end of time (vss.17, 19). ... The 2,300 evenings (and) mornings *must* cover the whole period of the events symbolized, *beginning at some point during the ram period*. ...

This conclusion is of pivotal importance with respect to the entire meaning of chapter 8. *If it is correct* that “the vision” mentioned in verse 13 refers to the entire vision – first referred to in verses 1-2, described in verses 2-14, and referred to again in verse 15 – then chapter 8 can never conclude or terminate with Antiochus IV Epiphanies. (Hasel 1986, “A Study of Daniel 8:9-14,” 433-4).

Comments on the above answers to Qn 12

1. “Two alternative” interpretations

If there are “two alternative” interpretations, with evidence to support both, and we adopt one of them, how can we then say with certainty that the interpretation we adopt is the only correct one? As stated above, this is no small matter, because we build our whole case on the word “vision” in the question (v. 13) and the subsequent answer “unto 2300 days” (v. 14), as applying to the entire vision and not just to part, namely, the activities of the “little horn” of verses 9-12. From this we conclude that the 2300 days must symbolise years to span the entire period (verses 3-14) from Persia through to the “time of the end” (vv. 17, 19).

When it comes to the meaning of the ‘ram’ and the ‘goat’ there is no ambiguity. They represent Medo-Persia and Greece respectively (vv. 20-21). We can only be dogmatic that the 2300 days represent years, spanning the entire vision, if there is only one unambiguous meaning for the word “vision” in v.13. Any ambiguity destroys the certainty that our position is the only correct one and our whole interpretation on 1844 and the investigative judgment collapses.

2. What is “not explicitly cited in the question”

Exegesis is the act of drawing the meaning out of the text itself. Eisegesis is reading our own meaning into the passage. To build a case on what is “*not explicitly cited*” is not exegesis but eisegesis. Any number of theories and interpretations could be devised from what is “*not explicitly cited*” in the text.

It would seem that what is *explicitly cited* in verse 13 (i.e. the activities of the little horn), could be used as *explicit* evidence that the word “vision” in this verse and the answer in verse 14 (unto 2300 days), apply only to the activities of the “little horn” in verses 9-12.

What is explicitly asked in the question of verse 13 is:

“For how long is this vision concerning the **regular burnt offering**, the **transgression that makes desolate**, and the giving over of the **sanctuary and host** to be trampled?” (NRSV)

This is about the activities of the little horn in verses 9-12.

¹⁰ It grew as high as the host of heaven. It threw down to the earth some of the **host** and some of the stars, and trampled on them. ¹¹ Even against the prince of the host it acted arrogantly; it took the **regular burnt offering** away from him and overthrew the place of his **sanctuary**. ¹² Because of **wickedness**, the **host** was given over to it together with the **regular burnt offering**; it cast truth to the ground, and kept prospering in what it did. (NRSV)

3. Elaborate Intricate Arguments

To establish that the ram and the goat are Medo-Persia and Greece respectively is obvious—the text tells us this (see vv. 20-21), as mentioned above. There is no need for any elaborate intricate arguments (which are used to establish that the word ‘vision’ in v. 13 applies to the whole vision), to arrive at this conclusion.

The most obvious meaning of verse 13 is that the question is about how long will be the activities of the little horn in its attack on the daily sacrifice, the

sanctuary and the host. This is the most obvious meaning because that is what the text *explicitly* says.

It would seem that we are going to great lengths to make this passage fit our traditional view and to avoid any application of the little horn prophecy to Antiochus IV Epiphanies.

In the article “Divine Judgment” Hasel says:

What precisely is included in the time period that comes to an end with the 2300 evening[s] –morning[s]? *If* we can determine when the time period concludes, then we can determine when the beginning of the period commences and how far from that point it extends into the future. (Hasel 2000, Divine Judgment, *Handbook*, 836).

This statement has not been thought through carefully. It is saying: “If we can determine the end then we can determine the beginning and from that we can determine the end.”

13. Assuming that the word “vision” applies to the whole vision and not to part, namely, the activities of the little horn (which is what DARCOM and others have argued for above) why do we then arbitrarily apply the 2300 day/year prophecy to only part of the vision? Why do we start the 2300 days partway through the Persian period and not from the beginning of her dominance when Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.?

The word *vision** used here, however, makes no such distinction [between the ram and the he-goat (vv. 3-8) and the activities of the little horn (vv. 9-12)]. All that precedes this inquiry must be included in the reference to this (single) vision. *Thus the 2300-day period must include both the prophecies about the Persian ram and the Grecian he-goat as well as the description of the actions of the little horn*. *If* this is not the case, then the inquiring holy one *should have distinguished* between two preceding visions, which he did not do. In other words, the holy one did not inquire how long would the little horn take away the *tamid* etc.; instead he inquired as to how long a period of time would be covered by the vision including this subject. ...

The *only logical conclusion* I can come to from the use of the word *vision** in the query of the holy one in Dan 8:13 is, therefore, that he *included the whole procession of events* viewed by the prophet, beginning his question with the Persian ram at the beginning of that *vision*.* Therefore, by virtue of the use of the word *vision** in the question of Dan 8:13, *the beginning of the 2300 days should be dated historically sometime during the period of the supremacy of the Persian ram. But when during that period?* When Cyrus conquered the Medes? When the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon? When Alexander defeated the Persians? The point in the Persian period from which the 2300 days were to commence is not clarified in ch 8. (**Author's emphasis*) (Shea 1981. "Relationship between the Prophecies," 249-250).

It should next be noted that the 70 weeks of the prophecy in Dan 9:24-27 *clearly begin during the same Persian period*, at the time when the decree for the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem was to go forth. Since the prophetic time periods referred to in Dan 8 and 9 both were to begin during the same Persian period of history in the ancient Near East, *it seems reasonable*, in view of the connections between these two prophecies discussed above, to take the precise chronological point of commencement for the time period of the second of these two prophecies (the 70 weeks of ch 9) and employ it as the starting point for the time period referred to in the first of these two prophecies (the 2300 days of ch 8). (Shea 1981. "Relationship between the Prophecies," 250).

Should we interpret the 2300 days in terms of the year-day principle? The text itself points in this direction. The question of verse 13 asks, "Until when the vision . . . ?" We saw already that "vision" in Daniel 8 *designates the whole vision, beginning with the ram, Medo-Persia. The 2300 days were to start during the time of the Medo-Persian Empire* and end at the time when the eschatological day of atonement would begin. The fact that *the vision covers at least the history of two empires explicitly mentioned in it* (verses 20, 21) makes clear that the 2300 days cannot be literal days but

prophetic days--that is to say, years.[26] (Rodríguez 1991. *The Sanctuary and Its Cleansing*).

Hasel, in the article "Divine Judgment" argues that the word "vision" (v.13) "includes the entire "vision" from the ram period forward." Then contradicts himself, as do the writers above, when he states that it began "at some point *after* Babylon had come to an end in 539 B.C."

... the issue is whether the time period includes the entire historical period of the vision from its beginning or whether it begins at some later point during this historical period. ... The word "vision" is of essential importance for the question; this term is employed for the first time in Daniel 8:1, 2. The word thus includes the entire "vision" from the ram period forward. The word "vision" reappears in verse 13, where the question about its point of termination is asked. This reveals that the "vision" includes the historical periods of the ram, goat, and the little horn to "the time of the end" (verses 17, 19). ... The "vision" (*hazon*) began in the ram period, of the "kings of Media and Persia" (verse 20), This would be at some point *after* Babylon had come to an end in 539 B.C. (Hasel 2000. *Divine Judgment*, 836).

Seventeenth Century Commentator T. Beverly

To determine the time for the commencement of the 2300 days given in answer to that question, therefore, one must go back to the beginning of that overall vision. That takes us back to the time of the Persian ram in vs 3-4. From these correlations it may be concluded that the 2300 days *began sometime during the Persian period* (539-331 B.C.), the precise year being left unspecified here. *The implication of these observations has been noted by commentators on Daniel as early as 1684 ... as the following quotations indicate:*

"The *Vision* of the 2300 *Evenings and Mornings*, dates most exactly and precisely the Time from the very Beginning of the *Persian Monarchy* or the *First of Cyrus* to the *cleansing of the Sanctuary*, at the *new Jerusalem*, and the *breaking of Antichrist without hand*, or by

the stone *cut out of the Mountains without hand*, at the kingdom of Christ, Dan 8, 14, 25."

"Those 2300 are not the *Gauge of the daily Sacrifices taken away*, but of the whole *Vision*, from the *Persian* through the *Grecian*, the end of the Roman, *Antichristian Monarchy*, and the *Kingdom of Christ*."⁹

(Shea 1982, *Prophetic Interpretation*, 82)

These quotations are from T. Beverley cited by Shea to show that others, since the 17th century, have interpreted the word "vision" in v. 13 as applying to the whole vision. Notice that these quotations from T. Beverley apply the word "vision" "from the very Beginning of the *Persian Monarchy* or the *First of Cyrus*".

Footnote 9 for these quotations cited by Shea is:

⁹ T. Beverley, "An Explication of Daniel's Grand Line of Time, or of His 2300 Evenings and Mornings," *A Scripture-Line of Time*, pt 1, pp. 1, 14 (*author's italics*), cited by Leroy Edwin Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 2 (Washington, D.C., 1948): 583.

Referring to these quotations Froom says of Beverley: "He believed the period to extend from Cyrus, the typical restorer of Jerusalem, on to Christ, with the New Jerusalem as the great antitype." (1948, 2:583).

Why, after arguing that the word "vision" in verse 13 applies to the whole vision and not to part (i.e. the activities of the little horn), do we then apply the 2300 days, which is the answer to the question, "How long..." to only part of the vision (from 457 B.C. on)? We cannot have it both ways. We cannot argue that the word "vision" applies to the whole vision to avoid the application to Antiochus and then apply it to only part of the vision that suits us. If we are consistent then we must do what Beverley does above, and apply the 2300 days to the entire vision from 538 B.C. when Persia conquered Babylon and became a dominant power.

Summing Up

From what is presented above, we cannot consider our traditional view of the 2300 days and the 70 weeks to be biblically based. If, as Frank Holbrook has said, “The messianic prophecy of the 70 weeks, which also forms the first part of the longer 2300 day time span, *finds genuine meaning only if its correct commencement date can be established,*” then we have *failed* to establish a correct commencement date from the Bible and the other central issues associated with that date.

Both the DARCOM and subsequent writers have failed to establish and demonstrate clearly and unambiguously from the Bible the 1844 investigative judgment. Assumptions have been made at each of the following crucial steps:

1. That Artaxerxes of Ezra 7 is Artaxerxes I
2. That the decree of Artaxerxes I, as recorded in Ezra 7, is the “decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem”
3. That the date of the issuing of the decree of Artaxerxes is 457 B.C.
4. That Ezra used the Jewish fall to fall calendar
5. That the 70 weeks prophecy explains the 2300 day prophecy and that the starting point of the 70 weeks is the starting date of the 2300 days
6. That a day in apocalyptic prophecy symbolises a year.
7. That the word “determined”(Daniel 9:24) means “cut off” and that the 70 weeks are “cut off” from the *beginning* of the 2300 days. Daniel 9:24 applies it “for your people and for your holy city.”
8. That the starting date of the 70 weeks prophecy is when Artaxerxes’ decree goes into effect in the fall of 457 B.C., after Ezra arrives in Jerusalem in early summer. (Shea has since postulated that it was Ezra who

issued the decree in the summer/spring of 456 B.C., completely undermining our previous position).

9. That Jesus was baptised in A.D. 27
10. That the word “vision” in Daniel 8:13 applies to the whole vision and not to part, namely, the activities of the “little horn.” (After arguing that it applies to the entire vision, it is then, in contradiction, applied to part of the vision {commencing in 457 B.C. instead of 538 B. C.})

It seems that our scholars, in their enthusiasm to defend the traditional position, have overstated the evidence. In doing this, at each crucial stage in the establishment of the church’s position on these two prophecies they have used presuppositions. Hasel correctly criticises the Dispensational school of interpretation for basing its views on assumptions. (Hasel 1986. *Interpretations*, 14-15).

The New Testament

Perhaps the greatest problem with the doctrine of 1844 and the investigative judgment is that it is not taught in the New Testament. The relationship between the Old Testament and the New is that the NT interprets and explains the OT. Not everything from the OT is carried over into the NT.

Dispensationalists teach that the Jews are still God’s chosen people, Palestine is still the Holy Land and Jerusalem is still God’s Holy City, nationally and geographically. They point to passages in the OT that indicate that Israel and Jerusalem are to stand forever (Genesis 17:8; Psalm 48, Joel 3:20-21, etc.). They interpret the NT by the OT and not the other way around. They fail to see that Israel in the NT is identified by a relationship with Jesus the Messiah and is spiritual. Jerusalem, in the NT is not the Jerusalem in Palestine, but is from above (Galatians 4; Hebrews 12; Revelation 21). The OT promises

concerning Israel in the OT are reinterpreted in the NT in relationship to Jesus (Galatians 3:29; Romans 2:28-29; 4:1-25, etc.).

The book of Hebrews is the main NT book that explains the sanctuary. In the introductory note “To the Reader” in *Issues in the Book of Hebrews* (Frank B. Holbrook, Editor, 1989 DARCOM Vol. 4) it says:

Hebrews provided our pioneers with the initial insights to resolve the dilemma of the 1844 disappointment. The Epistle pointed them not to the church or the earth as the sanctuary to be cleansed in the Christian era but to the heavenly sanctuary, the counterpart of the Israelite tabernacle/temple. By faith they beheld the Saviour as their high priest entering upon the second phase of His priestly ministry, corresponding to the Most Holy Place ministration in the typical sanctuary on earth.

Strange as it may seem, the book that brought great joy to our pioneers has caused other Adventists to withdraw from the church. *The charge is that Hebrews denies the Adventist belief that Christ mediates in a two-phase priestly ministry* (antitype of the daily and yearly ministrations in the earthly sanctuary) with the latter ministry beginning in 1844. It is asserted that according to Hebrews Christ ascended after His death and resurrection to the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary and began a one-phased, intercessory ministry. In 1844 nothing happened in terms of His assuming an additional ministry.

Consequently, the issue addressed by the Committee was delimited to a twofold question: (1) Does Hebrews explicitly teach Christ’s two-phased priestly ministry? (2) Does Hebrews deny Christ’s two-phased priestly ministry? *Eventually the Committee rendered a negative response to both questions.*

Here the Committee is saying that the book of Hebrews neither affirms nor denies 1844 and the investigative judgment. If the NT explains the OT and Hebrews is the main book in the NT explaining the OT sanctuary, then to *NOT* affirm this teaching *IS* to deny it!

The NT does of course affirm judgment. As Jon Paulien points out, there are three phases of judgment in the NT: Judgment at the cross (John 12:30-33; 16:11), judgment at the preaching of the gospel (John 3:16-18; 5:22-25) and judgment at the end (John 12:28-29; Acts 17:31; John 5:28-29; Rom 14.10; 2 Cor 5.10). (Elder's Summer School, Melbourne 2002, on CD). The Bible very clearly states that we are judged by our works, because how we live reveals what we believe.

William Johnsson, one of the main writers in *Issues in the book of Hebrews*, in his book *In Absolute Confidence* (1979) says:

The Day of Atonement references have deeply disturbed some SDA Students of Hebrews. They have reasoned that Hebrews parallels the Old Testament Yom Kippur ceremonies with the work of Christ on Calvary, thereby indicating that Christ fulfilled His ministry in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary at Calvary. Such a conclusion, of course, makes shipwreck of the traditional SDA view of a "first apartment" work up to 1844 with the "second-apartment" function of judgment—the antitype of the Old Testament Day of Atonement—commencing in 1844.

The problem and their reaction to it illustrates well a basic principle of Biblical interpretation: *We must put to the text only questions appropriate to its context. ... The apostle here definitely does not deal with the work of Christ in the heavenly tabernacle from a time perspective.* What he is concerned with is one supreme idea—the all-sufficiency of His death. ...

The argument of Hebrews, then, does not deny the SDA sanctuary doctrine, because *basically it does not address the issue.* We may say, particularly on the strength of 9:23, that it allows for it. *But we cannot dilute the apostle's emphasis on one point in time—the once-for-all sacrifice of Calvary—by importing into the context considerations of subsequent events in history.* (115-116)

The above two paragraphs contradict each other. If "*the apostle's emphasis [is] on one point in time—the once-for-all*

sacrifice of Calvary," then the apostle is dealing with the work of Christ *from a time perspective.* Again, for Hebrews *not to address the SDA sanctuary doctrine is to deny it.* If it is not in Hebrews where else is it in the NT?

What is true is that we must not "*dilute the apostle's emphasis on one point in time—the once-for-all sacrifice of Calvary.*" Notice what Hebrews (from the NIV) says:

1:3: After he had provided purification [*katharismos*] for sins, he **sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.**

["Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." "At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." (John 19:30; Matthew 27:51)].

2:14-15: Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that *by his death* he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

[³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die (John 12:31-33)]

4:14, 16: Therefore, since we have a great high priest *who has gone through the heavens*, Jesus the Son of God. ... Let us then *approach the throne of grace with confidence*, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

7:24-27: Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives *to intercede* for them. ²⁶ Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day ... He sacrificed for their sins *once for all* when he offered himself.

8:1-2: We do have such a high priest, *who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,* ² and who serves in the sanctuary, the true

tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.

9:6-11: the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. ⁷ But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that *only once a year*, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. ⁸ The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. ⁹ This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear [*teleioun*] the conscience of the worshiper. ¹⁰ They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

9:11-14: 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 *once for all* by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly *clean* [*katharizō*]. ¹⁴ How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, *cleanse* [*katharizō*] *our consciences* from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

9:22-28: In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be *cleansed* [*katharizō*] with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. ²³ It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be *purified* [*katharizō*] with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, *now to appear for us in God's presence.* ²⁵ Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place *every year* with blood that is not his own [Day of Atonement]. ²⁶ Then Christ would

have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared *once for all* at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.²⁷ Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,²⁸ so Christ was *sacrificed once* to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

10:10-14: And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*.

¹¹ Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, *he sat down at the right hand of God.* ...¹⁴ because *by one sacrifice* he has made *perfect [teleioun]* forever those who are being made holy.

10:19-22: Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ *by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,*²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² *let us draw near to God* with a sincere heart *in full assurance* of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to *cleanse us from a guilty conscience* and having our bodies washed with *pure [katharos]* water.

Enormous resources expended

Why is it that we have expended enormous resources of time, money and scholarship to defend a position that can only be substantiated by a series of presuppositions and not on clear biblical grounds? The mandate for the DARCOM writers was to “focus on the Scriptural basis for belief” and not on the writings of Ellen White.

I can only conclude that we do this because Ellen White endorsed 1844 and the pre-advent investigative judgment. We want to defend the integrity of our prophet. I believe she had the prophetic gift and I treasure her writings and find them a great blessing. Some of her statements on the substitutionary atonement and the imputed (credited)

righteousness of Christ are as clear as any that can be found. But spiritual gifts are subordinate to the Bible, which is the ultimate authority for doctrine.

Cognitive Dissonance,

What we have here is a classic case of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance occurs when we hold two conflicting thoughts in the mind at the same time. Some examples are: being opposed to the slaughter of animals and eating meat; being an anti-abortionist yet supporting war; believing smoking is bad for the health and continuing smoking. Something has to change to eliminate the discord and bring psychological harmony. In the case of a discrepancy between attitudes and behaviour, it is most likely that the attitude will change to accommodate the behavior. Smokers, for example, who know that it is unhealthy, will often rationalize and say, “I’ll put on weight if I stop smoking.”

We have a lot at stake here. This is our one “unique” doctrine that gives us “our distinctive identity as Seventh-day Adventists.” It is “directly connected to the self-identity of the Adventist movement, its message, and its mission.” “The fulfilment of Daniel 8:14 in 1844 validates the presence of Seventh-day Adventists in the world, and particularly in the Christian community.” It is what our pioneers taught and what Ellen White endorsed.

Yet no non-Adventist Bible scholar, as well as some dissident Adventist scholars, can find this doctrine in the Bible! And it can be seen from what has been presented above that they are right. Our scholars have not been able to confirm the 1844 pre-Advent judgment from the Bible without making a string of assumptions.

How do we resolve the dilemma we are in? This is our one unique doctrine, endorsed by Ellen White, to which we have tied our self identity. On this basis, to admit it is not true is to deny our right to exist and to say Ellen White and our pioneers were wrong.

What we have done, instead of admitting that our pioneers got it wrong, is to *rationalize* the “uniqueness” of this doctrine (“*because no one else teaches this*”), into “evidence” of our “special calling.” Note what was cited at the beginning of this paper:

For some, this fact is worrisome: *Why don't more Christians see it, as well?** For others, the uniqueness of the doctrine [the 1844 pre Advent judgment] points even more powerfully to the *special calling* of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *It's precisely because no one else teaches this judgment that we have been raised to do so.* From this doctrine, perhaps more than any other, our distinct identity as Seventh-day Adventists arises. (**Author's emphasis*) (Clifford R. Goldstein. “The Gospel, 1844 and the Judgment.” April to June, 2006, p. 2).

Spiritual Gifts

The integrity of Ellen White is not at stake here. It is only under threat if we have an incorrect view of inspiration and fail to recognise that the prophetic gift has its limitations.

Prophets are not infallible

Nathan was wrong to tell David he could build the temple (2 Samuel 7). John the Baptist, called the greatest of the prophets, was wrong when he doubted that Jesus was the Messiah (“are you the one, or do we look for another?” Luke 7:18-28). Paul was wrong in rejecting John Mark, who later proved to be a good helper (see Acts 15:36-41; 1 Peter 5:13; Col 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11).

Ellen White was not infallible, and she never claimed infallibility. She grew, changed her mind on issues, and was constantly open for more light. (Gerhard Pfandl 2009, *The Prophetic gift*, Adult Teachers Sabbath School Guide, Jan Feb Mar 2009, 110).

Ellen White said:

In regard to infallibility, I never claimed it; God alone is infallible. His word is true, and in Him is no variableness, or shadow of turning. (*Selected Messages*. Book 1, 37).

Prophets are products of their times.

The popular view of the coming of the Messiah, at the time of the first advent, was that He would set up the kingdom of God in Israel and get rid of the hated Roman yoke. The people were expecting a physical political kingdom such as was the case at the time of David and Solomon.

The disciples were expecting this and were shattered by the death of Jesus ("we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel" Luke 24:21). Even after the resurrection they still thought this. ("Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" Acts 1:6).

Peter, following Jewish custom at the time, separated himself from the Gentile believers when Jewish Christian leaders came from Jerusalem. He was wrong and Paul had to rebuke him. (Galatians 2:11-14).

Ellen White also was a product of her time. She said that the Artaxerxes of Ezra 4 was the False Smerdis (522 B.C.) (*Prophets and Kings*, pages 572-573). Our DARCOM scholars and others do not accept her view on this. They consider that it was Artaxerxes I (465-423 B.C). See above under Question 3.

Bishop Ussher (1581-1656) calculated from Genesis that the world was created 4004 B.C. This chronology was inserted in the margins of many editions of the King James Version in the 19th century. Ellen White reflected this view that the world was about 6000 years old.

Ussher's view is discredited by scholars today. Siegfried Horn, one of our greatest archaeologists, at a Bible conference in the early 1970s, said that archaeology shows that the world is older than 6000 years. "We cannot use archaeology to prove the Bible and then reject its findings when those findings don't suit us."

William Shea, at a later Bible Conference, disagreed with the application of Revelation 9 to the fall of the Ottoman Empire (*The Great*

Controversy 334-335, 691). He applied it to a later historical event. He then asked the question, "What do we do with what Ellen White has said? His answer, "She was reflecting the popular view of her day."

Ellen White's view of the investigative judgment is not the view that the church promotes today. The view presented in *Great Controversy* gives no assurance of salvation until our lives pass the scrutiny of the judgment and we are perfected by the atoning work of Jesus. And, to add to the uncertainty, we don't know when our names will come up in the judgment.

Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are *to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator*. Their robes must be *spotless*, their characters must be *purified* from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. While the *investigative judgment* is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a *special work of purification*, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14 (page 425).

... our great High Priest enters the holy of holies and there appears in the presence of God to engage in the last acts of His ministration in behalf of man--to perform the work of *investigative judgment and to make an atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to its benefits*. ... in the great day of *final atonement and investigative judgment* the only cases considered are those of the professed people of God. The judgment of the wicked is a distinct and separate work, and takes place at a later period. ... The books of record in heaven, in which the names and *the deeds of men* are registered, are to *determine the decisions of the judgment*. ...

The law of God is the standard by which the characters and the lives of men will be tested in the judgment. ... Those who in the judgment are "accounted worthy" will have a part in the resurrection of the just. ... *When any have sins remaining upon*

the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven, their names will be blotted out of the book of life, and the record of their good deeds will be erased from the book of God's remembrance. ... It is impossible that the sins of men should be blotted out until after the judgment at which their cases are to be investigated.

At the time appointed for the judgment--the close of the 2300 days, in 1844--*began the work of investigation and blotting out of sins. ... Sins that have not been repented of and forsaken will not be pardoned and blotted out of the books of record, but will stand to witness against the sinner in the day of God. ... God has an exact record of every unjust account and every unfair dealing...*

In the judgment the use made of *every talent will be scrutinized*. ... Those who would share the benefits of the Saviour's mediation should permit nothing to interfere with their duty to *perfect holiness* in the fear of God. ... *Everyone must be tested and found without spot or wrinkle* or any such thing. ...

The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. ... *Soon--none know how soon--it will pass to the cases of the living. In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review*. ... When the work of the investigative judgment closes, the destiny of all will have been *decided* for life or death (pages 480-490).

What is said in the DARCOM series and other sources is quite different from the above. But there is still an endeavour to marry what God has not joined together – completed atonement at the cross and a special cleansing work of Jesus during the investigative judgment. We cannot marry grace and end time sinless perfection. This has the affect of detracting from the completed atonement at the cross.

Without complete assurance that God forgives and accepts us we cannot possibly live for Christ and in harmony with His claims. ... the investigative judgment *ratifies and confirms the justification procured by Christ at the cross and received by believers through faith*. (Ivan T. Blazen. Christ: Savior and Lord. *Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy*. 1986, volume 3, 373, 382).

In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but *the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus*. The investigative judgment *reveals* to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have a part in the first resurrection. It also makes *manifest* who among the living are abiding in Christ... It *declares* that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom (*Fundamental Beliefs*, 24).

On the cross the penalty for human sin was fully paid. Divine justice was satisfied. From a legal perspective the world was restored to favour with God (Rom. 5:18). *The atonement, or reconciliation, was completed on the cross* as foreshadowed by the sacrifices, and the penitent believer can trust in this *finished* work of our Lord. ...

The Day of Atonement, then, illustrates the judgment process that deals with the eradication of sin. The atonement performed on this day “foreshadowed *the final application of the merits of Christ* to banish the presence of sin for all eternity and to accomplish the full reconciliation of the universe into one harmonious government under God. ... *Atonement by judgment* will, therefore, bring about a fully reconciled and harmonious universe. ...

Daniel’s vision indicated that Christ’s role as our high priest would be made especially prominent toward “the time of the end” (Dan. 8:17), when He would begin *His special work of cleansing and judgment in addition as to His continual intercessory ministry* (Heb. 7:25). ...

Why then a pre-advent investigative judgment? This judgment is not for the benefit of the Godhead. *It is primarily for the benefit of the universe*, answering the charges of Satan and giving assurance to the unfallen creation that God will allow into His kingdom only those who truly have been converted. So God opens the books of record for impartial inspection (Dan. 7:9, 10). ... (*What Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 1988, 315, 318-19, 322, 325).

One of the accomplishments of the pre-Advent judgment is the *determination* of those among the

professed people who will inherit the kingdom. ... Regarding the professed people of God, this work is judicial, yet *redemptive*, revealing that the *atonement process* begun with the death of Christ at the cross comes to an end at the conclusion of the pre-advent investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary. (Hasel 2000. “Divine Judgment,” 844, 845),

Daniel 8:14 and the sanctuary inform us that Christ is *now performing* the last aspect of his high priestly work in the heavenly sanctuary. *The antitypical day of atonement is in progress* and God is judging His people. ... While the sanctuary is being *cleansed*, our spiritual life also should be *cleansed* from sin. (Rodregus 2000, “The Sanctuary,” 401).

Spiritual Gifts Tested by the Word

New Testament spiritual gifts are to be tested and subjected to the Bible, not the other way around.

Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 (NIV)

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 1 John 4:1 (NIV)

As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe in the gifts of the Spirit, including prophecy, but we also believe that everything should be tested by the Word of God. (Pfundl 2009. *The Prophetic gift*).

The Spirit was not given - nor can it ever be bestowed - to supersede the Bible; for Scriptures explicitly state that the Word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Ellen G. White. *The Great Controversy*, p. vii).

The Bible the Only Rule of Faith and Practice

The preamble to our fundamental beliefs states:

Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church's understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the

church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God’s Holy Word.

Gerhard Pfandl’s comments on Ellen White are relevant:

Her writings are not another Bible, nor do they carry the kind of authority found in the Bible. In the end, the Bible and the Bible alone is our ultimate authority. (Pfundl 2009, *The Prophetic gift*, 98).

The crucial point to remember is that our church’s doctrines are based solely on the Bible. They are not dependent upon Ellen White’s writings; however helpful she has been in clarifying some of those teachings. (Pfundl 2009, *The Prophetic gift*, 113).

Ellen White’s writings are never to be used in place of the Bible; on the contrary, she spent her life trying to get church members to read the Bible and make it the rule of faith for their lives. (Pfundl 2009, *The Prophetic gift*, 152).

Ellen White herself said:

In our time there is a wide departure from their [the Scriptures'] doctrines and precepts, and there is need of a return to the great Protestant principle - the Bible, and the Bible only, as the rule of faith and duty. (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 204, 205).

The Everlasting Gospel

It is an overstatement that the relevance of our message and our right to exist are diminished or denied if we admit that the 1844 investigative judgment is not biblical. The Sabbath, the state of the dead, God as creation, the health message and holistic view of human nature, the emphasis on holy living, Christ’s intercession in the heavenly sanctuary, the Second Coming, and especially Jesus’ substitutionary atonement and the everlasting gospel, etc. are all still true and relevant today.

The everlasting gospel is the heart of the Three Angel’s Messages (Rev 14:6-12), which in turn is to be at the heart of the Advent message (See E. G. White. *Evangelism*, page 190). With the gospel at the centre of our message we have something very important to share with

the world, but without the gospel we are just another sect.

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you ... By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4 NIV)

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:23-26 NIV)

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6-8 NIV)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-10 NIV)

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will *not be condemned*; he has crossed over from death to life. (John 5:24 NIV). Therefore, there is now *no condemnation* for those who are in Christ Jesus, (Romans 8:1 NIV)

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know

that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:11-13 NIV)

Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. ... The sacrifice of Christ *as an atonement for sin* is the great truth around which all other truths center....This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers. (*Gospel Workers* 156, 315).

Hanging upon the cross Christ was the gospel. (Ellen White. *S.D.A. Bible Commentary* Vol. 6, 1113). Christ’s sacrifice in behalf of man was *full and complete*. The condition of the atonement *had been fulfilled*. (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 29).

The great work that is wrought for the sinner who is spotted and stained by evil, is the work of justification. By Him who speaketh truth He is declared righteous. ***The Lord pronounces him righteous before the universe*** [Could we say: This is the pre-Advent judgment that “reveals to heavenly intelligences” (Belief 24), what takes place *at the time when a person accepts Jesus*]. He transfers his sins to Jesus, the sinner’s representative, substitute, and surety. . . . Christ made satisfaction for the guilt of the whole world, and all who come to God in faith, will receive the righteousness of Christ. (*Selected Messages*, book 1 392).

As our Substitute and Representative everything that happened to Jesus is provisionally counted as happening to the whole human race and this becomes ours when we accept by faith Jesus as Saviour! When He died we died (2 Corinthians 5:14), when He was buried we were buried (Rom 6:3-4), when He was resurrected we were resurrected (Rom 6:4-5), when He ascended on high we ascended (Col 3:1), when He sat down in heaven we sat down in heaven in Him (Eph 2:6). His victory is our victory (Heb 2:14; Rom 8:37). His righteousness is our righteousness credited to us when we believe (Rom 4:6).

For those who accept Jesus as Saviour the Father has qualified us “to share in the inheritance of the saints.” He “has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the

kingdom of the Son he loves” (Col 1:12-13) We are children of God (John 1:12-14), members of the household of God (Eph 2:19-22) and citizens of heaven now (Phil 3:20-21). This is not an excuse for lax living. How we live reveals what we believe Now God wants us to live as His children, in obedience to His will, out of gratitude.

The two greatest threats to the gospel are legalism on the one hand and liberalism on the other. Legalism is the view that something we do contributes to our salvation. Crudely put, it is the view that we can earn salvation by what we do. A more subtle form of legalism is to substitute the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit for the finished work of Christ. The ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in us is then made the bases of salvation instead of the finished work of Jesus.

With liberalism, some people turn the liberty of the gospel into licence to do as they please (eg. Gal 5:13). The position of those who say because of grace we do not have to obey God’s commandments (or who are careless about obedience), is just as destructive of the gospel as legalism.

Ministers can believe quite aberrant and perfectionist views of the gospel and still retain their credentials. Some hold that Christ had a sinful human nature, but did not sin through the power of the Holy Spirit. They reason, if He could do it then so can we. They see Jesus primarily as our Example in holy living, rather than as our Substitute in paying for our sins and crediting us with His righteousness. The last generation, some claim, will be without sin through the final atonement of Christ performed during His closing ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, where He perfects the saints.

This was the view of Robert Brinsmead and the Sanctuary Awakening offshoot of the 1960s. It still is the teaching of some independent groups today. It makes the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, making us righteous, the basis of our justification instead of the finished work of Jesus on the cross. It is based on the view that sin

is wilful wrong-doing and not the possession of sinful propensities. Making the Holy Spirit our Justifier instead of Jesus and limiting sin to wilful wrong doing are Catholic views of salvation in opposition to the Protestant Reformation view. The Reformers taught from Scripture that sin is nature as well as wilful wrong-doing and that God declares us righteous based on the finished work of Jesus.

Ministers can believe these unscriptural views of the gospel and retain their credentials, but if they question 1844 and the Investigative Judgment and express doubts about these teachings, which are not salvation issues, they could be dismissed.

An Appeal for Reassessment

Ellen White has said,

Error is never harmless. It never sanctifies, but always brings confusion and dissension. It is always dangerous. (Testimonies vol. 5, 292).

Every position of truth taken by our people will bear the criticism of the greatest minds; ... therefore every position we take should be critically examined and tested by the Scriptures. ... if our theories of truth can be picked to pieces by historians or the world's greatest men, it will be done. (Evangelism 69.1).

The testimonies of Sister White should not be carried to the front. God's Word is the unerring standard. *The Testimonies are not to take the place of the Word.* ... Let all prove their positions from the Scriptures and substantiate every point they claim as truth from the revealed Word of God. (Evangelism 256.2).

For a time Paul did a very cruel work, thinking that he was doing God service; for he says, "I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1:13). But *his sincerity did not justify his work, or make error truth.* (Selected Messages Book 1, 346)

New light will ever be revealed on the word of God to him who is in living connection with the Sun of Righteousness. Let no one come to the conclusion that there is no more truth to be revealed. The diligent, prayerful seeker for truth will find precious rays of light yet to shine

forth from the word of God. Many gems are yet scattered that are to be gathered together to become the property of the remnant people of God. ...

There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, *and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error.* The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, *is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.* ...

How shall we search the Scriptures? Shall we drive our stakes of doctrine one after another, and then try to make all Scripture meet our established opinions? or shall we take our ideas and views to the Scriptures, and measure our theories on every side by the Scriptures of truth? Many who read and even teach the Bible, do not comprehend the precious truth they are teaching or studying. ... *Many give the words of Scripture a meaning that suits their own opinions, and they mislead themselves and deceive others by their misinterpretations of God's word.* ...

Long-cherished opinions must not be regarded as infallible. It was the unwillingness of the Jews to give up their long-established traditions that proved their ruin. ...

We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed. (Ellen G White. *Counsels to Writers and Editors* 35-37).

Adventist theologian Frank M. Hasel says,

From the very beginning Adventist Believers have considered themselves as people of the Book, literally as Bible-believing Christians in the full tradition of the Reformers of the sixteenth century. Seventh-day Adventists acknowledge that for a correct interpretation of Scriptures the Scripture itself is foundational (1

Cor 4:6). Hence, they affirm the scriptural principle summarized in the Reformation slogan: *sola scriptura*—by Scripture alone (Frank Hasel. Presuppositions in the interpretation of Scripture. In George W. Reid, ed. *Understanding Scripture, an Adventist Approach*, 2006, 36).

Can we claim to be “people of the Book” and heirs of the Reformation’s *sola scriptura*, while we “go beyond what is written” in Scripture (1 Cor 4:6)? This one “unique doctrine” undermines our credibility as “Bible-believing Christians.” By far, the great majority of Adventists have no understanding of these issues and few could give an intelligent Bible study on the prophecies of Daniel 8 and 9. They just accept the church’s teaching on the subject. How will they feel when they eventually discover that this doctrine that we make so central is unbiblical? By allowing this unscriptural teaching to prevail, we detract from the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus and the completed atonement at the cross. We also undermine the assurance of salvation for many Adventists who believe they have to reach a certain level of holiness before they are ready for heaven.

While this situation remains we sap the energy and morale of pastors who know that this doctrine is unscriptural. They want to be honest with Scripture and with church members and the people they study with but they cannot without suffering reproach and the distinct possibility of dismissal. This I believe is stifling our mission, especially in Western countries among thinking people.

There are Adventist administrators, scholars, pastors and members who want the church to correct this error. Have we the moral courage, the will and the humility to this? This paper is an appeal to the church to re-assess this unique teaching in the light of Scripture.