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**AN EXAMINATION OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST INTERPRETATION
OF TWO TIME PROPHECIES IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL - THE 2300 DAYS
OF DANIEL 8 AND THE 70 WEEKS OF DANIEL 9.**

ASSUMPTION 18

**The phrase “to seal the vision and the prophecy” in Dn9:24:
(a) refers to the vision of Dn8, or;
(b) signals the marker for the end of the seventy weeks**

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The Purposes of This Assumption

There are two purposes in the use of the phrase “to seal [the] vision and [the] prophecy (Dn9:24) in the writings of SDA historicists. One purpose was used by SDA pioneers and the bulk of Adventist workers up until recently. The second purpose is the brainchild of a contemporary SDA scholar, Dr. William H. Shea.

The Reasoning by the Pioneers of this Assumption. The purpose of this assumption is to use the reference to “vision” in Dn9:24 to support the SDA interpretation of the relation between the 2300 days and the 70-weeks. To be more specific, they want to use this text to show that the 2300 days is 2300 years. This is done by arguing the seventy weeks prophecy was fulfilled by using the year-day principle. This then “seals” or confirms that the same principle should be used with the 2300 days of Daniel 8. Put differently, the seventy weeks “seals” or confirms the interpretation of 2300 days to be 2300 years.

The New Assumption Reasoning developed by Shea with support by others. This assumption uses the same infinitival phrase “to seal up vision and prophet” to endorse William Hale’s and Tanner’s theory concerning the end of the seventy weeks. They argued that the end of the seventy weeks is marked off with the sealing or ending of the prophetic ministry to the Jews with the stoning of Stephen. This argument was advanced without “any single exegetical connection between Stephen and Daniel 9: 24-27.” (Paroschi, 1998, p.344)

It has been argued recently that there has been a major breakthrough, notably from the research of Dr. William H. Shea, in finding scriptural evidence for using the stoning of Stephen as a Biblical marker for the ending of the seventy weeks. Although the use of this infinitival phrase to indicate the end of the seventy weeks is an entirely new approach to the verse, it highlights firstly, the change in perspective on the same phrase to that used by the SDA pioneers; secondly, the unwillingness of current SDA scholars to use the argument of the SDA pioneers linking Dn9:24 to Dn8 through the use of the definite article in the text; and thirdly, it highlights the invalidity of the pioneer’s argument, as will become more obvious as we proceed.

The Methods used in This Assumption and their Associated Problems

From the foundation of the SDA church and up to the 1950s, there was ever only one method among SDA historicists of explaining the statement “to seal the vision and the prophecy.” That method was to make it endorse their interpretation of the 2300 days of Dn8:14 by saying that the seventy weeks sealed or confirmed the vision and the prophecy of the 2300 days. However, with the continuation of biblical research and the frank admission of some SDA scholars, the foundation of this traditional historicist method disintegrated. There is a group of scholars and writers in the SDA church however, who are loathe to abandon old positions. Consequently, contemporary writings, as we shall see, still assert a strange amalgam of contemporary scholarship together with abandoned traditional exegesis on this text in a bid to placate both viewpoints. This paper looks at the variety of approaches used by SDA historicists. It then looks at a contemporary approach by Shea who takes an entirely different view on this infinitival phrase, which in the process of establishing his particular view fatally undermines the original arguments

used by SDA historicists with this assumption. After examining these perspectives, it examines the views of some prominent non-SDA writers on the topic. Lastly, it highlights the assumptions used in this assumption.

The Traditional Explanation of the Sealing of “the vision and the prophet:” The Fulfillment of The Seventy-Weeks Confirms the 2300-days to be 2300 years.

The text of Dn9:24 says:

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. (KJV)

This section focuses on the traditional understanding and explanation of the clause “to seal up the vision and prophecy.” As will be seen from the quotations to follow from SDA publications, this clause has been seen to refer to both the 70-week prophecy and the vision of ch8. The presence of this clause is thus argued as a terminological link between Dn8 and 9.

In the following quotes, we see a sample from SDA writers both nineteenth century and contemporary, arguing that the year-day principle is being used in Dn9. This argument says that the fulfillment of the 70-week prophecy proves the validity of the year-day principle and justifies its use for the 2300 days:

The vision and the prophecy were to be sealed up, or made sure. By the events given to transpire in the seventy weeks, the prophecy is tested. By this the application of the whole vision is determined. If the events of this period are accurately fulfilled, the prophecy is of God, and will all be accomplished; and if these seventy weeks are fulfilled as weeks of years, then the 2300 days, of which these are a part, are so many years. Thus the events of the seventy weeks furnish a key to the whole vision. (Smith, 1870, p.; cf also Smith, 1944, pp.203-4)

“To seal up the vision.” Events transpired within these four hundred ninety years that sealed, or established the entire vision of the two thousand three hundred years. (Haskell, 1970, pp.193-194)

Notice Smith’s line of logic again from the reference at the beginning of this section.

- By the events given to transpire in the seventy weeks, the prophecy is tested.
- By this the application of the whole vision is determined.
- If the events of this period are accurately fulfilled, the prophecy is of God, and will all be accomplished;
- and if these seventy weeks are fulfilled as weeks of years, **then the 2300 days**, of which these are a part, **are so many years**.
- Thus the events of the seventy weeks furnish a key to the whole vision.

Put simply, if the year-day principle, as applied to the 70-week prophecy, produces a correct result (which, in Smith’s view, it does correctly predict the Messiah’s coming and death), then this is confirmation that the year-day principle is the key to interpreting the 2300 days as well. It will be readily noticed that Haskell argues the same, with greater simplicity.

From contemporary SDA writers we see the following:

Gabriel's dependability reminds us that according to Daniel 9:24 one of the purposes of the seventy weeks was to **"seal up the vision and the prophecy"** (K.J.V.) of the 2300 days. Because the shorter prophecy was so stunningly fulfilled, we have reason to depend on the longer one. Of course what Jesus *did* during the seventieth week accomplished far more than chronology ever could to seal the vision and prophecy. (Maxwell, 1981, p.226)

To seal up vision and prophecy [to guarantee fulfillment of the 2300 day prophecy (a) by fulfilling time elements so accurately that we can depend also on the date 1844 and (b) by providing at the cross the essential basis for Christ's heavenly ministry, which culminates in the pre-advent (pre-second coming) Day of Atonement / Day of Judgement]....(Maxwell, 1981, p.247)

To seal up Here evidently not in the sense of "shutting up," but of "confirming," or "ratifying." The fulfillment of the predictions connected with the first coming of the Messiah at the time specified in the prophecy gives assurance that the other features of the prophecy, notably the 2300 prophetic days, will be as precisely fulfilled. (Nichol, 1976, p.852)

It is to be noted, also, that the fulfillment of the predictions of the prophecy concerning the 70 weeks was to "seal up the vision" (v.24), that is, the vision of the longer period of 2300 days (see on v.21). The accurate fulfillment of events foretold for the 70th week, having to do with the ministry and crucifixion of our Lord, provides incontestable evidence of the certainty of events at the close of the 2300 days. (Ibid, p.853)

"To seal both vision and prophet" means both to ratify and fulfil prophetic vision. In a special sense the events of the seventy weeks guarantee the fulfillment of the particular promise of the previous vision – "then the sanctuary shall be restored" (8:14). The accomplishment in history of the events of the 490 years ratify, or make certain, the accomplishment of what has been promised for the period following the 2300 years. (Ford, 1978, p.227)

Gabriel told Daniel the 490-year period would be "cut off" (Daniel 9:26) and that it would not only witness the Advent of the Messiah but also "seal up the vision" (verse 24). When we relate this explanation of Gabriel's to the 2300-day period of Daniel 8, the part Daniel did not at first understand, we conclude that the one is a part of the other. The 2,300 days represents so many years. This principle had been employed at least twice before in God's dealings with His people. (See Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6).

The 490-year period would be cut off from the 2,300-year period. The former would be for the Jews; the remainder would extend until the "sanctuary be cleansed." The baptism and crucifixion of Jesus and the gospel to the Gentiles occurred "when the fullness of time was come" (Galatians 4:4), which assures us that we are on the right track in regard to the starting date and method of calculation. Hence we can with confidence calculate that the remainder of the 2,300 years would extend to A.D. 1844. (Woolsey, 2001, p.49).

Woolsey's comments imply that the fulfillment of the 490-year period seals up the vision of the 2300 days in the sense that it "assures us that we are on the right track" when applying the beginning of the seventy weeks as the beginning of the 2300-day prophecy, and also when applying the year-day prophecy to the 2300-year period.

What is interesting in these contemporary writers' comments is the fact that they acknowledge the correctness of dropping the definite article, so that "the vision" and "the prophet/prophecy" become generic terms "vision" and "prophet," yet they still try to argue the same point as the pioneers howbeit without using the definite article. If they recognise the correctness of omitting the definite article, then both the word "vision" and "prophet" have no more direct link to Dn8 than it does to any other prophetic chapter in the Old Testament. They have no textual basis to link "to seal vision and prophet" to

Dn8 and even less, to the 2300 days. Notice again Maxwell's surprising logic in his statement quoted above. He admits that the translation is "vision and prophet" but then immediately ignores it and continues on assuming that the reference is to the 2300 days: "To seal up vision and prophecy [to guarantee fulfillment of the 2300 day prophecy" (Maxwell, 1981, p.247) Where is the evidence to introduce the 2300 days here? He does not provide us with *any* evidence that our thinking should follow the path he has outlined. *There is nothing specific* in the phrase "vision and prophet" that has the slightest reference to Dn8 or the 2300-day prophecy. Ford also refers us to a "special sense" that links "vision and prophet" to the 2300 days, yet he provides no evidence to justify his "special sense." There is no textual basis for it, unless all the assumptions listed in these papers are taken on board.

The SDA pioneers were specific. When they asked the question, What vision is here referred to, after quoting "seal up *the* vision," they argue, *the* vision of the 2300 days, for Daniel, they say, has had none other.¹ This line of argument has long been dead, since there is no textual evidence to support it. The use of the definite article was their only method of linking Dn9:24 with Dn8:14. And with that gone, nothing remains to support the assertion.

Conclusion on the Traditional Approach.

The traditional approach of arguing a link to Dn8 based on a definite article with the word "vision" in Dn9:24 is no longer relevant. Commentators have noted for nearly two centuries that the definite article in the English version of the phrase "to seal the vision and the prophecy" in Dn9:24 is incorrect, and most modern translations have omitted it in their rendition of this verse. Therefore, there is no textual basis to argue that the seventy weeks prophecy "seal," "ratify," or "guarantee" the 2300 days to be 2300 years. Both "vision" and "prophet/ prophecy" are generic terms and are to be taken in the widest possible sense. There is no textual basis to argue there is a special sense that warrants applying this phrase to the 2300 days of Dn8.

The New Approach: The Sealing of Vision and Prophet/ Prophecy means the marker for the ending of the Seventy Weeks, rather than the sealing meaning a confirmation of the 2300 days to be 2300 years.

As noted in the introduction, there is a new theory on the block – the brainchild of Dr. William Shea. The theory is that the phrase "to seal vision and prophecy" does not mean a confirmation of the year-day principle to be applied to the 2300 days, but it refers to the end marker of the seventy weeks or the ending of the prophetic ministry by God to Israel,

¹ "The first question which arises is, Are the seventy weeks a part of the 2300 days? We learn that they are from the following facts: 1. The same person whom Daniel saw at the beginning, appears the second time to give him understanding, and refers back to *the* vision, which can be none other than that of chap. viii. 2. He explains the very point which he there omitted, namely, Time. 3. He informs us that seventy "(Smith, 1854, pp. 368f)

and signified in the stoning of Stephen. This concept goes one step further than Maxwell and Ford, by abandoning the effort entirely of using the phrase “to seal vision and prophet” to provide a link to the 2300 days.

In this section I examine three major issues with this approach.

- Firstly, the issue of definite article (or better, its absence) with respect to the phrase “vision and prophet;”
- Secondly, the meaning of the infinitival phrase “to seal;”
- Thirdly, the concept that the phrase “to seal vision and prophet” is the marker for the end of the seventy weeks.
- Following that, I examine Shea’s concept of Stephen being a prophet.

The Generic Sense of “Vision and Prophet.”

In recent years, different proposals regarding the meaning of the infinitival phrase “to seal vision and prophet” have appeared in SDA publications. Generally, there has been a moving away from the ideas espoused by the pioneers to an interpretation that purports to be closer to the meaning of the text: There is no longer an argument in contemporary literature using the definite article in the KJV “*the* vision” to argue for a link to Dn8 from Dn9:24. It is standard practice to quote “vision and prophet” generically.

This is more than a century and a half overdue. Hengstenberg in 1854, a decade before the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist church discussed the generic implication of the absence of the definite article in his Christology of the Old Testament:

The use of the singular (compare [in Heb. *Chazôn*-FB] Is. i. 1; 2 Chr. xxxii, 32; Nahum i.1; and *Kleinert*, über die Aechtheit des Jes. p.11), and the absence of the article serve to show, that the words are used in their widest sense. This generality of expression my answer a double purpose. It may either indicate, that what is predicated of any object, applies to that object without exceptions, as in Ps. lxxv. 2 and lxxiii. 5; or it may simply be intended to represent indefinitely that which has really a limited application. (1978, p.821)

Keil, writing in 1872, said:

"But against this view stands the fact of the absence- of the article; for if by [Heb: *hazôn*] that prophecy is intended, an intimation of this would have been expected at least by the definite article, and here particularly would have altogether indispensable. It is also condemned by the word [Heb: *nabi*'] added, which shows that both words are used in comprehensive generality for all existing prophecies and prophets. Not only the prophecy, but the prophet who gives it, *i.e.* not merely the prophecy, but also the calling of the prophet, must be sealed. " (1978, p.345)

The new approach among SDA writers is more in line with the writings of Hengstenberg and Keil and works from a textual consideration towards an interpretation, which is more commendable than their forebears.

From Doukhan:

“To seal [htm] sins” is in parallelism with “to seal [htm] both vision and prophet,” with htm being common to the two stichs. Thus, the seal of the prophecy – *i.e.*, its fulfillment – is related to the seal of the sins – *i.e.*, their forgiveness. (Doukhan, 1981, p.259)²

² Doukhan has made a slight but significant textual change here. He has changed the infinitive “to seal” into a noun: “the seal of the prophecy” and “the seal of the sins.” Whether this is just a weakness in

Or this from Shea:

“To seal up vision and prophet.” The verb “to seal up” (*hatam*) is the same as that which occurs three phases earlier in this verse. Three meanings appear possible for it here: (1) to validate; (2) to close up (until a later opening); or (3) to bring to an end.

If the second object of the infinitive (“to seal up”) were “prophecy,” either of the first two meanings would be preferred. However its objects are “vision” (*hazôn*) and “prophet” (*nabi*), not “prophecy.” Since this second word occurs without the article it probably refers to “prophet” in a collective or corporate sense.

The third of these meanings (“to bring to an end”) makes the best sense if it is applied to prophets as persons rather than to their words. This sense is supported by the fact that it is the same as its parallel, used earlier in the verse (“to seal up / to make an end of sins”). As far as Daniel’s people and his holy city are concerned, therefore, “vision” and “prophet” are to come to an end by the time this prophetic period closes. (Shea, 1986b, p.80)

As is readily evident, there is no use of the definite article in the phrase “vision and prophet” when quoted by informed SDA scholars. This moving away from the arguments of the SDA pioneers is evidence in itself that the premise on which the pioneers based their argument for using Dn9:24 to apply to Dn8 was incorrect. Commentators like Kiel and Hengstenberg, who were contemporaries with the SDA pioneers, acknowledged the generic nature of the words in the phrase “to seal vision and prophet” but this scholarship was not read or taken up by SDA writers until recently.

Doukhan’s Support for the Generic Sense of “vision and prophet.”

Doukhan supports the view that the words “vision and prophet” have a “universalist” rather than a specific meaning in 9:24. He argues this on the basis of the presence of the definite article with certain words in the first half of the chapter and then the absence of them in the vision section. Here is his full statement on “Universalism:”

The universalistic dimension of Dan 9:24-27 becomes evident when we pay attention to the way certain words of our passage are used in the rest of the chapter. Thus, the word [*chatta’oth*-I have had to make a few changes because I cannot produce the letters used by Doukhan-FB] (“sins”), which is used in 9:24-27 in an indefinite sense pointing to a universalism, is always used in vs1-23 in a relative sense (particularism) : *our* sins (v 16), *sin of the people* (vs20), *my* sin (v20), *we* have sinned (vs 5, 8, 16). The same thing can be said for the word *‘awôn* (“iniquity”), which is also used in the preceding verses in a relative sense: *we* did iniquity 9v5), *our* iniquities (v13), *the iniquities of our fathers* (v16). This is also the case with the word *tsedeq* (“justice”), which is used in the preceding verses only in reference to God: vs 7, 14, 16, 18. The word *hazôn* (“vision”), which is used in the preceding verses only one time - *hahazôn* (“the vision”) in v21 – points here to a particular and definite vision. The word *nabi* (“prophet”) also occurs in a definite sense in vs 2, 6, 11.

his mastery of English is not certain. He rightly should have said, “the sealing of the prophecy,” and “the sealing of sins.” In this case, the action of the infinitive is reflected in a participle. It is not an object, i.e., “a seal,” that the infinitive refers to, but an action, i.e., “a sealing.” The purpose of this change is unclear. Perhaps it is designed to make his explanation of sealing the same part of speech, and so he turned the infinitive into a noun. That is to say, *the seal of sins* is forgiveness, and *the seal of prophecy* is fulfillment.

The fact is striking: All those words which are used in the prayer in a definite sense expressing a particularist view (“our,” “my,” “of the people,” “of God,” etc) are suddenly, as soon as they appear in the context of the 70 weeks, used in an indefinite sense expressing a universalistic point of view.

We may now understand why the *mashîah*, “Messiah,” is indefinite – an absolutely exceptional case in OT usage....In the light of precedes and on account of its particularity, the term *Mashîah* does not mean a particular Messiah among others holding a certain mission, but He is indeed *the* Messiah *par excellence*. Consequently, it is not surprising that this Messiah has something to do with the *rabbîm*, a word which has a *strong* universalistic connotation. He is the Messiah of all the former ones, which points to the Jubilee, introduces the eschatological dimension of our prophecy. (1981, p.268)^{3 4}

Doukhan uses the word “*universalistic*” or “indefinite” where I use generic but the sense is the same. His point is that many of the words that have a *specific* reference in the *first half of the chapter* have a *generic* application in the vision at the end of the chapter.⁵ This “*universalistic*” application of the meaning of the words “vision” and “prophet” may best be understood in a generic and universal sense which I argue in this document. With this position I concur.

While Doukhan’s work supports the new position regarding the phrase “vision and prophet,” and gives insights that add significantly to this position, there are questions with the total validity of his reasoning concerning the definite article or lack thereof. We need to examine closely the text of Dn9:24-27 to ascertain whether Doukhan’s argument is the case.

Here is a more literal rendering of the text using the King James Version but omitting the definite article in the KJV where there is none in the BHS text:

24 Seventy weeks are determined upon **thy** people and upon **thy** holy city, to finish **the** transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint most Holy (place).

25 Know therefore and understand, *that* from going forth of commandment to restore and to build **Jerusalem** unto **Messiah** Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: Street shall be built again, and wall, even in [**the**] troublous times.

26 And after [**the**] threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and people of prince that shall come shall destroy **the** city and **the** sanctuary; and its end *shall be* with [**the**] flood, and unto end of war desolations are determined.

27 And he shall confirm covenant with [**the**] many for one week: and in midst of **the** week he shall cause sacrifice and oblation to cease, and for overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon desolator.

³ Doukhan footnotes: “Throughout the OT, *masiah* is used with the article or in status constructus relatively to a particular, specific, common Messiah. (p.275)

⁴ When Doukhan says “all of those words” he presumably means “all of the key words which are used both in the vision and in the prayer, or perhaps only those three words he discusses - *chatta’oth*, *awôn*, and *hazôn*. This would make better sense.

⁵ His comment on the use of the word “vision” in Dn9:21 (with the definite article) being used in a “particularist” sense indicates that he does not limit the particularist position just to the prayer but includes vs.21-23 as well. (cf. p.268 quoted above).

Note: **the** (*without* the parentheses) indicates a definite article in both the BHS text and the English; **[the]** (*with* the parentheses) indicates a definite article in the BHS text but not in the KJV. Verse 27 “desolate” KJV was changed to “desolator” and “end thereof” in v. 26 changed to “its end” to express the pronominal suffix better. “Jerusalem” is highlighted because a proper noun is automatically a definite noun. If “Messiah” is a title or a proper name it should be regarded as definite, which would make “prince” definite as well. Italics indicates a supplied word in the KJV.⁶

Here is a list of words in these verses that *have* the definite article in verses 24-27:

- Verse 24. “the transgression;”
- Verse 25 – “the weeks sixty two;” “the times;”
- Verse 26 – “the city,” “the sanctuary;” “the coming (prince);” [used with a participle here] or put differently, “a prince, the coming one”;
- Verse 27 “with/on/by the flood” [prenominal preposition *b^e* used with the definite article]; “for the many” [again, prenominal preposition *l^e* used with the definite article]; [“the midst of” – in construct with “the week” that has the definite article] “the week;”

The next question is whether any of these words are present in the prayer?

- “The times” occurs in verse 21 in the construct singular;⁷
- The “Sixty two Weeks” is not;
- “The many” is not;
- The “coming prince” is not;
- In “The transgression” is not;
- “the flood” is not;
- “the city” is present in the prayer and does have the article in verse 18.
- “the sanctuary” is used in verse 17 within the prayer of Daniel in a definite sense – “thy sanctuary.”⁸?

We see in this list that while some of the words are understandably not in the prayer, the use of the definite article with the highly significant words “city” and

⁶ This phrase “Messiah Prince” is quite plausibly an appellate, in much the same as we have many people called “Caesar,” and “Pharaoh,” and survives in our usage, for example, “Yes, as you wish, Prime Minister or Mr. President.” If it is a title and a name, it is automatically a definite noun and becomes “Messiah, *the* Prince” since the appositioned “prince” takes its determinate from the proper noun and must then refer to Messiah as a specific person. (See [Hengstenberg, c1970](#), p.832-836 who, in discussing many things regarding this possibility, cites Jn4:25 showing that Messiah was used as a proper noun (without the article): “The woman said unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.”)

⁷ Verse 21 is neither in the prayer nor in the vision that follows. Doukhan however admits that the *particularist* theme should apply to this verse. “The word *hazôn* (“vision”), which is used in the preceding verses only one time - *hahazôn* (“the vision”) in v21 – points here to a particular and definite vision.” (1981, p. 268)

⁸ Notice in verse 16 with the phrase “mountain of your holiness” that the construct state here is used and no definite articles are present, but they are correctly understood. Where it occurs in verse 20 there is a double construct state “[the] mountain of...[the] holy one of ...my God” or translated “the holy mountain of my God

“sanctuary” brings *particularist* elements into the vision where Doukhan suggests there should only be *universalist* elements.

In addition to the use of the definite article to define a particular pronominal, we must consider the use of the pronominal suffix as being indicative of a determinate noun.⁹ A point of note with the use of pronominal suffixes with substantive is that where they are used, it is correct to assume a determinate noun. Doukhan correctly suggests they indicate a “*particularist* view,” e.g., “your people” refers to a *definite group of people*, not just any people. In this grouping we have:

- Verse 24 “your people;” “your holy city;”
- Verse 26 “its end;”

Thus we see the presence of determinates in the vision through the use of the pronominal suffixes, bringing *particularist* elements into the vision where Doukhan suggests there should only be *universalist* elements.

And another issue Doukhan has not addressed is the presence of the genitival construct state in the text. The construct state is translated “the something of a/the...” For example, in verse we have “the people of the prince that shall come.” Even though there is no definite article with the word “the people” the pointing of the word and its genitival relation with the following word indicates that we should read a determinate noun in the translation.

The verses that have the construct include the following:

- Verse 25 “in *the* affliction of the times” or as KJV translates “in troublous times.” Verse 26 “*the* people of the prince that shall come;” “*the* end of *the* war;” ¹⁰
- Verse 27 “*the* wing of abomination;” “*the* half of the week;” (in this second example we get the full construction with the presence of the definite article with the noun “week”).

It should be observed here that the word “time” appearing in the plural in verse 25, appears in the singular appears in verse 21 “about the time of the sacrifice of the evening.” It should be noted that the definite article does not occur in this phrase in the Hebrew text. “Time of” is in the construct state and so should be rendered “the time of”

⁹ A determinate noun is one, which is specified as being a certain one. Says Gesenius: “§125.1 A noun may be either determinate in itself; as a proper name or pronoun (see below, *d* and *I*), or be made so by its context. In the latter case, the determination may be effected either by prefixing the article (see §126), or by the connexion of the noun (in the construct state) with a following determinate genitive, and consequently also (according to §33c) by its union with a pronominal suffix (§127a). It is taken as a fundamental rule, that the determination can only be effected in *one* of the ways here mentioned; the article cannot be prefixed to a proper name, nor to a noun followed by a genitive, nor can a proper name be used in the construct state. Deviations from this rule are either only apparent or have arisen from a corruption of the text. (Kautzsch, 1982, p.401)

¹⁰ Another translation of this phrase could be, “up to the end, war.” (Apparatus Criticus – Targums use plural “wars” here)

and “sacrifice” is also in the construct state and should be rendered “the sacrifice of,” but it is important to note that there is *no definite article where Doukhan’s argument would expect one*, since it is referring to a “*particular*” time, i.e., “*the evening*.”¹¹ And it should be observed that this is a *double* construct state: “[the] time of...[the] sacrifice of... [the] evening.” We should expect to find a definite article with the noun in the absolute state as it does when this exact phrase is used in narrative writing in Ezra 9:4, 5. But that is not the case in Dn9:21.

Another aspect of determination not considered by Doukhan is the presence in these verses of participial clauses, which in themselves, are determinate, since they specify a certain event:

Verse26: “the people of the prince *that shall come*,”

Verse27: “*that determined*.”

In the case of the first one, a Qal participial clause, it is clearly definite, since it is accompanied by the noun it is qualifying.¹² But in the second one, verse 27, a Niph’al participial clause, it is not so easily recognised.¹³ The phrase “that determined” should be expanded to more correctly be translated “That which is/shall be determined,” shall be poured upon the desolator. This fuller translation is given in Dn11:36 for this same word. This shows us that it is not just anything that shall be poured on the desolator, but a definite thing – only that which is determined. It is limited to one item – the punishment decided upon by God. The *decided* punishment is the punishment to be poured upon the desolator. This same participial clause occurs in v.26 where it says “desolations determined.” This participle is a determinate one because it has a subject – “desolations.” Not just anything is “determined;” “desolations” are determined.¹⁴ It is agreed here that “desolations” is a generic term here but since it refers to those desolations determined by God, specific desolations are implied.

¹¹ This identical phrase “evening offering” occurs in three places: in Ezra 9:4, 5, the definite article is included with evening. In Ps 141: 2, it naturally occurs without the definite article being poetic. One could plausibly argue that commonly used words like evening, often do not carry a determinate but is only assumed, even in narrative, in much the same way as we use “evening” without a definite article; e.g., “We watched the sky until evening.” QUOTE KAUTZSCH REFERENCE

¹² Davidson, “Kal, part[iciple], act[ive], s[ingular], m[asculine],” (1984, p.56); Keil, (1978, p.362)

¹³ Davidson, “Niph[’al], part[iciple], sing[ular], fem[inine] of [Heb: *nech’rats*-FB]” (1984, p.545), Tregelles, (1952, p.308), Keil, (Ibid, p.372-3). See also the occurrence of this exact word at Dn11:36: “for that that is determined shall be done.”

¹⁴ The apparatus criticus at this phrase in the BHS says that the phrase here is doubtful. The note says: “dub[ius].cf.v27 fin[is]” They are suggesting that this is a scribal gloss from verse 27 and should not be here at all. That is, the verse finished at the phrase “up to the end, war (or “wars,” Targums).” But looking at the end of verse 27, there are two words between “that which is determined” and “desolator.” These words are “poured out” and “upon.” And the form of the participle “desolations” in verse 26 to “desolator” in v.27 is two letters longer. Although both feminine forms, the feminine form of the Niph’al participle finishes with a *Taw* in verse 26 but a *He* in verse 27. The former is a segholate form of this feminine participle (See Kautzsch, § 80.d, e). All this means a slip of the eye would not transpose the material in verse 27 to the form we have it in verse 26 without having to think about doing some changes. The form of the words and the number of words transposed all argue against taking the position in favour of the BHS note. So my choice would be to retain the phrase in verse 26 as being innate to the text.

Therefore, in addition to the presence of the definite article in the vision with words that occur in the prayer; the issue of the use of the genitival construct yielding a definite article in the translation, and the pronominal suffixes providing determination as well, these participial phrases pose a problem for Doukhan's concept of *universalism* in the vision as evidenced with the absence of determinants. But although the application of his concept as a blanket rule for the vision of Dn9 is in question, his application of this concept to the specific phrase "vision and prophet" is valid.

We can see that the simplistic concept of Doukhan's just does not give us the full picture. The concept of the determination of a noun is expressed in a number of ways and to ignore all the ways it is expressed because it does not fit into a particular theory is not good scholarship. In one case we have Jerusalem called by its proper name, (verse 25); in another it is called "[the] city, your holy (one)," (verse 24) using apposition and a pronominal suffix, the determinate state being implied by the pronominal suffix "your;" and in verse 26, we get the simple form "the city" All these are examples of *particularism* where Doukhan would only argue that there should be *universalism*.

There is clear enough evidence that Doukhan's concept of *particularism* or *universalism* is *not* the reason for the presence or absence of the definite article in the prayer and the vision. Furthermore, we cannot conclude that the definite article can be implied even in the absence of any determinative on that basis or that it can be assumed to be omitted because the substantive is being used in a "*universalistic*" manner. We find evidence of the *absence* of determinates in what Doukhan calls *particularist* material in Dn9 *where they should be*, and we find the *presence* of determinates in what Doukhan calls *universalist* material in Dn9 *where they should not be*, and this includes words that appear in both Daniel's prayer and his subsequent vision.¹⁵

In summary, those words which are used in the prayer in a definite sense expressing a "particularist" view *are not*, contra Doukhan, "as soon as they appear in the context of the 70 weeks, used in an indefinite sense expressing a "universalist" point of view." Some do, but certainly not *all*. Most commentators see the text as a generic use of the word "vision" and "prophet," as do other SDA scholars like Shea.

Even if we were to accept the translation as "*the* vision," there is another issue highlighted in my paper on [Assumption 13](#) to contend with, viz., that the reference to "vision" in verse 24 can quite legitimately refer to the revelation Daniel was about to receive in verses 24 to 27. Therefore if the sealing of *the* vision and *the* prophet/prophecy refers to the revelation of verses 24-27 (which I do not believe it does), this merely means that Israel has seventy weeks to fulfil all that is predicted in the revelation in Dn9:24-27. Thus it does not automatically mean that even if the definite article is accepted in the phrase "seal vision and prophet," it refers to the 2300 days. Doukhan, in this article; says that 'vision' in verse 24 refers to "the body of the vision itself (vs 25-27)" (cf., [1981](#), p.258). That is to say, the revelation given by Gabriel to Daniel in Dn9 is referred to by

¹⁵ This exercise might be reversed and *universal* elements searched for in the prayer where *particularist* elements should be. We could examine the first half of the chapter for examples where there is no definite article where we should expect one. Do any examples exist? These would further highlight the already-obvious conclusion that Doukhan's reasoning does not stand up to examination, even though he supports my position. YOU MIGHT WANT TO DO THIS LATER.

Doukhan as a “vision.”¹⁶ I concur with this position, and even Shea makes the slip of calling Dn9:24-27 a prophecy, whereas most SDA historicist efforts have been to say that Dn9 is just a continuation of an unfinished explanation in Dn8.¹⁷

Shea’s support for the Generic meaning of “vision and prophet.”

Shea’s statement quoted at the beginning of this section highlights his position on this. He holds to this position consistently throughout his writings. He endorses the generic view of the phrase “vision and prophet” rather than trying to tie it in with Dn8:

“To seal up vision and prophet.” The verb “to seal up” (hatam) is the same as that which occurs three phases earlier in this verse. Three meanings appear possible for it here: (1) to validate; (2) to close up (until a later opening); or (3) to bring to an end.

If the second object of the infinitive (“to seal up”) were “prophecy,” either of the first two meanings would be preferred. However its objects are “vision” (hazôn) and “prophet” (nabi’), not “prophecy.” **Since this second word occurs without the article it probably refers to “prophet” in a collective or corporate sense.**

The third of these meanings (“to bring to an end”) makes the best sense if it is applied to prophets as persons rather than to their words. This sense is supported by the fact that it is the same as its parallel, used earlier in the verse (“to seal up / to make an end of sins”). As far as Daniel’s people and his holy city are concerned,

¹⁶ On page 257 Doukhan refers to vs24-27 twice as being a “vision.” The first statement says, “if the coming of a Messiah, an anointed one, is perceived in the vision...” The second statement says, “The vision has two sides. The first concerns the people...the second concerns the holy city.” It should be said however that Doukhan endorses the SDA practice of using the 70 weeks as the first part of the 2300 years to provide a starting date for the latter. (*Ibid*, p. 255)

¹⁷ Here are a couple of samples. Even Shea has two positions on Dn9: (Yes, it is a prophecy, and no, it is just an extravisional explanation). Readers are referred to his work [quoted in this paper](#) where he calls it a prophecy: (1980, Here is his statement where he is only prepared to call Dn9 an explanation: “The pattern of the contents of Dan 8 differs somewhat from the pattern of the contents in Dan 7. In Dan8 we have a lengthy vision (vs 2-12) followed by a short intravisional explanation (vs 13,14), which was followed in turn, for the first time recorded in the book, by a lengthy extravisional explanation (vs 17-26). This extravisional explanation was given to Daniel personally by the heaven-sent interpreter and messenger, Gabriel, i.e., an angelophany. The return of Gabriel with more information for Daniel, as recorded in 9: 21-27, continues the *third* element found in Dan 8 – the extravisional explanation.” (*Shea, 1981a*, p. 221) [Shea’s concept of “extravisional explanation” does not mean that it was another vision; rather, “extravisional explanation” means it was merely an explanation, extraneous to the vision.-FB]

“What follows in chapter 9 [of Daniel] is therefore not a new and independent vision, but is the continuing literal explanation of the symbolic “vision of chapter 8.

“We would stress this point, that in chapter 9, Gabriel was not introducing a new line of prophecy. He was simply continuing and completing his interrupted explanation, picking up the thread just where he had laid it down in his previous appearance to the prophet recorded in chapter 8.” (*Seventh day Adventists, 1957*, p271-272).

“Daniel 9:24-27 contains no vision, but there is auditory revelation in which the time element figures most prominently. Both Dan 8: 13-14 and Dan 9:24-27 are auditory revelations. The latter provides the beginning of the time span of Dan 8.” (*Hasel, 1981*, p. 197)

therefore, “vision” and “prophet” are to come to an end by the time this prophetic period closes. (Shea, 1986b, p.80 Emphasis mine)¹⁸

The Meaning of the Infinitive “to seal.”

Before examining the definition of this verb in SDA writings, a survey of the position of major lexicographers would be appropriate firstly.

Koehler and Baumgartner (1994) give the meaning as ‘to seal, to shut.’ (p.364)

Jastrow, (1950) in his Dictionary of the Targumim, The Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and Midrashiic Literature defines *chatham* as 1) to tie up, to close, lock....2) to sign, subscribe (as witness, judge &c)...3) to close a benediction...He also defines the Aram *ch^atham* as “1) to close up. Ber6^a ...and let him close up its opening.”...2) to seal, sign....Gitt.66^b ...to draw their signatures. 3)to close a benediction....he closed his prayer without saying *Barukh etc*...Cant.R. to I.11...a closed and finished word (complete in itself).” (1950, p.513f)

Alan Millard, in the article under *chatham* in the New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis says the following:

[Heb.*chatham*] q. seal, close; ni. Be sealed; hi.block (#3159); [Heb *chotham*] nom. Seal (#2597); [Heb *chôthemeth*] nom. seal (#3160); [Heb.*ch^atham I*] Aram. Seal (10291).

ANE. The base *chtm* is common to Eyp., Phoen., Aram., Arab., and Eth., both nom and vb occurring from the Old Kingdom in Egypt and a nominal form introducing owners’ names on Aram. Seals from the eighth century BC onwards. In addition, the vb means close, in Eyp and Aram.

O.T 1. Seals were current from the sixth millennium BC in ANE in the form of stone, clay, or wood stamps and from the fourth millennium also as the distinctive cylinder seal, originating in Babylonia but spreading across the Fertile Crescent to Egypt. While designs engraved on seals could differ and so serve to identify individual ownership or authority, the advent of writing made naming the proprietors possible, with consequent increase in particularity and grading of authority from a king downwards. Seals were usually impressed on lumps of clay to secure documents, containers, doors etc., and sometimes on pottery vessels to mark ownership, origin, or content. As an extension of the individual’s personality, a seal on a deed could attest his presence at its execution or his approval of its contents. Hundreds of seal stones and imprints on clay survive from eighth- and seventh-century Israel and Judah, showing widespread understanding of the value of their written nature and a considerable bureaucracy. Their Hebrew legends add to knowledge of personal names (those compounded with Yahweh predominate) and of professions.

2. Sealing was a means of closing something from interference, authoritatively when the royal seal was applied, as at the lion’s den, only to be opened at the royal command (Dan.6:17(18)), and in the metaphor of God’s punishment stored as poisonous wine in his cellar (Deut 32:34). Hebrew letters sent to Tel Arad about 600 BC order the addressee to dispatch jars of wine and oil sealed with the owner’s seal (Y. Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions*, 1981, nos. 4,13,17). Royal authority is evident in Jezebel’s use of Ahab’s seal on the letters she sent to secure Naboth’s demise (1 Kg

¹⁸ Shea assumes here that the correct meaning for it in the phrase “to seal sins” means for sins to be brought to an end. This is the meaning of the marginal reading of the verb in “to seal vision and prophet,” using the verb *tamam*. Hengstenberg and Keil argue must more convincingly for a base meaning here of “shutting up /away from sight.” How this is done is another issue, but this is the base meaning of the word.

21:8) and in the Persian king's seal applied to decrees (Esth 3:12; 8:8, 10) Parties to a contract (Jer 32:10) or a pact (Neh 9:38[10:1]; 10:1 2]) mark their assent with their seals, subjecting themselves to the possibility of investigation should the deed be disputed or they renege upon it. Similarly, a book, in scroll or hinged wooden tablet form, could be sealed, completed, and preserved, for future reference (Isa 8:16; 29:11; Dan9:24; 12:4,9).

3. Something sealed is closed, so the term was transferred to denote shutting inside a house (Job 24:16), a blocked spring (S of Songs 4:12), the obstruction of a bodily discharge (Lev 15L3), and the obscuring of starlight (Job 9:7).

4. What was sealed may be taken as ended, so sins are sealed (Dan9:24), and sealed in a bag, not to be reopened (Job14L17).

5. The seal (*chôtham*) was a very personal possession, worn on a cord almost as an identity tag (Gen 38:18, with [*chôthemeth*] denoting the same object in v.25), a precious object worn constantly, as the elect Zerubbabel would be (Hag.2:23), and so a metaphor for the lover (S. of Songs 8:6), but also something that could be changed or discarded, as was the faithless Jehoiachin (Jer 22:24). Cutting a seal was skilled work, mentioned only to indicate the way the tribes' names were engraved on the stones of the High Priest's breastplate (Exod 28:11 etc.). When pressed on clay, the seal's design stands in relief, like the face of the earth at sunrise (Job 38:14).

6. The Heb. *tabba'at*, ring(> #3192), is a loan word from Egyptian, giving Phoen, and later Sem. Languages a vb. Seal, and a nom. For stamped or coined money. As stamp seals were often set in finger-rings, so ring could stand for a seal, as clearly in Esth3 and 8 and probably in Gen 41:42, where the Pharaoh's gift to Joseph indicated the transferred power.

7. The Aram. Word 'izqâ, seal (#10536), denotes the Assyrian king's seal in Ahiqar 3,19. In Dan 6:18 this is the Persian king's signet.

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([VanGemerén, 1997](#), Article #3159)

There are two basic meanings current in the SDA church for the meaning of the infinitive "to seal." Martin Weber, populist Adventist writer succinctly summarises these two views:¹⁹

¹⁹ A third interpretation not widely used by commentators but proposed by W. Sibley Towner includes the idea of "unlocking" the prophecies of Daniel 9 after being kept "long-hidden." That is, the sealing "locks" the prophecies, and the breaking of the seal "unlocks" these "long-hidden" revelations. This is reminiscent of the arguments of SDA historicists proposed for the concept of sealing in Dn12:4, 9. Here, Towner applies the same rationale to the phrase in Dn9:24. He seems to intimate that the last phase of "the pre-eschatological age" – or "the time of the end," in SDA terminology – began at the end of the seventy weeks.

"Sealing vision and prophet, refers to the fictional setting of Daniel. When the supposedly long-hidden message is found, taken out of its time capsule, as it were, the seal is broken and the text is found to be extraordinarily descriptive of the present moment. Then all can know that the last phase of the pre-eschatological age is winding down and that the end is at hand." ([1984](#), p.141)

In this interpretation, Towner links the sealing in Dn9:24 with that of Dn12 when Daniel is told to "seal the book" until the time of the end. This interpretation cannot stand since in Dn9:24 the people of Daniel are given seventy weeks "to seal vision and prophet" whereas Daniel is the only person told to seal the book and preserve it for posterity. If Daniel seals the book, then it is not a task for the people of Israel so to do. Towner has also been misled into thinking it is a definite vision and prophet referred to in Dn9:24; viz., the book of Daniel. In this he is incorrect. It does not refer to "the supposedly long-hidden message" in the book of Daniel and he does not produce any evidence to justify such a conclusion.

To seal up vision and prophet. Two possible interpretations vie for endorsement here: first, that the seventy weeks in some way would seal, or confirm, the whole vision of Daniel 8 and its ongoing significance. In a special sense the events of the seventy weeks guarantee the fulfillment of the particular promise of the previous vision – “then shall the sanctuary be restored” (chap. 8:14 [R.S.V.]). “The accomplishment in history of the events of the 490 years ratify, or make certain, the accomplishments of what has been promised for the period following the 2300 years.” [He footnotes Ford, *op. cit.*, p.227]

A second possible interpretation is that the ministry of prophetic vision to the Jewish nation would end with the conclusion of the seventy weeks. Shea endorses this latter interpretation. He sees “the meaning of sealing or shutting up in the sense of bringing to an end...this would mean that for that city and people prophet and vision were to cease by the end of the time period prophesied. They could have been either for their weal or woe. If they developed the righteousness society which Daniel and the other prophets called for and envisioned, then the restoration of the kingdom with all the peace, prosperity, and righteousness seen flowing from it could have been brought about. Vision and prophet would no longer have been necessary then because all that the classical prophets had talked about would have been fulfilled. If they did not comply with the desired conditions, however, then the prophetic voice and vision among them would cease since God would no longer speak to them in this way.” [Weber footnotes: Shea, 1980, pp.74, 75.]²⁰

Although both interpretations appear to be permitted by the context, the latter seems to harmonize better with the parallel phrases in Daniel 12:4, 9. Additionally, the stoning of Stephen at the close of this period of probation lends support to this second interpretation. (1985, p.46)

The first meaning of “to seal” – “to confirm,” or “to ratify.”

The first interpretation listed by Weber of the meaning of “seal” – that of “confirm” – is intricately related to the use of the definite article with “the vision” and “the prophecy” as has been highlighted earlier in the paper. Ford and Maxwell, as documented above, try to allude to this confirmation of the 2300 days, yet without the traditional method – using the argument involving “the vision.” Though Maxwell refers to “the vision,” he does not labour the issue of the definite article as the pioneers did. Ford avoids this entirely.²¹ The SDA Bible Commentary also endorses the idea of “confirming” and “ratifying:”

To seal up Here evidently not in the sense of “shutting up,” but of “confirming,” or “ratifying.” The fulfillment of the predictions connected with the first coming of the Messiah at the time specified in the prophecy gives assurance that the other features of the prophecy, notably the 2300 prophetic days, will be as precisely fulfilled. (Nichol, 1976, p.852)

Montgomery also follows the idea of “confirmation” or “ratifying:”

'Sealing vision and prophet': In the sense of 'putting seal to,' *i.e.*, ratifying, exactly as σφραγίζειν [Grk: sphragidzein] is used in Jn 3³³, 6²⁷, and so frequently in Syr. Cf. 1

²⁰ Notice here the difference in Shea's position here to that written later in 1986 where he states that Dn9 was written through the foreknowledge of God – that Dn9 is a prophecy that foretells Israel's failure. This is a contradiction to what he writes here in 1980 and is quoted by Weber. This contradiction is discussed later under the heading [The Differences in Shea's definition of the phrase between 1980 and 1986.](#)

²¹ See their comments under the Heading: [The Traditional Explanation of the Sealing of “the vision and the prophet.”](#)

Ki 21⁸, Jer.32¹⁰. So Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, i, 21, AEz. and most comm. Another interpretation of the vb. is "to conclude," so Jeph., PsSa., on the ground that "no prophet has arisen since the second temple." The VSS, aso Aq., exc Θ appear to have read [Heb lhtm] for [lchtm] *cf.* the variation between the two vbs. just above, translating 'to finish,' or else they give the interpretation to [lhtm]. 'Vision and prophet' is taken by Grot., Bert. as hendiadys, = 'prophetic vision,' but the prophet as well as the vision through him calls for justification, *n.b.* the sealing of the Messiah in the Johannine passage cited, *cf.* Is.8¹⁶, Jer. *passim*. GV and EVV, exc. JV, have 'prophecy' for 'prophet,' following V[ulgate-FB], an exegetical makeshift, defined by some comm. as enallage of the concrete for the abstract (s. Pole); the same variation appears sporadically in other VSS and some Gr. MSS. (1927, p. 375)

The concept of "confirming" is also followed by Robert A. Anderson:

'To seal both vision and prophet', or 'to confirm the prophetic vision', is not a reference to the cessation of prophecy. In this context it had to do with the subject matter of Jeremiah's words. (1984, p.113)

Goldingay sees a similar meaning to the word even though he applies it to meaning the prophecy of Daniel confirms Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy years of exile:

Reference to the sealing of the vision recalls 8:26 (for the verb *cf.* Dan12:4, 9; also 6:18 [17]). Yet it is Jeremiah, not Daniel, whom chap. 9 describes as a prophet (v2). The phrase has been taken to suggest that prophecy is to be sealed up and thus silent through this period (Keil), but this is a lot to read out of the phrase. Sealing elsewhere suggests authenticating (1 Kgs 21:8), and this fits the present context well: the promise is that Jeremiah's prophecy will be fulfilled and thus confirmed. (1989, p. 259-260)

Robert A. Anderson mirrors the meaning of "to seal" as inferring "to confirm:"

'To seal both vision and prophet', or 'to confirm the prophetic vision', is not a reference to the cessation of prophecy. In this context it had to do with the subject matter of Jeremiah's words. (1984, p.113)

Notice that Anderson, contra Davidson, does *not* see the sealing of vision and prophet as the cessation of prophecy.

Seow looks to Dn8:26 and argues that Dn9:24 *authenticates* the vision of Dn8, rather than looking at the adjacent usage of seal in verse 24, as do Shea and Doukhan.:

The fifth objective is the sealing of the "vision and prophet." In the first place, this objective echoes the mention of the sealing of Daniel's vision in 8:26. Certainly, given the number of probable links to the vision of chapter 8-"the transgression," human sins running their full course, the restoration of legitimacy of the temple - the allusion to the sealing of vision is entirely appropriate (see 1 Kings 21: 8; Jer 32:10, 11, 44). The point is that Daniel's vision of the previous chapter is authentic. (2003, p.148)

He does not expand his last statement and enable us to understand in what way he sees the authentication of the vision of Dn8. In addition, what Seow fails to understand is that Daniel is not referring to a specific vision – whether it be Jeremiah's or Daniel's. The absence of the definite article augurs against the conclusions of Seow, of Anderson and of Goldingay. Keil answers this concisely:

"But against this view stands the fact of the absence of the article; for if by [Heb: *hazôn*] that prophecy is intended, an intimation of this would have been expected at least by the definite article, and here particularly would have altogether indispensable. It is also condemned by the word [Heb: *nabi*'] added, which shows that both words are used in comprehensive generality for all existing prophecies and prophets. Not only the prophecy, but the prophet who gives it, *i.e.* not merely the prophecy, but also the calling of the prophet, must be sealed. " (1978, p.345)

Hengstenberg also adds some interesting observations on this argument:

The use of the singular (compare [in Heb. *Chazôn*-FB] Is. i. 1; 2 Chr. xxxii, 32; Nahum i.1; and *Kleinert*, über die Aechtheit des Jes. p.11), and the absence of the article serve to show, that the words are used in their widest sense. This generality of expression my answer a double purpose. It may either indicate, that what is predicated of any object, applies to that object without exceptions, as in Ps. lxxv. 2 and lxxiii. 5); or it may simply be intended to represent indefinitely that which has really a limited application. An example of the latter we find in chap. Xi. 14. “the sons of the wicked of thy people will exalt themselves, [quotes same in Heb], to the fulfillment of prophecy,” where the prophet speaks quite generally – ([In Heb *chazôn*-FB] being employed in this passage also as a collective noun) – although he had really something definite before his mind, namely, his own prophecy. The point of importance in this case was not, that the event would contribute to the fulfillment of one particular prophecy, but that it would be subservient to the accomplishment of prophecy generally. The last-mentioned argument in favour of the general character of the article is omitted several times, in cases where it must necessarily have been inserted, if the expression had been as definite as the object referred to (compare for example, [in Heb. *Mashiah*-FB], vers. 25.260 – *Bertholdt*, *Wiessler*, *Hitzig*, and others explain the clause as meaning, “till the predictions of the prophet Jeremiah and fulfilled.” But this explanation is untenable. 1. It rests upon the assumption that *sealing* is equivalent to confirming. For if this term be correctly understood, the only circumstances, under which such an explanation would be defensible, would be if *chazôn* (the vision) stood alone. The addition of [in Heb. *w'nabî'* and prophet-FB] renders it altogether inadmissible; for how could a prophet be described as of no further use, simply because one single prediction of his had been fulfilled? But even if it stood by itself, the indefinite character of the expression would extend far beyond the limits assigned elsewhere, if the prophet had merely one particular prophecy of Jeremiah before his eyes. That we have here a violation of the rule, “the article is the most indispensable, where deference is made to a person or thing, that has been mentioned just before,” is a conclusion to which we should be justified in coming, only if the prophecy of Jeremiah had been mentioned so immediately before, that it would occur at once to the mind of any reader, and the indefinite character of the expression be thus removed – unless there were other circumstances connected with the passage, such as some striking resemblance between the prophecy of Jeremiah and the promises here given, which might serve as an indirect clue to the prediction referred to. – 2. The *καταργέιν* of the [in Heb. *chazôn* – FB] and the [in Heb. *nabî'* – FB] could not take place in any other way, than through the fulfillment of that which is here described, as about to be accomplished at the end of the seventy weeks, more especially the sealing up of sins, with which the sealing up of the vision and prophet was closely connected. This same prediction ought, therefore, to be contained in the prophecy, or two prophecies of Jeremiah, to which the prophet is said to refer. But there is no trace of this in either of them. The twenty-fifth chapter contains nothing but a promise of the termination of the Babylonian captivity, and the twenty-ninth is restricted to an assurance of the return of the Jews and the gracious protection of God.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that we have here an allusion to the forgiveness of sins to be imparted in the days of the Messiah, the announcement of which runs through all the writings of the prophets (compare Is. liii.' Zech. xiii.1). And when this, the essential element in the work of Christ, had been accomplished, the prophecies, in this respect at least, could justly be regarded as abolished. (c.1970. pp.820-822)

Though we may take issue with Hengstenberg over some of his arguments and conclusions, nevertheless his reasoning for discounting any reference to a *particular* vision in the phrase “to seal vision and prophet” is quite valid.

From Porteous:

the putting an end to (or sealing of) sin, perhaps the reaching of sin of its full measure (cf. 8:23), corresponds less obviously to the sealing of vision and prophecy (lit. prophet), which means either confirmation or ratification of vision and prophecy or the bringing of them to an end as no longer necessary; the wiping out of iniquity (the technical term employed, *viz. kapper*, means 'atone for' when used of the priest, and 'absolve' or 'forgive', when used, as here, of God) corresponds to the anointing, i.e.. the consecration, of a most holy place. (1979, p.140)

Porteous here includes with the concept of “confirmation” and “ratification,” Shea’s concept of bringing them to an end, but for a different reason – not because the ministry has ceased but because they are “no longer necessary.”

From D. S. Russell:

He will "seal both vision and prophet". The meaning seems to be that, just as the genuineness of a document is confirmed by the setting of a seal upon it (cf, 1 Kings 21:8; Jer 32:10f), so the messages of the prophets and the visions they have received will at last be confirmed and be shown to be true. Alternatively, it may mean that the "vision and prophet" are "sealed up" in the sense that they have now come to an end, for with the coming of the promised time they are no longer needed. (1981, p.185)

Some object to the interpretation of “confirm.” Keil says:

In the fifth passage, *to seal up the vision and prophecy*, the word [Heb: *chatham-FB*], used in the second passage of sin, is here used of righteousness. The figure of sealing is regarded by many interpreters in the sense of confirming, and that by filling up, with reference to the custom of impressing a seal on a writing for the confirmation of its contents; and in illustration these references are given: 1 Kings xxi, 8, and Jer. xxxii, 10, 11, 44 (Hävernick, v.Lengerke, Ewald, Hitzig, and others). But for this figurative use of the word to seal, no proof-passages are adduced from the O.T. Add to this that the word cannot be used here in a different sense from that in which it is used in the second passage. The sealing of the prophecy corresponds to the sealing of the transgression, and must be similarly understood. The prophecy is sealed when it is laid under a seal, so that it can no longer actively show itself. (1978, p.345)

Others, contra Keil, do find evidence from the O.T. to endorse the idea of “confirming.” One such writer is Lacocque. He sees the playing out of history as “confirming” the prophecies of Daniel which continue right to the end of history:

As for the seal on the vision and the prophet, the expression is unusual. One puts a seal on a document (see on 1 Kings 21:8; Jer.32:10, 11, 49; Dan. 6:17; 12:4,9); yet we find a metaphorical use of this term in John 3:33; 6:27; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph 1:13 etc., where living beings are at issue: they are confirmed in their role or justified in their action. History reaches its peak at the end. At that moment, both the 'vision' and the 'prophet' are sealed. There is no longer any hiatus between them, there is nothing more to add to or subtract from the prophetic testimony. Daniel is conscious of ending prophecy in Israel once and for all and this gives his book a unique character which cannot fail to impress the reader. (1979, p.193)

As we have seen, many commentators use the concept of “confirm” to interpret the meaning of the infinitive “to seal.” Some commentators use a similar word, “authenticity,” instead of “confirming” to interpret the verb “to seal.” Typical of those are Baldwin, Collins and Seow:

From Baldwin:

To seal (hatam) both vision and prophet: that is, to set seal to all that God has revealed by accomplishing all that has been promised by Jeremiah. To seal a document may involve closing it, but in law the meaning is rather to authenticate it with one's seal and signature. That is the meaning here. (1978, p.169)

From John Collins:

To seal vision: The seal was the mark of authenticity (1 Kgs 21:8; Jer 32: 10, 11, 44). Compare the metaphorical use for divine approval in John 3:33; 6:27. "Vision" here is interchangeable with "prophecy." The immediate reference is Jeremiah's prophecy, but the allusion probably includes all prophecy that is construed as eschatological. Compare the use of "vision" in Sir 36(33):15 ("establish the vision spoken in your name"), in the Apostrophe to Zion (11QPsZion) v 17 ("accept a vision that was spoken about you"); and in Dan 11:14, where "the violent ones of your people will raise themselves to fulfill the vision." It is not possible to identify a specific vision in any of these references. (1993, p.354)

What Collins says concerning "a seal" may be correct and may support the idea of "confirming," but how the Israelites had seventy weeks to seal vision in the sense of authenticating it is not clear in Collins' statement. Were the Israelites "to place a mark of authenticity" on "all prophecy that is construed as eschatological?" And how would that have been done? Do we follow the interpretation of the verses he has quoted from Sir36, "to establish the vision;" or Apostrophe to Zion v17, "to accept a vision;" or Dan 11:14, "to fulfil a vision?" And how do we apply that? Do we do it only to Jeremiah's prophecy? Or to all eschatological prophecy? The issue is none the clearer with Collins' comments.

C. L. Seow's comment also needs to be looked at again more closely:

The fifth objective is the sealing of the "vision and prophet." In the first place, this objective echoes the mention of the sealing of Daniel's vision in 8:26. Certainly, given the number of probable links to the vision of chapter 8-"the transgression," human sins running their full course, the restoration of legitimacy of the temple - the allusion to the sealing of vision is entirely appropriate (see 1 Kings 21: 8; Jer 32:10, 11, 44). The point is that Daniel's vision of the previous chapter is authentic. (2003, p.148)

As with Collins' comment above, Seow's view is doubtful when we ask the question, how does his definition fit in with the concept that the Israelites had seventy weeks to prove that the vision of Daniel 8 was authentic? Rather than looking to a meaning of "seal" in the immediate context of verse 24 with the phrase "to seal sins," Seow has leap-frogged that incidence of the word *entirely* and chosen to consider the association with the command in Dn8:26 to "shut up the vision." Another question to be addressed to Seow is: if Gabriel commands the *prophet* "to seal the vision," why are *the people of Israel* then told to seal the vision of Daniel 8, if it has already sealed by Daniel?

The fatal problem however, with Seow's conclusion is that, unless Seow is proposing an emendation in Dn8:26 from *satham* ("to close") to *chatham* ("to seal"), Daniel is *not* told to "seal" the book in Daniel 8 as Seow asserts; Daniel is only told to "shut" or "close" the book. The book is never "sealed" until the final communication – in Dn12. With ancient manuscripts, though a document be "closed," it could still be added to; but when it was "sealed," nothing else could be added to it. To make any additions to the manuscript at that stage, one had to break the seal, but the broken seal would then indicate a tampering with the original. Thus it was with Daniel's writings. He "closed" the book at various times in his life, only to have it added to when a later revelation was given. But the angel explicitly indicated in Dn12 that that revelation was the last, and that henceforth, he could "seal" the document, since there would be no more additions to it. And so, Daniel is told in Dn12 to both "close" and "seal" the book.

Summarising the selection of commentators listed above who prefer the interpretation of "confirming," "ratify" or "authenticity" for the verb "to seal," those who apply it to a specific prophecy such as the eighth chapter of Daniel or the prophecy of Jeremiah have their assertions nullified by the arguments of both Keil and Hengstenberg, who ably

demonstrate why it cannot apply to a specific prophecy. It will be readily apparent that most authors quoted above giving this interpretation of the verb, *do not consider the meaning of the same verb in the phrase “to seal sins.”* Even the SDA Bible Commentary ignores the implications of this association when making its conclusion on the meaning of the verb in the phrase under consideration. Keil rightly says, “Add to this that the word cannot be used here in a different sense from that in which it is used in the second passage [i.e., “to seal sins” – FB]. The sealing of the prophecy corresponds to the sealing of the transgression, and must be similarly understood. The prophecy is sealed when it is laid under a seal, so that it can no longer actively show itself.” (1978, p.345) Can the verb include the meaning of “to confirm,” or “to ratify?” Although Keil may be correct in arguing the similarity of the verb in both cases in this verse, the question remains whether his interpretation of the verb of “laid under a seal so that it can no longer actively show itself” is correct. In addition, writers have used reverences outside the immediate context of Dn9 to prove that the meanings of “confirm, ratify, or authenticate” instead of examining the meaning within the context of verse 24. What does this phrase mean here? Is there a base meaning that applies to both of the instances in this verse that endorses the meaning of “confirm,” or “ratify.” These two instances need to be more closely examined to arrive at a better definition. If the sense of “confirm, ratify or authenticate” is to applied to the second instance of the verb in verse 24, it should also be applied to the *first* instance of the verb in the same verse, as Keil correctly argues. But this meaning of the verb does not fit the phrase “confirm sins,” or “ratify sins,” or “authenticate sins.”

The second meaning of “to seal” – “to fulfil.”

The second interpretation of the phrase listed above, sees the meaning of “to seal” as meaning *the fulfilling* of the prophecy. Typical of this are the contributions of two SDA scholars, Doukhan and Shea. Doukhan says:

Thus, the seal of the prophecy – i.e., its fulfillment – is related to the seal of the sins – i.e., their forgiveness. (Doukhan, 1981, p.259)²²

Shea says:

The third way in which this phrase can be interpreted employs the meaning of sealing or shutting up in the sense of bringing to an end, as this verb appears to have been used in the preceding case. This could be applied in the more immediate contextual sense, as something relating directly to the city and its people with which the balance of this passage is concerned. This would mean that for that city and people prophet and vision were to cease by the end of the time period prophesied. This could have been either for their weal or woe. If they developed the righteous society which Daniel and the other prophets called for and envisioned, then the restoration of the kingdom with all the peace, prosperity, and righteousness seen flowing from it could have been brought about. Vision and prophet would no longer have been necessary then because all that the classical prophets had talked about would have been fulfilled. If they did not comply with the desired conditions, however, then the prophetic voice and vision among them would cease since God

²² But does “to seal sins” mean “to forgive sins?” Hengstenberg comes closest to a correct explanation by arguing for the meaning of “to shut” or “to close up” and applies that extension then to the covering over of sins through expiation of the blood – the atonement. Doukhan would have been more accurate if he had provided a rationale similar to this to justify his position.

would no longer speak to them in this way. I currently favor this third interpretation and an internal play could have been intended here based upon these two possibilities. (1980a, pp.73-75)

Quite apart from their individual interpretation of the phrase, both of these scholars quoted above stay closer to the text than that displayed by SDA writers of an earlier period.

- For instance, both scholars recognise the absence of the definite article as indicative of the generic use of the nouns as “vision” instead of “*the* vision,” and “prophet/ prophecy” instead of “*the* prophet/ prophecy.”
- Secondly, both recognise the association between the two phrases “to seal sins” and “to seal vision and prophet” and the necessity of using the same meaning in both cases.
- Thirdly, they see the link between the phrase “vision and prophet,” and visions and prophets in general, rather than just Dn8 or 9 in particular.
- Lastly, since they do not recognise the presence of the definite article in the text, they do not argue for the application of the word “vision” in this particular verse as applying specifically to the 2300 days.

There are certain similarities in the meaning of “to fulfil.” Above we looked two interpretations of the infinitive “to seal.” The first had the sense of “to confirm,” whereas the second interpretation had the sense “to fulfil.” As shown above, some authors see the confirmation occurring in the actual fulfillment of the prophecies. This is how the SDA writers generally see it too. For instance, notice this comment from Smith:

The vision and the prophecy were to be sealed up, or made sure. By the events given to transpire in the seventy weeks, the prophecy is tested. By this the application of the whole vision is determined. If the events of this period are accurately fulfilled, the prophecy is of God, and will all be accomplished; and if these seventy weeks are fulfilled as weeks of years, then the 2300 days, of which these are a part, are so many years. Thus the events of the seventy weeks furnish a key to the whole vision. (Smith, 1870, p.; cf also Smith, 1944, pp.203-4)

Although disagreeing with his conclusions concerning the relationship between the 2300 days to the seventy weeks, Smith’s comment shows that he sees the events transpiring during the seventy weeks as *confirming* or “*determining*” “to be of God,” the “vision and the prophecy, which in his mind was the 2300 days, but could more rightly apply to all prophecy and vision relating to the successful completion of Israel’s mission and the inauguration of the Messianic kingdom.

Shea’s 1980 view of the meaning of the concept –to “shut” or “cease” because of fulfillment – aligns with statements from the bulk of Christian commentators from all persuasions of faith. For instance, Hengstenberg confesses that in his day, (early 19th century), the consensus of opinion included the concepts of “fulfillment” and “confirmation.” He takes issue with that interpretation however:

Commentators are for the most part agreed in the opinion that the *sealing up* is equivalent to *fulfilling*, or *confirming*, and that allusion is made to the custom of affixing a seal for the purpose of adding validity to the contents of a document. It is evident from 1 Kings xxi, 10, 11, 44, that such a custom existed. They also adduce as parallel passages Acts iii, 18, (“those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, he hath so fulfilled, *ἐπλήρωσεν*”), and Matt v, 17. The expression “to seal” is certainly used in this sense in Syriac (see, for example, *Ephraim Syrus* hymn. 80, adv. Scrutat. Opp iii, p.149), as well as in the New

Testament, *e.g.*, John vi 27 and other passages (see our comm on Rev vii.3). But it is never so employed in the Old Testament. (1978, p.820)

Hengstenberg then argues how the meaning of the word “to seal” should be understood as “confirming” in the text in Dn9:24, not as a primary meaning of the word, but as an extended meaning. The basic meaning of the verb in Hengstenberg’s view is that of “shutting up.” The marginal reading for the verb “to seal” suggests the Hiph. Inf of *tamam* (“to complete”) from which many interpreters have got the concept of “fulfillment.” This marginal reading he discounts and proposes a reason why the early Greek translations included this concept. Others got this concept from the use of a seal as a means of sealing a document in Arabic customs but he argues that this concept is not used in the Old Testament. Hengstenberg however, gets the concept of “confirming” or “fulfilling” from a different line of reasoning.

As noted in the quotation above, he correctly contrasts the meaning of “to seal sins” with “to seal vision and prophecy” as a reference for determining the meaning of the verb. Since all prophecies point to the completion of all things in the coming of the Messiah with his provision of the forgiveness of sins (thereby “sealing” sins by taking them out of God’s sight), with the fulfillment of the sealing of sins comes the fulfillment of vision and prophet.

He argues against the meaning of “to seal” as an expression for ‘finishing or putting an end to’ in contrast to “open” as noted above, and cites many passages where the concept of “sealing” is placed in contrast to “open” to highlight the opposite nature of these two words. He finds a common link in the meaning of all three verbs used in the first half of verse 24. He says, “it is equally unallowable to separate those employed [in the first half of Dn 9:24] to denote what will be done to sin, the ‘shutting in, sealing up, and covering over.’ In the latter case, in fact, it is even less allowable, since the three expressions are all figurative, and represent the same idea of removing a thing out of one’s sight.” (c.1970, p. 817)

Archer says:

The fifth achievement will be the fulfillment of the vision [*hazôn*] and "the prophecy," which serves as a grand and central goal of God's plan for the ages - that final stage of human history when the Son of man receives "authority, glory and sovereign power" (7:14) so that all nations and races will serve him. This fulfillment surely goes beyond the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ; it must include his enthronement - on the throne of David - as supreme Ruler over all the Earth. (1985, p.113)

Leupold writes:

The same verb "to seal up" is used here that was employed earlier in the verse, *chatham*. The objective is the same: to dispose summarily and finally of a thing that deserves to be relegated to the category of achieved things. Why perpetuate visions if the purpose for which they are given is fully realized, and no higher achievement is possible? For "prophecy" we have the word "prophet," *nabhi*'; though the man is involved, it is primarily his *prophecy* that is under consideration. He too, needs no longer to function after the things he prophesied are fully attained. The term could be translated, "the vision of the prophet" - hendiadys (*Charles*). (1949, p.414)

Walvoord probably offers the best synthesis of the different ideas proposed for this verb. He comments:

The fifth aspect of the program, "to seal up the vision and prophecy," is probably best understood to mean the termination of unusual direct revelation by means of vision and oral prophecy. The expression *to seal up* indicates that no more is to be added and that what has been predicted will receive divine confirmation and

recognition in the form of actual fulfillment. Once a letter is sealed, its contents are irreversible (cf. 6:8) Young applies this only to Old Testament prophet, but it is preferable to include it in the cessation of New Testament prophetic gift seen both in oral prophecy and in the writing of the Scriptures. If the seventieth week is still eschatological, it would allow room for this interpretation which Young, attempting to interpret the entire prophecy as fulfilled, could not allow. (1971, p.222-223):

The comment to especially focus on in this statement by Walvoord is this: “The expression *to seal up* indicates that no more is to be added and that what has been predicted will receive divine confirmation and recognition in the form of actual fulfillment.”

Redditt (Ed.) has the same view; that the fulfillment provides the validation or guarantee of the prophecies:

The word for 'seal' appears here: **to seal both vision and prophet**. The phrase constitutes a word-play on the phrase 'seal the vision' (Lacocque, 1979: 193). The idea is that God will bring to fruition all that God promised Daniel in his visions and Jeremiah in 29:11-12. When a king or someone sealed a document, he was signing it, so to speak, or validating the contents. Such a seal by God would connote 'guarantee'. (1999, p.161)

The Interpreter's Bible also endorses both the idea of a seal on a document to attest to its genuineness, as well as the concept of “to stop” in the sense of the fulfillment of the visions, so that no further visions are necessary:

To seal both vision and prophet: To seal a vision or a prophet is to ratify or confirm the message (see John 3:33; 6:27, and Paul calling his converts the seal of his apostleship in 1 Cor 9:2). This common metaphor is derived from the ancient custom of attaching a seal to a document in attestation of its genuineness (cf. 1 Kings 21:8; Jer 32:10-11). The coming messianic kingdom will be the ratification of all the visions of seers and prophecies of prophets in which its coming was foretold. Some take the meaning as "to seal up" in the sense of "to stop," just as above we had a sealing of sin: i.e., once the kingdom has come the era of prophecy will be at an end, for all has been fulfilled and no further visions or prophecies will be necessary. In either case, the writer is probably playing on the use of the word in his positive and negative lists. (Buttrick, , vol 6: p.494)

Some commentators, like Shea's comments in his 1980 publication, see the fulfillment of “vision and prophet,” not as a *necessary* event but a *contingent* event, depending on Israel's preparedness to be faithful in her calling and growth to follow God's plan for her. That is to say, it was possible for all “vision and prophet” to be fulfilled by the time of the end of the seventy weeks with the ushering in of the Messianic kingdom. That it did not occur at the end of the seventy weeks merely confirms the Deuteronomic nature of this cataclysmic event. Since the seventy weeks did not culminate in the rise and then consequently, the destruction of the “desolator,” with the subsequent inauguration of the Messianic kingdom, the ultimate confirmation or validation of the seventy weeks did *not* occur. This position has important ramifications for the SDA insistence on the unconditionality of apocalyptic prophecy. It would argue that the seventy weeks prophecy is *not* apocalyptic in the sense that it is history prewritten, but it is a preview of what could have been given Israel's faithfulness. There are elements of it that would still occur if Israel was unfaithful, but there also are elements that would not occur. Leupold makes an interesting comment in this regard:

Since this [everlasting] righteousness was, in the last analysis, the purpose of all vision and prophecy, after the end has been achieved, the means become outmoded, and so “to seal up vision and prophecy” follows. (Ibid, p.414)

Through Israel's bringing in of everlasting righteousness, there would be no need of vision or prophet, since they would have made an end of sin, and Israel would have grown to the full measure of the stature of Christ (Eph 4:13). Consequently, there would be no further need for the gifts of the Spirit including the gift of prophesying (Eph 4:11-15). In the words of Paul, "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Cor 13:10).

Thus it was the privilege of Israel, in obeying her covenantal directive from God, to bring to an end, through realising their fulfilment, "all the good" that God had promised them in the prophets. (Jer 32:40) Kliefoth, quoted by Keil, had this to say:

When sins are sealed, the prophecy is also sealed, for prophecy is needed in the war against sin; when sin is thus so placed that it can no longer operate, then prophecy may come to a state of rest; when sin comes to an end in its place, prophecy can also come to an end also by its fulfillment, there being no place for it after the setting aside of sin. And when the apostasy is shut up, so that it can no more spread about, then righteousness will be brought, that it may possess the earth, now freed of sin, shut up in its own place. (Keil, 1978, pp.344f.)

As amply demonstrated, there is plenty of support in current literature for the concept of "ratification *through* fulfillment." The comment by the Interpreter's Bible is an insightful statement and explains the implications of their interpretation of the phrase better than some other commentators. Although it uses the concept of ratification, it is "ratified" in the fulfillment of the visions with the ushering in of the Messianic kingdom. When "that which is determined" is poured on the desolator then the kingdom will be set up and the inauguration of this kingdom will "ratify" all the prophecies written in the dim past foretelling of that day.

The Differences in Shea's definition of the phrase between 1980 and 1986.

Shea made a significant shift in opinion between the publication of "Daniel and the Judgment" in 1980 and the publication of his 1986 article in the BRI publication on the seventy weeks. Here firstly are extracts of his views in 1980, 1986 and 1996 on the topic of the infinitival phrase:

His View in 1980

"To seal up vision and prophet."

The same infinitive occurs in this and the middle colon of the preceding tricolon, as has already been mentioned, and there is also some alliteration between their objects since the middle consonants of both *chatta'oth* and *hazôn*²³ are dental phonemes. There are three main ways in which this difficult phrase can be interpreted. One question here is whether this verb was used in a sense similar to its preceding occurrence or a word play upon what it was intended.

Thus the first way in which to take this phrase is that there was a word play intended. In this case the contrasting significance of "authenticate" can be suggested for this second occurrence. The second way in which this verb can be interpreted is with the more similar meaning of closing or shutting up. If that was the idea intended then the prophet could be Daniel and the visions his visions. Since he was

²³ My changes to the transliteration due to inability to type the needed pointing. FB

twice told to shut up the words (s[°]tom hadd[°]barîm) and seal the book (h[°]tôm hassepher) until the time of the end (12:4, 9), that might be what was referred to here. When the events of the shorter prophecy of Dan 9 had come to pass then the unfulfilled portions of the vision of Dan 7 and 8 would be sealed until the time of the end (cf. 8:17, 19, & 26).

The third way in which this phrase can be interpreted employs the meaning of sealing or shutting up in the sense of bringing to an end, as this verb appears to have been used in the preceding case. This could be applied in the more immediate contextual sense, as something relating directly to the city and its people with which the balance of this passage is concerned. This would mean that for that city and people prophet and vision were to cease by the end of the time period prophesied. This could have been either for their weal or woe. If they developed the righteous society which Daniel and the other prophets called for and envisioned, then the restoration of the kingdom with all the peace, prosperity, and righteousness seen flowing from it could have been brought about. Vision and prophet would no longer have been necessary then because all that the classical prophets had talked about would have been fulfilled. If they did not comply with the desired conditions, however, then the prophetic voice and vision among them would cease since God would no longer speak to them in this way. I currently favor this third interpretation and an internal play could have been intended here based upon these two possibilities. (pp.73-75)

His View in 1986

“To seal up vision and prophet.” The verb “to seal up” (hatam) is the same as that which occurs three phases earlier in this verse. Three meanings appear possible for it here: (1) to validate; (2) to close up (until a later opening); or (3) to bring to an end.

If the second object of the infinitive (“to seal up”) were “prophecy,” either of the first two meanings would be preferred. However its objects are “vision” (hazôn) and “prophet” (nabi’), not “prophecy.” Since this second word occurs without the article it probably refers to “prophet” in a collective or corporate sense.

The third of these meanings (“to bring to an end”) makes the best sense if it is applied to prophets as persons rather than to their words. This sense is supported by the fact that it is the same as its parallel, used earlier in the verse (“to seal up / to make an end of sins”). As far as Daniel’s people and his holy city are concerned, therefore, “vision” and “prophet” are to come to an end by the time this prophetic period closes. (p.80)

...9:24-27 is a prophecy about both God and man. On the manward side of this prophecy we see first that Daniel’s prayer was to be answered, God’s people would return to their land and rebuild their temple and city. The blessings of the covenant would return to them again. With a return to these more favourable circumstances there would come upon them a new responsibility, a responsibility to respond in obedience to the God who had kept His covenant with them. The idea is expressed in the O.T by the analogy that the return from exile would represent a new Exodus.

Part of their obligation would be physical responsibilities. They would be the ones to rebuild the ruined temple and city. This work would not be easy. It would be accompanied in troublous times, that is, with opposition. This was indeed the case in the experience of the community of Jesus under Ezra and Nehemiah.

Then we come to the Messiah in relation to his people. Just as the references to the Messiah mark the center of this prophecy in terms of its literary structure, so His coming demarcated a great divide in His people’s experience. Two opportunities faced them. At the beginning of this prophecy they were exploited to prepare for His coming by putting away sin and the rebellious spirit that had led to their first exile. In short, they were to develop a righteous society they would be fit to welcome Him.

Failure to develop a righteous society would result in dire consequences. The outcome of this prophecy is very Deuteronomic in character. The avenues through

which God's people could avail themselves of either the blessing or the curse of the covenant were open to them. Unfortunately, the prophecy ends on a negative and a tragic note.

The people of God are foreseen to fail to put away that rebellious spirit which previously had afflicted them. There would still be a deep current of sin in the camp when the Messiah came. These failures are foretold as resulting in their rejecting of Him. Other consequences would follow in the train of this unfortunate choice. They would run their inexorable course until the city and the temple that were to be rebuilt (according to earlier statements in this prophecy) would lie in ruins (according to concluding statements in the same prophecy). It was not predestined by God to happen in this way, but it was foreseen that this sequence would occur in the course of events...

The first group of men (in Dn9) who come into view are God's own people. A great opportunity is offered to them at the beginning of the prophecy. By the end of the same prophecy it becomes evident, however, they will not receive the blessings that would have come from their fulfilling the responsibilities accompanying that opportunity. As a result, a second group of men are seen coming on the scene. Their actions would be adverse to the professed people of God since they would desolate their city and temple. (pp.116-118)

His View in 1996

The final pair of events in verse 24 are results of the first four actions. The first was "to seal up vision and prophecy." The word translated *prophecy* here is actually the word for "prophet." There would come a time when both vision and prophet would be sealed up. This is in the context of what would happen to the people of Judah. (pp.57-58)

Shea's 1980 position on "to seal."

In Shea's understanding as printed in 1980, the concept of "to seal" includes both the idea of "fulfillment" and "bringing to an end." I quote his statement again so that we can examine it more closely:

The third way in which this phrase can be interpreted employs the meaning of sealing or shutting up in the sense of bringing to an end, as this verb appears to have been used in the preceding case. This could be applied in the more immediate contextual sense, as something relating directly to the city and its people with which the balance of this passage is concerned. This would mean that for that city and people prophet and vision were to cease by the end of the time period prophesied. This could have been either for their weal or woe. If they developed the righteous society which Daniel and the other prophets called for and envisioned, then the restoration of the kingdom with all the peace, prosperity, and righteousness seen flowing from it could have been brought about. Vision and prophet would no longer have been necessary then because all that the classical prophets had talked about would have been fulfilled. If they did not comply with the desired conditions, however, then the prophetic voice and vision among them would cease since God would no longer speak to them in this way. I currently favor this third interpretation and an internal play could have been intended here based upon these two possibilities. (1980a, pp.73-75)

Shea is totally correct in understanding that the concept of "to seal" means "to shut." He then extends this sense of "to seal" to mean "to cease by the end of the time period prophesied." He then explains that the concept of "to cease" could imply two meanings depending on whether Israel was faithful or unfaithful. If they were faithful then it would mean fulfilling: "Vision and prophet would no longer have been necessary then because all that the classical prophets had talked about would have been fulfilled." On the other

hand, if they were unfaithful, then the infinitive “to seal” would mean “bring to an end:” “the prophetic voice and vision among them would cease since God would no longer speak to them in this way.” This is an excellent explanation of the meaning of this infinitive, with which I fully concur. Notice this quote from Davidson, which highlights this concept of the ending of vision and prophet:

To seal up the vision and prophecy. (RV. mg. 'prophet'). The reference is to the Old Testament dispensation, during which the prophet was the representative of God before the nation, and the vision was one of the means by which God made known His revelation to the prophets. A prophet was an Israelite who was raised up of God as an accredited spokesman, to deliver God's words to the people. God made His will known to the prophets by means of dreams and visions (see Nu.xii, 1-8). The entire prophetic institution was typical of the great Prophet to come, and, since it was under Moses, partook of the preparatory character of the Old Testament age. When this method of revelation ceased, the Old Testament dispensation itself was at an end, and it is this which is signified by the sealing of vision and prophet. (1954, pp.678-679)

However, there are two things Shea did not point out, but are worth noting. Firstly, there is something worth noting that is not mentioned by Shea— that the meaning “fulfilling” can apply in either scenario –whether Israel be faithful or unfaithful. How can this be? Well, just as Israel’s *obedience* would enable her *to fulfil all the O.T. classical prophecies concerning “the good”* that the Lord had planned for Israel, so Israel’s *disobedience* would enable her *to fulfil all the O.T. classical prophecies that spoke of “the evil”* the Lord would bring upon her, including the loss of His ministry through His servants, the prophets.

Therefore, regardless as to whether Israel is faithful or not, one side of the classical prophets’ predictions would be “fulfilled.” It is within this context of a wider picture of the conditionality of the outcome of both Dn9:24-27 and the predictions of the classical prophets that we can concur with Shea’s concept of the prophetic gift to Israel ceasing after the seventy weeks.

Expressed tabularly it would be presented something like this:

	What prophecies would be permanently fulfilled?	What prophecies would then be permanently redundant.
Israel passes probation	Those concerning their permanent acceptance as God’s own people.	Those concerning their permanent rejection by God
Israel fails probation	Those concerning their permanent rejection by God	Those concerning their permanent acceptance as God’s own people.

This endorsement of Shea’s excellent explanation in the 1980 paper is not to agree with him that the last act marking the close of the seventy weeks would be the stoning of a prophet to cease that ministry. I assert that this particular idea of Shea’s is indefensible from Scripture.

The second thing Shea overlooks is that the infinitival phrases are couched in an attitude of “doing the right thing.” For instance, with the moral issues listed in verse 24 we have:

- “finishing transgression” – which is doing the right thing;
- “putting an end to sin” – which is doing the right thing;
- making “reconciliation for iniquity” – which is doing the right thing instead of ignoring to make amends;

To be consistent with the tenor these phrases in verse 24, we can assume that the tenor of the meaning of the phrase “to seal vision and prophet” implies the right attitude on the part of Israel. This would mean that the infinitive phrase “to seal vision and prophet” leans towards the position of fulfilling the prophecies of the classical prophets for “the good” of Israel rather than fulfilling those referring to “the doom” of Israel, as prophesied also by them. So, in accordance with the first point examined above, “to seal vision and prophet” is to shut them up or to bring it to an end by fulfilling all the good relating to Israel’s future privileged position as God’s people, predicted by the visions and prophets in the Old Testament dispensation .

Shea’s 1986 Position on “to seal.”

In Shea’s 1986 paper however, he moves away from this definition of the verb “to seal” with its base meaning of “shutting,” to asserting that this is only *one of three* base meanings of the verb. He proposes that the meaning “to shut” is a possibility but he rejects that option in favour of “to bring to an end.” He says, “Three meanings appear possible for it here: (1) to validate; (2) to close up (until a later opening); or (3) to bring to an end.” (1986, p.80) He then goes on to reject the first two and accept the third one. His weakness here is that he has considered each of these meanings as mutually exclusive, rather than seeing them as an extension of the base meaning of “to shut.” He did not consider they were so in 1980. Hengstenberg argued over one hundred and fifty years ago against that meaning for the verb. It is surprising that Shea never read this statement before he mooted the idea:

The idea, however, that “sealing up” is equivalent to “putting an end to” cannot be sustained. The verb is no doubt frequently so used in Arabic, where the meaning has arisen from the very common custom of affixing a seal at the end of a letter or other written documents. (A large collection of examples may be seen in *Franc. Tspregi’s* dissertation de authentia selectiorum Kthibim, in *Oelrich’s* collect. opus. phil. theol. ii. p.153 sqq.). But it is never used in this sense in Hebrew. In the only passage, which is ever cited as an example, (Ez.xxviii, 12), the rendering given to [in Heb. *chothēm takēnīth*-FB], *perficiens, absolvens pulchritudinem*, rests on a misapprehension of the meaning of the second word. According to xliii.10 [in Heb. *takēnīth*] means a *sketch*, or *model*; and therefore [in Heb. *chothēm takēnīth*], “one who seals up the sketch,” is one who has the right to lay aside the idea of its existence, because that idea is perfectly represented in his own person, in other words, he is himself a personified idea, an ideal. Quite in harmony with this are the words that follow, in which the king of Tyre is called “full of wisdom and *finished* in beauty.” The figurative use of the word [in Heb. *chatham*] in the Hebrew is derived entirely from the custom of sealing up, for the sake of greater security, any thing that had been shut up or laid aside. Thus in Job xxxvii. 7, God “sealed up the hand of every man,” he shuts it up so that it cannot move. In Job ix, 7 he is said to “seal up the stars,” that is to shut them up so that they cannot shine. In Jer. xxxii. 11 and 14, a sealed book and an open book are contrasted; and in the same manner, a sealed fountain is contrasted with an open one in Is.xxix, 11; *vid.* Song of Solomon iv, 12. In the book of Daniel the outward act, from which the figure is derived, is found in vi, 18, where the king seals up the den, into which Daniel has been thrown; and the

figure itself occurs in chap.viii,26 and xii, 4, where the prophecies of Daniel are described as sealed up until the time of their fulfillment – a figurative expression of their obscurity. The opposite of this may be seen in Rev xxii, 10 (see Dissertation on Daniel p.175, 176 translation). Just as [in Heb. *chatham*] is preceded in the present case by [in Heb. *kal'a*], “to shut in,” so is it preceded in chap.xii, 4 by [in Heb. *satham*] (“shut up the words and seal the book”) and in Deut xxxii, 34 by [in Heb. *kamas*] (“it is not hidden with me, sealed up in my treasures?”). Sin is described in this passage as sealed up, because it is to be entirely removed out of God’s sight, taken completely away.

The marginal reading in the place of [in Heb. *lach^ethôm*] is [in Heb. *l^ehathëm*] (“to be completed,” the Inf. Hiph. of [in Heb. *tamam*]), the vowel pointing of which is inserted in the text. It probably owes its origin simply to the ancient versions, in which the figure is dropped, and which were so thoroughly misunderstood, as to give rise to the notion that they contained the traces of a various reading. There was all the greater readiness to adopt this reading because the form [in Heb. *hatham*] is actually employed in chap viii, 23, to denote the termination of sin, apostasy; and, for reasons already assigned, there was a strong desire to assign this meaning to the word in the text. It maintained itself in its usurped position by the help of the equally illegitimate [in Heb. *l^ekallë*], whose pretended legitimacy it served to strengthen in return. *Hitzig* and *Ewald* indeed, adduced, as an argument in its favour, the fact that [in Heb. *l ch th m*] follows, which, they say, is sufficient of itself to render the Kethib suspicious. But this is turned into an argument on the other side, when we observe that the frequent repetition of the same words is one of the distinguishing characteristics of Daniel’s style. Proofs of this may be obtained in great abundance from the eleventh chapter. In fact, they may even be found in this short section. For example, the roots [in Heb. *charats* and *shamam*] occur no less than three times. But even if this marginal reading, which is so thoroughly destitute of authority, were adopted, there would be no absolute necessity for attributing to the words a threatening meaning. To finish sins *may* mean, to force them to a head, to fill up their measure; but it may also mean to put an end to them by forgiveness, and thus to answer to the phrase to wipe away sin, [in Heb. *machah*, *tamam*] is used in this sense with reference to sin, *e.g.*, in Lam.iv 22: “Thine iniquity is wiped away, [in Heb. *tam nônëk*], thou daughter of Zion....But he will visit thine iniquity, thou daughter of Edom.”

Instead of the plural [in Heb. *chatta’ôth*] there are not a few MSS. in *Kennicott* and *De Rossi* in which the singular [in Heb. *chatta’th*] is found. But there is no reason for giving the preference to this reading, which probably owes its origin simply to an attempt to make the word more like [in Heb. *pesha’*] and [in Heb. *’awôn*]. The singular [in Heb. *pesha’*] is met with in other passages along with the plural [in Heb. *chatta’ôth*] (*i.e.*, Micah i 5), which may be explained from the fact that [in Heb. *pesha’*], apostasy, rebellion, has more of the nature of a collective noun, whereas [in Heb. *chatta’th*] relates more to some particular manifestation of sin.

On the other hand, even if the reading in the text be pronounced correct in both cases, as it should be, there is nothing in the words themselves to prevent our interpreting them in an evil sense. The punishment and extermination of the sinner might be described as the shutting in and sealing up of sin, just as well as the forgiveness of sin. Thus in Is iv. 4, the “filth of the daughters of Zion is washed away and the blood of Jerusalem purged from the midst thereof,” by means of the destructive judgments of God. Still, the following reasons are sufficient to show that this view is inadmissible, and that the expression must denote an act of divine grace, *viz.*, the shutting in and sealing up of sin by means of forgiveness. 1. In the second part of the verse there is a triple blessing mentioned, which the Lord will bestow upon his church at the end of the seventy years. If, now, we interpret the first two clauses of the verse in a good sense, we find the removal of a triple evil answering to this communication of a triple good. There is all the more reason to believe that the

two halves of the three clauses each, are thus related to each other, because otherwise the use of the word [in Heb. *chatham*] in the one would not correspond to its use in the other, whereas the two are evidently closely connected, nor would it occur in each case in the second clause. The prophecies are sealed up along with the sins, because the wiping away of sin, which is predicted in the former as the leading characteristic of the Messianic age, will now have taken place. This exact correspondence between the double use of the word [in Heb. *chatham*] also serves to defend it in the first instance against the unfounded pretensions of the marginal reading. – 2. There can be no doubt that, if it is not allowable to separate the three terms descriptive of sin which are found linked together in other passages (Ex xxxiv. 7 and ver.5), it is equally unallowable to separate those employed to denote what will be done to sin, the “shutting in, sealing up, and covering over.” In the latter case, in fact, it is even less allowable, since the three expressions are all figurative, and represent the same idea of removing a thing out of one’s sight. Hence if it can be proved of any one of these, that it must necessarily be used in a good sense, the argument will be equally applicable to both the others. Now this is indisputably the case with [in Heb. *kipper* ‘*awôn*,], which is a very common phrase, and never means anything but the forgiveness of sins, the covering of sin with the veil of mercy, so that the eye of an angry judge cannot observe it. As every one must admit, there is nothing in the verbs themselves, to show that any contrast is intended; and therefore, if this were the case, it would surely have been distinctly expressed in some other way. For example, when *Hofmann* gives the following as the meaning of the third clause: “It is different with the transgression of believers, it is expiated,” he shews by the turn which he here gives to the text, the form which it would really have assumed, if such a view had been admissible. – 3. The declaration, contained in the first three clauses, is closely related to the various confessions of sin in ver. 5, and the prayer for forgiveness connected with them.²⁴ It follows from this that, even if the last of the three were as ambiguous as the other two, it would still be better to interpret them in a good sense, since the angel would not have been likely to have come so very swiftly (vers.21), for the purpose of announcing to Daniel exactly the opposite of that for which he had prayed. It was the previous announcement of salvation, which alone served to divest of its terrors the prediction, that followed immediately afterwards, of the destruction of the city and temple. It now appeared as running parallel to the highest manifestations of mercy towards the faithful among the people of God, and so far as their connexion with the ungodly was thereby brought to an end, it also assumed the form of a manifestation of grace. (c.1970, p.814-817)

Hengstenberg argues that the concept of “put an end to” comes both from a misunderstanding of the meaning of the verb *chatham* and also from a misunderstanding of the verb in the marginal reading *tamam* for the verb “to seal.”

He points out that the Arabic use of *chatham* commonly includes the use of “to put an end to” through the application of a seal at the *end* of a letter or document, but it is never used in this manner in Biblical Hebrew. He surveys a collection of Hebrew texts that use the word “seal” and concludes that a more correct meaning for the verb is “to shut, to close.”

In addition, he argues the marginal reading should be rejected in favour of the text as it stands, thereby eliminating all sources of support for the meaning of the verb as “to complete, finish, put an end to.” (See Montgomery’s comments in the same vein above.)

²⁴ Look at the link between the request for forgiveness in the prayer and the conditions God sets up in his answer for that unconditional and permanent forgiveness. Verse 24 outlines the necessary conditions for that permanent forgiveness.

Having looked at his change in position in regard to the meaning of the verb “to seal,” we need to move on and look at his understanding of the whole phrase in verse 24. Shea’s early understanding of the vision in Dn9 is that verse 24 is a “very Deuteronomic” statement, meaning that real choices were open to Israel and that the vision presented the possibility of them redeeming the past and making reconciliation with God for their errors. However with the examples from his 1996 paper, he sees the foreknowledge of God speaking in verses 25-27 and thus these verses are not to be understood as being “very Deuteronomic” in character as they predict the actual history as it will occur. There is no room for choice when it comes to a revelation of God’s foreknowledge. Here is his 1986 statement again:

The outcome of this prophecy is very Deuteronomic in character. The avenues through which God’s people could avail themselves of either the blessing or the curse of the covenant were open to them. Unfortunately, the prophecy ends on a negative and a tragic note.

The astute reader will recognise immediately the contradiction of this statement. How can a prophecy both be a revelation of the foreknowledge of God and be Deuteronomic at the same time? God’s foreknowledge reveals the absolute outcome without the possibility of choice or variation. And if there is no possibility of choice or variation, then it cannot be Deuteronomic in character.

And this takes us into the debate as to whether apocalyptic prophecy reveals the foreknowledge of God or whether there are conditional elements present in it – a debate that cannot be addressed in this paper, but a topic definitely worth exploring. Readers are directed to my paper on Revelation 3:10 which argues that according to Rev.3:10, *all* of the Apocalypse was intended to be fulfilled to the then-contemporary readers of the Apocalypse and that since it was not fulfilled in that fashion, apocalyptic prophecy is not a revelation of God’s foreknowledge in specific detail.

It is interesting to notice how Shea has changed his position over the years. He has done this with other topics covered in this series of papers, and he has likewise has done so here too.²⁵ In his comments quoted above from his 1980 publication “Daniel and the Judgment pp. 73-75, he says the outcome was totally conditional on Israel’s obedience. The significance of this statement needs to be highlighted so that the contrast with the second quote can be distinct. He says here:

1. **There were two possible real outcomes for Israel’s future:** “This could have been either for their weal or woe.”
2. **If they followed the right way, then their future was *not* doomed to failure as he asserts in 1986.** “If they developed the righteous society which Daniel and the other prophets called for and envisioned, then the restoration of the kingdom with all the peace, prosperity, and righteousness seen flowing from it could have been brought about. Vision and prophet would no longer have been necessary then because all that the classical prophets had talked about would have been fulfilled.” This portrays a real positive future, and a possible

²⁵ One of the most obvious ones in Dn9 where Shea changed his opinion was over the issue of the dual gender participle “sevens.” Shea argued that it was masculine because it referred to the 2300days in Dn8:14. He quickly changed his opinion in his next publication with the BRI since he was prepared to say that it was a dual gender, and can rightly have either gender. His allusion to the 2300 days based on the gender of the word “sevens” just magically “disappeared” from any paper he published on the topic since

successful outcome for the purposes of God with Israel. Shea here explicitly says what he denies in his later work where he states that Dn9 foresees their doom in verses 26-27. It is important to note that his meaning of the phrase “to seal vision and prophet” here concurs with the bulk of Christian commentators.

3. **If they followed the wrong path, they would be rejected:** “If they did not comply with the desired conditions, however, then the prophetic voice and vision among them would cease since God would no longer speak to them in this way.” This and the previous point are classical Deuteronomic statements. And the Deuteronomic code, like the classical prophetic style, was conditional.
4. **The vision of Daniel 9 is classed with the writings of the classical prophets:** “If they developed the righteous society which Daniel and the other prophets called for and envisioned,...vision and prophet would no longer have been necessary then because all that the classical prophets had talked about would have been fulfilled.” Here Shea places the predictions of Dn9:24 with the predictions of the classical prophets. The predictions of the classical prophets were conditional; therefore, the inference (unsavoury for Shea) from this is that the vision of Daniel 9 is also conditional.
5. **The same conditions that applied to the classical prophets applies to the vision of Daniel 9:** Unless Shea is prepared to admit that the writings of the classical prophets are to classified as apocalyptic prophecies, and as such, unconditional, then his classing Daniel 9:24-27 with the classical prophets puts this vision of Daniel’s under the same classification as those writings – conditional prophecies.

How different is this statement in 1980 compared to the one he published six years later.²⁶ In his 1986 publication, Shea proposed that Dn 9 is written from the viewpoint of God’s foreknowledge. Here is his comment:

The people of God are foreseen to fail to put away that rebellious spirit which previously had afflicted them. There would still be a deep current of sin in the camp when the Messiah came. These failures are foretold as resulting in their rejecting of Him. Other consequences would follow in the train of this unfortunate choice. They would run their inexorable course until the city and the temple that were to be rebuilt (according to earlier statements in this prophecy) would lie in ruins (according to concluding statements in the same prophecy). It was not predestined by God to happen in this way, but it was foreseen that this sequence would occur in the course of events...This prophecy appears to end on a sombre note. (1986b, p.118.)

This is an unequivocal statement by Shea that the prophecy in Daniel 9 is a “history in advance” revelation. There is no conditionality in a revelation of God’s foreknowledge. He shows it the way it will be, not the way it could have been. As Shea says, “It was foreseen that this sequence would occur in the course of events.” Being such a historical preview, it is, therefore in his view, an unconditional apocalyptic prophecy.

²⁶ And Shea has the gall to chide Ford for changing his position!!! See Shea’s comments on the apotelesmatic principle of Ford where Shea examines some of Ford’s statements in his PhD Doctorate publication and discusses the logic of the principle. Note also Weber, a pro-Shea writer, has a parting shot at Ford’s change of opinion between Ford’s commentary on Daniel and the publication produced by Ford for the Glacier View Conference in 1980. (1985, pp.38,62-64)

The problem, however, is that if this conditionality was available at the beginning of the seventy week period, how can a historical preview of the course of events during the seventy weeks showing their failure, do anything *except* negate any conditionality available in the time period? Shea's explanation offers us a Dn9:24 outlines realistic and possible positive outcomes for Israel. Had these things been done, she would have fulfilled the conditions for a successful probation. She did not "make an end to transgression," She did not "make reconciliation for iniquity," she did not "bring in everlasting righteousness;" and consequently, she did not "seal up vision and prophecy" that spoke of her bright destiny. And in those things failing to eventuate, she failed the conditions of the probation. Therefore, this line of reasoning clearly shows that "to seal vision and prophecy" is equated with the successful completion of the purposes for Israel as explained in the prophets. They were to come to an end / completed / fulfilled by their realisation in much the same way transgression would be stopped, and made reconciliation for, and everlasting righteousness brought in.

But due to the failure of Israel, that never occurred, therefore "vision and prophet" were never "sealed;" as too "everlasting righteousness" was never brought in by them, nor was there "reconciliation for iniquity;" in fact, they filled up the cup of iniquity rather than emptying it. (Matt 23:32) If this reasoning is correct, then to "seal vision and prophet" implies a fulfillment of all the positive visions that are expressed in the prophets and the Law.²⁷

This possible positive outcome of the prophecy in Dn9:24 can also be argued from the word "cut off" or "determined." (see my paper on [Assumption No.15](#)). My argument concerning this word in that paper is that the seventy weeks is cut off from a much longer period of grace and favour to be afforded Israel once they had fulfilled all the conditions outlined in Dn9:24. The seventy weeks was merely a slice from the main block of favour. The seventy weeks was a probationary period. This indicates that a longer period of favour was available to them given their correct response to the probationary period given to them. This is also intimated by Jesus when he wept over Jerusalem and said, "If thou hast known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes." Luke 19: 42. There was the possibility in the text of Dn9:24 for Israel to be faithful and not be cast out as representatives of God. This period of grace and favour would be longer than 2300 years; in fact the full measure of this main block of favour would be *for eternity*. Even Shea in [1980](#) says in the same vein:

If they developed the righteous society which Daniel and the other prophets called for and envisioned, then the restoration of the kingdom with all the peace, prosperity, and righteousness seen flowing from it could have been brought about. Vision and prophet would no longer have been necessary then because all that the classical prophets had talked about would have been fulfilled. ([1980a](#), pp,74f)

²⁷ I also explore in this paper the concept that since the O.T. prophets also portray a scenario involving the *unfaithfulness* of Israel and their *final and irrevocable disownership* by God, their failure to fulfil the responsibilities of Daniel 9:24 meant that in the end of the seventy weeks all of those negative prophecies would be "sealed" or fulfilled instead of the positive. Therefore, this phrase, while written with a positive view in mind has a dark flip side which turned out to be the final outcome. But, contra Shea, Daniel 9 portrays that it could have been different.

Shea's 1986 interpretation of "seal up prophet and vision," on the other hand, assumes the *unfaithfulness* of Israel and the disassociation of God from Israel as his chosen instrument to communicate His purpose to the world. For him, this phrase signals their failure, since it means that God would cease communicating through them at the end of the seventy weeks. From Shea's perspective, "as far as Daniel's own people are concerned 'vision' and 'prophet' were sealed up or brought to an end with the rejection of this final prophet sent to them according to Acts 7." (1982, p.82) This is a contradictory tautology. You cannot have a period of conditionality *and* an unbreakable prophecy of failure coexisting together on the same topic for the same period in time. The two are mutually exclusive.

To offer a choice at the beginning of the prophecy that has no room for possibilities – only certainties – indicates either that verse 24 should not be a part of the vision or that verse 24 is a conditional prophecy and verse 24-27 are apocalyptic verses. Verse 24 should read something like this, if written in the foreknowledge of God:

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and thy holy city, yet they will not finish transgressions, seal sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, bring in everlasting righteousness, or seal vision or prophet.²⁸

If the text had been written something like this, then perhaps we could agree with Shea that this is a presentation of God's foreknowledge. But it is not written thus. There is an allotment of time so that they could achieve those things. Is God being farcical here? Is he saying, "I will make out that they have a probationary time, but I know they will refuse it." Although Shea denies it, a revelation of God's foreknowledge saying that they would fail their calling, is to condemn them to failure, since that is what will happen. We are not talking about conditionality here as it was in the days of Hezekiah, who was told that he would not live but die; and his spiritual pleading with God reversed that decision. Shea tells us we are reading the foreknowledge of God when we read the vision of Dn9. There is a significance difference. Shea's view is that Dn9 is history in advance. This is incorrect.

Are Dn9:24 and Dn9:25-27 Different Types of Prophecy?

It seems from reading Shea's writings that he considers Dn9:24 as being a conditional statement, and verses 25-27 as an unconditional prophecy. From his statement in verse 24 we can see his understanding of the seventy weeks as offering two possible outcomes to Israel. He says, "A great opportunity is offered to them at the beginning of this prophecy. By the end of the same prophecy it becomes evident, however, that they will not receive the blessings that would have come from their fulfilling the responsibilities accompanying that opportunity." (1986b, p.118) The very word he chooses – "that opportunity" – indicates a choice of destinies.

And his comments on verse 25-27 indicates that he reads them as being a portrayal of history in advance written from the foreknowledge of God: He says:

²⁸ I have excluded the phrase "they will not anoint a Most Holy" from this example in order to group those phrases that deal with more direct issues of spirituality – righteousness and sin. This does not discount the importance of this phrase.

The people of God are foreseen to fail to put away that rebellious spirit which previously had afflicted them. There would still be a deep current of sin in the camp when the Messiah came. These failures are foretold as resulting in their rejecting of Him. Other consequences would follow in the train of this unfortunate choice. They would run their inexorable course until the city and the temple that were to be rebuilt (according to earlier statements in this prophecy) would lie in ruins (according to concluding statements in the same prophecy).

He talks here of the events in these verses as the foreseeing of a history that will occur, such as the rebellion of the people of Israel, the rebuilding of the city and the temple with its later destruction. The only logical conclusion a reader could come to when reading these things is that somehow the vision of Daniel 9 is two different revelations – one is a conditional one while the second one (vs25-27) is an advance portrayal of history. This type of logic begs the question, who is to decide when a text is conditional or apocalyptic, especially when it is within the same body of text as we have here in Dn9? Shea seems to think he has the ability to pick between the two in the absence of any clear indication.

The whole basis of Deuteronomy is that Moses sets before the people of Israel a choice: Choose ye this day whom ye shall serve. If it be Baal, then serve him; if it be Yahweh, then serve him and follow his laws and statutes.²⁹ The very notion of Moses putting out such a challenge to Israel and at the same time telling them that their future shows they will fail and will not be able to follow this challenge makes a mockery of the very nature of offering a choice in the first place. The very act of God saying what the future will be empowers one to fulfil that statement. For Moses or Daniel to say that God says Israel will fail, forces one to think of the impossibility of success, due to the ultimate fulfillment of God's foreknowledge. I am not referring to predestination; but a revelation of our future spiritual state, even though it is known by God. This revelation, if it is from the foreknowledge of God, cannot be altered, as his foreknowledge is perfect. It must be correct; therefore, though one make a different choice than the one revealed in the foreknowledge eventually that choice must change because God's foreknowledge must come to pass.

It seems that Shea thinks in 1986 that Dn9 is in a different category of prophecy to the experience of Hezekiah. He was told that he would die and not live. Hezekiah humbled himself before God, repented and God changed his mind and Hezekiah rose from his deathbed a new man. This clearly indicates that the first statement of God was not given in the foreknowledge of God.³⁰ Shea, on the other hand, indicates that verses 25-27 of the vision in Dn9 are immutable declarations of history-in-advance, without the possibility of variation or condition. He then throws out a caveat in an attempt to cover himself by saying, "It was not predestined by God to happen in this way, but it was foreseen that this sequence would occur in the course of events..." And this foreknowledge is revealed in the prophecy. This is a red herring and should be ignored. He wants the vision to be Deuteronomic in verse 24 and non-Deuteronomic in verses 25-27. Put differently, he sees verse 25-27 as containing God's foreknowledge, but verse 24 is seen as not having any foreknowledge. His position in 1980, indicating that verses 25-27 reveals the outcome if they refused is closer to the truth than this position in 1986.

²⁹ See Deuteronomy 4 and 6 *et passim*.

³⁰ See 2 Kgs 20.

The vision of Dn9 is indeed very Deuteronomic and either outcome could have occurred. The nation of Israel could have been faithful and the events portrayed in verse 25-27 would have occurred yet in a different manner than how they played out. This topic is also beyond the parameters of this paper and will be reserved for a separate paper.

The evidence contradicting Shea's idea of verse 24 containing the Deuteronomic element and the rest of the prophecy containing a revelation of God's foreknowledge on the unfaithfulness of Israel comes from Shea's own writing. He says in his 1996 publication, (and correctly), that "the prophecy begins...with a summary or conclusion (v.24). Then it goes on to give the details that fill in or support that conclusion (vss.25-27)" (p.55).

Shea here explicitly says that verse 24 summarises vs.25-27. If then he says that verse 24 contains the Deuteronomic tradition, then we would have to say, in view of the statement quoted immediately above from 1996, p.55, that *the whole vision*, including vs 25-27 is a vision in the Deuteronomic tradition, since verse 24 is a summary of vs.25-27. Seeing the predicament this argument puts him in, the other conclusion he could make – its converse – is that verse 24 is a statement of God's foreknowledge, since verse 24 is a summary of vs.25-27, and vs.25-27 reveal God's foreknowledge of the unfaithfulness of Israel. But he cannot do that because he has already indicated conditional elements in verse 24, unless he wants to argue that God's foreknowledge is conditional. He cannot have it both ways. Either the whole vision is Deuteronomic, or it is a revelation of God's foreknowledge, including v.24. His third option is to deny that verse 24 is a summary of vs.25-27, and that is doomed to failure too. Either of these choices have fatal problems for his position.

Suffice it to say that Shea's contradictory argument in 1986 should be discarded as invalid, and his 1980 position should be accepted as closer to the truth. The vision of Daniel 9 is a Deuteronomic prophecy entirely and does not reveal the foreknowledge of God. This means the apocalyptic vision of Dn9 is a conditional prophecy and can be rightly classified with the classical prophets of the O.T in regards to the conditionality of its outcome, as Shea has indicated in 1980.³¹

Conclusion on the meaning of "to seal."

A number of meanings of "to seal" were canvassed in this section. 1) Early commentators like Hengstenberg, Keil argued for a base meaning of the word "to stop, close, shut." 2) The SDA pioneers used an interpretation of "to seal" meaning "to confirm" or "to ratify." This meaning is used among Christian writers. The issue becomes problematic however when we examine the logic on what the SDA pioneers infer is "ratified" or "confirmed." Their argument was that the fulfillment of the seventy weeks "ratified" or "confirmed" the correct interpretation and fulfillment of the 2300 days. This can no longer be argued from the text of Dn9:24. The competing interpretation, to "fulfil," is also endorsed widely among SDA scholars and the wider

³¹ There is another possibility: that the events in verse 25-27 would have meant different things if Israel had been faithful, and that another interpretation was possible, cf., Cottrell's view of it in SDABC4 in the "Role of Israel in Prophecy." Therefore, the events in verses 25-27 can explain *either* outcome of Israel's response to the probation given her by God. Explore this in another paper linked to this paper.

Christian community. 3) Others argue for a meaning of the verb as “fulfil” in the text of Dn9:24, and this has wide support in the wider Christian community. 4) The sense of “to cease” is proposed by Shea, in both a positive and a negative sense. The positive sense was that the visions and prophets in general would cease when all things were fulfilled, had Israel been faithful. This would concur with the base meaning of “to shut, close” argued by Keil and Hengstenberg. This positive sense has a myriad of endorsements from Christian commentators on the matter. The negative sense was that vision and prophet in general would no longer minister to the nation of Israel if they failed their calling and rejected God’s plan for their future. I then looked at his change of opinion from 1986 where he omitted the conditional aspects of Dn9 explained by him in 1980 and chose the base meaning of the verb to mean ‘to cease’ or “bring to an end.” I found his arguments to be fatally flawed.

Some commentators are able to successfully incorporate all three senses of the verb (“to close /shut;” “to fulfil;” and “to validate / confirm”) into their interpretation by explaining that “vision and prophet” are *sealed or closed up* when their predictions are *fulfilled*, and this fulfillment *validates* the genuineness of their message. Of course, there is no relation in this that can even be remotely connected with the 2300 days of Dn8.

The Marker for the End of the Seventy Weeks.

We turn now to the next aspect of this assumption – the notion that the sealing of vision and prophet is the marker of the end of the seventy weeks. The remainder of this paper will be devoted to debunking this fanciful notion. At the end of the discussion it will be seen that the reasons for using this infinitival phrase as the marker is without justification. Shea has gone to great effort to defend and advance this position. Therefore, his views should be examined in depth. It will be found that his concepts are groundless and his arguments are embarrassing if representing the cream of SDA selected by the SDA Biblical Research Institute. In fact, they will be shown to be hasty and shallow.

The SDA Pioneers' position

What do the pioneers have to say on why the “sealing of vision and prophet” constitute the marker for the 70 weeks?

Smith merely throws up the date without any justification at all:

This date is marked by the martyrdom of Stephen, the formal rejection of the gospel of Christ by the Jewish Sanhedrin in the persecution of His disciples, and the turning of the apostles to the Gentiles. These are the events which one would expect to take place when that specified period cut off for the Jews and allotted to them as a peculiar people, should fully expire. (1944, p.217)

Bible Readings For the Home (1949) discusses every infinitival phrase in Dn9:24 *except* the phrase “to seal vision and prophet.”

Ellen White likewise follows Smith's lead and merely recites the event without any justification. She says:

The seventy weeks, or 490 years, especially allotted to the Jews, ended, as we have seen, in A.D. 34. At that time, through the action of the Jewish Sanhedrin, the nation sealed its rejection of the gospel by the martyrdom of Stephen and the persecution of the followers of Christ. Then the message of salvation, no longer restricted to the chosen people, was given to the world.” (1950, p.328)

F. C. Gilbert, a Jewish Seventh-day Adventist from the turn of the twentieth century, merely follows suit of the previous citations:

After his Ascension, the Apostles carried on the work; and from the time of the crucifixion till the persecution of the church at Jerusalem, when many were scattered abroad, some going to Samaria there to preach the gospel, was just three and a half years. This completed the seventieth week. At the close of this prophetic week, or four hundred ninetyeth year, the Jews, as a nation, entirely rejected the gospel, and climaxed their national sin by stoning Stephen, while the glory of God shone on his face. Then for the first time the gospel was preached to others outside of the Jews. Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, was converted, The seventy weeks had ended; Israel, as a nation, as a separate people, was cut off. This brings us to the year A. D. 34 in the fall. (1972, p.303)

It is difficult to find *anyone* that even discusses and in depth this infinitival phrase in the writings of the pioneers why Stephen's stoning should be chosen apart from the fact that it occurred near the end point of their calculation of the seventy weeks. Where is a textual basis for using this apart from the maths involved in the SDA interpretation of the seventy weeks? Why did they not use the turning of the Christian Church to the Gentiles as the marker, when in their view it occurred at a similarly suitable time as well.

Contemporary SDA Scholars Contribution

The question of the marker for the end of the seventy weeks has been a vexed point of discussion among commentators. There is no clear statement in the text to give us a lead in this matter. In fact, it is an open question however as to how, at the end of the 70 week prophecy, the “vision” and “prophet” was to come to an end, and whether the nature of the marker of the end of the seventy weeks and the nature of the “coming to an end” of “vision and prophet” are one and the same or entirely different. Shea wants to argue that they are the same. That is to say, the coming to an end of “vision and prophet” *is* the marker of the end of the seventy weeks.

Questions on Doctrine, in contrast, argue that since there is no clear event linked to the end of the seventy weeks none should be sought.

Expositors have long sought for some incontrovertible event to mark the close of the seventy weeks of years of verse 27. Not a few have suggested the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7). But this is variously dated as occurring in A.D. 32, 33, or 34. Others have considered the conversion of Saul (Acts 9), or the declaration, “Lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46). The timing of these episodes, however, is not at all certain. In this connection the question arises, Is it really necessary to pinpoint some event as marking the close of the 70 weeks? No specific event is predicted in the prophecy, and it would therefore seem that no historic event is actually called for to indicate its close....So although various expositors (such as Hales, Tanner, Taylor et cetera) suggest the martyrdom of Stephen as the closing event of the seventieth week – and such might be quite reasonable – no historical mark is actually necessary, and possibly none can be pointed out with certainty. (*Seventh-day Adventists*, 1957, pp.289-291)

Amongst contemporary SDA scholars and writers there is a difference of opinion whether there is a marker for the end of the seventy weeks. Martin Weber, populist Adventist writer, regurgitates much of Shea’s material (quoted in the previous section) in his volume as his evidence for endorsing Stephen as the marker. (1985, p.46) Maxwell, on the other hand, takes the position of Questions on Doctrine by saying there was no marker for the end of the seventy weeks, and he draws some very compelling parallels:

The end of the seventy weeks. For the termination of the seventy weeks, Gabriel in Daniel 9:24-27 prescribed no specific event. Gabriel did not say what particular act or transaction, if any, marked the close of the prophetic period which, for 490 years, had counted out the privileges of the Jewish nation.

We do know however, that a few years after the cross – and various commentaries have placed the event around A.D. 34 – the Jewish leadership confirmed its rebellion against God by creating the first Christian martyr. The Sanhedrin, the highest governing body in the Jewish commonwealth, officially stoned Stephen.

In killing Christ the Jewish leaders had persuaded the Romans to commit the murder for them. In killing Stephen they threw rocks with their own hands, employing the traditional Jewish procedure for execution. The symbolism was devastating. (1981, pp. 234f)

Ford’s comments mirror those of Maxwell:

...while the prophecy itself does not tell of a climactic event at the end of the seventy weeks, it is right to point out that in A.D. 34, the actual close of the literal 490 years, the Jews sealed their rejection of the Christian gospel by stoning Stephen to death. That same year marked the calling of the Apostles to the Gentiles...(1978, p.235)

Nichol’s comments are closer to the traditional SDA position:

For one week. This week, the 70th, began in A.D. 27 with the opening of Christ's public ministry at the time of His baptism. It extended beyond the crucifixion "in the midst of the week," in the spring of A.D. 31, to the rejection of the Jews as the covenant people in the autumn of A.D. 34. (490 years after 457 B.C. is A.D. 34; see on v. 25 for the method of computation). The "vineyard" was then "let out...unto other husbandmen" (Matt. 21:41; cf. Isa. 5:107; GC 328, 410). For about 3 ½ years the authorities in Jerusalem tolerated the preaching of the apostles, but their spite was finally translated into decisive action in the stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, and the general persecution that then broke out upon the Church. Until this time the apostles and other Christian workers appear to have confined their efforts largely to the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem (see on Acts 1:8; 8:1). (1976, p.855)

As illustrated by pioneer and contemporary writer, the significance of the stoning of Stephen is proposed because the event is said to have occurred at that time. No evidence is cited and none is discussed concerning the choice of this event. And there is no evidence cited linking between the phrase "seal vision and prophet" and the stoning of Stephen. The stoning of Stephen is used as the marker *but* the proof of AD 34 comes from the maths related to the calculations from the seventy week prophecy, *not* from any independent chronological data. As Shea succinctly summarised,

"Simple addition tells us that if we add 490 years to 457 B.C., we reach A.D. 34. What happened in A.D. 34 to mark the conclusion of the seventy weeks? This date is too late for the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus which took place three or four years earlier. Some other event must be considered." (1996, p.68)

Not that SDA historicists are alone in holding to the stoning of Stephen as the marker for the end of the seventy weeks. Presbyterian scholar Oswald Allis in his book on Prophecy and the Church refers to many interpreters who hold to the stoning of Stephen as a marker:

Many interpreters regard this [last half of the seventieth week] as referring to the period of the founding of the Church and the preaching of the gospel exclusively to the Jews, a period ending with or about the time of the martyrdom of Stephen. Others hold that the period of three and a half years was graciously extended to some 35 years, to the date of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, a reference to which is found in v.26. Both of these explanations may be regarded as possible. (1947, pp.144f)

In summary, some writers like Maxwell and Ford take the position of Questions on Doctrine and say no marker is given for the end of the seventy weeks. As Maxwell and Ford both allude, *it may well be* that probation for the Jews finished with the stoning of Stephen; but there is nothing to indicate it.³² Scripture tends to lend support to the murder of Jesus as the end of national opportunity for Israel. Prudence would leave the matter at that until concrete independent chronological data surfaces to make us believe anything different concerning A.D. 34.

³² One could draw an analogy familiar to SDA eschatological thought: that it is the action to kill those who refuse to worship the beast and its image that constitutes in the mind of God a stepping over of the line of probation (Rev 13-14, 18-19). When the nations act legislatively to do this, probation for the world will be finished. This may have parallels with the death penalty of Stephen. When the governing body were prepared to put believers to death, they had crossed the line. This analogy is not without its problems, since the Roman Empire was prepared to mirror the actions of the Sanhedrin for centuries to come. The difference of course was that one purported to be the representative of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whereas the Caesars were ignorant pagans, with no claims to great spirituality, and wisdom as did the Sanhedrin.

Textual Evidence to choose the phrase “to seal vision and prophet” as the marker for the end of the 70 weeks?

Notice this statement from [Shea's 1980](#) paper: “This particular phrase is the one which says that 70 weeks were cut off upon Daniel’s people to “seal up vision and prophet.” (p.372) Shea explicitly states here that it is this phrase that indicates the end of the 70 weeks. The sealing up of vision and prophet at the end of the 70 weeks marks the end of the time period.

A very basic question then, is whether there is any contextual evidence in Dn9:24 to suggest that one infinitival phrase should be chosen above another as indicative of the marker for the end of the seventy weeks. Starting first with the evidence in favour of Shea’s argument, we must consider the following. His definition of the phrase “to seal vision and prophet” is that it means the ending of vision and prophets to Israel. That is to say, at the end of the seventy weeks, vision and prophet would cease to Israel. Does the text allow the infinitive to describe an action that would only take less than a day to achieve (ie., the trial and the stoning of Stephen) when the text of Dn9:24 seems to indicate that the seventy weeks applies to the actions of each and every one of the infinitives? Put differently, were the *whole* of the seventy weeks needed for each of the actions specified by the six infinitival phrases, or whether they could occupy only a *part* of the period. Take the example “to anoint a most holy.” How long does it take to anoint a most Holy place or person? Definitely not 490 years. Is there any way that this phrase could involve seventy weeks?

If this phrase refers to a place of worship, does it imply the rebuilding of that temple and the willingness of the people to have a place of worship after the prescriptions of Yahweh’s worship, rather than the temples of idols so familiar with the pre-exilic nation? Even if it did, this would not involve as long a period as 490 years. If it refers to the post-exilic temple, then the anointing of the temple occurred early in the seventy weeks. If this is correct, then it is feasible to say that this phrase does *not* cover a significant length of the seventy weeks.

If the phrase refers the anointing of a Person, such as the Messiah, likewise it would not take the seventy weeks to accomplish this either. Even if we allow for the reasoning that the period of waiting for the Messiah to appear must be included as well, we have the problem that there is a part, if not the whole, of seven years of the last week of the prophecy not accounted for under this phrase. We could include the entire period only up to the anointing of the Messiah by the Holy Spirit at the baptism of John.³³ From the perspective of applying this infinitival phrase to the Messiah then, it does not cover the entire period involved either.

Therefore, after considering both options for the meaning of “anointing a most Holy,” it could be reasonably argued that the phrase does *not* have to cover the *entire* seventy weeks. Likewise, the phrase “to seal vision and prophet” does not have to cover the full seventy weeks. It could imply the end of the period as a point in time. This would be a favourable outcome then for Shea’s theory. It could validly be argued that the phrase “to

³³ This assumes the validity of many other factors in the SDA explanation of this aspect of the prophecy, such as the anointing is done by the Holy Spirit, that the anointing occurs at the beginning of the seventieth week.

seal vision and prophet” only need apply to *the closing moments of the prophecy*. It could also imply the period beyond the seventy weeks when the visions and prophets’ sayings would be consummated in the actions as they played out with the introduction of the new world and a new kingdom.

Moving on to some of the arguments against his theory are the following. One of the basic faults with the theory of saying the infinitive “to seal vision and prophet” is the phrase marking the end of the seventy weeks, is that he has not explained why this infinitive is chosen and not *any of the other* infinitival phrases. These six phrases are given to Daniel in a set in verse 24. There are no signals in the text to indicate that one has to be the marker of the end of the seventy weeks more than another; or that any one of them is the marker of the end of the 70 weeks *at all*. There could have been some marker associated with “putting an end to sin,” “finishing transgression,” “bringing in everlasting righteousness,” or “making reconciliation for iniquity” that would just have plausibly made that infinitival phrase the marker for the end of the seventy weeks. It is not too hard to create a reasonable marker for each of these phrases.

Could he argue on the basis of the meaning of the infinitive “seal” in the phrase “seal vision and prophet:” that since it means to finish, then this is the proof that we should choose this infinitival phrase? This would be just as futile a line of thinking since this infinitive is also used with the infinitival phrase “to seal sins,” and so this argument would not be advantageous for him. Someone could equally argue that the sealing of *sins* is the marker for the end of the 70 weeks using the same infinitive. How would he justify choosing one infinitival phrase and not the other with the same verb on a purely textual basis?

Could he use the issue of “vision and prophet?” This would be just as problematic as the difficulty using the infinitive “to seal.” These words are no less significant than “sealing up sin;” “making an end to transgression” or “bringing in everlasting righteousness.” In fact, it is because of the actions just cited that vision and prophet can be sealed one way or another. The vision and prophet are only sealed in response to the primary action of the people of Israel’s choice either for sin or everlasting righteousness.

As Shea says, “The final pair of events in verse 24 are results of the first four actions.” (1996, p.57) One would assume that if a marker was to be chosen for the end of the seventy weeks, it would be a turning point where sin and transgression are either embraced or abandoned forever nationally. But that would mean not using the phrase “seal vision and prophecy” as the marker, which would negate Shea’s theory.

If we are to believe that the phrase “to seal vision and prophet” is to be marker for the end of the seventy weeks, then we should clearly be able to see it to be the case in the text. Here are some samples of how the text *should have been written* to say what Shea wants it to say:

24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city until **I seal /the sealing of vision of prophet**, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to anoint the most Holy.

OR

24 Seventy weeks are determined until **I seal /the sealing of vision of prophet** upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to anoint the most Holy.

OR

24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to anoint the most Holy until **I seal /the sealing of vision of prophet.**

OR

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. **And at the end of the week I will seal both vision and prophet (to/from your people.)**

OR

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, **and at the end of the week I will seal vision and prophecy**, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate

This is a sample of the type of signal from the text that would give us some hints that the infinitival phrase “seal vision and prophecy” should be taken as *the* end marker for the period. But there is nothing in the text itself which points us to choose this phrase as the distinctive one as the end marker of the time period, even though we could reasonably argue that the sealing of vision and prophet only has to occupy a short period of time. Therefore we must reject Shea’s theory on the basis of the absence of any textual support. There is nothing in the text of Dn9:24 to make us to choose one infinitival phrase above another.

I understand that his goal is to try and find support for the thesis of Hales, but he cannot use the assumptions used two hundred and fifty years ago to justify his argumentation now.

Shea understands the "sealing up of the vision and the prophet" to be referring to the rejection of the prophet Stephen by the Jews.

Shea’s interpretation of this phrase infers that “vision and the prophet” means the prophetic ministry to Israel generally, rather than restricting it, as done by the pioneers, to meaning that it confirms visions or even more specifically, it confirms the SDA interpretation of Dn8:14 and the 2300 days.³⁴

He understands “to seal up” to refer to the ending of the prophetic ministry, rather than the confirmation of the 2300 days as 2300 years through the historical fulfillment of the seventy weeks. His interpretation is incorrect on two counts. First, Stephen was not a prophet, and second, even if he was, he was not the last prophet to the nation of Israel. I will prove these two assertions in the next two sections. The first section entitled “[Stephen – a prophet](#)” deals whether Stephen was a prophet, and the section entitled “[Stephen was not the last prophet to the Jewish people.](#)” Both of these sections are

³⁴ Stephen is the last prophet to speak to the Jewish people of God. But his death is silenced in death by stoning. In silencing him they also silence the prophetic voice addressed to them with finality....Stephen’s death was also of significance because it occurred in the year 70 prophetic weeks came to their end: AD 34. ([Shea, 1986b](#), p.82)

lengthy and by clicking on the hyperlink, you may move there. But before launching into these matters I quote Shea's pertinent material first.

Shea's Comments on Stephen in 1980:

This material was prepared by Dr. Shea for consideration by the Glacier View Committee in 1980 when the views of Dr. Desmond Ford were under review. The manuscript has five chapters. The five chapter headings are as "1. Biblical Parallels for the Investigative Judgment;" "2. Why Antiochus Epiphanes is not the Little Horn of Daniel 8;" "3. The Judgment of Daniel 7;" "4. The Date of the Judgment in Daniel 8;" and "5. The Nature of the Judgment in Dan. 8." Shea pleads for the readers to overlook his typographical errors in this manuscript since it was written in haste before the consultation was convened at Colorado, and we shall give him that. He acknowledges his material on Daniel is different from the traditional "approach to the interpretation of Daniel" by the church:

The position proposed in the final chapter and the subject of typology, varies from the way in which this subject has been taught in the past, but it is still considerably closer to the older views than that which has been proposed in the Ford manuscript. ...Unfortunately, our different approaches [Shea's and the SDA committees-FB] to the interpretation of Daniel were already too far apart for them to have been harmonized by that late date. (1980, p.2f)

And so here is the material he wrote then on the issue examined in this assumption:

The end of the 70 weeks in A.D. 34

An event of significance around this time is the stoning of Stephen recorded in the book of Acts. The theological situation of this event in relation to the prophecy of the 70 weeks is examined further below. Here we are only concerned with chronological correlations for this event. Since the date that Stephen was stoned was not recorded in the book of Acts one might get impression that the date of this event cannot be determined. That would leave us without any chronological correlation with which to forge a link between prophecy and history here.

There is, however, another avenue through which to approach the chronological problem of the date that Stephen was stoned. This alternate approach is based upon the fact that that Paul (Saul) was in attendance at the time that Stephen was stoned. Obviously, Paul had not yet been converted to faith in Christ by that time. If a date for the conversion of Paul can be determined then that date would provide us with a terminus later than which Stephen could not have been stoned. The problem of how long Stephen was stoned before Paul was converted would remain, but the magnitude of that problem would be reduced in size.

From a lack of time in which to investigate this problem more fully personally, I present but one scholar's date for the conversion of Paul here. Thus this view is only intended to be illustrative, it is not necessary (sic) fully representative or the most correct chronological reconstruction. In spite of the less than definitive approach that must be taken here, the reader should be able to see the potential correlations with the prophecy of Dan 9 that such a presentation offers.

Finnegan's work on this point has been cited here at length. In order to determine the date Paul was converted it is necessary to establish some fixed point somewhere along the line in his life and work backwards from that point with whatever chronological fixed point in Paul's life. The standard term of office for a proconsul of a senatorial province like Achaia was one year, starting in July of one year and ending in June of the next. An inscription which mentions Gallio in this office has been found at Delphi and it reported a letter from Claudus' name, this inscription can be dated in the first half of A.D. 52. That being the case it is probable that Gallio took up this office in the summer of 51 A.D. Then,

Acts 18:11-12 states that Paul stayed a year and six months in Corinth and then, “when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia,” was attacked by the Jews and brought the tribunal of the governor. The language seems to suggest that Gallio arrived at that time, and it seems inherently likely that the coming of a new governor, who was inexperienced in that place, would provide a good opportunity for such an attack. It is probable, therefore, that Paul was brought before Gallio (who had arrived in May/Jun) in the early summer of A.D. 51. Since at that time he had been at Corinth a year and six months (Ac 18:11), Paul original arrival in Corinth may be dated in midwinter of A.D. 49/50, say perhaps in January, A.D. 50 (Finegan, p. 319)

Some support for this date can be derived from the information that Aquila and Priscilla had recently come from Italy because Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2), if this expulsion can be identified with that mentioned by Suetonius and dated in 49 A.D. by Orosius. Working backwards through the second missionary journey of Acts 16-17 takes us back to an estimated time around the spring of A.D. 49 for the beginning of that journey. That would date the Jerusalem conference of Acts 15 in 48/49 A. D. Since that to Jerusalem appears to correspond to the one “after 14 years” that Paul mentioned in Gal 2: 1, we have now worked back to the point where earlier dates can be determined by projecting those 14 years back from the estimated time of the conference. Gal 1:18 refers to another period of 3 years which are best taken as running consecutively with these 14 years. In Finegan’s synthesis this results in the following scheme through which he dates the conversion of Paul (p. 321):

Table 148. From the Conversion of Paul to the Conference at Jerusalem A.D.

33/34 Conversion of Saul (Ac9)

34/35

35/36 Visit to Jerusalem “after 3 years” (Gal 1:18)

36/37

37/38

38/39

39/40

40/41

41/42

42/43

43/44

44/45

45/46

46/47

47/48

48/49 Visit to Jerusalem “after fourteen years” (Gal 2:1) and the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15)

Some variables are naturally involved here, as they are in most problems in ancient chronology. One link in the chain involves how much time was spent on the second missionary journey. Another involves what kind of years Paul was talking about here, Roman, Jewish spring, Jewish fall, or years in some more general sense. Another link involves the length of time between the stoning of Stephen and the conversion of Paul. Perhaps it would be better to estimate that period of time in terms of months rather than years. Other scholars would date Paul’s conversion later, in 35 A.D., for example.

Even when all of these variables are taken into account, however, 34 A.D. remains a reasonable estimate for the date of the stoning of Stephen as derived from dates in the career of Paul. In fairness to the material available this date should probably qualified in terms of plus or minus a year. That is a manageable margin of difference here, however, and thus as far as we presently know from the sources available, the stoning of Stephen does come very close to fulfilling the specific chronological

requirement for the end of the 70 weeks. The theological significance of this event is discussed further below...

A.D. 34 is a reasonable date for the death of Stephen and the conversion of Paul, but variables involved still allow for some margin of difference here. From a statistical point of view one might say that a possible margin of error of 1/490th is involved in the two last cases, while the correspondence is essentially direct in the first two cases. Even allowing for this margin of error in the dates for the death of Christ and Stephen, such correspondences are still highly significantly statistically. Not only that but the improbability of the occurrence of such a series of events occurring in the predicted years is compounded by the very fact that they were predicted in a series. (pp.267-269)

The Significance of the Stoning of Stephen.

According to the calculations presented above, the 70 weeks of Dan 9 came to an end in A.D. 34. But Christ was crucified in either 30 or 31 A.D., or his death was not the event that marked the end of this prophetic period. In looking for another event of significance with which to mark the end of this prophetic period, Seventh-day Adventists have settled upon the stoning of Stephen. For our present purposes we may accept the date of A.D. 34 as an accurate estimate of when that event took place, as discussed above (pp.265-267)

The question that lies beyond the mere establishing of a date from this event is, what was so significant about the stoning of Stephen? Why was his martyrdom so significant as demarcating the end of this period at all? Why not some other type of event such as a decree or a war or something like that? I would suggest, in answer to these questions, that there are several aspects to this experience that can be evaluated as highly significant when they are viewed through the eyes of the OT.

1. Stephen's view of the heavenly court.

When Stephen came to the direct and personal application of the thrust of his address to the members of the Sanhedrin, "they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him (Acts 7:54)." At that moment he, "full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.'" (vv. 55-56)." The reaction of his listeners was abrupt and violent, 'But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him, (vv.57-58)."

What happened to Stephen when the Holy Spirit came upon him should be noted carefully. He was given a vision of heaven. Since this view lay outside the realm of normal sense it can be called a vision. Stephen had a vision at this time. That makes Stephen a prophet; since it is to prophets that God has given visions of Himself like this. Thus the Holy Spirit inducted Stephen into the office of a prophet at this time. Since he was killed shortly thereafter, he may have had the shortest ministry of any prophet known in the Bible. It is not the length of his ministry that is significant, it is the nature of the vision that he was given at that time. He looked into heaven. In the first chapter of this study passages were collected which relate similar views. In those cases, however the view of heaven was given for the specific purpose of identifying the judgment that was about to fall upon some party or parties. The case of Micaiah ben Imlah in I Kings 22 is illustrative here. Standing before Ahab he looked into the heavenly court and saw Yahweh sitting on his throne and the host of heaven on his right hand and his left. It was from that session of the heavenly court that the sentence upon Ahab came, and the prophet served as the messenger of the heavenly court.

In Acts 7 we see Stephen standing not before that ruler of Israel but before the rulers of Judea. It is not the host of heaven that Micaiah sees at the right hand of God, now it is the resurrected Messiah Jesus Christ. Stephen stands here then in the same position in which the prophets of old stood, as a messenger of that heavenly court. The view of heaven given to him carries with it an aura of judgment. Such a

prophetic view was appropriate to the circumstance in which he found himself. He was a messenger of the heavenly court, and he was rejected by the leaders of God's people and that rejection came at the time the probationary period of the 70 weeks came to an end. Such a setting lends importance to what he had to say in the speech that preceded this prophetic experience and his martyrdom, and thus we need to inquire further into the nature of the message which he brought to the Sanhedrin that day.

2. Stephen's covenant lawsuit.

In order to understand the significance of what Stephen had to say on that day, one has to go back into the OT and look at the way in which the covenant which God made with his people was formulated and how the prophets used that formulation. A major breakthrough in OT studies occurred in the 1950s when G. Mendenhall identified the form of the Sinai covenant, and other covenants in the OT, with that which was utilized by the kings of the Hittites in the late Bronze Age of the 2nd millennium B.C (Biblical Archaeologist 17 [1954]: 50-76). The Hittite king was the Great King or suzerain who had under his control a number of small kinglets or vassals. Politically, he kept these fellows in line by making treaties, i.e., covenants, with them. These suzerainty treaties follow a particular form and it differs, for example, from the parity treaties that were used for agreements among equals like the Hittites and Egypt.

The five main sections of the suzerainty treaty form have been outlined as: 1) the preamble – which identified the Hittite king by name and title; 2) the prologue – which recited the gracious acts of the vassal in the past as motivation for his continued loyalty; 3) the stipulations – the provisions of the covenant which the vassal was obliged to keep and do, 4) the witnesses – the gods of both covenanting parties who were responsible for seeing that the covenant was kept, and 5) the blessings and curses – the benefits that would come to the loyal vassal and the harm that would come to the disloyal vassal and his kingdom. From establishing this form in Hittite sources it was then noted that this form also fits that of a number of covenants in the Bible. In other words, God spoke to his people through this vehicle or medium which was known in those times, as E. G. White has noted in connection with the Abrahamic Covenant, “The Lord condescended to enter into a covenant with His servant, employing such forms as were customary among men for the ratification of a solemn engagement (PP, 137).” The following outline illustrates how some of the biblical covenants can be organized along this line:

Covenant Element	Ex.20-23	Josh 24	Deut	I Sam 12
Preamble	20:2a	2a	1:1-5	6a
Prologue	20:2b	2b-13	1:6-4:49	6b-13
Stipulations basic	20:2-17	14-15	5-11	14a
Stipulations detailed	21-23	25	12-26	-----
Witnesses	24:3-8	22-27	31	16-18
Bless & Curse	23:20-33	20	27-30, 32-33	14-15

The witnesses, of course, were not pagan gods in this Israelite context, they were other things such as the people, the stones of witness, the song of Dt 32, heaven and earth, etc. The more important for our consideration here is the use to which this

form was put by the prophets. The prophets were not religious innovators as Wellhausen thought, they were reformers. The particular type of reformation to which the prophets called the people was back to living the lives of those who had truly entered into covenant relationship with Yahweh. The covenant which they called the people back to was the Sinai Covenant, and it is in this sense that they were reformers.

Serving in this capacity it naturally was necessary for the prophets to point out to the people where they had violated the covenant. This was sometimes done in a particular way and called by a particular name. The Hebrew word used to refer to this was rib, which can probably be translated best as “covenant lawsuit.” It was the prophets, therefore, who brought God’s covenant lawsuit against the people when they violated that covenant. In calling the people back to a covenant relationship with God by announcing His rib they used the old elements from the covenant in a new way. A classic example of this can be found in Micah 6, which may be outlined as follows:

I. Preamble and Witnesses, Micah 6: 1-2

Hear what the Lord says: Arise, plead your case (rib) before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, you mountains, the controversy (rib) of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a controversy (rib) with his people, and he will contend with Israel.

II. Prologue, Micah, 6:3-5

O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of bondage; and I sent before you Moses, and Miriam, and Aaron. O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab devised and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the Lord.

III. Stipulations.

A. What they are not, Micah 6:6-7

With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

B. What the stipulations are, Micah 6:8

He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

C. The Violations of the stipulations, Micah 6: 9-12

The voice of the Lord cries to the city ---and it is sound wisdom to fear thy name: Hear O tribe and assembly of the city: Can I forget the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is accursed? Shall I acquit the man with the wicked scales and with a bag of deceitful weights? Your rich men are full of violence; your inhabitants speak lies and their mouth is deceitful.

IV. Curses = judgment, Micah 6:13-16

Therefore I have begun to smite you, making you desolate because of your sins. You shall eat, but not be satisfied, and there shall be hunger in your inward parts; you shall put away but not save, and what you save I will give to the sword etc.

The parallel to the prologue of the covenant functions in a similar way here as it does in the covenant proper, as a reminder of the gracious care which God had exercised on their behalf in the past. Because he did so much for them through these saving acts, their rebellion against Him is unwarranted.

With this OT background in mind a better evaluation of Stephen’s speech that is recorded in Acts 7 can be given. If one does not have that background in mind then this speech might seem to be a strange, perhaps boring, sermon in that he droned on and on and on about the history of Israel. But when this is seen in the light of the use of the covenant formulary and the rib pattern of the OT, it takes on a deep meaning.

This was the way in which the prophets utilized the prologue of the covenant in bringing their rīb to the people in an earlier time, and now Stephen does the same thing. He starts with Abraham, with whom the first covenant was made, he continues on then with Isaac, and Jacob, and his sons, especially Joseph, then he comes to Moses the great deliverer and covenantor and he spends a long time on his life and experiences, then he comes down to Joshua, and David, and finally he ends up with Solomon. After this lengthy recital of history he breaks off into his indictment, and this is based upon the stipulations of the covenant: You received the law but you did not keep it. You killed the prophets and now you have killed the Messiah. In this way Stephen not only served as a prophet in that he was given a prophetic view of the heavenly court at a time of judgment, he also served as a prophet in bringing God's final rīb or covenant lawsuit to the leaders of the people.

3. Sealing up prophet and vision.

These two prophetic functions enhance the importance of A.D. 34 as the terminal date for the 70 week's prophecy far above and beyond the mere fact that an important Christian martyr died at that time. That being the case this event might shed some light upon an obscure phrase that is mentioned in connection with the 70 weeks in Dan. 9:24. This particular phrase is the one which says that the seventy weeks were cut off upon Daniel's people to "seal up vision and prophet." The reference to "prophet" here seems strange since one would have expected the word "prophecy" here instead.

Looking back at this phrase from Stephen's experience, however, it can be viewed in a new light. Stephen was the last true prophet whom God called to that office to speak particularly to the people of His election. When their leaders stoned him they silenced the voice of the last in a long line of their prophets. His death brought an end to the function of the prophetic office on their behalf as a people. The vision that he saw just before he died was the last vision that a prophet who ministered especially to them was to see. As far as Daniel's own particular people were concerned, vision and prophet had been sealed up. From this time forward the prophetic gift was to be manifested in the arena of Christ's church instead. (pp.366-373)

Shea's Comments on Stephen in 1986:

When did this happen and what does this mean? Since the final events of this prophecy appear to extend half a prophetic week or three and one half years beyond the death of the Messiah, we must look to the NT for an answer. Consequently, Seventh-day Adventist interpreters have usually examined the first chapter of the book of Acts to find an event with significance to mark the end of the 70 weeks. The event commonly selected is the stoning of Stephen (Acts 6:12-7:60).

What is so significant about the stoning of Stephen? Why is his martyrdom more important than that suffered by others at that time? Why is a martyrdom and not some other kind of event so significant in demarcating the end of this prophetic event?³⁵ When this event is evaluated in terms of the expectations of OT prophets, several aspects of it can be seen as highly significant in this connection.

The first point of significance has to do with Stephen's view of the heavenly court. When Stephen broke off his speech before the enraged members of the Sanhedrin, he, "full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus

³⁵ Many do indeed choose a different event for this time – the turning of the Church to the Gentiles, since, according to Shea's theory, it was only a matter of months between the martyrdom of Stephen and the dispersion of Christians from Judea to the Gentiles. Thus, for these people, the turning of the Church to the Gentile Church is the marker of the end of the special probation period of the Jews. From hence, the church is more correctly found among the Gentiles.

standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55, RSV).” This he announced to his listeners. They in turn cast him out of the city and stoned him to death.

When the Holy Spirit came upon Stephen, he was given a vision of heaven. By definition Stephen became a prophet at this point in time. It is to prophets that God gives visions of Himself like this. To cite but one parallel from the OT, the experience of Micaiah looked into the heavenly court and saw Yahweh sitting on the throne with the hosts of heaven around him. It is from this session of the heavenly court that sentence is pronounced upon Ahab. The prophet serves as the messenger of the heavenly court who brings sentence to the king. By virtue of his connection with the same heavenly court Stephen stands in a similar position in this episode in Acts.

The second point of significance has to do with the nature of Stephen’s speech. It should be understood in connection with the covenant of the OT. Studies in recent years have identified five main sections of the covenant formulary: (1) the preamble which identified the covenant-making suzerain; (2) the prologue which recited past historical relations between the suzerain and his vassal; (3) the stipulations of the covenant. (4) the witnesses to the covenant, and (5) the blessings and curses for obedience to, or violations of, the covenant. When the prophets came as reformers to call Israel back to the Sinai covenant relationship, they did so by applying the covenant formulary to situations current in their times. For a good example of this see Micah 6.

In making this call to the people the prophets brought to them what is known in Hebrew as a *rîb* or “covenant lawsuit” (the word occurs three times in Micah 6:1-2). As an introduction to their indictment the prophet cites God’s mighty acts on behalf of His people in the past. (cf., Micah 6: 3-5). This portion of the *rîb* or “covenant lawsuit” parallels the prologue section of the original covenant (the recital of past historical relations between ruler and subjects).

Stephen’s speech (Acts 7) which began with Abraham and ended with Solomon’s parallels this portion of the “covenant lawsuit.” Looking at this experience through the eyes of OT prophets, we can see this episode as another instance where the Spirit-endowed prophet brings God’s *rîb* or covenant lawsuit against the representatives of His covenant community.

If one regards Stephen as a prophetic messenger or the heavenly court who brings God’s covenant lawsuit to His people (in continuity with the prophets of the OT), his death takes on much more theological significance. He is not one martyr more or less. We can now look at this highly significant event in terms of the prediction of 9:24 about sealing vision and prophet.³⁶

Stephen is the last prophet to speak to the Jewish people of Judea as the elect people of God. But his voice is silenced the prophetic voice addressed to them with finality. The words and works of further prophets are referred to in the NT (Acts 11:28; 21:19; 1 Cor 14; Rev 1:1), but the difference is that these prophets may be identified as Christian prophets who address the church.

As far as Daniel’s own people are concerned “vision” and “prophet” were sealed up or brought to an end with the rejection of this final prophet sent to them according to Acts 7. As is pointed out in the chronological occurred in the year the 70 prophetic weeks came to their end: A.D. 34. Shortly thereafter, Paul was called (by a

³⁶ Why would a NT Christian want to model themselves under the influence of the Holy Spirit, according to the rituals of the O.T. prophets? The New Covenant is an entirely different covenant, and God was not calling Israel to remember the Old Covenant. He was calling the Sanhedrin to forsake the old covenant and make a new covenant with him. The process with the new covenant has no coincidence with the old covenant. The historical recital by Stephen has nothing to do with a covenant setting. It was a historical anchoring of the conclusion he never got to completing

vision on the road to Damascus) to be an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9), and Peter was instructed (also in a vision) that Gentiles should be accepted into the fellowship of the church (Acts 10). (Shea, 1986b, pp.80-82)

AD 34.

For exegetical and theological reasons already cited, the end of the seventy weeks has been connected most directly with the stoning of Stephen. The passage in Acts which describes this event, however, does not date it. That being the case, it must be dated through some other chronological avenue. The venue most readily available is to relate it to the date for the conversion of Paul. Paul was not a Christian when he stood by and watched the stoning of Stephen. Thus, the stoning of Stephen could not have taken place any later than the date of the conversion of Paul. On the other hand, it probably occurred only a relatively short time before that event.

In order to determine the date for Paul's conversion it is necessary to establish a fixed chronological point some time later in his career. It may then be possible to work backwards from there to his conversion. Paul's appearance before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, offers such a fixed point (Acts 18:12). Gallio's proconsulship can be dated to A.D. 51-52 on the basis of an inscription found at Delphi which mentions him.

Working backwards through the second missionary journey of Acts 16-17, we arrive at the spring of A.D. 49 for the beginning of this journey that took Paul to Corinth, the governing seat of Achaia. This would date the Jerusalem conference of Acts 15 in A.D. 48/49. Since that visit to Jerusalem appears to be the one "after fourteen years" mentioned in Galatians 2:1, earlier dates can be determined by projecting those 14 years back from A.D. 48/49 to A.D.35/36. Galatians 1:18 refers to another period of three years. These are best taken as preceding the 14 years, that is, from A.D. 33/34 to A.D. 35/36.³⁷

From this interpretation of the chronological evidences we may date the conversion of Paul to A.D. 34. While earlier and later dates have been suggested for his conversion, this date may well represent a median and a mean among those suggested.

Stephen's stoning should be dated late in, or at the end of, Daniel's seventieth week since, on this basis, it could not have taken place later than A.D. 34.³⁸ While Acts is not specific on this point, a few months would appear to be an adequate period to allow between the martyrdom of Stephen and the conversion of Paul. Although the point may not be proved with finality, the most reasonable date available for the stoning of Stephen is sometime in A.D. 34. (pp.103-104)

Shea's Comments on Stephen in 1996

Looking at the commentary of Shea on Daniel, published in 1996, we have the following comments:

This prophecy would be dramatically fulfilled with the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7). One may reasonably ask what there is about Stephen's martyrdom that makes it more special than others. Several features show it to be especially significant in a spiritual sense.

³⁷ Shea inserts footnote here "Cf. J. Finegan, p.321.

³⁸ Here is a summary of Shea's reasoning. It is circular logic *par excellence*. To prove that the stoning of Stephen is the marker of the end of the seventy week period, we need to examine the chronology of the stoning of Stephen. Yet we cannot any date for the stoning of Stephen later than AD 34, because it would fall outside the seventy week period. Therefore, since it has to fall inside the period, and so AD 34 is the correct date, and more specifically, it is late (presumably the autumn) in that year!!" Therefore, this proves that the stoning of Stephen is the marker for the end of the seventy weeks!!

First, there is the setting of Stephen's speech. He gave his defence before the Sanhedrin, the highest religious body of the people, and the religious representatives of the nation (Acts 6:15). Second, there is the nature of Stephen's speech. To a modern reader, it is rather long and not very interesting, because it goes through a lot of history. It starts with Abraham (7:2); it continues with Isaac, Jacob (vs.8), and Joseph (vs.9) to explain how the Israelites happened to be in Egypt. Then it takes up the story of the deliverance under Moses (vs.20) and the rebellion under Aaron at Sinai (vs.40). Joshua brings the people into the land of Canaan (vs.45). Then Stephen mentions David (vs.45) and Solomon (vs.46) who built the temple. At that point, Stephen breaks off his speech to accuse the religious leaders of resisting the Holy Spirit and the prophets and of crucifying the Righteous One, the Messiah.

Why this long historical speech?

When God made a covenant with His people in the Old Testament, there was a historical prologue which showed how gracious God had been to His people. This served to motivate them to give Him loving obedience.

When the Old Testament prophets brought God's messages to the people, they commonly started right where the original covenant did – with a historical prologue, showing how gracious God had been to His people and how ungrateful they had been to God. There is a technical term for this kind of prophetic speech – a “covenant lawsuit” in which the prophet serves as the prosecuting attorney from the heavenly court. A good example of this kind of speech can be found in Micah 6. Stephen was giving an inspired “covenant lawsuit” speech before the religious leaders of the nation in the Sanhedrin.³⁹

But they did not like it. As a result they dragged him outside of the city and stoned him (Acts 7:58). Just before this happened, however, Stephen, “full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.” (vs.55). And he witnessed to what he saw before the assembled group.

When a person looks into heaven and sees God sitting on His throne and Jesus standing at His right hand, that person is having a vision. People who have visions, are, by definition, prophets. At that moment, technically speaking, Stephen was a prophet. But his audience would not hear or accept his vision; they rejected him and stoned him, sealing his lips in death. When Stephen died, *the last prophetic voice had spoken to Israel as the elect people of God.* (pp.58-59 emphasis his)⁴⁰

³⁹ There are many instances in the New Testament where there is a historical recounting from the Old Testament origins. Are we to fit these into this artificial mold of “covenant lawsuits” as well? Their characteristics are identical with the speech of Stephen.

⁴⁰ Do we classify John the Baptist's father Zechariah as a prophet since he had a vision of a heavenly visitor? Do we classify Joseph, the father of Jesus, as a prophet, because he was given a heavenly revelation during his sleep? Do we classify Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist as a prophetess because she had a heavenly revelation? Do we classify Mary the Mother of Jesus as a prophetess because she had a heavenly revelation? Either we classify Stephen's speech as we would classify these other speeches or talks and we decide that the Old Testament “covenant lawsuit” should be left where it belongs –with the Old Testament situation; or we attempt to force all these speeches / talks / confessions in the New Testament into the mold of a “covenant lawsuit.” And what are we to make of the record of those martyrs, who during torture, and the stake, are given a vision of heaven and of Jesus? Are they prophets also? Is there testimony before their murderers a “covenant lawsuit” also? When do we stop applying the metaphor? If we can apply it to a New Testament deacon, why not extend it further?

Shea might want to argue that it is only a vision of God that qualifies as a commissioning vision for a prophet, but there are many prophets who never had a vision of God as a commission to be a prophet. Samuel, for example, received a commission from God early in his life, but it was not even a vision; it was

Of course, there are other prophets in the New Testament after Stephen – Paul and John, along with others.⁴¹ But the prophets who followed Stephen were prophets *to the Christian Church*, not to the nation of Israel.⁴² A profound shift had taken place from prophecy directed to national Israel to prophecy directed to the Christian church. “Vision and prophet” had been sealed up to “your people and your holy city” (Daniel 9:24). (1996, pp.57-59)⁴³

As can be seen from a survey of these three publications, Shea’s concept of Stephen is not just a passing idea thrown up for consideration. In his view, the theory is valid enough to be repeated in what are significant publications. The three major points I wish to examine here on Shea’s views concern:

1. Firstly, *how one becomes a prophet*;
2. Secondly, *when did Stephen become a prophet*, and;
3. Thirdly, *what type of Speech was his statement before the Sanhedrin?*

Each section dealing with these issues is considerably long, so I have listed the subheadings for each section under each section as a link, to assist the reader. My conclusion is that Shea has an erroneous notion as to *how* one becomes a prophet, and secondly, that Shea’s ideas are anachronistic in considering *when* he became a prophet. In Shea’s view, Stephen became a prophet *after* he gave his defense before the Sanhedrin, instead of *before*. Shea needed this sequence to occur in reverse in order to argue that Stephen’s speech is a prophetic utterance.

Overview

To come up with the concept of using the phrase “to seal vision and prophet” as the marker for the end of the seventy weeks, and to tie it in with the traditional interpretation of the stoning of Stephen as that marker in AD 34, as universally espoused by SDA historicists, Shea needs to link the terms “vision” and “prophet” to Stephen more explicitly. He has tried to achieve that by referring to Stephen’s vision of Jesus in heaven as a vision inducting him or qualifying him to be a prophet. Shea then applies the title of prophet to Stephen by creating the ingenious theory that a person who has a vision is a prophet. By arguing these two points, he believes he has achieved his goal of linking his theory of the phrase “to seal vision and prophet,” (not to a confirmation of the 2300 days

an auditory revelation. He was not even shown a heavenly person such as was given to Mary, Zechariah, Paul, and Cornelius etc.

⁴¹ Where does the New Testament refer to Paul or John as being prophets? Having a vision does not thereby mean they are prophets.

⁴² Stephen was a minister to the Christian Church but he clearly challenged the belief system of the Jews. But does that mean he is a prophet to them? Ellen White says he was most active in spreading his beliefs. (White, 1943, p.294)

⁴³ According to the parables given by Jesus, God had sent his prophets / messengers first. Then at the last, he sent his Son. He did not send any prophets / messengers after he sent his son. The Son of God, was the last prophet to Israel. He declared behold your house is left to you desolate. The Witness of the Son was the witness of that “prophet” spoken by Moses. They had slaughtered the prophets, and now they did the ultimate insult – slaughtered the Son, the heir and the Greatest of the prophets. There are no further prophets beyond the testimony of John the Baptist and then the Messiah himself. The prophetic ministry to the Jews finished with their rejection of the Son of God.

being 2300 years as the pioneers did, but) to the ending of the seventy weeks through the ministry of Stephen the prophet.⁴⁴

What happened to Stephen when the Holy Spirit came upon him should be noted carefully. He was given a vision of heaven. Since this view lay outside the realm of normal sense it can be called a vision. Stephen had a vision at this time. That makes Stephen a prophet; since it is to prophets that God has given visions of Himself like this. Thus the Holy Spirit inducted Stephen into the office of a prophet at this time. Since he was killed shortly thereafter, he may have had the shortest ministry of any prophet known in the Bible. It is not the length of his ministry that is significant, it is the nature of the vision that he was given at that time. He looked into heaven. ...Stephen stands here then in the same position in which the prophets of old stood, as a messenger of that heavenly court. The view of heaven given to him carries with it an aura of judgment. Such a prophetic view was appropriate to the circumstance in which he found himself. He was a messenger of the heavenly court, and he was rejected by the leaders of God's people and that rejection came at the time the probationary period of the 70 weeks came to an end. Such a setting lends importance to what he had to say in the speech that preceded this prophetic experience and his martyrdom, and thus we need to inquire further into the nature of the message which he brought to the Sanhedrin that day. (1980, pp.367f)

This is not a passing assertion by Shea. He has repeated it three times in his published works, and Wilson Paroschi, at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, has taken it upon him to defend the position of Shea in regard to "the prophetic significance of Stephen" and the Adventist Theological Society deemed that the material was worthy of publication. Paroschi's view will be examined [later in the paper](#). We must therefore accept that the theory has credible supporters and that it has credence in certain circles in Adventism, and must not be just dismissed with disdain. I will spend some time therefore, debunking his fanciful notions and show them for what they are.

1 How does one become a prophet, according to Shea?

Looking through the three excerpts listed [above](#), Shea proposes that when a person has a vision they are inducted as prophets. Here is his statement:

What happened to Stephen when the Holy Spirit came upon him should be noted carefully. He was given a vision of heaven. Since this view lay outside the realm of normal sense it can be called a vision. Stephen had a vision at this time. That makes Stephen a prophet; since it is to prophets that God has given visions of Himself like this. Thus the Holy Spirit inducted Stephen into the office of a prophet at this time. (1980, p.367)

Hengstenberg endorses Shea's view that the vision of prophets is an extraordinary experience. He wrote an excellent essay in the Appendix on the topic in the Christology of the Old Testament entitled, "The Nature of Prophecy." This is typical of many great works on the topic. Hengstenberg himself quotes from Delitzsch's Biblical Psychology.

⁴⁴ Not that Shea does not believe that or is unwilling to argue that the 70 weeks confirms the use of the year-day principle. In his 1980 paper in his conclusion on the section after the stoning of Stephen he argues the "pragmatic" reason why the 70 weeks prophecy endorses the year-day principle. His argument is that history has confirmed the prediction of the time periods. Therefore the year-day principle is proved valid and as such can be applied quite appropriately to the 2300 days. This argument is addressed in [Assumption 21](#).

But to jump into the chasm and say that *every* person who has a vision is a prophet goes too far.

Visions by people who are not prophets.

How does Shea define a “vision”? This question needs to be answered so that we can measure his definition of a prophet against other peoples’ experiences. In his 1980 publication, he says,

What happened to Stephen when the Holy Spirit came upon him should be noted carefully. He was given a vision of heaven. Since this view lay outside the realm of normal sense it can be called a vision. Stephen had a vision at this time. That makes Stephen a prophet; since it is to prophets that God has given visions of Himself like this. Thus the Holy Spirit inducted Stephen into the office of a prophet at this time. (1980, p.367)

There are three definitions here: 1) “a vision of heaven;” 2) “view...outside the realm of normal sense...can be called a vision;” 3) “visions of Himself.” Does he refine this definition in later publications? In his 1986 publication he says,:

When the Holy Spirit came upon Stephen, he was given a vision of heaven. By definition Stephen became a prophet at this point in time. It is to prophets that God gives visions of Himself like this. (p.81)

His definitions of a vision here are “a vision of heaven,” or “visions of Himself” or “when the Holy Spirit came upon Stephen, he was given a vision.”

In his 1996 publication, he says:

When a person looks into heaven and sees God sitting on His throne and Jesus standing at His right hand, that person is having a vision. People who have visions, are, by definition, prophets. At that moment, technically speaking, Stephen was a prophet.(p.59).

The definition of a vision here is “a person looks into heaven and sees God sitting on His throne and Jesus standing at His right hand...”

So Shea delivers a kaleidoscope of definitions for the qualifying visionary experience needed to be inducted as a prophet. They include:

- “a vision of heaven;”
- “view...outside the realm of normal sense...can be called a vision;”
- “visions of Himself;”
- “When the Holy Spirit comes upon a person and is given a vision;”
- “a person looks into heaven and sees God sitting on His throne and Jesus standing at His right hand...”

If we used this structure to qualify those of the Old and New Testament who professed to be prophets, we would have to eliminate many so-called prophets. Shea has placed a limit on the way a person qualifies to be a prophet – a limitation that scripture has failed to do. What Shea has failed to understand is that God called his prophets in many different ways. For instance, when did Daniel become inducted as a prophet? According to Shea’s criteria, *only after* he received the vision “of heaven/ God sitting on His throne” as recorded in Daniel 7. So what was God doing on those other occasions when he used Daniel if not using him as a seer?

There are a number of people who had a vision of God or Gabriel whose experience is documented in the Bible but whom were not graced with the title of “prophet/ ess” by the inspired Word. Let us examine the Bible in a good old-fashioned way and decide whether these things are so!! Getting out the concordance and looking up

the words “vision,” “prophecy,” “prophet” and “dream” comes up with the following key people that raise problems for this definition by Shea:

1. Zechariah father of John the Baptist: (Luke 1:11-80)

11. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12. And when Zecharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

14. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

15. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

16. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

17. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

18. And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

19. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

20. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not be able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

22. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.

23. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

57. Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.

63. And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.

64. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.

67. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying.

68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

69. and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;

70. As he spoke by the holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

71. That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

72. To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

73. The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,

74. That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,

75. In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

76. And thou, child shall be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

80. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

It will be noticed that not only did Zechariah have a vision of Gabriel in identical a fashion as did Daniel, which, in Shea's definition would qualify Zechariah to be a

prophet, but after the circumcision and naming of the child, the Scriptures record Zechariah as “*prophesying*” (verse 67). In the words of Ellen White: “The Holy Spirit rested upon Zacharias, and in these beautiful words he prophesied of the mission of his son...” (1940, p.100) Yet when Luke comes to write of this event to Theophilus, he refers to Zechariah as a priest, (v.5) not as a prophet. Perhaps Luke’s understanding of what qualifies one to be a prophet is a little different than the theories that Shea is throwing up in haste.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that John was to be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth (v15), he was imbued with the spirit and power of Elijah (v.17), and he was to be a prophet to Israel (v76). This calling, according to the Word, did not begin with a vision by John of the heavenly sanctuary, as Shea would define it, but began before his birth with the commissioning by Gabriel to his father, of his name, his role and his work. In the words of Ellen White: “God had called the son of Zacharias to a great work....John was to go forth as Jehovah’s messenger....As a prophet, John was ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.’” (1940, pp.100f) Even *before* he started preaching, she says of John, “The burden of his mission was upon him. In solitude, by meditation and prayer, he sought to gird up his soul for the lifework before him” (*Ibid*, p.102). Clearly from the writing of Ellen White, John had his mission as a prophet from birth, not from a vision he received at any time. Shea’s desperate response to this clear example from scripture would probably be that it was his father’s vision that qualified him to be a prophet! This would get him into a deeper hole – to say that a vision given to someone else could qualify a person *ipso facto* to become a prophet!! Although John knew his calling from birth, he began his ministry in exactly the same manner as the prophets of old began their ministry – when the “word of the Lord” came upon him (Luke 3:2).

It should be noted that in this reference to Zacharias by Luke, he does not refer to Zachariah as a prophet, *even though* he had received a vision, *and* the word of the Lord came on him to prophesy (which, in Shea’s definition, would make him a prophet.).

2. Joseph, the Father of Jesus – Matthew 1: 19-25; 2:13-15:

19. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

20. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

21. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.

24. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

25. And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.

2:12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

13. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

14. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

15. And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be spoken by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My son.

Here is Joseph with as much communication from heaven as Daniel, *and* in direct communication with the angel of the Lord, yet no one has proposed that Joseph should be called a prophet, even though given a vision by the angel of the Lord. But according to Shea's theory, Joseph is now a prophet!! The church has been wrong for the last 2,000 years. But wait, that is not all!! There's more!!

3. Mary, mother of Jesus: (Luke 1: 26-38)

26. And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth.

27. To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and he virgin's name was Mary.

28. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

29. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

30. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.

32. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

34. And Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

35. And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

36. And behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

37. For with God nothing shall be impossible.

38. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

The same argument could be presented here. Here is Mary, having a similar vision to Daniel – with the angel Gabriel, and yet for all that, no scripture refers to Mary the mother of Jesus as a prophetess. Perhaps Shea will argue that she is a prophetess, even given the silence of Scripture.

4. The shepherds in the field: (Luke 2:8-15)

8. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12. And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men..

15. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

This experience of the shepherds mirrors the experience of Daniel in Dn10, and also of Paul on the way to Damascus. Are we to conclude then that these shepherds are thereby commissioned to become prophets? The Scriptures say that “the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them” (v.20) But nowhere does Luke even hint that these shepherds were to be called any different than just shepherds. Yet their experience and the message conveyed to them was of greater importance than the rise and fall of nations given in Daniel’s experience in Dn10-12.

5. Simeon, a just and devout man:(Luke 2:25-35, 36-38) and Anna, the Prophetess.

We read again in Luke of a man who received a revelation from God and who was overshadowed by the Spirit of prophecy:

25. And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

26. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.

27. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

28. Then he took him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29. Lord, now lettest thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

30. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

31. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

32. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

33. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

34. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and the rising again of many in Israel: and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

35. Yea (a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

Ellen White says of Simeon:

To the astonished priest, Simeon appears like a man enraptured. The child has been returned to Mary, and he takes it in his arms and presents it to God, while a joy that he has never before felt enters his soul. As he lifts the infant Saviour toward heaven, he says, “Lord, now lettest thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.

The spirit of prophecy was upon this man of God, and while Joseph and Mary stood by, wondering at his words, he blessed them, and said unto Mary, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and the rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also)...(1940, p.55)

This is recorded quite differently by Luke than what Shea would have done if he was given the task of writing this account. Here is a man upon whom the word of the Lord comes, and is taken off in prophecy. This experience is virtually identical to Stephen’s. Notice the details. He is enraptured by the Holy Ghost. He is given a revelation that he

would not see death until he saw the Christ. He sees the Christ under the influence of the Holy Ghost; nay, he is lead by the Holy Ghost into the temple where presumably there are many people; not knowing what to look for; but he is supernaturally shown Jesus. As Shea says, "Since this view lay outside the realm of normal sense it can be called a vision." (1980, p.367) This is the *same experience* as Stephen seeing Jesus in Heaven, or the apostle Paul on the Damascus Road seeing the glorified Jesus. It is revealed to him in a *supernatural* way that the ordinary baby held by that young couple over there with the priest is the Messiah of the world. Yet, Simeon is not called a prophet when Luke comes to writing the incident. And to make the matter even clearer, Luke *does* refer to another person at the *same* event, doing the *same* thing as Simeon, as a prophetess:

Luke2:36-38

36. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

37. And she was a widow, of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

38. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

We must therefore conclude that this discriminatory use of the title "prophet" by Luke is a deliberate one, and that even though the Spirit of God was upon Simeon,- even though Simeon received a revelation from God, - even though Simeon was enraptured by the spirit of prophecy when he came into the temple, - even though Simeon prophesied concerning the life of Christ – Luke does *not* refer to him as a prophet. He calls him simply as a just and devout man. Can Shea learn something from Luke here and Ellen White here? Luke is quite prepared to say that the Holy Ghost was upon him, and that he came by the Spirit into the temple, and Ellen White is quite prepared to say the spirit of prophecy was upon him, but both writers refrain from calling Simeon a prophet.

Ellen White says that the "spirit of prophecy" was upon Simeon. We can see though that this was only a temporary experience. She does not refer to him as a prophet, even though he had this experience. This has implications for the apostle John who wrote the book from which this phrase comes (19:10). It should also be noticed that the disciple John is only called an apostle, by his contemporaries. He is not referred to as a prophet, even though he was given one of the most powerful and enduring revelations in the New Testament canon. In point of time however, it should be noted that, as enduring and important as the book of Revelation has been in the history of the Christian church, it was an event that occurred *only once* on a Sabbath day. We do not have any information indicating that he performed any other prophetic function in the early church or that he received other revelations than the Apocalypse. And even though he is referred to indirectly as having the spirit of prophecy, as does his fellowservants, the prophets, the statement quoted above, concerning Simeon by Ellen White has implications here. She refers to Simeon having the spirit of prophecy as did the apostle John, yet she, like Luke, refrained from calling Simeon a prophet.⁴⁵ Therefore we can conclude that a person who

⁴⁵ In the Acts of the Apostles, she refrains from calling John a prophet there too.

It should be observed that John does not refer to himself as a prophet; he does not even refer to himself as an apostle. He refers to himself as a "His [God's] servant John" in Rev 1:1; and as "the elder" in the epistles (2John1 and 3John1). From the perspective of a "servant," a "fellowservant" could be anyone serving the church, be they angels or men (Rev 19:10; 22:9); It also refers to "them that keep the sayings of this book" which would mean any Christian. (Rev 22:9)

has the spirit of prophecy temporarily is not necessarily a prophet. One calls to mind the Old Testament prophecy concerning the last days when many people will be imbued with the spirit of prophecy as they announce the impending day of the Lord:

Joel 2: 28-32

“28. And it shall come to pass afterward *that* I will pour my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

29. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.

30. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, fire, and pillars of smoke.

31. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.

32. And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.

Notice that it does not say that they became prophets; it just says that they would have prophetic revelations – revelations that Shea’s definition must force him to view them all as prophets.

6. Jacob’ ladder: (Genesis 28: 10-18)

10. And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran.

11. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.

12. And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

13. And, behold the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

14. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

15. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

16. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.

17. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

18. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stones that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

From this vision of God by Jacob, we can see that he understood he saw the Lord himself, yet we do not read of any of the inspired writers calling Jacob a prophet. The

Finally, the book of Revelation is given to “his servants.” So whoever the book was written for is a “servant.” (Rev 1:1) Therefore, since it would be hard to argue that it was not given to all believers, the phrase “fellowservants” quite properly refers to all Christians (when it is not referring to angels).

second incident of Jacob having a vision of God occurred when he was pondering taking up Joseph's invitation to go to Egypt:

Genesis 46: 1—3

1. And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.

2. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I.

3. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:

4. I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

Yet in spite of these revelations of God himself, Jacob is *not* referred to anywhere in Scripture as a prophet. This is another event that neuters Shea's concept of what constitutes the calling of a prophet.

7. Abraham, a prophet of God and King Abimelech, a prophet too?

The Scripture reveal that Abraham was a prophet. God tells Abimelech that Abraham is a prophet, and therefore should release Sarah from the harem (Gen.20:7). When does Scripture say that Abraham became a prophet? It does not do so. Should we take any one of the occasions when God visits Abraham? Or was he a prophet from the day that God called him? This is not an easy task for Shea.

Let us go one step further and take the actual vision that God sent to Abimelech concerning this error on Abraham's part. Does not this vision of Abimelech make the king a prophet in Shea's terms?

Notice the revelation to Abimelech:

Genesis 20:2-8

3. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.

4. But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation?

5. Said he not unto me, She is my sister? And she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this.

6. And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.

7. Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.

8. Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid.

To be consistent here, Shea would have to admit that Abimelech was given a dream of God. God visited Abimelech in *exactly* the same manner as when he visited and called Samuel. This would make Abimelech a prophet. In Shea's words, Abimelech was, "at that moment, technically speaking," a prophet. (Shea, 1996, p.59)

8. Moses, Samuel, Jonah, and Daniel.

To Moses he commissioned him from a burning bush, without a vision of himself or the heavenly court. The spectacle of the burning bush was beheld with the *natural* eyes, and evoked his curiosity until God spoke and changed the nature of the event. To Samuel, he commissioned him by merely calling him – an auditory commissioning, even

before he knew the Lord. In fact, the Scriptures say that when Samuel was commissioned, “Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him.” (1 Sam 3:7) 1 Samuel 3:20 says, “And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.”⁴⁶ And Jonah is merely told what to do. “the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying....” (Jonah 1:1) The Scripture in Jonah 1:3 calls this word of the Lord “the presence of the Lord.” Daniel is not even commissioned by word or vision, yet Jesus calls him a prophet (Matt 24:15). His early visions are merely reproductions of what has been already been given to a pagan king. Yet in the reproductions of the king’s dreams, Daniel’s ministry is given a stamp of divine approval. He is a seer half a century before he receives a vision of heaven or of God.

And so may the examples be multiplied. Are those who are commissioned in a manner different to what Shea espouses to be discounted and refused the title of prophet, even though the Word calls them such? Or do we discount Shea’s definition of the qualifying induction vision? If he admits that prophets are called in a variety of ways and some without visions, then Shea must also accept the assertion that those who have a supernatural revelation are not necessarily prophets.

9. Philip’s four daughter are not prophets. (Acts 21:7-14)

7. And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8. And the next day we that were of Paul’s company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

9. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

10. And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

12. And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

14. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

In the book of Acts we read of Philip’s four daughters prophesying but not being called prophetesses by Luke when he comes to write up the story, even though Luke has referred to another female as a prophetess before in his writings to Theophilus (see reference above to Anna in the Book of Luke). He is not immune to calling people prophets or prophetesses, but he refrains from doing this to Philip’s four daughters. One of the visitors while Paul was with Philip was a prophet, named so by Luke.

In Acts 21:9, we read Philip’s four daughters prophesied while Paul was with them, but that did not justify calling them “prophets.” Luke still refers to them as “virgins,” in

⁴⁶ Samuel is also called a prophet in Acts 13:20 by Paul, Acts 3:24 by Peter, and in 1 Chron 6:28; 9:22; 26:28 and 29:29.

spite of the supernatural revelations. It is not an insignificant observation that *none* of the people recorded by Luke in the book of Acts who experienced a vision are referred to as “prophets” as a consequence of this vision. And conversely, those people whom Luke calls prophets in the book of Acts are not recorded as having a vision; they may make predictions, but none have visions. This is clear evidence that the parameters set by Shea for a prophet just does not mesh with the understanding of Luke, and by extension, the Gentile church. It is my belief that we are on good ground in following the lead of Luke and ignoring the ideas of Shea on this matter.

Conclusion on these texts relating to Visions by people who are not prophets.

All these people were given a vision of God, heaven, or heavenly beings, or were visited by heavenly persons or prophesied. They should be called prophets under the parameters defined by Shea but they are not. Therefore Shea’s criterion for becoming a prophet is incorrect.

Shea might respond with the statement that he did not say in the article that *a vision* made a person a prophet; but rather, only *a vision of God* made them a prophet. This position is just as problematic as indicated above, since there are records of prophets who do *not* get a vision of God before they are given a ministry. Classic among these are the calling of Jonah and Samuel.

Jonah was not given a commissioning vision; he was merely given the word of the Lord. Samuel was not given a commissioning vision of God. He merely heard the voice of God, but the scriptures record that people understood that his experience was a commissioning in the full sense of the word. In the case of many others, the record merely says that “the word of the Lord came” upon them, or to them etc. That was enough to qualify them to speak in the name of the Lord. In the words of Josephus concerning Jesus, the son of Ananus, they had a “divine fury” in them. We can understand from this that this “fury” was inspired by a heaven-sent directive. They did not need a burning bush, or a vision of a heavenly throne-room. The word of the Almighty was sufficient. In the words from the book of Samuel, a prophet is one who not only has the word of the Lord *revealed unto* them; but has the word of the Lord *with* them, and is careful not to let any of His words fall to the ground (1 Samuel 3:7, 19).

And what about the prophet Daniel. God used him as a seer long before he received a vision of God. Was he a prophet in the days of Nebuchadnezzar or not? Daniel was not initially given a commissioning vision. Rather, the king was given a vision and Daniel was merely the respondent to interpret what had already been revealed to a pagan king. The argument that it had to be a vision *of God*, and not just a vision *from* God that could qualify anyone as a prophet will not stand the scrutiny of Scripture, and definitely will not stand the test of time. It is another rash argument of Shea’s that will not outlive him.

The truth of the matter is that being given a vision does not qualify one to be a prophet, as is testified by many examples quoted in this section. Second, a prophet is not discredited because he /she has not had a vision of God or even a vision, as it testified by the examples of Jonah, Daniel or Samuel.

Shea’s example of Micaiah – a misquote

Shea cites the experience of the prophet Micaiah, a prophet serving in the days of king Ahab and King Jehoshaphat. Shea quotes the appearance of Micaiah before king Ahab to

compare the similarities between the experience of Micaiah and the experience of Stephen:

It is to prophets that God gives visions of himself like this. To cite but one parallel from the OT, the experience of Micaiah ben Imlah may be noted (1Kgs 22). Standing before Ahab, Micaiah looked into the heavenly court and saw Yahweh sitting on the throne with the hosts of heaven around him. It is from this session of the heavenly court that sentence is pronounced upon Ahab. The prophet serves as the messenger of the heavenly court who brings sentence to the king. By virtue of his connection with the same heavenly court Stephen stands in a similar position in this episode in Acts. (1980, p.367)⁴⁷

Shea again misquotes Scripture to establish his point. Read again the story of 1 Kings 22 for yourself. It does *not* say that “Standing before Ahab, Micaiah looked into the heavenly court and saw Yahweh sitting on the throne with the hosts of heaven around him,” as Shea would have us believe. Here is the text:

1Kgs22: 13 And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good.

14. And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak.

15 So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forebear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.

16 And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?

17 And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace.

18 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?

19 And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

20 And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.

21 And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him.

22 And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt also persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.

23 Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee.

24. But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah, went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?

⁴⁷ This is hardly a comparison with Stephen's experience, since Shea is arguing that this type of vision given to Stephen was a commissioning vision – a vision that *begins* a person in a prophetic role. Micaiah's vision is not a commissioning vision since he already operated in the personal knowledge of being a prophet for the Lord. Therefore, one must discount the use of Micaiah's experience to justify Shea's argument that such a vision qualifies one to be a prophet. Does anyone except prophets receive visions of God's throne room in a similar way to Stephen? We can quote Paul, Jacob, who both saw heaven opened yet who are not called prophets by the scriptures.. Shea would probably naively reply that that makes them prophets!.

25. And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself.

The Word indicates that while he was before the two kings, Micaiah *said* that he had seen “the Lord sitting on the throne.” The text does *not say* that while he was standing before the two kings, he *saw* the Lord sitting on the throne, then and there, any more than it means that while he was standing before Jehoshaphat he saw “all Israel scattered upon the hills as sheep without a shepherd,” or that he saw the evil spirit accept the mission of deceiving Ahab from the Lord. The text clearly indicates that the *seeing* of the Lord “sitting on the throne” occurred at a time in the past. Micaiah merely *relates* to the kings a previous revelation. Similarly, his disclosure of the vision of the nation being scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd and the information concerning the vision of the false spirit making a deal with God to deceive Ahab through the false prophets is the disclosure of visions previously seen. At this time he merely *says* he saw; that is to say, it is the *recounting* of the visions that happened before the king, not the actual *seeing* of the three visions.

There is further evidence showing that Micaiah’s vision occurred *before* he was summoned to talk to the kings. In verse 20 to verse 22, we have an evil spirit in the heavenly court indicating its willingness to deceive the prophets into lying to the kings when they are questioned by the kings. This heavenly court session then must occur *before* the prophets are questioned by the kings, as recorded in verses 4 to 7 since it would be pointless to have such a court session *after* an event that was going to be manipulated by the evil spirit had occurred ⁴⁸ Micaiah stood before the king after the four hundred prophets had given their judgment to the king. What would be the purpose of an evil spirit doing a deal with the Lord to deceive the king through these prophets if the event had already taken place. If the visions recounted by Scripture occurred when Shea says they did – while Micaiah was standing before the king – then this third vision concerning the evil spirit is quite anachronistic.

Furthermore, Had Micaiah indicated that he had the vision *after* the meeting between the four hundred prophets and the kings, he could be accused of just using information to create this so-called “vision.” When he is brought before King Ahab, the meeting between the kings and the four hundred prophets had been relayed by the courier to Micaiah, who was sent to get the prophet. Therefore, one should date the vision given to Micaiah at least *before* the courier arrived and requested the presence of the prophet before the king.

It is true that the vision could have been given to Micaiah after the event took place but before the messenger was sent to get Micaiah, since Micaiah was not there when the

48 Verse 4 “And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth-gilead? And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses.”

Verse 5 “And Jeshoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord today.”

Verse 6 “Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.”

four hundred prophets were interrogated by the kings. It could have been presented to him as a historical vision – that is, a vision of something that had happened already, but was only presented to Micaiah later. But if he had the vision before the meeting took place, then indeed it *had* to be a vision from God, since it reveals events that had not yet occurred. It would give greater credibility to the God of Micaiah if the vision was seen to occur before the events actually transpired. Therefore, Micaiah's vision should best been seen to occur *before* the events described in the beginning of the chapter and definitely before the arrival of the courier. Although this aspect of my argument is inferred, the point that the visions did *not* occur at the time he is standing before the two kings is explicit in the text. The Hebrew uses the perfect indicating the seeing of the revelation was already completed; in contrast to the use of the imperfect or a participle here which would indicate the vision was in the process of taking place.⁴⁹

The plain statement of the verse is that Micaiah only *said* to the kings while he stood before them that he had seen the Lord. The text *does not say* that while he spoke to the kings, Micaiah *saw* the Lord sitting on his throne. It was his *saying* that occurred before the king, not his *seeing*. Shea's argument is groundless. So, in addition to the desperate and obscure example used by Shea to try and prove his point, not only does it fail to qualify to fit any similarity to the experience of Stephen, he has misquoted the text entirely.

Summary of this section on How God calls prophets.

In summary, the fatal weaknesses in Shea's chronological reasoning for A.D. 34 include the following:

- God does not necessarily use a vision to call a prophet and it is not the case in Scripture that if a person has a vision, he / she is automatically a prophet.
- The examples cited above of Mary, Zechariah, the shepherds, Joseph, the husband of Mary, King Abimelech, Simeon, the daughter of Phillip, Paul, Peter, John, Cornelius and Jacob etc confirm the view that a person who is given what Shea would call a vision of induction into the office of prophet, is not called a prophet by Scripture.

2. When did Stephen become a prophet, according to Shea?

1. The Significance of the order of events at Stephen's Trial on Shea's theory
2. [The Chronology of the Stoning of Stephen.](#)

The Significance of the order of events at Stephen's Trial on Shea's theory.

It is important to ask when, according to Shea, did Stephen become a prophet? Shea says Stephen only became a prophet when he had a vision. But Shea has again overlooked a most important point: Stephen was not given a vision, (and therefore a prophetic commission) until *after* his speech. Therefore, when he was standing before

⁴⁹ In the words of Gesenius: on the use of the perfect: "The perfect serves to express actions, events, or states, which the speaker wishes to represent from the point of view of completion, whether they belong to a determinate past time, or extend into the present, or while still future, as pictured as in their completed state." (Kautzsch, 1982, p.309) The vision of Micaiah is not presented in this text as a present or a future event, so the concept of a past vision is the most natural with the context.

the Sanhedrin, he was still a mere plaintiff, conscious that he was merely defending his own life. He could not have been conscious of a prophetic calling from God when he went in to defend himself, because as yet, he had not received his “commission.” This is when he spoke the so-called *rîb* in Shea’s view; not *after* the vision. Shea says, “Looking at this experience through the eyes of O.T. prophets, we can see this episode as another instance where the Spirit-endowed prophet brings God’s *rîb* or covenant lawsuit against the representatives of his covenant community.” (1986b, p.82) Unfortunately for Shea, he is wrong again since by Shea’s own criteria, the Spirit-endowed speaker was not a prophet yet, but just a mere plaintiff.

In the visions of commissioning given to the prophets of the Old Testament, like Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, they are given the vision at the *commencement* of their ministry, since by definition, it is a vision that is commissioning them to be prophets. Therefore if Stephen is considered to be inducted as a prophet at the time of the vision, then we can consider anything *after* that vision as coming from a prophet. What do we get? Stephen’s dying remarks for forgiveness. The speech given previous cannot be considered under his prophetic ministry, since according to Shea’s criteria, he was not yet a prophet!! Therefore one can hardly say that Stephen was conscious of him having a prophetic ministry when he stood before the Council.

When Shea discusses the anointing of the Messiah and the commencement of his Messianic office, he says, “Thus the Messiah is one who is anointed. Before being anointed, the person concerned is not fully the Messiah yet.” (1991, p.136) `Using Shea’s logic, we can say, “Thus a prophet is one who has a vision. Before having a vision, the person concerned is not a prophet yet.” (The word “fully” does not apply here– you are either a prophet or you are not.) Therefore, by Shea’s own logic, we cannot call Stephen a prophet when he was giving his speech, since according to Shea, he had not been given a commissioning vision. He had no foreknowledge that he was about to receive a vision, unless of course, Shea wants to suggest that Stephen did have a premonition of such a vision. How he would prove such a point remains to be seen. Shea’s concept of the speech of Stephen being a prophetic utterance cannot be considered correct, neither from the Biblical evidence itself, nor from the application of Shea’s own logic.

Another factor that Shea has overlooked is Luke’s understanding of visionary phenomena. In Luke’s view, although one had a visionary revelation, this implies neither that they are automatically a “prophet,” nor that they have the “gift of prophecy.” Two classic examples will suffice. The four virgins daughters of Phillip are given revelations and according to Shea’s definition, they are, “at that moment, technically speaking,” prophetesses. (Shea, 1996, p.59) Similarly, when Peter was given the vision of the beasts coming down from heaven, just before the arrival of Cornelius, he was, “at that moment, technically speaking,” a prophet. (Ibid) Paul, had a vision from God of Jesus. The same could be said of Cornelius. Consequently, according to Shea both Peter and Cornelius were “at that moment, technically speaking,” prophets. Yet Luke refrains from applying the title prophet to these persons. Obviously, for Luke, they were not, “at that moment technically speaking” prophets. Luke applied that title where it was appropriate. And that did *not* include applying it to Paul, Peter, Cornelius or the daughters of Phillip. Let us be consistent with the parameters defined by the very author who comments on the events in Stephen’s life. For Luke, the experience of a supernatural revelation to an

individual, or even in the case of Phillip's daughters, to a group of individuals, did not constitute them as "prophets." Luke was not reticent to use the title "prophet" where it was appropriate. He did not use it with these individuals nor with Stephen. Neither should we.

Luke takes the time to mention Christian prophets by their prophetic position when they are a part of the history he wants to relate. Examples include the encounter of Paul with the prophet Agabus on the way to Jerusalem, who predicted that tough times lay ahead for the apostle (Acts 21:10). The following texts are quoted to show how Luke's literary style consistently names prophets when he encounters them in his narration:

Acts 11:25-28 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when they found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world; which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Acts 13:1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Acts 21:7-11 And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day. And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

Clearly when Luke wants to refer to a person by their position in the church, he calls them by that office, whether it be evangelist, apostle, or prophet. The fact that the four daughters of Philip did at one time prophesy, did not make them prophets in Luke's eyes. He does not call them prophets, but virgins, even though they did prophesy while Paul was there. The prophets who visited Antioch with Agabus, were named duly by their title. Agabus was rightly acknowledged by Luke on both occasions as a prophet. Acts 21:5 names Philip as one of the seven who were ordained the same day as was Stephen, and he is described in this verse as an evangelist. If Stephen had the title "prophet," then Luke would have done him the same justice as he did to Philip. He did not refer to Stephen as a prophet. Therefore, it is obvious that in Luke's eyes, Stephen was *not* a prophet. Further confirmation of this is given by the apostle Paul, who, in Acts 22:20 refers to the stoning of Stephen, to which he consented, and in referring to Stephen, he does not call him a prophet, but "a martyr." Even Paul does not refer to Stephen the way Shea would like him to. Shea is totally out of line with Scripture. He does not have a shred of evidence to say that the "sealing of the vision and the prophet" ended with a stoning of Stephen. William Hales' assertions concerning the stoning of Stephen was just a tenuous proposal and in the view of the authors of Questions on Doctrine does not have a solid foundation.

If Stephen were a prophet, then Luke would have made note of that fact in his extensive letter to Theophilus. Luke understood his own purpose in including the chosen

snippets of early Church history to Theophilus. If he understood the speech and the vision of the open heaven by Stephen as qualification to call him a prophet, Luke would have been the first to acknowledge in his own work such an honourable man. He has not done this, and we should go no further than the one who recorded the events of Stephen's life.

Questions on Doctrine admits there is no event given in Dn9:24-27 to signal the end of the 70 weeks.⁵⁰ They prefer to let the matter rest without any real marker to signal the end of the period. But Shea seeks to improve on Scripture and in doing so, oversteps the mark. Paroschi's conclusion on another matter can aptly apply here: "the best alternative, therefore, is to take Luke's narrative as it stands and acknowledge the significance of Stephen in the development of the apostolic church." In this case, it means not going as far as Shea and Paroschi have done in attributing offices to Stephen that neither Luke nor Paul have done. (Paroschi, 1998, p.352)

The Chronology of the Stoning of Stephen.

Apart from the issue of proving these arguments, there is a more insuperable problem for him in trying to provide a convincing chronology to lock the martyrdom of Stephen in at AD 34, since there is very little chronological data that can establish the time of the stoning of Stephen accurately. Luke has chosen not to convey the exact date of this event, and this leaves this event undefined chronologically. When Shea discusses the matter of dating the stoning of Stephen, he admits that there is no information that can provide accurate data for the time of this event:

For the exegetical and theological reasons already cited...the end of the seventy weeks has been connected most directly with the stoning of Stephen. The passage in Acts which describes this event, however, does not date it. That being the case, it must be dated through some other chronological avenue. The venue most readily available is to relate it to the date for the conversion of Paul...the stoning of Stephen could not have taken place any later than the date of the conversion of Paul. On the other hand, it probably occurred only a relatively short time before that event.

While Acts is not specific on this point, a few months would appear to be an adequate period to allow between the martyrdom of Stephen and the conversion of Paul. Although this point cannot be proved with finality, the most reasonable date available for the stoning of Stephen is sometime in A.D. 34. (1986b, pp.103f)⁵¹

He then works out a very flimsy chronology using Paul's appearance before Gallio in Acts 18:12, using the time of Gallio's proconsulship in Achaia – a period of two years – to begin his calculation. We have no evidence which of the two years Paul appeared before the proconsul; it could have been either year of the proconsulship, and Shea accepts a range of two years for this event in Paul's life.

Gallio's proconsulship can be dated to AD 51-52 on the basis of an inscription found at Delphi which mentions him.

Working backwards through the second missionary journey of Acts 16-17, we arrive at the spring of AD 49 for the beginning of this journey that took Paul to

⁵⁰ [Seventh-day Adventists, 1957](#), p.284

⁵¹ Not only can it *not* be "proved with finality," it cannot be proved *at all*. There could have been a few years between the two events according to the details of the extent of the persecution in the book of Acts.

Corinth, the governing seat of Achaia.⁵² This would date the Jerusalem conference of Acts 15 in AD 48/49. Since that visit to Jerusalem appears to be the one “after fourteen years” mentioned in Galatians 2:1, earlier dates can be determined by projecting those 14 years back from AD 48/49 to AD 35/36. Galatians 1:18 refers to another period of three years. These are best taken as preceding the 14 years, that is from AD 33/34 to AD 35/36. [Shea footnotes here: J. Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, (Princeton, 1964), p.321]

From this interpretation of the chronological evidence we may date the conversion of Paul to AD 34. While earlier and later dates have been suggested for his conversion, this date may well represent a median and a mean among those suggested.

Stephen’s stoning should be dated late in, or at the end of, Daniel’s seventieth week, since, on this basis, it could not have been taken place later than AD 34. (*Ibid*, p.104)⁵³

Another point worthy of consideration on this matter is the Jewish reckoning of time, and trying to reconcile this with our calendar system. Notice these comments from Conybeare and Howson concerning the difficulty of knowing exactly what period in our terms the fourteen years in Galatians really meant:

...we have remarked that the interval of 14 years (Gal ii:1), between the flight from Damascus and the Council of Jerusalem might be supposed to be either 14 full years, or 13, or even 12 years, Judaically reckoned. It must not be imagined that the Jews arbitrarily called the *same interval* of time 14, 13 or 12 years; but the denomination of the interval depended on the time when it began and ended, as follows. If it began on the 1st September, AD 38, and ended on October 1, AD 50, it would be called 14 years, though really only 12 years and one month; because it began before the 1st of Tisri, and ended after the 1st of Tisri; and as the Jewish civil year began on the 1st of Tisri, the interval *was contained in 14 different civil years*. On the other hand, if it began October 1, AD 38 and ended September 1, AD 50, it would only be called 12 years, although really only two months less than the former interval which was called 14 years. Hence as we do not know the month of the flight from Damascus nor of the Council of Jerusalem, we are at liberty to suppose that the interval between them was only a few weeks more than 12 years, and therefore to suppose the flight in AD 38, and the Council in AD 50. (1978. p.835)

⁵² If he dates the proconsulship at 51-52 why does he not talk of the spring of 49-50 or 48-49 here? If he starts with a *two-year margin* for error, how come this margin disappears in the next calculation?

⁵³ But note previously above he is constrained to admit that the three years of Gal. 1:18 is to be dated AD 33/34. Therefore, the conversion of Paul is to be dated AD 33/34 by Shea’s own words and the stoning of Stephen has to be dated sometime around or before AD33/34. And Shea, hard pressed to fit the chronology together to fit the preconceived timeline of the SDA interpretation of Dn9, collapses what Luke calls “a great persecution” into a few months after the stoning of Stephen. Notice how Luke describes it: “And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles....As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word” Acts 8:1, 3-4. This is no small event. And who can say that it was only a matter of months before the Damascus road experience? Even Shea admits he cannot prove his theory. Notice Acts 26: 11 “And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.” Here is a reference of Saul travelling to cities that even he did not know, and he seemed to be fairly well acquainted with the surrounding district. We can conclude from this verse that his persecution was wider than the limits of Paul’s known world at that time – even as far as “strange cities.” It would be more realistic to extend this persecution much longer than a couple of months.

Conybeare and Howson, with these thoughts in mind, place the conversion of Paul in AD 36. ([Ibid](#), p. 832) In his 1980 publication Shea was prepared to acknowledge these vagaries and give them some weight. He says:

Some variables are naturally involved here, as they are in most problems in ancient chronology. One link in the chain involves how much time was spent on the second missionary journey. Another involves what kind of years Paul was talking about here, Roman, Jewish spring, Jewish fall, or years in some more general sense. Another link involves the length of time between the stoning of Stephen and the conversion of Paul. Perhaps it would be better to estimate that period of time in terms of months rather than years. (p.267)

In the later publications, less weight is given to them. With so many vagaries, every man could be an expert on the reasons for his choice of a date, but the bottom line is that it *cannot* be pinpointed as Shea would like, and AD 34 is *not* “the most reasonable date available for the stoning of Stephen” ([Ibid](#)) if the pure science of chronology is the final arbiter of decisions. A.D. 34 is only “the most reasonable date” because it fits in with the Shea’s and the SDA tradition’s definition. Reason has got nothing to do with this date at all.

Shea starts with a range of two years for the proconsulship of Gallio, since Paul appeared before Gallio in Acts 18: 12, and reasons back from there with a two year range, but somewhere in the calculation, he magically drops the range of two years to end up with AD 34. Though he admits the range and states that it could occur between AD33-36 ([1986b](#), p.104), yet he concludes that “it could not have taken place later than AD 34,” ([Ibid](#), p.104) on the “basis” of “Daniel’s seventy weeks.” ([Ibid](#)) That is to say, the SDA calculation of the seventy weeks and the other dates used in that calculation (eg., 457 BC, 408 BC; 27 AD; 31 AD) determine what date to choose for Stephen’s stoning. This is not a chronological study; Shea dishes us up pseudo-chronology and calls it “the most reasonable interpretation of the data currently available.” ([1986b](#), p.104) In his 1996 paper he bends the facts even further. We have noted that he acknowledges the range scholars present as A.D. 33-36, yet in his 1996 publication he has the gall to say, “This date, A.D. 34, is the one New Testament scholars commonly favor for Stephen’s death and Paul’s conversion. We can’t be so precise as to determine the month or the day, but it is a close estimate for the year itself.” (p.69) One has to wonder whether Shea only counts SDA New Testament scholars as the only New Testament scholars, since by his own admission other New Testament scholars *commonly quote a range of dates*.⁵⁴

What maths is this: to say on one hand the range can quite legitimately be between AD 33-36 and at the same time say that it *cannot* be earlier or later than 34 A.D.? Shea is saying that while there is a possible range of error of four years (ie., A.D. 33-A.D.36), there is actually *no possible range of error at all* because of the SDA interpretation of other dates in the seventy weeks prophecy. In fact by the time he has finished with his arguments on this point, he narrows the range even further by indicating that the stoning of Stephen had to occur “late in AD 34.” Here is the statement again:

⁵⁴ And many SDA scholars are not even prepared to say that the stoning of Stephen is a marker for the end of the seventy weeks. See Maxwell . ([1981](#), pp. 234f) for instance.

Stephen's stoning should be dated late in, or at the end of, Daniel's seventieth week since, on this basis, it could not have taken place later than A.D. 34

So he has limited the range not only to one year, it is limited even further to just a few months error. Without any evidence to justify such a decision, we assume he does this in order to align his chronology of the stoning of Stephen with the autumn of 1844.

One wonders why he did not take the precision the entire way and argue that the stoning of Stephen happened exactly three and one half year after the 14th Nisan AD 31. This would mesh with the SDA church's chronology of 22nd October, 1844. The SDA church has narrowed the "inauguration of the second phase of the heavenly sanctuary" or Day of Atonement to a specific day, and they defend that date with ferocious tenacity. If it is possible to be dogmatic about this date and be a conventional Seventh-day Adventist, then the logical conclusion that follows is that it is incorrect to say Seventh-day Adventists *cannot* name the exact date of the stoning of Stephen, and the crucifixion. The specific date for the stoning *must follow* if there is a definite date for the period subsequent to A.D. 34.. If the period between them is exact – and it must be since each prophetic day is a literal full year in their thinking – then Shea should be able to confidently name the *day* on which Stephen was stoned. To abstain from doing this would mean that either the chronology is wrong or the date for October 22, 1844 is incorrect. One cannot say that the date for the beginning of the antitypical Day of Atonement categorically began on October 22, 1844 and not be definite about the beginning of the 1810 years that marks off the 1844 date.⁵⁵ But if these dates are correct, then there is no reason why he cannot admit that this chronological exercise forces one to the conclusion that there is a definite date for the stoning of Stephen. As he says – "Simple addition tells us that if we...." end 1810 years at October 22. 1844, then they begin at the Day of Atonement in A.D. 34. (Shea, 1996, p.68) This is when we date the stoning of Stephen, and we can confidently say the prophecy was fulfilled to the day. To doubt that Stephen was stoned on the Day of Atonement in A.D. 34 is to doubt the validity of October 22. 1844, being the date for the Day of Atonement for that year.

If Shea is prepared to make so many assumptions in the calculation of Stephen's stoning, why does he not just make the obvious one and name the day? All the information is there. He does not need to calculate anything. If SDA scholars are prepared to admit there is abundance of evidence for 457 B.C, then one needs to ask the question, *why not be* then be precise with both the crucifixion of Christ and the stoning of Stephen, even to the *exact* date.⁵⁶

But leaving all this behind us, we can confidently ignore Shea's study on this subject as being *far* from "the most reasonable interpretation of the data currently available." (Shea, 1986b, p.104)

3. Stephen was not the last prophet to the Jewish people.

This section is also a lengthy section and so I provide a list of subheadings here for the reader's convenience.

⁵⁵ The 1810 years comes from subtracting the 490 years (of the seventy weeks) from the 2300 days of Dn8. 2300 – 490 = 1810 .

⁵⁶ 1996, pp.79-80.

1. [Stephen is not a Jewish prophet](#)
2. [Another truly Jewish non-Christian prophet later than Stephen?](#)
3. [The account by Josephus on this person:](#)

Stephen was not a Jewish prophet.

In his 1980 paper, Shea says:

“The vision that he saw just before he died was the last vision that a prophet who ministered especially to them was to see. As far as Daniel’s own particular people were concerned, vision and prophet had been sealed up. From this time forward the prophetic gift was to be manifested in the arena of Christ’s church instead. (1980, pp.372f)

This is a problematic position, because the vision given to Stephen was given to a *Christian*, who was not even a Jew “as far as Daniel’s own particular people were concerned.” In contemporary terminology, Stephen would have been phrased “one that feared God,” that is, a convert to Judaism. However, we cannot use his previous status as a convert to Judaism as his spiritual position at the time of the vision, because he was no longer a convert to Judaism; he was a convert to Christianity. When Stephen converted to Christianity, he was no longer a Jewish convert; he was a Christian convert – he had changed camps completely. He had no blood ties with the Jewish nation; he was not a Jewish national. His previous affiliation with Judaism was wiped clean when his spiritual allegiance was transferred to Christianity. His conversion to Christianity annulled any affiliation he had in the past with Judaism. This vision of Stephen was not a vision by a Jew to the Jewish people. It was a vision by a *Greek Christian* to the Jewish leaders and anyone else present.⁵⁷

If we are to accept Shea’s view that Stephen’s vision made him a prophet, that does not help Shea’s argument, especially if Shea wants to deny the validity of arguing that other Christian prophets were not a part of the tradition of “Daniel’s particular people” because Stephen was a *Christian prophet* – *he was not a Jewish prophet and he was not a prophet “who ministered especially to them.”*(p.372) There were many people in the early Christian church who were previously Jews and doubtless some of them received the gifts of the Spirit, including the gift of prophecy. These were in a different position than Stephen was – they were previously Jews by religion AND birth, making them one of “Daniel’s particular people” and they were given the gift of prophecy to speak to Jew and Gentile. But Shea discounts the presence of the gift of prophecy among Christians as a continuation of the prophetic tradition of “Daniel’s own particular people.” “The words and works of further prophets are referred to in the NT (Acts 11: 28; 21:19; 1 Cor 14; Rev.1:1) but the difference is that these prophets may be identified as Christian prophets who address the church.” (1986b, p.82)

If Shea was consistent with himself, if he discounts the possibility of including the later visions of other converts to Christianity from Judaism then he should also discount Stephen’s vision too as being in the tradition of OT prophets, since Stephen is a Christian, and a Christian was not a Jew. There is a *significant* difference in Shea’s thinking between the prophets of the OT and those of the NT. The two cannot be compared in the same tradition. One speaks as a Jew to Israel, the other speaks as a Christian to the

⁵⁷ There is no evidence that Stephen’s supporters were not there somewhere in the periphery.

Christian church. To answer the issue simply, we must ask Shea the question: Did Stephen speak as a Jew to the Sanhedrin or as a Christian? If he spoke as a Christian, then he did not speak in the tradition of the OT prophets, since Shea discounts Christian prophets speaking in the OT tradition. The possibility of Christian prophets in the early church speaking to Jewish groups scattered throughout the Diaspora in the same fashion as Joseph Wolfe and other Jewish converts to Christianity did throughout the centuries, has not entered his thinking. Would these Christian prophets be excluded by Shea, theoretical though they be for the purposes of this exercise?

Shea has two options: Either he has to admit that Stephen's vision is *not* a continuation of the prophetic tradition of "Daniel's own people," or he has to admit that the NT prophets are in the same tradition as Stephen and as such Stephen *cannot* be considered the *last* in his tradition. Either position shows how artificial and unrealistic Shea's thinking really is.

Another truly Jewish non-Christian prophet later than Stephen?

Shea's thesis that Stephen was the *last* prophet to the Jewish people has just as many insuperable obstacles as his doomed thesis that Stephen was a prophet. This concerns the extant record of a later prophet to the Jewish nation prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.⁵⁸ If this is correct, then even if we accepted Shea's spurious arguments concerning Stephen being a prophet, it would *not* make him the *last* prophet to Jerusalem. Consequently, Shea's argument using the infinitival phrase "to seal the vision and prophet" as being **the marker for the end of the seventy weeks** simply vanishes into thin air.⁵⁹

Josephus refers to a doleful person of doom who daily announced the forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem for seven years and five months before the event transpired. "Jesus, the son of Ananus,⁶⁰ a plebeian and a husbandman," announced his message – indeed it was the only thing he said for the seven years, according to Josephus. "He every day uttered these lamentable words, as if it were his premeditated vow, 'Woe, woe, to Jerusalem!' Nor did he give ill words to those that gave him food; but this was his reply to all men, and indeed no other than a melancholy presage of what was to come" ([Josephus, 1987](#), pp.742f. *Wars*, Bk6, ch5, 3; (300-310)).⁶¹ There was nothing intellectually

⁵⁸ I call him a prophet, though he is not given that title by Josephus and the Jews would hardly acknowledge such a messenger of doom as a prophet. But is indeed what he was, and both his demeanour, his persistence in the face of opposition and bad treatment, his forbearance under suffering, and the acknowledged divine energy in the man's mission and message, as well as his uncanny foreboding of his own death all have the signature of a prophetic call – as much as any evidence that Shea might proffer concerning Stephen. If Shea feels himself at liberty to refer to Stephen as a prophet though unnamed as such by Luke, so I think it is justified to refer to Jesus, the son of Agabus, as a prophet, though unnamed as such by Josephus.

⁵⁹ One of the problems for Shea is that the six infinitival phrases are *equally important* as markers for the results of the faithful actions of the Jewish nation, had they followed their instruction. There is no justification to choose one as the marker for the end of the seventy weeks and not the other five.

⁶⁰ Whether this refers to the high Priest Ananus is not clarified by Josephus. If this is the case, it would make this prophet the son of the High Priest.

⁶¹ note: [Ellen White, 1950](#), p.30

stimulating in his message that could be committed by a scribe to papyrus for future generations to study and ponder like the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel and the other OT prophets; his message was an affront to the intelligence of thinking people. Yet, from God's viewpoint, everything that needed to be said had already been said by the best orator he could have sent to them; and still they did not listen. No one could misunderstand what Jesus, son of Ananus, was announcing to Jerusalem. As Jonah declared the doom of Nineveh, so Jesus the son of Ananus, did the same for Jerusalem.

In the words of Josephus, we see that there was a consensus among the leaders that this was a messenger with a mission: "our rulers supposing, as the case proved to be, that there was a sort of divine fury in the man, brought him to the Roman procurator; where he was whipped till his bones were laid bare..." (303) This constant persecution throughout the seven years of ministry drew only a Christ-like response from the man. With an unction from on high, as acknowledged by both Josephus and the contemporary rulers in Jerusalem, the title "prophet" would be just as appropriate here for Jesus, son of Ananus, if Shea wants to apply this title to Stephen. Furthermore, Jesus, the son of Ananus, is a *Jewish* messenger to Jerusalem, not a *Christian* one as was Stephen.⁶² Both Shea and Paroschi point out that the prophet *had to be* a Jewish prophet (which Stephen was not) ministering to Daniel's people and the holy city (Paroschi, 1998, p.345, 359).⁶³ Therefore, even if Stephen was to be acknowledged as a prophet (which he is *not*, by Scripture), he was not the *last* prophet to Israel. Jesus, son of Ananus, was only a messenger of destruction, yet his actions call to mind the mission of many a prophet in the times of the Old Testament. His actions were not a transitory event as was Stephen's speech. He continued for seven and a half years, saying the same message. However his warning gave time enough for any who heeded his message to escape the fate of the city. And according to Josephus, many non-Christian Jews left the city before the final curtain came down.

Here is the account by Josephus on this person:

"....the miserable people...belied God himself; while they did not attend, nor give credit to the signs that were so evident and did so plainly foretell their future desolation; but, like men infatuated, without eyes to see, or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them. (289) Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued, a whole

⁶² Stephen was a strong protagonist for the wide implications of the sacrifice of Christ on the Jewish system. He was primarily a minister to the Greek foreigners in Jerusalem. He was also a Christian apologist taking the debate into the very arena it was spawned from yet threatening that very arena with extinction. It is argued by commentators on the life of Paul that Stephen's arguments in the Libertine Synagogue were that the entire Mosaic system around which the temple was founded was now defunct in the presence of a greater sacrifice and a greater way of salvation for Jews and Gentiles. It was against the implications of this that Paul fought until he met the author of this way of salvation. In time he argued the very points that he had fought against. The ritual system and the economy dependent on it was doomed to extinction. See Conybeare and Howson, p. 57, and Davidson, 1954, pp.907f., quoted at [the end of this paper](#))

⁶³ Shea says, "The words and works of further prophets are referred to in the NT (Acts 11:28; 21:19; 1 Cor.14; Rev. 1:1), but the difference is that these prophets may be identified as Christian prophets who address the church." (1986b, p.82).

year. (290) Thus also, before the Jews' rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus [Nisan], and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which light lasted for half an hour. (291) This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskilful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes, as to portend those events that followed immediately upon it. (292) At the same festival also, a heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple. (293) Moreover, the eastern gate, of the inner [court of the] temple, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night. (294) Now, those that kept watch in the temple came hereupon running to the captain of the temple, and told him of it: who then came up thither, and not without great difficulty, was able to shut the gate again. (295) This also appeared to the vulgar to be a very happy prodigy, as if God did thereby open them the gate of happiness. But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy house was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies. (296) So these publicly declared, that this signal foreshadowed the desolation that was coming on them. Beside these, a few days after that feast, on the twenty-first day of the month Artemisius, [Jyar], (297) a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem like a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, (298) and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sunseting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen (299) running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. Moreover at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, (300) and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, "Let us remove hence." But what is still more terrible there was one Jesus, the son of Ananus, a plebeian and a husbandman, who, four [sic?] years before the war began, and at a time when the city was in a very great peace and prosperity, came to that feast whereon it is our custom for everyone to make tabernacles to God in the temple, (301) began on a sudden cry aloud, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people." This was his cry, as he went about by day and by night, in all the lanes of the city. (302) However, certain of the most eminent among the populace had great indignation at this dire cry of his, and took up the man, and gave him a great number of severe stripes; yet did not he either say anything for himself, or anything peculiar to those that chastised him, but he still went on with the same words which he cried before. (303) Hereupon our rulers supposing, as the case proved to be, that this was a sort of a divine fury in the man, brought him to the Roman procurator; (304) where he was whipped till his bones were laid bare; yet did he not make any supplication for himself, nor shed any tears, but turning his voice to the most lamentable tone possible, at every stroke of the whip his answer was, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" (305) And when Albinus (for he was then our procurator) asked him who he was, and whence he came, and why he uttered such words; he made no manner of reply to what he said, but still did not leave off his melancholy ditty, till Albinus took him to be a madman, and dismissed him. (306) Now during all the time that passed before the war began, this man did not go near any of the citizens, nor was he seen by them while he said so; but he every day uttered these lamentable words, as if it were his premeditated vow, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" (307) Nor did he give ill words to any of those that beat him every day, nor good words to those that gave him food; but

this was his reply to all men, and indeed no other than a melancholy presage of what was to come. (308) This cry of his was the loudest at the festivals; and he continued this ditty for seven years and five months, without growing hoarse, or being tired therewith, until the very time that he saw his presage in earnest fulfillment in our siege, when it ceased; (309) for as he was going around the wall, he cried out with his utmost force, "Woe, woe to the city again, and to the people, and to the holy house!" And just as he added at the last, - "Woe, woe to myself also!" there came a stone out of one of the engines, and smote him, and killed him immediately; and as he was uttering the very same presages, he gave up the ghost. (310) Now, if any one considers these things, he will find that God takes care of mankind, and by all ways possible foreshows to our race what is for their preservation; but that men perish by those miseries which they madly and voluntarily bring upon themselves..." (Josephus, 1987, pp.742f, *Wars*, book 6, ch.5. 3-4, (288-310))

Repeating my assertion again, if Shea wants to argue that Stephen, one of the seven, was the last prophet to be sent to the Jews, then I would argue that Jesus, the son of Ananus, is as much, if not more, a prophet to the people of Jerusalem. He was a Jew – definitely not a Greek – and not a Christian. He was a prophet in the tradition of “Daniel’s particular people.”. He was a prophet who ministered especially to Israel. (Shea, 1980, pp.372f) Further, it is obvious that Jesus, son of Ananus, was the last prophet to Jerusalem and indeed, the last prophet to the Jews, dying immediately prior to the holocaust that overtook Jerusalem.

There are many points in the story of Jesus the son of Ananus that bear strong evidence of a prophetic ministry, and place it in superior contrast with any evidence that Shea can muster to substantiate his notion of Stephen being a prophet. These include

- his accurate prediction of the destruction of the city years before the event and in the face of popular opinion which took a contrary view;
- he was not a follower of the sayings of Jesus, who predicted the same message;
- his composure under atrocious treatment from both the Romans and the Jewish people;
- his commitment to the faithful completion of his commission to proclaim the destruction of the city right up to the event;
- his dependence upon God (and the kindness of Jews) to provide for his needs;
- his uncanny foreboding of his own death shortly before it eventuated, and the correctness of his prediction concerning the destruction of the city.

It is interesting to note in passing that, in Josephus’ view, Jesus, the son of Ananus understood that his ministry involved staying *with* the Jewish people up to the end, whatever that would entail. He continued to announce God’s displeasure with Israel while he still had breath. He could have spoken from afar. But apparently, his ministry entailed announcing the woes from *within* her midst. Josephus also writes of Jesus, son of Ananus’ uncanny foreboding of his own imminent death, announcing it moments before being struck down on the wall. An impulse from the Almighty? He sank with the sinking ship, but was spared from the final atrocities in the siege.

Stephen’s speech – a Defense of his Faith?

And as for the type of presentation Stephen gave to the Sanhedrin, Ellen White uses the word “defense” a number of times. Rather than Shea’s esoteric concept of a law-suit,

it had the substance of a simple defense—something one would expect from a person defending himself before a formal court session against false accusations:

As Stephen stood face to face with his judges, **to answer** to the crime of blasphemy, a holy radiance shone upon his countenance...Stephen was questioned as to the truth of the charges against him, and took up his **defense** in a clear, thrilling voice that rang through the council hall. He proceeded to rehearse the history of the chosen people of God, in words that held the assembly spell-bound. He showed a thorough knowledge of the Jewish economy, and the spiritual interpretation of it now made manifest through Christ. He began with Abraham, and traced down through history from generation to generation, going through all the national records of Israel to Solomon, taking up the most impressive points **to vindicate his cause**. He showed that God commended the faith of Abraham...He dwelt especially upon Moses....He repeated the words of Moses which foretold of Christ...He presently directly before them that the sin of Israel was in not heeding the voice of the angel, who was Christ himself....He made plain his own loyalty to God and to the Jewish faith...He connected Jesus Christ with all the Jewish history....When Stephen had reached this point there was a tumult among the people. The prisoner had read his fate in the countenances before him....Although he was just in the midst of his sermon, he abruptly concluded it by suddenly breaking away from the chain of history and turning upon his infuriated judges... (White, 1943, p.294)

The SDA Bible Commentary has two views on his speech. The first is that the speech is a defense:

Stephen's speech was historical, as had been Peter's speech before him (chs.2; 3), and Paul's afterward (chs. 13; 22; 26); and to that extent records little of his theological thinking. Stephen's theology, as it had developed up to this time, must be seen in the implications of the history he traced, and in the accusations of his enemies...His discourse was doubtless a continuation of the evangelistic message given by the seven following their ordination (ch. 6:7-10), and of the presentation of the gospel Stephen had been making in the synagogues of the Hellenists (see on v.9). Therefore his defense took for granted much that would be of help to the present-day student in analysing and evaluating it...Three fairly obvious objectives can be inferred for Stephen's speech:

To win approval, or rather to temper disapproval, by showing the Sanhedrin that he had familiarity with Hebrew history, and to provide ground for proving his orthodoxy.

To show historically how God had sought to lead the Hebrews, and how persistently they had rejected that leadership as given through Moses, the prophets, and the long-foretold Messiah.

To show the nature and meaning of the worship that God had prescribed for the patriarchs and for His chosen people, in relation, as must be recognized, to Christ's newly inaugurated work at the right hand of God. This may be considered the most important, but least clearly stated, objective. Four facts are to be observed in connection with it:

When the deacons, of whom Stephen emerges as the leading evangelist, began their public ministry, "a great company of the priests," it is noted for the first time, "were obedient to the faith" (6:7). This result may have arisen from a particular emphasis in the presentation of the gospel by Stephen and the other deacons.

The serious accusation was brought against Stephen that he taught what was contrary to "this holy place," that is, the Temple; to "the law"; and to the "customs" (ch.6: 13, 14).

Stephen stressed the call of Abraham and God's providential care of Jacob and his descendants (ch. 7: 2-17); the liberation of the Hebrews from Egypt under the leadership of Moses (vs. 18-36); Moses' witness to a future prophet for the church in the wilderness (vs. 37, 38); the false worship and unconsecrated sacrifices of the Hebrews (vs. 39-43); the wilderness tabernacle built according to the pattern shown

to Moses (vs. 44, 45); Solomon's Temple (vs. 46, 47); and the fact that God is in no need of man-made temples (vs. 48-50). This emphasis upon worship would suggest that Stephen was leading to the subject of Christ's ministry in heaven. (Nichol, 1957c, pp.207f.).

The second view of the SDA Bible Commentary (which seems to be an disjointed add-on to the previous discussion in the special note where it appears) is that Stephen's speech is an *appeal* to the Jewish nation.⁶⁴ This second view however, is unlike Shea's model, since Shea has Stephen as a prophet, delivering a prophetic covenantal instrument before the people. In contrast, a simple appeal could be made by anyone:

Stephen's experience bears a recognisable relationship to the prophecy of the 70 weeks (Dan. 9:24-27), which began in 457 B.C., in the last week of which Messiah was to be cut off, "not for himself," and the typical, earthly sacrificial system was to end as an effective means of intercession, which result would mean also the end of the earthly priesthood. This commentary accepts the view that the crucifixion took place in A.D. 31...(in the midst of the week." Therefore the last of the 70 prophetic weeks must end in A.D. 34. Thus Stephen's ministry can be viewed as dramatically symbolizing God's appeal to His chosen people during the last prophetic week, before the gospel is offered to the Gentiles. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to date Stephen's martyrdom in A.D. 34, for the killing of Stephen may be viewed as a final act of rejection of the gospel by the Jews as a nation. (Ibid, p.208)

Not only was *this* address before the Sanhedrin a defense for what Stephen believed, the circumstance which spawned this court hearing from the outset in the Libertine synagogue was a speech in the same vein – a defense of his faith:

Stephen was very active in the cause of God, and declared his faith boldly. "Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia, and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." These students of the great Rabbis, had felt confident that in a **public discussion** they could obtain a **complete victory** over Stephen, because of his supposed ignorance. But he not only spoke with the power of the Holy Ghost, but it was plain to all the vast assembly that he was also a student of the prophecies, and learned in all matters of the law. He **ably defended the truths he advocated**, and utterly defeated his opponents. (White, 1943, p.294)

Conybeare and Howson, one of Ellen White's major sources on this topic, wrote on this incident:

Before these judges Stephen was made to stand, confronted by his accusers...The judicial question, to which the accused was required to plead, was put by the president: 'Are these things so?' And then Stephen answered; and his clear voice was heard in the silent council-hall, as he went through the history of the chosen people, proving his own deep faith in the sacredness of the Jewish economy, but suggesting, here and there, that spiritual interpretation of it which had always been the true one, and the truth of which was now to be made manifest to all. He began, with wise discretion, from the call of Abraham, and travelled historically in his argument through all the great stages of their national existence, – from Abraham to Joseph – from Joseph to Moses – from Moses to David and Solomon. And as he went on he selected and glanced at those points which made for his own cause. (1978, pp.58f)

⁶⁴ The entire additional note previous to this comment anchors their comments directly in the given text, and looks at the contextual issues and themes. This second view however, has no contextual reference with the material in Acts 6 or 7, and does not try to link its thought to any particular verse.

And commenting on the method of presentation adopted by Stephen in his defense before the court, they say:

It is remarkable, as we have said before, how completely St. Stephen is the forerunner of St. Paul, both in the form and the matter of this defence. His securing the attention of the Jews by adopting the historical method, is exactly what the Apostle did in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia. His assertion of his attachment to the true principles of the Mosaic religion is exactly what was said to Agrippa: 'I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come.' It is deeply interesting to think of Saul as listening to the martyr's voice, as he anticipated those very arguments which he himself was destined to reiterate in synagogues and before kings. (*Ibid*, 1978, p.59)

Ellen White says, "Few who read the address of Stephen properly appreciate it. The occasion, the time and place should be borne in mind to make his words convey the full significance." (*Ibid*) It is a message that both Shea and Paroschi should take to heart and ponder. The address of Stephen was given by a man cognisant that "he was giving his last testimony,"—no more, no less. The address by Stephen is a defense of his faith, spontaneous and Spirit-filled. The abrupt end of the speech and the change of topic testifies to its spontaneity, dictated by the needs of the moment. Says Ellen White in Sketches from the Life of Paul, the forerunner of the Acts of the Apostles:

When Stephen had reached this point, there was a tumult among the people. The prisoner read his fate in the countenances before him. He perceived the resistance that met his words, which were spoken at the dictation of the Holy Ghost. He knew that he was giving his last testimony. When he connected Jesus Christ with the prophecies, and spoke of the temple as he did, the priest, affecting to be horror-stricken, rent his robe. This act was to Stephen a signal that his voice would soon be silenced forever. (1974, p.18)⁶⁵

Says the SDA Bible Commentary:

1. Are these things so? The high priest's question served to interrupt the astonishment of the onlookers as they beheld Stephen's countenance, but it was normal to the opening of the formal trial, and analogous to the question put to the Lord (Matt. 26:62). The accused was called upon to plead guilty or not guilty, and Stephen's defense follows. Stephen's reply was a declaration of faith. It was also an indictment of his accusers. (Nichol, 1957c, vol.6, p.197)

51. Ye stiffnecked. The sudden change in the tenor of Stephen's address doubtless is to be accounted for by the growing excitement of the Sanhedrin, and the resentment aroused by his words (cf. AA100; Matt. 26:65) Apparently realizing that his end was near, and that no further discussion would affect the issue, Stephen broke forth in a stern rebuke. The adjectives he used had been applied to the sins of ancient Israel: "stiffnecked" in Ex. 33:3, 5; 34:9, and "uncircumcised" in Lev. 26:41. "Stiffnecked" is applied to stubborn oxen (see on Ex. 32:8). The actual phrase "uncircumcised in heart" had been used by Ezekiel (ch. 44:7) of "strangers." Now at the very moment when Stephen had been telling them that their veneration of the Temple was excessive and futile, he put them in the class of the Gentiles. No worse insult could have been directed against these furious people. (*Ibid*, p. 204)

Betrayers and murderers. Reading in the faces of his tormentors the fate that is soon to be his own, Stephen reminds them of their former actions with respect to Christ. (*Ibid*, p.205)

⁶⁵ It is interesting that Ellen White here says that the speech he gave to the Sanhedrin was not a prepared speech from Stephen, as Shea and Paroschi would have us believe, but rather the Holy Spirit *dictated* to the Sanhedrin through Stephen.

And from the SDA Bible Dictionary:

Sensing, evidently by the reaction of his listeners, that his defense had failed and that his enemies were determined to take his life, Stephen abruptly ended his line of reasoning and began a severe indictment of his accusers (Acts 7:51-53). [Horn \(Ed\), 1960](#), p.1043, Article "Stephen")

Stephen crafted his utterances to suit the temper of the audience, and when the atmosphere changed, so did his speech. This can be seen also in the speeches of Paul and recorded by Luke. For instance, in his second speech before the Jews and Greek's in the synagogue at Pisidia.

Acts 13: 44 And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

45. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47. For so hath the Lord commanded us saying, I have set thee to a light to the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

48. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

Here we get a picture of Paul and Barnabas explaining matters in the synagogue, but the opposition of the Jews made a continuation of the things they wished to speak inappropriate, and so like Stephen, they "waxed bold" and took a new line and attacked the opposition head on. And this is not the last time that Paul does this. He does it again when he is struck by an officer in response to the command of the high priest Ananias after saying to the Council, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." His immediate response to the smiting was, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" Acts 23: 1, 3

The speech of Stephen was *not* a carefully crafted delivery modelled on the examples of "lawsuit" presentations of Micah or any other Old Testament prophet. It was a spontaneous defense of a faith held by a man who understood that within moments his voice would be silenced forever. That his sermon presentation might resemble historical rehearsals by other orators simply testifies that the common ground Stephen shares with other orators in the *style* of presentation, not the motive or object of the presentation. Other New Testament speeches confirm that it was just the *modus operandi* for presenting a thorough and intellectually acceptable explanation. Examples worth looking at are the speech by Jesus to the disciples on the way to Emmaus after the resurrection, and the speech of Paul before the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia. None of these can be argued to be law-suits against the hearers of these speeches.

In referring to the necessity of understanding the experience of Stephen's speech from Shea's own perspective, he says, "Without that background in mind, this speech might seem to be a strange, perhaps even boring, sermon in that he droned on and on and on about the history of Israel." But in the light of the use of the covenant formulary and specially the *rib* pattern in the Old Testament, the speech takes on "deep meaning." What Stephen did in Acts 7:2-50 was to parallel the prologue section of the original covenant in the same way the Old Testament prophets did when they brought God's *rib* against Israel. ([Paroschi, 1998](#), p.354)

Clearly Shea has read neither the Acts of the Apostles nor the Spirit of Prophecy, vol.3. Although Shea might want to suggest that unless we see the speech from the perspective of his *rîb* model, it would be a boring read, Ellen White encourages us to read it, not from Shea's viewpoint, but from the last words from a man about to be condemned to death. Unsupported by Scripture, but not denied by Shea (unless he does not hold her writings in proper authority as does the SDA church), the critical moment in the speech of Stephen was when the high priest rent his robe, feigning disgust and signalling to the rest of the Sanhedrin, as he did in the trial of Jesus, that the farcical trial was over; the plaintiff was to be condemned.

When Stephen had reached this point there was a tumult among the people. The prisoner read his fate in the countenances before him. He perceived the resistance that met his words, which were spoken at the dictation of the Holy Ghost. He knew that he was giving his last testimony. Few who read this address of Stephen properly appreciate it. The occasion, the time and place should be borne in mind to make his words their full significance.

When he connected Jesus Christ with the prophecies, and spoke of the temple as he did, the priest, affecting to be horror-stricken, rent his robe. This act was to Stephen a signal that his voice would soon be silenced forever. Although he was just in the midst of his sermon, he abruptly concluded it by suddenly breaking away from the chain of history, and turning upon his infuriated judges, said, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers; who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it."

At this the priests and rulers were beside themselves with anger. They were more like wild beasts upon prey than like human beings. They rushed upon Stephen, gnashing their teeth. But he was not intimidated; he had expected this. His face was calm, and shone with an angelic light. The infuriated priests and the excited mob had no terrors for him. "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of God standing on the right hand of God." (1969, Vol 3, pp.298f)

For Stephen's speech to provoke such a response from the High Priest, it could hardly have been an innocuous or boring recital of history in the ears of his hearers. Apparently, there was a sharp edge to it that we do not appreciate today. Says Davidson:

Arrested and put on trial before the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of the Jewish nation, over which in those days the High Priest presided, Stephen stated his case in the form of a historical review, a form not uncommon among the Jews. The two chief themes of his speech are, first, that the nation, from the days of Abraham onwards, had always been intended to sit loose to any one locality of earth; a movable tent was therefore a fitter shrine than a permanent building; and secondly, that the nation, from the time of Moses onwards, had always rebelled against God and opposed His messengers, a course of action which had culminated in their slaying of 'The Righteous One.' **Any line of argument less likely to conciliate his judges could hardly be imagined.** (1954, pp.907-908) Emphasis mine.

The SDA Bible Commentary says:

48. That is, on the other hand. This points to the contrast between the immediately preceding verses, which speak of the tabernacle and the Temple as God's meeting places with men, and verses 48, 49, which emphasize that God does not dwell in man-made buildings....

Dwelleth not. This clause may be translated, “does not dwell in handmade things” (cf. on Heb. 9:11, 24), for there is no word for “temple” in the original. The Jews should not have needed this reminder about the omnipresence of God, for they had been well instructed concerning this aspect of His nature (see no 1 Kings 8:27; Ps. 139: 7-13). But they had concentrated on the truth that He had promised to grace the Temple with His presence until their thought confined Him to its precincts. Even worse, they came to have a greater reverence for the building than for the One for whom the building was erected. In so doing they unfitted themselves to recognize and receive God “manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16) when He became incarnate and lived among them. Paul, who had heard Stephen’s defense, used a similar argument in talking to the philosophers of Athens (Acts 17:24, 25)...

49. Heaven is my footstool. ...Isaiah points out that the Most High cannot be confined within human limitations, but will dwell with those who are “poor and of a contrite spirit.” These words were a rebuke to the Jews who heard them. With their worship centered upon the earthly Temple, they were far from being “poor and of a contrite spirit.” Stephen’s unspoken appeal is to accept the Divine One, who had walked among them so humbly, and had shown them their heavenly Father’s lovely character. (Nichol, 1957c, p.204)

Furthermore, it would appear that Shea has not read Ellen White’s caution not to judge Stephen’s speech without being mindful of the context. She is not referring to Shea’s *rib* model either. Shea has to develop his own definition of the issues in Acts 7 to make the event have any significance: “If one regards Stephen as a prophetic messenger of the heavenly court who brings God’s covenant lawsuit to His people (in continuity with the prophets of the O.T), his death takes on much more theological significance. He is not one martyr more or less. We can now look at this highly significant event in terms of the prediction of 9:24 about sealing up vision and prophet.” Clearly Shea needs to rethink his material, ponder the words of Ellen White and discard his current theories on this topic. Stephen is not a prophetic messenger; and he is not bringing a covenant lawsuit to the Jews.

Although Shea’s application of this *rib* model may have relevance with the messages of the Old Testament prophets and perhaps to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, we can with all confidence dismiss yet another of Shea’s fanciful concepts in applying this concept to Stephen’s speech.⁶⁶

Paroschi’s Support for Shea’s Views

Wilson Paroschi from the SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University, submitted an article for publication in *The Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* in 1998 entitled, “The Prophetic Significance of Stephen.” In Paroschi’s words,

“the purpose of the paper ...is not only to show how Shea connects Stephen with the prophecy [of Dn9:24-27], but also to go a step further, developing some of the points of that connection and also exploring the role performed by Stephen in the context of the early church, which certainly makes his prophetic significance even stronger.” (1998, p.346)

⁶⁶ For his application of the *rib* model to the messages of the seven churches of the book of Revelation, see AUSS, Spring, 1983, Vol. 21. No.1, pp.71-84, “The Covenantal Form of the Letters to the Seven Churches.” Lee F. Greer III examines this concept in the letters to the churches more closely in the paper, “The Revelation: The Covenant and the Christ Chapters 2-3: Letters to the 7 churches – Suzerainty judgment-reckoning declarations” at the web address <http://www.jesusinstituteforum.org/Rev2-3HCE.html>.

Right from the outset Paroschi signals that this article is not going to be a close examination of the validity of Shea's ideas. On the contrary, it assumes their validity from the outset and praises and expands them where possible. Notwithstanding this weakness, the article is a very useful resource. The article is divided by three subheadings: Stephen as Preacher; Stephen as Prophet; and then finally, the Conclusion. This is the only recent quasi-scholarly defense of Shea's position, so it is worth examining.⁶⁷ Some of the points of Shea's ideas listed below could rightly have been placed above when discussing Shea's views, but they are included below in the context of Paroschi's arguments as they seemed best to be discussed with both authors in view.

In his introduction Paroschi discussed the original contribution to historicism by William Hales who postulated that the stoning of Stephen marked the end of the seventy weeks:

...even without any single exegetical connection between Stephen and Dan. 9:24-27, and indeed those who came after him limited themselves to only reproducing the same argument, apparently unconcerned with demonstrating why Stephen's death suffices as evidence for the end of that prophetic period. The only reason given was the traditional one that after his death, the gospel was taken to the Gentiles. (*Ibid*, p. 344)

Paroschi then introduces what he considers seminal work by Shea with the statement, "for the first time, the exegetical connections between Stephen and the seventy weeks began appearing" (*Ibid*, p.345). He points out how Shea creates these "exegetical connections" using the phrase "to seal up vision and prophet." The "exegetical connection" of this phrase means that "'vision and prophet' are to come to an end by the time this prophetic period closes" (*Ibid*) meaning that the marker of the end." (*Ibid*, p.352)

In the excellent section entitled "Stephen as Preacher," Paroschi looks at Stephen's community, his theology and his influence. He highlights the more advanced understanding held by the Hellenistic Christians, among whom Stephen ministered, when compared to the Jewish Christians, concerning the implications of the gospel towards the wholesale abrogation of the Jewish ritual system. Their position put them in direct opposition to Saul's Pharisee party (*Ibid*, pp. 348f) and consequently brought Saul into bitter conflict with Stephen. Paroschi examines the contemporary consensus which incidentally, agrees with the position of Conybeare and Howson published a century and a half ago, that Saul was more than likely one of the Jewish antagonists at the Libertine synagogue who sought to overthrow the teachings of Stephen only to be embarrassed by his superior arguments. (*Paroschi, 1998, p.349; Conybeare and Howson, 1978, p.56*)⁶⁸

⁶⁷ I call it a "quasi-scholarly" work because he has not examined the proposals of Shea critically. Rather, the article is more of a "celebration" of Shea's ideas, as though they are above close examination. Paroschi's scholarship would have been put to better use had he been ruthless in his examination of Shea's theory.

⁶⁸ *Conybeare and Howson*, "We cannot doubt, from what follows, that Saul of Tarsus, already distinguished by his zeal and talents among the younger champions of Pharisaism, bore a leading part in the discussions which here [the Libertine Synagogue] took place.... We can imagine Saul, then, the foremost in the Cilician Synagogue, 'disputing' against the new doctrines of the Hellenistic Deacon, in all the energy of vigorous manhood, and with all the vehement logic of the Rabbis. How often must these scenes have been recalled to his mind, when he himself took the like furious assault; surrounded by 'Jews filled with envy, who spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.'" (p. 56f.)

Two major points of significance Paroschi sees with the Lucian inclusion of the incident with Stephen - first "Paul, the Apostle, is introduced by Luke at the exact moment of Stephen's death," and second, "it was the event which initiated the Christian message being taken to the Gentiles." Previous to this the Christians "lived practically as Jews." (*Ibid*, p.351) In many ways then, this conflict with Stephen and Saul spawned the divergence of Christianity from the strictures of the rituals Jewish Christians were living under, and opened the way for the unfettered embracing of Gentiles by Christian preachers without the need of being attached to a Jewish synagogue. All this information from Paroschi is informative and indeed augments the writings of Shea on this topic. It is when he gets into the next section that problems arise with his material.

Under the section "Stephen as Prophet," Paroschi looks at the suitability of choosing Stephen as the last prophet to Israel. He poses the question "Was Stephen a prophet? If so, then we must also ask: does he match the criteria required by Dan. 9: 24-27 for the end of the seventy weeks period?" (p.352) He examines Shea's definition of how Stephen became a prophet and concurs with Shea's arguments. He then broaches the topic under three subsections: "His Speech," "His Verdict," and "His Vision." Under the topic of Stephen's speech, he summarises with approbation Shea's perspective on this speech as a *rîb* or "'covenant lawsuit,' to express the idea of God bringing before a court an action against His people because of their covenant." (*Ibid*, pp.353f)⁶⁹ The issues with this topic have been dealt with in Shea's material above and will not be repeated here.

He then considers Stephen's accusation a formal change of Israel's status with God from henceforth. He asserts that this radical opinion is confirmed by the vision.

In this sense, Stephen's vision could indicate that this time [of judgment against the Jewish leaders] had arrived, for he saw Jesus 'standing ...at God's right hand instead of 'seated' ...as Jesus Himself had said he would be. (p.357)

Israel was being judged by God by means of Stephen's prophetic ministry. Stephen addressed the Sanhedrin not as a defendant, but as a prophet who brought God's final *rîb* against those people. Because of this, he finished his speech with a strong statement of condemnation. They had failed in keeping the covenant, therefore they were no longer the people of the covenant. (*Ibid*)

Under the subheading of "His Verdict," Paroschi looks at Peter's offer of repentance and forgiveness to Israel even after she had killed the Messiah – a second chance, but with their actions against Stephen and the absence of any invitation to repent in Stephen's speech, that second chance had faded. "Now however, Jesus did not seem to be waiting for their repentance anymore." (*Ibid*, p.358)

In his concluding comments, Paroschi suggests that "the traditional interpretation that the seventy weeks of Daniel 9:24-27 reached their fulfillment with the stoning of Stephen seems to be much more than a mere possibility." (*Ibid* , p.359) In regard to the idea of Stephen being a prophet, he says, "to the Christians, Stephen was a preacher...and to the Jews he was a prophet, the last prophet called by God to speak directly to Israel as the covenant people.... Stephen's vision, therefore, was not a vision of a martyr close to death, but the vision of a prophet performing his mission." (*Ibid*) And in regard to

⁶⁹ Compare other condemnatory statements by Christian martyrs before their judges. The martyrs stand up and judge the judges before the martyrs are silenced in death. See Great Controversy. These incidents do not represent a "covenant lawsuit."

Israel's probation, he says, "Israel's last hope as a nation ceased to exist with Stephen. The stones that the Jewish leaders threw at him forever sealed their fate." (*Ibid*) These ideas have been answered elsewhere in this paper, and readers are referred there for my discussion on the issues.

There are a few minor points Paroschi raises in his paper begging comment. These do not relate significantly to the major theme of this paper, but they contribute to the overall argumentation of the protagonists for the position defended by Shea and Paroschi.

Some of the points Paroschi raise include the following:

1. Stephen does not defend himself
2. The tone of his condemnation by the Jews is climactic
3. There is no call to repentance by Stephen, therefore the time for it is past for Israel to be forgiven;
4. The covenant-lawsuit was the final one and they are no longer the people of the covenant.

The next section he deals with is the topic of "His Vision." The points he draws out include:

5. The title "Son of man" used by Stephen to identify the person in the vision clearly refers to the judgment scene of Dn7;
6. The position of Jesus "standing" as opposed to "sitting" is significant. Jesus is not waiting for repentant Israel; he is standing in judgment;(p.358)

The other matters raised by Paroschi are either covered in the section dealing with Shea's ideas or not central to the topic under discussion here and will not draw comment.

Stephen does not defend himself.

Paroschi says in his article "he [Stephen] actually made no effort to defend himself." (p.355) But the reason Stephen did not finish his defense, according to Ellen White, whom Shea and Paroschi presumably respect, is because he could see that the chance of acquittal was hopeless, his doom was certain, and that any further speech in his defense was just wasted breath.

When Stephen had reached this point there was a tumult among the people. The prisoner read his fate in the countenances before him. He perceived the resistance that met his words, which were spoken at the dictation of the Holy Ghost. He knew that he was giving his last testimony. Few who read this address of Stephen properly appreciate it. The occasion, the time and place should be borne in mind to make his words their full significance.

When he connected Jesus Christ with the prophecies, and spoke of the temple as he did, the priest, affecting to be horror-stricken, rent his robe. This act was to Stephen a signal that his voice would soon be silenced forever. Although he was just in the midst of his sermon, he abruptly concluded it by suddenly breaking away from the chain of history, and turning upon his infuriated judges, said, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers; who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it."

At this the priests and rulers were beside themselves with anger. They were more like wild beasts upon prey than like human beings. They rushed upon Stephen, gnashing their teeth. But he was not intimidated; he had expected this. His face was calm, and shone with an angelic light. The infuriated priests and the excited mob had no terrors for him. "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into

Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of God standing on the right hand of God.”

The scenes about him faded from his vision; the gates of Heaven were ajar, and Stephen, looking in, saw the glory of God, and Christ, as if just risen from his throne, standing ready to sustain his servant, who was about to suffer martyrdom for his name. When Stephen proclaimed the glorious scene opened before him, it was more than his persecutors could endure. They stopped their ears, that they might not hear his words, and uttering loud cries ran furiously upon him with one accord. “And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep.”

Amid the agonies of this most cruel death, the faithful martyr, like his divine Master, prayed for his murderers. (1969, Vol 3, pp.298f)

This position by Ellen White also has the support of the New Bible Commentary, which says: “*When they heard these things...*(54). They cut his speech short; they had heard more than they desired.” (1954, p.909)

Why do not Shea and Paroschi accept Ellen White’s reasoning on this issue and support her position? Do they believe she is inspired? Her position is much more feasible than their proposal. For a sample of the type of conclusion in his defense Stephen was leading towards, Paul’s speech at Pisidia in Antioch provides a good example, according to Conybeare and Howson. ([op. cit.](#), p. 59)

The Speech of Stephen is Climactic; therefore it is climactic for the Jews as a nation.

In referring to the condemnation given by Stephen to the Sanhedrin, Paroschi says:

The tone of these words are climactic and must be understood as an explicit statement of condemnation. By killing the Messiah, those people were not only identifying themselves as sons of their “fathers” but also completing the great amount of rebellion and iniquity initiated by them, or to use the biblical language, “they had filled up the measure of their fathers.” If their fathers were guilty of slaying the prophets, they were even more so for murdering Jesus. As Marshall says, they had gone to the limit of Israel’s opposition to God [He inserts a footnote: “Marshall, p.147”] (p.355)

Of course the statement of Stephen’s in verses 51-53 is climactic. It is personally climactic to Stephen. He can see that his time has come and he appears to be in the grasp of these men. The reaper is about to call on Stephen. The speech is naturally climactic in Stephen’s life, since he can see that it is the last time he will be able to speak concerning his faith; nay, it is the last speech he is ever going to give on any topic. He faces a certain death and silence in the grave. Stephen’s speech is also climactic for Paul life. That is how Paul saw it, and that is how Luke presents it. It is also climactic for the Hellenistic Christians and the spread of the gospel among the pagans. For the Sanhedrin, it is just another condemnation of these heretics who endorse the blasphemer Jesus of Nazareth. They had had *their* climax on the Passover three or so years before when they forced the hand of Pilate to crucify him. They had since dealt with these heretics on a number of occasions (Acts 4:1ff; 5:17ff) and would have to deal with them yet again.

One should note in the quote of Paroschi above that his statements relate not to the stoning of Stephen but to the killing of the Messiah. It is the murder of the Son of God that is climactic, not the stoning of Stephen. In the words of the Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Dictionary: “When, at the crucifixion, the Jews rejected Christ, God took the

kingdom away from them and gave it 'to a nation bringing forth the fruits' of the kingdom (Mt 21:41-44; 23:36-38)." (Horn, 1960, Article "Prophet," p.879) This was done at the cross and the seal of approval was placed on the Church with the gift of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. If this occurred many years before the stoning of Stephen, then how can we say that the nation of Israel still had a chance to remain God's instrument on earth rather than the Church? God had already ordained the change on the day of Pentecost after the crucifixion some three years previous!! What God hath bound together, let no man put asunder!! Israel had already lost her special place in God's plan and as a nation long before the trial of Stephen, she stood no differently before Him than any other nation.

Stephen's failure to call to repentance.

Paroschi seems to think that the reason Stephen did not offer the call of repentance in his speech was because the Sanhedrin was past having it offered to them.

"It seems, therefore, that what Stephen was bringing to the Jewish leaders was not only another of God's covenant lawsuits, but the final one, as if their time for repentance had definitely come to an end and they were found guilty. They had failed in keeping the covenant (cf. v. 53), and because of this they were no longer the people of the covenant." (Ibid, p.355)

What Paroschi has failed to notice is the comment by the inspired source for the SDA church, in the pen of Ellen White, who explains the abrupt end of the speech, as an unfinished utterance. That is to say, he did not offer them the opportunity for repentance because he had not finished his defense; they interrupted it by condemning him before he was able to finish what he was going to say:

When Stephen had reached this point there was a tumult among the people. The prisoner read his fate in the countenances before him. He perceived the resistance that met his words, which were spoken at the dictation of the Holy Ghost. He knew that he was giving his last testimony. Few who read this address of Stephen properly appreciate it. The occasion, the time and place should be borne in mind to make his words their full significance.

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than his persecutors could endure. They stopped their ears, that they might not hear his words, and uttering loud cries ran furiously upon him with one accord. "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep."

Amid the agonies of this most cruel death, the faithful martyr, like his divine Master, prayed for his murderers. (1969, Vol 3, pp.298f)

Therefore one cannot make hasty conclusions from such an incomplete defense. Paroschi takes the matter too far by saying the Stephen's failure to offer a repentance to the Sanhedrin means they are past forgiveness as a nation. This is all argumentation from silence. We do not know what Stephen might have or might not have said.

She also says concerning Saul's part in Stephen's demise:

Learned Jews from the surrounding countries were summoned for the purpose of refuting the arguments of the accused. Saul, who had distinguished himself as a zealous opponent of the doctrine of Christ, and a persecutor of all who believed on him, was also present. This learned man took a leading part against Stephen. He brought the weight of eloquence and the logic of the Rabbis to bear upon the case, and convince the people that Stephen was preaching delusive and dangerous doctrines. (Ibid, p.295)

Not only was Saul taking a leading part in the proceedings against Stephen, his career took a decidedly upward move after the death of Stephen.⁷⁰ It was an initiation event for Saul. Says Ellen White:

The witnesses who had accused Stephen were required to cast the first stones. These persons laid down their clothes at the feet of Saul who had taken an active part in the disputation, and had consented to the prisoner's death.

The learned Saul was a mighty instrument in the hands of Satan to carry out his rebellion against the Son of God but a mightier than Satan had selected Saul to take the place of the martyred Stephen, and to labor and suffer for his name. Saul was a man of much esteem among the Jews, for both his learning and his zeal in persecuting the believers. He was not a member of the Sanhedrin council until after the death of Stephen, when he was elected to that body in consideration of the part he had acted on that occasion. (Ibid, pp.299f)

Other writers like Conybeare and Howson compare the speech of Stephen to that of Paul at Pisidia and point out the type of conclusion Stephen would have made, had he been given the opportunity to complete the speech.⁷¹ The speech of Paul concluded with a plea for repentance.

The Change from "Our" to "You" in Stephen's speech.

The change of the pronoun from "our" (vs. 11, 19, 48, 44, 45) to "your fathers" (v.51) perhaps means more than a simple breakage in Stephen's solidarity with his audience, as Gerhard A. Krodel suggests. It may also imply the definitive end of the covenant relationship between God and Israel as a nation. The reference to Jesus in [Acts] 7:52 makes it implicit that now the true covenant people were those who believed in Him and followed Him. In other words, the people who belonged to God's covenant were no longer defined by ethnic or political terms as Israel had been, but in terms of discipleship to Jesus Christ (cf. 11:26). (1998, p.356)

⁷⁰ So Conybeare and Howson: "There are strong grounds for believing that, if he was not a member of the Sanhedrin at the time of St. Stephen's death, he was elected into that powerful Senate soon after; possibly as a reward for the zeal he had shown against the heretic." (1978, p.64)

⁷¹ *op. cit.*, p. 59.

The change from the first person pronouns to the second person pronouns is because his speech has changed its nature. Before he was taking pains to point out his acceptance *in common with the Council* of the spiritual significance of Israel's history.

But now, *in opposition to the pre-judged, pre-condemned farcical nature of the actions of the Council*, Stephen understandably takes a “me” versus “you” approach and distances himself from them since he is he accused and they are the accusers. But he turns that position on its head, since he has nothing to lose; he knows he will soon be silenced, and he can protest at the injustice of the proceedings, and state the nature of innocence and guilt while he still has breath to give his opinion. The change in the personal pronouns used represents a change of topic not some official judicial change of relationship between God and Israel.

The covenant-lawsuit was the final one and they are no longer the people of the covenant.

This is answered above in my discussion of Shea's material, but in a nutshell, there is no covenant-lawsuit in the speech of Stephen, since, even in Shea's definition, he was not a prophet when he gave his speech to the Sanhedrin, nor did he understand himself to be standing in the role of a prophet. He was a Gentile Christian, not a Jewish prophet when he stood before his accusers. His speech is the act of a person who is cognizant that he is soon to become a martyr. It is a defense of his faith and his response to what he sees as an unjust sentence from an unholy council of hypocrites. He knows he is powerless; he knows they have the power of life or death over him, but he lets them know that they have abused their privileges of stewardship afforded them by God.

The title “Son of man” used by Stephen to identify the person in the vision clearly refers to the judgment scene of Dn7;

The Son of man was Jesus' favourite term for himself, regardless of the implications of the title. One would be surprised to find anything *other* than the title “Son of man.” Says the New Bible Commentary on the topic:

“I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God (56). This is the only New Testament occurrence of the title ‘the Son of man’ outside the Gospels (the expression in Rev, i.13, xiv,14 is different). Many members of the Sanhedrin must have been reminded of the words of Jesus himself (Mk xiv, 62) which drew forth their verdict of blasphemy.: (1954, p.909)

The choice of using the same title before virtually the same body of elders who condemned the Son of man, a few years previous is a fitting one. It is in the context of this previous judgment on the Son of man that the title “son of man” has significance, not some unsubstantiable assertion concerning the judgment of God on Israel. Paroschi extracts more from this title than is warranted.

The position of Jesus “standing” as opposed to “sitting” is significant. Jesus is not waiting for repentant Israel; he is standing in judgment.” (p. 358)

This is overdone. Though some have promoted this idea, others argue that developing some climactic significance from the physical position of Jesus in this text is bending the meaning too far. If anything, it is a position of support of Stephen, and a protest by Jesus in Stephen's mind against the action of the Sanhedrin. It is the most appropriate position

for Jesus to be seen in when one of his followers has taken the fight “right to the ropes” and has not given in.

Probably the best position on this issue is expressed by F. Davidson (Ed) in “The New Bible Commentary: *“Jesus standing on the right hand of God.* We should not press the idea of His standing here in contrast with the more regular mention of His being seated at God’s right hand.” (1954, p.909)

Conclusion on Paroschi’s article.

In spite of the informative expansion of the events around the stoning of Stephen, nothing that Paroschi presents addresses the major criticisms in this paper levelled against Shea’s ideas. Instead of a superficial approbation of Shea’s ideas, Paroschi would have contributed more significantly to the credibility of Shea’s theory had he wrestled more professionally with the issues. Needless to say, since Paroschi fails to address the weaknesses of Shea’s theory, he leaves Shea’s argument where Hales’ and Tanner’s theory rested over a century ago – without a single text to support the position.

Other SDA writers who use this argument.

From Pfandl:

“to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.” For the Jews, vision and prophecy came to an end at the conclusion of the 70 weeks with the stoning of Stephen (Acts 6:12-7:60). It indicated the end of their special status as a nation.

What was so significant about the stoning of Stephen? Why was his martyrdom more important than that suffered by others at that time? Stephen’s speech in Acts 7 parallels the prophetic “covenant lawsuits” speech. When the Holy Spirit came upon him, he received a vision of heaven. Thus by definition Stephen became a prophet at this point in time. When we look at his speech through the eyes of Old Testament prophets, it becomes another instance in which a divine prophet brings a covenant lawsuit against the representatives of God’s covenant community. His death, therefore, is not just one more martyr’s death. Stephen is the last of the Old Testament prophets to speak to the Jewish people as the elect people of God. But in stoning him they also silenced the prophetic voice addressed to them. “The prophets who followed Stephen were prophets *to the Christian Church*, not to the nation of Israel.” [Inserts footnote: “Shea, *Daniel 7-12*, p.59”]

Those who have read the previous section on Shea and Paroschi’s ideas will recognise the virtual recital of the same arguments here by Pfandl. The same arguments used above to discredit this view apply to Pfandl’s ideas as well.

Conclusion on the Theory of the Marker for the end of the Seventy Weeks.

In summary of this section on the marker for the end of the seventy weeks, I examined:

1. The concept in the SDA pioneers’ writings and found that generally, the phrase “to seal vision and prophet” was not used as the text to establish a marker. The association of Stephen’s stoning was done purely by means of the mathematics

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- involved with the seventy weeks, necessitating looking for an event around three and a half years after the cross.
2. The pioneers never justified or explained the reason for putting up Stephen as a possible marker; rather, it was just asserted. In their mind, the chronology of the seventy weeks was the proof of the marker.
 3. I looked at the reasons why the phrase “seal vision and prophet” should be chosen above any of the other infinitival phrases as the marker for the end of the prophecy, but found nothing of note in the text. Furthermore, Shea did not offer any reason why he should choose this phrase in the first place, notwithstanding the fact that the phrase could correctly be applied to a point of time in the seventy weeks rather than to the full 490 years.
 4. I then looked at Shea’s proposals and found they were wanting. In particular:
 - a. His 1986 explanation of the phrase was incorrect, whereas the 1980 explanation was more acceptable;
 - b. He is unable to develop a justifiable chronology for the stoning of Stephen;
 - c. He attributes a prophetic role to Stephen that is unbiblical;
 - d. He wrongly assumes Stephen the Greek to be a Jewish prophet in “Daniel’s tradition;”
 - e. He wrongly assumes Stephen was the last Jewish prophet.
 5. Paroschi’s article supporting Shea offers no extra information concerning the validity of Shea’s ideas that counters the objections outlined in this paper.

Summary on the Method used to establish this Assumption.

This section of the paper looked at the methods used by SDA historicists to use Dn9:24 to link the seventy weeks to the 2300 days.

The traditional method basing its argument on the use of the definite article in the phrase “the vision and the prophecy” was examined and found that this approach has long been ditched by SDA scholars who are familiar with Biblical research. In fact, the current research produced by Doukhan and Shea to enhance the SDA position on the seventy weeks fatally undermines the traditional position of linking “the vision and prophet” in v.24 with the 2300 days of Dn8. In Shea’s theory, the generic use of *hazôn* in verse 9:24 addresses something else beside the actual vision of Dn8 or Dn9 specifically. Thus the occurrence in Dn9:24 of the word *hazôn* is *not* a terminological link between Dn9:24 and/or Dn8. They support the generic sense of the words in this phrase, meaning it applies no less to Daniel than it does to the writings of any other of the prophets. Writers like Maxwell and Ford bravely try to allude to a special sense of this text applying to the 2300 days but offer no evidence to justify such an allusion. The reason is because there is no evidence that can be used.

A new approach was examined in the second half of the discussions in the “Methods” section. This approach by Shea argues that the phrase “seal vision and prophecy” means the bringing to an end of the prophetic gift in Israel. This took place when they rejected Stephen, who, in Shea’s view, was a prophet. My analysis argues that although Shea uses a plausible explanation for the meaning of “to seal” and correctly sees “vision and

prophet” as being generic nouns, he fails to provide a valid argument linking this to Stephen for three reasons:

- He incorrectly assumes in his 1986 paper that the tone of Dn9:24 indicates that the nation of Israel would reject the probation offered and thereby cause “vision and prophet” to cease to a rebellious nation. This is explained in his meaning of the verb “to seal;”
- He cannot provide a valid chronology for the stoning of Stephen;
- He incorrectly calls Stephen a prophet, which Scripture fails to do;
- He incorrectly calls Stephen the last prophet, as the records of Josephus relate of another messenger of doom much later to the people of Jerusalem.

Paroschi wrote an article in the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* in support of Shea’s ideas, augmenting them where he thought appropriate. While some of the peripheral information was of value, nothing he adds in the article insulates Shea’s theory against the arguments I provide showing the flaws in Shea’s theory. Therefore, Hales and Tanner’s proposal to use the stoning of Stephen as the marker of the end of the seventy weeks must remain where it was before Shea unsuccessfully attempted to substantiate it – without “any single exegetical connection between Stephen and Daniel 9: 24-27.” (Paroschi, 1998, p.344)

The Conclusion

The concept of the seventy weeks being the confirmation of the year-day principle being applied to the 2300 days prophecy on the basis of the phrase “to seal vision and prophet/ prophecy” is not proposed by informed contemporary SDA scholars on the basis of Dn9:24. Their abandonment of this argument shows that the phrase “seal vision and prophet” in Dn9:24 cannot be used to endorse the use of any year-day principle in Dn8.

To be specific, the argument traditionally used by SDA writers that attempts to prove the allusion to Dn8 in Dn9:24 by the definite article in the phrase “the vision” fails on two fronts.

The first argument used was the use of the definite article “*the* vision,” which was argued to refer to Dn8:14. SDA scholars today candidly admit that what non-SDA scholars have been writing for nearly two centuries or more – that the phrase “vision and prophet” is a generic statement and refers to these phenomena *in general*. Therefore, the argument using the definite article just vanishes; it can no longer be used. SDA scholars like Ford and Maxwell still assert that the 70 weeks prophecy “seals” the 2300 days, but now they just assert this point, since they cannot reason on the basis of using the definite article – as historicists did when they established this argument.

The second front on which their argument fails is that Dn9:24 cannot be used to say that the seventy weeks proves the validity of using the year-day principle. The text makes no reference to the vision of Dn8 and one cannot argue a relation between this phrase in 9:24 and Dn8 on the basis that Dn9:24 refers to “vision” generically. Both of these conclusions mean that the third conclusion –that the use of the year-day principle in the seventy weeks means that the 2300 days can be considered as 2300 years–cannot be drawn using the premise of both of the earlier arguments. The year-day principle is not being used in Dn9.

There has been a silent change of argumentation by SDA scholars on this point leaving the assumption without a valid basis for its argumentation and without a voice to defend it. The effort by recent scholars to give some credibility to the reference of “the vision” like Ford and Maxwell yet without a textual basis, is shallow and faulty and will not survive the test of time. The phrase “vision and prophet” has no direct reference to Dn8, since there is no definite article in the text for either “vision” or “prophet.” Dn8 can only be included in this phrase inasmuch as this phrase refers to *all* Old Testament visions and prophecies, among which is the book of Daniel. The first part of this assumption – that the definite article refers the phrase “the vision” to Dn8 –has been quietly dropped by contemporary SDA scholars.

In addition, the use of the phrase “to seal vision and prophet” in Dn9:24 cannot be used to provide an end-marker to the seventy weeks nor can it refer to the stoning of Stephen. This attempt fails on a number of fronts.

- First, the phrase does not mean the prophetic ministry by God to the Jews will finish at the end of the seventy weeks; rather it means the Jews had seventy weeks to fulfil vision and prophecy.
- Second, it does not mean that the marker for the end of the seventy weeks is the ending of the prophetic ministry to the Jews.
- Third, the stoning of Stephen cannot be used as the marker for the end of the seventy weeks. The Scripture does not give us a marker to end the period.
- Fourth, Stephen was not a prophet.
- Fifth, Stephen was neither a Jew, nor even a Jewish convert when he spoke to the Sanhedrin; he was a Gentile Christian.
- Sixth, there is only a doubtful chronology for the events surrounding Stephen’s death, with possible dates of A.D. 33 to 36.

The Assumption Chain used in this Assumption

The sub-assumptions used in this assumption include the following:

A. For the traditional arguments of the pioneers, we have:

1. The definite article “the” is a part of the text in the phrase “the vision and the prophecy.”
2. “The vision” in Dn9:24 refers specifically to Dn8.
3. The year-day principle is being used in Dn9.
4. There is no other way of interpreting the calibration of the 70 weeks apart from the year-day principle.
5. The fulfilment of Dn9 confirms the vision of Dn8 to be 2300 years long.
6. All the assumptions relating to the starting date for the 2300 days not being given in Dn8 are included as well.
7. The assumptions supporting the view that Dn9 provides a starting date for the 2300 days are included as well.

B. For Shea’s proposal.

The assumptions used by Shea in his fruitless attempt to prove the phrase “to seal vision and prophet” in Dn9:24 refers to the end marker of the seventy years include the following:

1. The time between the stoning of Stephen and the conversion of Saul is only a couple of months in order to keep it in AD 34;
2. Stephen was a Jew “in the tradition of Daniel’s people;”
3. Stephen was a prophet;
4. A person is commissioned by a vision of God to be a prophet;
5. A person who receives a vision (of God) is thereby a prophet;
6. The speech of Stephen was a “covenant lawsuit” between Israel and God through this prophetic messenger;
7. There are no prophets to Israel after the times of Stephen;
8. The meaning of “to seal” mean “to finish” or “bring to an end;”
9. The infinitive statement “to seal vision and prophet” is an action undertaken by God in withdrawing the prophetic gift from the Jewish nation;
10. Micaiah the prophet had a vision of God while in audience before king Ahab and King Jehoshaphat.

With the exception of the meaning of “to seal” meaning “to finish” or “bring to an end.” all of Shea’s assumptions for his thesis on Stephen being a prophet have foundered under examination and are to be disregarded as a futile endeavour to try and bolster the theories of Hale and Tanner. With the meaning of “to seal” as “finish,” even though this choice of Shea’s may be correct, his explanation as to how they were to come to an end at the end of the seventy weeks is incorrect. The most appropriate interpretation of this phrase is one of the “fulfillment” of vision and prophet. But to present it as *the* marker for the end of the seventy weeks is grossly incorrect and unsubstantiated, anymore than using any other of the six infinitives as the marker for the end of the seventy weeks. Much more honest and sensible is the statement by Questions on Doctrine that no marker for the end of the seventy weeks is indicated in the text of Dn9. ([Seventh-day Adventists, 1957](#), pp.289-291)⁷²

⁷² “In this connection the question arises, Is it really necessary to pinpoint some event as marking the close of the 70 weeks? No specific event is predicted in the prophecy, and it would therefore seem that no historic event is actually called for to indicate its close....So although various expositors (such as Hales, Tanner, Taylor et cetera) suggest the martyrdom of Stephen as the closing event of the seventieth week – and such might be quite reasonable – no historical mark is actually necessary, and possibly none can be pointed out with certainty.”

Appendix No.1

Perspectives of some non-SDA writers on the topic.

In this next section I wish to pull together the comments of various non-SDA writers from a variety of disciplines and examine their view on the areas discussed in this assumption. It is taken in two sections. The first section looks at the phrase “to seal vision and prophet” in Dn9:24; whereas the second section looks at the events surrounding the preaching and stoning of Stephen.

The Phrase “to seal the vision and prophet.”

From Hengstenberg:

Commentators are for the most part agreed in the opinion that the *sealing up* is equivalent to *fulfilling*, or *confirming*, and that allusion is made to the custom of affixing a seal for the purpose of adding validity to the contents of a document. It is evident from 1 Kings xxi, 10, 11, 44, that such a custom existed. They also adduce as parallel passages Acts iii, 18, (“those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, he hath so fulfilled, ἐπλήρωσεν”), and Matt v, 17. The expression “to seal” is certainly used in this sense in Syriac (see, for example, *Ephraim Syrus* hymn. 80, adv. Scrutat. Opp iii, p.149), as well as in the New Testament, e.g., John vi 27 and other passages (see our comm on Rev vii.3). But it is never so employed in the Old Testament. We have already seen that the sole metaphorical use of the word [in Heb. *Chatham*-FB] is one which was founded upon the custom of sealing up anything that was laid aside, or deposited in a place of concealment. Of course, this would not be decisive in itself, unless there were something else to confirm it. But there is all the more reason for retaining the established meaning in the present instance, from the fact that, as a general rule, it would lead to great difficulties to take the verb [in Heb. *Chatham* -FB] in two different senses in the same verse; and this would be even more than usually the case in the verse before us, where it is evident from the arrangement, that the sealing of the vision and prophet is closely connected with the sealing of the prophecy (see p. 110). The sealing of the sins is accompanied by the sealing of the prophecies; and the latter is described in the prophecies themselves, as an act to be performed in the future. When once the fulfillment has taken place, *although in other aspects the prophecy still retains its great importance*, yet in this respect it has answered its purpose, that the eyes of believers, in need of strength and consolation, are no longer directed to its announcements or a coming salvation, but to a salvation that has already appeared; that they now hold fast, not so much to the word of the Lord, as to the works of the Lord, and exclaim with Philip in John i 46, “*we have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophet did write, Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph.*” According to this interpretation, there is a perfect parallel to our passage in the words of Christ, in Luke xxii. 37, “the things concerning me have an end” (the prophecies relating to my sufferings are now coming to an end); and in Matt.xi, 13, “for all the prophets and the law prophesied unto John,” on which *Bengel* says, “Now was everything completed, that had ever been predicted up to the time of John;” and also in 2 Pet. i 19, “we have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts.” In the last passage we have the sense of two different interpretations combined, the current one and our own. The “word of prophecy” had derived greater certainty on the one hand from its fulfillments, but on the other hand it has lost its force, in consequence, as a ground of hope and

consolation; just as the light of a candle, which serves but feebly and imperfectly to dispel the surrounding darkness, is only employed till the full daylight has dawned.

The use of the singular (compare [in Heb. *Chazôn*-FB] Is. i. 1; 2 Chr. xxxii, 32; Nahum i.1; and *Kleinert*, über die Aechtheit des Jes. p.11), and the absence of the article serve to show, that the words are used in their widest sense. This generality of expression may answer a double purpose. It may either indicate, that what is predicated of any object, applies to that object without exceptions, as in Ps. lxxv. 2 and lxxiii. 5; or it may simply be intended to represent indefinitely that which has really a limited application. An example of the latter we find in chap. Xi. 14. “the sons of the wicked of thy people will exalt themselves, [quotes same in Heb], to the fulfillment of prophecy,” where the prophet speaks quite generally – ([In Heb *chazôn*-FB] being employed in this passage also as a collective noun) – although he had really something definite before his mind, namely, his own prophecy. The point of importance in this case was not, that the event would contribute to the fulfillment of one particular prophecy, but that it would be subservient to the accomplishment of prophecy generally. The last-mentioned argument in favour of the general character of the article is omitted several times, in cases where it must necessarily have been inserted, if the expression had been as definite as the object referred to (compare for example, [in Heb. *Mashiah*-FB], vers. 25.260 – *Bertholdt*, *Wiessler*, *Hitzig*, and others explain the clause as meaning, “till the predictions of the prophet Jeremiah and fulfilled.” But this explanation is untenable. 1. It rests upon the assumption that *sealing* is equivalent to confirming. For if this term be correctly understood, the only circumstances, under which such an explanation would be defensible, would be if *chazôn* (the vision) stood alone. The addition of [in Heb. *w'nabî'* and prophet-FB] renders it altogether inadmissible; for how could a prophet be described as of no further use, simply because one single prediction of his had been fulfilled? But even if it stood by itself, the indefinite character of the expression would extend far beyond the limits assigned elsewhere, if the prophet had merely one particular prophecy of Jeremiah before his eyes. That we have here a violation of the rule, “the article is the most indispensable, where deference is made to a person or thing, that has been mentioned just before,” is a conclusion to which we should be justified in coming, only if the prophecy of Jeremiah had been mentioned so immediately before, that it would occur at once to the mind of any reader, and the indefinite character of the expression be thus removed – unless there were other circumstances connected with the passage, such as some striking resemblance between the prophecy of Jeremiah and the promises here given, which might serve as an indirect clue to the prediction referred to. – 2. The *καταργέιν* of the [in Heb. *chazôn* – FB] and the [in Heb. *nabî'* – FB] could not take place in any other way, than through the fulfillment of that which is here described, as about to be accomplished at the end of the seventy weeks, more especially the sealing up of sins, with which the sealing up of the vision and prophet was closely connected. This same prediction ought, therefore, to be contained in the prophecy, or two prophecies of Jeremiah, to which the prophet is said to refer. But there is no trace of this in either of them. The twenty-fifth chapter contains nothing but a promise of the termination of the Babylonian captivity, and the twenty-ninth is restricted to an assurance of the return of the Jews and the gracious protection of God.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that we have here an allusion to the forgiveness of sins to be imparted in the days of the Messiah, the announcement of which runs through all the writings of the prophets (compare Is. liii.' Zech. xiii.1). And when this, the essential element in the work of Christ, had been accomplished, the prophecies, in this respect at least, could justly be regarded as abolished. (c.1970. pp.820-822)

In summarising Hengstenberg's comments, we see that although he questions the validity of the concept of “fulfillment,” he argues that the determining factor of the meaning of the infinitive “to seal” is the double usage of the same verb in verse 24. He

argues “it would lead to great difficulties to take the verb [In Heb. *chatham*-FB] in two different senses in the same verse...” (p.820) His understanding of the meaning of the phrase “to seal sins” must therefore be considered in order to highlight the meaning in the second instance of its use in this verse. In a nutshell, he says that the correct meaning of the word to seal is the opposite to open, and properly signifies to shut out of the way, out of sight. It is also enlightening in these comments how he rebuts Shea’s argument that “to seal” means to come to an end. Here then is his statement. He says:

“*To seal up*” is regarded by many commentaries as a figurative expression for “finishing, or putting an end to.” Thus *Theodore*: ἐσφραγίσει δὲ τὰς ἁμαρτίας, παύσις μὲν τὴν κατὰ νόμον πολιτείαν, τὴν δὲ τοῦ πνεύματος δωρησάμενος χάριν. Several of the early translators drop the figure, and express the idea in literal terms; but *Theodotion* retains the figure. Thus in the *Septuagint* we find: καὶ τὰς ἀδικίας σπανίσαι; and in *Aquila*, καὶ τοῦ τελειώσαι ἁμαρτίαν, ut consummetur praevaricatio. That these renderings are traceable to the cause we have indicated, and not, as is commonly supposed, to any difference in the reading, is as clear as possible from the fact that, even in the case of the next verb [in Heb. *chatham*-FB], where there is not the slightest trace of a various reading, the *Septuagint* and the *Vulgate* also drop the figure (καὶ συντελεσθῆναι τὰ ὁράματα καὶ προφήτην, et impleatur visio et propheta), whilst *Theodotion* gives the same literal version as before (καὶ τοῦ σφραγίσαι ὅρασιν καὶ προφήτην), which *Theodoret* explains, again without the figure, (τουτέστι τοῦ δουναι τέλος ἀπάσις ταῖς προφητείαις).

The idea, however, that “sealing up” is equivalent to “putting an end to” cannot be sustained. The verb is no doubt frequently so used in Arabic, where the meaning has arisen from the very common custom of affixing a seal at the end of a letter or other written documents. (A large collection of examples may be seen in *Franc. Tspregi*’s dissertation de authentia selectiorum Kthibim, in *Oelrich*’s collect. opus. phil. theol. ii. p.153 sqq.). But it is never used in this sense in Hebrew. In the only passage, which is ever cited as an example, (Ez.xxviii, 12), the rendering given to [in Heb. *chothēm takēnīth*-FB], *perficiens, absolvens pulchritudinem*, rests on a misapprehension of the meaning of the second word. According to xliii.10 [in Heb. *takēnīth*] means a *sketch*, or *model*; and therefore [in Heb. *chothēm takēnīth*], “one who seals up the sketch,” is one who has the right to lay aside the idea of its existence, because that idea is perfectly represented in his own person, in other words, he is himself a personified idea, an ideal. Quite in harmony with this are the words that follow, in which the king of Tyre is called “full of wisdom and *finished* in beauty.” The figurative use of the word [in Heb. *chatham*] in the Hebrew is derived entirely from the custom of sealing up, for the sake of greater security, any thing that had been shut up or laid aside. Thus in Job xxxvii. 7, God “sealed up the hand of every man,” he shuts it up so that it cannot move. In Job ix, 7 he is said to “seal up the stars,” that is to shut them up so that they cannot shine. In Jer. xxxii. 11 and 14, a sealed book and an open book are contrasted; and in the same manner, a sealed fountain is contrasted with an open one in Is.xxix, 11; *vid.* Song of Solomon iv, 12. In the book of Daniel the outward act, from which the figure is derived, is found in vi, 18, where the king seals up the den, into which Daniel has been thrown; and the figure itself occurs in chap.viii,26 and xii, 4, where the prophecies of Daniel are described as sealed up until the time of their fulfillment – a figurative expression of their obscurity. The opposite of this may be seen in Rev xxii, 10 (see Dissertation on Daniel p.175, 176 translation). Just as [in Heb. *chatham*] is preceded in the present case by [in Heb. *kal’a*], “to shut in,” so is it preceded in chap.xii, 4 by [in Heb. *satham*] (“shut up the words and seal the book”) and in Deut xxxii, 34 by [in Heb. *kamas*] (“it is not hidden with me, sealed up in my treasures?”). Sin is described in this passage as sealed up, because it is to be entirely removed out of God’s sight, taken completely away.

The marginal reading in the place of [in Heb. *lach^ethôm*] is [in Heb. *l^ehathêm*] (“to be completed,” the Inf. Hiph. of [in Heb. *tamam*]), the vowel pointing of which is inserted in the text. It probably owes its origin simply to the ancient versions, in which the figure is dropped, and which were so thoroughly misunderstood, as to give rise to the notion that they contained the traces of a various reading. There was all the greater readiness to adopt this reading because the form [in Heb. *hatham*] is actually employed in chap viii, 23, to denote the termination of sin, apostasy; and, for reasons already assigned, there was a strong desire to assign this meaning to the word in the text. It maintained itself in its usurped position by the help of the equally illegitimate [in Heb. *l^ekallê*], whose pretended legitimacy it served to strengthen in return. *Hitzig* and *Ewald* indeed, adduced, as an argument in its favour, the fact that [in Heb. *l ch th m*] follows, which, they say, is sufficient of itself to render the Kethib suspicious. But this is turned into an argument on the other side, when we observe that the frequent repetition of the same words is one of the distinguishing characteristics of Daniel’s style. Proofs of this may be obtained in great abundance from the eleventh chapter. In fact, they may even be found in this short section. For example, the roots [in Heb. *charats* and *shamam*] occur no less than three times. But even if this marginal reading, which is so thoroughly destitute of authority, were adopted, there would be no absolute necessity for attributing to the words a threatening meaning. To finish sins *may* mea, to force them to a head, to fill up their measure; but it may also mean to put an end to them by forgiveness, and thus to answer to the phrase to wipe away sin, [in Heb. *m ch h, t m m*] is used in this sense with reference to sin, *e.g.*, in Lam.iv 22: “Thine iniquity is wiped away, [in Heb. *tam^anônêk*], thou daughter of Zion....But he will visit thine iniquity, thou daughter of Edom.”

Instead of the plural [in Heb. *chatta’ôth*] there are not a few MSS. in *Kennicott* and *De Rossi* in which the singular [in Heb. *chatta’th*] is found. But there is no reason for giving the preference to this reading, which probably owes its origin simply to an attempt to make the word more like [in Heb. *pesha’*] and [in Heb. *’awôn*]. The singular [in Heb. *pesha’*] is met with in other passages along with the plural [in Heb. *chatta’ôth*] (*i.e.*, Micah i 5), which may be explained from the fact that [in Heb. *pesha’*], apostasy, rebellion, has more of the nature of a collective noun, whereas [in Heb. *chatta’th*] relates more to some particular manifestation of sin.

On the other hand, even if the reading in the text be pronounced correct in both cases, as it should be, there is nothing in the words themselves to prevent our interpreting them in an evil sense. The punishment and extermination of the sinner might be described as the shutting in and sealing up of sin, just as well as the forgiveness of sin. Thus in Is iv. 4, the “filth of the daughters of Zion is washed away and the blood of Jerusalem purged from the midst thereof,” by means of the destructive judgments of God. Still, the following reasons are sufficient to show that this view is inadmissible, and that the expression must denote an act of divine grace, *viz.*, the shutting in and sealing up of sin by means of forgiveness. 1. In the second part of the verse there is a triple blessing mentioned, which the Lord will bestow upon his church at the end of the seventy years. If, now, we interpret the first two clauses of the verse in a good sense, we find the removal of a triple evil answering to this communication of a triple good. There is all the more reason to believe that the two halves of the three clauses each, are thus related to each other, because otherwise the use of the word [in Heb. *chatham*] in the one would not correspond to its use in the other, whereas the two are evidently closely connected, nor would it occur in each case in the second clause. The prophecies are sealed up along with the sins, because the wiping away of sin, which is predicted in the former as the leading characteristic of the Messianic age, will now have taken place. This exact correspondence between the double use of the word [in Heb. *chatham*] also serves to defend it in the first instance against the unfounded pretensions of the marginal reading. – 2. There can be no doubt that, if it is not allowable to separate the three

terms descriptive of sin which are found linked together in other passages (Ex xxxiv. 7 and ver.5), it is equally unallowable to separate those employed to denote what will be done to sin, the “shutting in, sealing up, and covering over.” In the latter case, in fact, it is even less allowable, since the three expressions are all figurative, and represent the same idea of removing a thing out of one’s sight. Hence if it can be proved of any one of these, that it must necessarily be used in a good sense, the argument will be equally applicable to both the others. Now this is indisputably the case with [in Heb. *kipper* ‘*awôn*,], which is a very common phrase, and never means anything but the forgiveness of sins, the covering of sin with the veil of mercy, so that the eye of an angry judge cannot observe it. As every one must admit, there is nothing in the verbs themselves, to show that any contrast is intended; and therefore, if this were the case, it would surely have been distinctly expressed in some other way. For example, when *Hofmann* gives the following as the meaning of the third clause: “It is different with the transgression of believers, it is expiated,” he shews by the turn which he here gives to the text, the form which it would really have assumed, if such a view had been admissible. – 3. The declaration, contained in the first three clauses, is closely related to the various confessions of sin in ver. 5, and the prayer for forgiveness connected with them.⁷³ It follows from this that, even if the last of the three were as ambiguous as the other two, it would still be better to interpret them in a good sense, since the angel would not have been likely to have come so very swiftly (vers.21), for the purpose of announcing to Daniel exactly the opposite of that for which he had prayed. It was the previous announcement of salvation, which alone served to divest of its terrors the prediction, that followed immediately afterwards, of the destruction of the city and temple. It now appeared as running parallel to the highest manifestations of mercy towards the faithful among the people of God, and so far as their connexion with the ungodly was thereby brought to an end, it also assumed the form of a manifestation of grace. (c.1970, p.814-817)

From Keil:

In the fifth passage, *to seal up the vision and prophecy*, the word [Heb: *chatham-FB*], used in the second passage of sin, is here used of righteousness. The figure of sealing is regarded by many interpreters in the sense of confirming, and that by filling up, with reference to the custom of impressing a seal on a writing for the confirmation of its contents; and in illustration these references are given: 1 Kings xxi, 8, and Jer. xxxii, 10, 11, 44 (Hävernicks, v.Lengerke, Ewald, Hitzig, and others). But for this figurative use of the word to seal, no proof-passages are adduced from the O.T. Add to this that the word cannot be used here in a different sense from that in which it is used in the second passage. The sealing of the prophecy corresponds to the sealing of the transgression, and must be similarly understood. The prophecy is sealed when it is laid under a seal, so that it can no longer actively show itself.

The interpretation of the object [Heb: *hazôn w' nabi'* (*vision and prophet*)-FB] is also disputed. Berth. Ros., Bleek, Ewald, Hitzig, Wiessler, refer it to the prophecy of the seventy weeks (*sic*) (Jer.xxv. and xxix), mentioned in ver.2. But against this view stands the fact of the absence of the article; for if by [Heb: *hazôn*] that prophecy is intended, an intimation of this would have been expected at least by the definite article, and here particularly would have altogether indispensable. It is also condemned by the word [Heb: *nabi'*] added, which shows that both words are used in comprehensive generality for all existing prophecies and prophets. Not only the

⁷³ Look at the link between the request for forgiveness in the prayer and the conditions God sets up in his answer for that unconditional and permanent forgiveness. Verse 24 outlines the necessary conditions for that permanent forgiveness.

prophecy, but the prophet who gives it, *i.e.* not merely the prophecy, but also the calling of the prophet, must be sealed. Prophets and prophecies are sealed, when by the full realization of all prophecies prophecy ceases, no prophets any more appear. The extinction of prophecy in consequence of its fulfillment is not, however, (with Hengstenberg), to be sought in the time of the manifestation of Christ in the flesh; for then only the prophecy of the Old Covenant reached its end (cf. Matt.xi,13, Luke xxii. 37, John i, 46), and its place is occupied by the prophecy of the N.T., the fulfilling of which is still in the future, and which will not come to an end and terminate (*καταργηθησεται*, 1 Cor.xiii.8) till the kingdom of God is perfected in glory at the termination of the present course of the world's history, at the same time with the full conclusive fulfillment of the O.T. prophecy; cf. Acts iii.21. This fifth member stands over against the second, as the fourth does over against the first. "When the sins are sealed, the prophecy is also sealed, for prophecy is needed in the war against sin; when sin is thus so placed that it can no longer operate, then prophecy also may come to a state of rest; when sin comes to an end in its place, prophecy can come to an end also by its fulfillment, there being no place for it after the setting aside of sin. And when the apostasy is shut up, so that it can no more spread about, then righteousness will be brought, that it may possess the earth, now freed from sin, shut up in its own place" (Kliefoth). (1978, p.345)

From Young:

For sealing vision and prophet - Many take this action to refer to the impression of a seal upon a writing so as to accredit it. Thus to seal up vision, etc., is said to mean that the prophecies are accredited. Some believe that this reference is to the particular prophecy of the 70 sevens.

This use of *to seal* however, does not appear to be supported from the OT. The reference is not to accrediting the prophecy, but to sealing it up so that it will no longer appear. Its functions are finished, and it is not henceforth needed.

This is not done by way of punishment to Israel (Mauro) but because the period of prophecy is now at an end. Keil thinks that this extinction of prophecy is not to be sought in the period of Christ's first advent, since that concluded only OT prophecy. NT prophecy and its fulfillment are yet to be sealed up. Hence, Keil believes that this prophecy is to be fulfilled in the future.

However, the particular description herein chosen very clearly refers to the OT period. Vision was a technical name for revelation given to the OT prophets (cf, Isa. 1:1; Amos 1:1, etc.) The *prophet* was the one through whom this vision was revealed to the people. The two words, vision and prophet, therefore, serve to designate the prophetic revelation of the OT period. This revelation was of a temporary, preparatory, typical nature. It pointed forward to the coming of Him who was the great Prophet (Deut 18:15). When Christ came, there was no further need of prophetic revelation in the OT sense. (1949, p.200)

From Leupold:

"To bring in everlasting righteousness." This is without doubt the imputed righteousness which is not naturally to be found among men, and so God must "bring in", *habhi'*, this much sought after treasure. It is not a thing of a moment only but lasts forever as all God's treasures do, it is "everlasting." Daniel speaks here the language of St. Paul at this point. This righteousness, or the Messiah who accomplishes it, was the treasure above all treasures that was most eagerly longed for by the Old Testament saints.

This leads to the next point. Since this righteousness was, in the last analysis, the purpose of all vision and prophecy, after the end has been achieved, the means become outmoded, and so "to seal up the vision and prophecy" follows. The same verb "to seal up" is used here that was employed earlier in the verse, *chatham*. The objective is the same: to dispose summarily and finally of a thing that deserves to be relegated to the category of achieved things. Why perpetuate visions if the purpose for which they are given is fully realized, and no higher achievement is possible? For "prophecy" we have the word "prophet," *nabhi*; though the man is involved, it is primarily his *prophecy* that is under consideration. He too, needs no longer to function after the things he prophesied are fully attained. The term could be translated, "the vision of the prophet" - hendiadys (*Charles*). (1949, p.414)

From Walvoord:

The fifth aspect of the program, "to seal up the vision and prophecy," is probably best understood to mean the termination of unusual direct revelation by means of vision and oral prophecy. The expression *to seal up* indicates that no more is to be added and that what has been predicted will receive divine confirmation and recognition in the form of actual fulfillment. Once a letter is sealed, its contents are irreversible (cf. 6:8) Young applies this only to Old Testament prophet, but it is preferable to include it in the cessation of New Testament prophetic gift seen both in oral prophecy and in the writing of the Scriptures. If the seventieth week is still eschatological, it would allow room for this interpretation which Young, attempting to interpret the entire prophecy as fulfilled, could not allow. (1971, p.222-223)

From Lacocque:

We passed over the expression 'end the sinning', or in the *Kethib*, 'seal the sinning' because it presents a vocabulary similar to 'seal the vision and prophet.' The parallel to 8:23 indicates that we should probably prefer the *Qere* (used in our translation) and assume that there is some contamination of the first part of the verse from the second part. [Lacocque's translation of this given a few pages earlier (p.187) is "It has been fixed seventy weeks for your people and your holy city in order to stop the crimes and end the sinning, to expiate the wrong and bring about eternal justice, to seal vision and prophet, to anoint a Holy of Holies." -FB] As for the seal on the vision on the vision and the prophet, the expression is unusual. One puts a seal on a document (see on 1 Kings 21:8; Jer.32:10, 11, 49; Dan. 6:17; 12:4,9); yet we find a metaphorical use of this term in John 3:33; 6:27; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph 1:13 etc., where living beings are at issue: they are confirmed in their role or justified in their action. History reaches its peak at the end. At that moment, both the 'vision' and the 'prophet' are sealed. There is no longer any hiatus between them, there is nothing more to add to or subtract from the prophetic testimony. Daniel is conscious of ending prophecy in Israel once and for all and this gives his book a unique character which cannot fail to impress the reader. (1979, p.193)

Appendix 2. The Significance of the Speech and the stoning of Stephen.

F. Davidson (ed):

The Twelve had kept the respect and goodwill of the Jerusalem populace; they attended the temple services regularly, and appeared outwardly to be observant Jews

whose only distinction from others was that they believed and proclaimed Jesus to be the Messiah. But a new note was heard in the debates in the Hellenistic synagogues which Stephen attended, a note which envisaged the abolition of the temple cultus and the institution of a new and more spiritual form of worship. If the charges made by Stephen's accusers are garbled, yet we are not at a loss to discover the real trend of his arguments; the speech preserved for us in chapter vii is not so much 'Stephen's apology' (such a defence was but little calculated to lead to an acquittal, as Stephen well knew), as a reasoned exposition of his teaching about the transitory nature of the Jewish worship. Now the people of Jerusalem lived on the temple; contributions came in from all over the world to maintain the cultus; the crowd of pilgrims who regularly came up to the festivals provided an immense revenue for the city. An attack on the temple was, therefore, in their eyes, an attack on their livelihood. The rulers at once saw their opportunity, and arraigned Stephen on a popular charge. The indictment against him was practically the same as that against his Master at an earlier date (Mk.xiv.58), and against Paul at a later date (Acts xxi. 28); it was alleged that he meditated the destruction of 'this holy place'....

There arose certain of the synagogue...(9). Probably one synagogue is meant, although five, four, three and two had been understood by various commentators. As it was attended by *them of Cilicia*, it may have included Saul of Tarsus among its members. *Libertines* (9). Probably Jewish freedmen or the descendants of freedmen from the various places mentioned; Deissman suggests freedmen of the imperial household. There is not sufficient reason to reject the text here for the attractive emendation "Libyans" suggested by Beza, Tischendorf and Dibelius.(p.907)

Arrested and put on trial before the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of the Jewish nation, over which in those days the High Priest presided, Stephen stated his case in the form of a historical review, a form not uncommon among the Jews. The two chief themes of his speech are, first, that the nation, from the days of Abraham onwards, had always been intended to sit loose to any one locality of earth; a movable ten was therefore a fitter shrine than a permanent building; and secondly, that the nation, from the time of Moses onwards, had always rebelled against God and opposed His messengers, a course of action which had culminated in their slaying of 'The Righteous One.' Any line of argument less likely to conciliate his judges could hardly be imagined. After one or two angry interruptions, which Stephen countered in true prophetic vein, he was prevented from finishing his speech, thrown out of the building and stoned. Whether his death was a simple act of lynch-law or an excess of jurisdiction on the part of the Sanhedrin is not quite clear; probably it partook of the nature of both. Although the Procurator's ratification was technically necessary for the execution, he was at the moment in Caesarea, his usual residence, and Caiaphas and Pilate certainly had a mutual understanding by virtue of which Pilate could be trusted to turn a blind eye when convenience required. (pp.907-908)

The ringleader of the campaign of repression which followed Stephen's death was Saul of Tarsus, destined to become one of the greatest men of all time. Although born a Roman citizen in the Greek city of Tarsus in Asia Minor, he was brought up by his Jewish parents not as a Hellenist, but as a 'Hebrew of Hebrews' (Phil iii.5 R.V), being sent to Jerusalem to be trained at the feet of Gamaliel, the great leader of the Pharisees whom we have already met as a counsellor of moderation. The pupil showed little of his teacher's moderation. As a Jew of Cilicia, he may well have attended the synagogue where Stephen debated, and heard those arguments which were bound to undermine the whole religious structure of Judaism. Saul's mind, as penetrating as Stephen's, saw the irreconcilability of the old order and the new, and he set out on his career as a vigorous champion of the old order, resolved to stamp out the revolutionary movement.

At Stephen's martyrdom he seems to have played some official part, and thereafter, wherever the believers fled in their dispersion, he pursued them, not only in Palestine itself, but even to Damascus. p.(908) (1954, pp.907-908)

Brown, Fitzmyer, and Carm (1968):

Persecutions from outside sources disturbing its tranquillity have already been noted; now an inner crisis disturbs the idyllic unity of the church. In effect, it foreshadows the emancipation of the Church from Palestinian Judaism, for the crisis arises between two groups of Jews converted to Christianity, the "Hebrews," and the "Hellenists." (p.181)...The strife between the "Hebrews," and the "Hellenists" points up the need of "assistants" (*diakonoï*) in the early community – in effect, a need for a structuring of the community itself. With the appointment of such assistants three classes appear: apostles, elders, and assistants....Stephen and Philip, two of the assistants, are almost immediately depicted in the role of preacher and debaters. The charges levelled against him [Stephen] resemble those levelled against Jesus in the Gospel tradition: It was Luke's intention to make Stephen similar to Jesus. The charges are three: (1) He has spoken blasphemies against Moses and God. (2) He has spoken against this "holy place" (the Jerusalem Temple) and the Law. (3) he has maintained that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change Mosaic customs. Though the Stephen episode is *prima facie* a defense, it is actually more a taking of position, a discussion in which Judaism is confronted with Christianity. It depicts the last Jerusalem crisis: the persecution that ensues drives the Word to Samaria, Judea, Galilee and Syria. (p.182)...

The precise nature of the blasphemy against Moses and God is not explained. Even though Stephen does touch on the Temple and Moses in his discourse, he really never answers the charge itself. (p.182)...

Even though Stephen was made to appear before the Sanhedrin (6: 11, 15), there is no indication of a sentence; the crowd's actions can only be described as a lynching. The execution of Stephen is scarcely an indication that the Sanhedrin at the time had any right to put a condemned man to death (Jn18:31). (p.182)

This discourse, which is clearly an insert between 6: 8-15 and 7:55-60, is the longest speech in Acts. *Prima facie* it is supposed to be Stephen's defense, but Stephen does not really (ie., directly) answer the charges levelled against him. In the development of Acts this discourse represents the beginning of the formal break of Christianity with Judaism. Stephen's speech is part of a larger context of the emergence of the Hellenists; as one of these, Stephen addresses and confounds Diaspora Judaism. The result is his death, "and on that day a great persecution started against the church in Jerusalem" (8:1b). The rift is between Jews and Christians. From now on Christianity will continue to emerge from its Jewish matrix, even though Paul in his last speeches will strive to show that Christianity is only the logical conclusion of Pharisaism (23:6; 26: 6-8) Hence Stephen's speech heralds the emancipation of Christianity from Judaism. (pp.182-183)

Stephen's discourse is really a sermon in which the history of Israel from Abraham to Solomon is recast in terms of opposition to Jesus. In this regard, it resembles the missionary speech of Paul at Pisidia, Antioch (13:17-22), which is the springboard for his proclamation to the Jews of that town (13: 23-41). Opposition to Jesus is the climax of the discourse of Stephen (7:51-53); but the implications in the rest of the speech are clear: The history of the Jewish people has always been one of opposition to God's appointed guides and of idolatry....The basic theme of the discourse can be summed up thus: The holy promise of God has been dishonoured by the disobedience of Israel; in rejecting the challenge of the promise, Israel has denied its own history and its inheritance.(p.183)

Stephen's speech should not really be regarded as his defense; it has often been noted that most of it is irrelevant to the charges that are made in the story of

Stephen's martyrdom. The didactic character of the speech predominates, and it serves to advance Luke's own story of the spread of the Word from Jerusalem to the end of the earth. (p.183)

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