Avondale College of Higher Education

AN EVALUATION OF THE TRADITIONAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST UNDERSTANDING OF THE IDENTITY OF 'THE REST OF HER SEED' IN REVELATION 12:17

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ABSTRACT

Seventh-day Adventist scholars have long identified the 'rest of her seed' of Revelation 12:17 with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This identification is based on the understanding that 'the rest of her seed' are an 'end-time remnant' that appears in history after AD 1798, keeps the seventh-day Sabbath and possesses the prophetic gift.

This study has two aims: (1) to undertake an objective contextual examination of the identity of 'the rest of her seed'; and (2) to evaluate the assertion made by Seventh-day Adventists that their movement is to be identified with 'the rest of her seed'.

In Chapter One the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding of 'the rest of her seed is examined and the four theological premises upon which the Seventh-day Adventist Church has made its assertion are identified and articulated.

In Chapter Two consideration is given to five key contextual features that make possible a sound identification of 'the rest of her seed'. It is argued that 'the rest of her seed' are believers from the entire Christian era who are faithful to the Old and New Testament Scriptures, identified elsewhere in Revelation as 'the saints.'

In Chapter Three the four theological premises upon which the Seventh-day Adventist Church has made its assertion are examined. It is shown that these premises are not supported by the context, and therefore that 'the rest of her seed' in Revelation 12:17 cannot be limited in its meaning to a reference to the Seventh-day Adventist movement.

This study concludes with a discussion of the implications of these conclusions for both Seventh-day Adventist self-understanding, and the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Revelation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT **3**

INTRODUCTION **6**

Purpose of the Study **6**

Outline of the Study **7**

Limitations of the Study **8**

The Remnant 8
The 1260 Days 8
Ellen G White's Prophetic Gift 9

METHODOLOGY **10**

CHAPTER ONE—THE TRADITIONAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST UNDERSTANDING OF 'THE REST OF HER SEED' **12**

Historical Development of the Traditional Seventh-day Adventist Understanding **12**

Early Seventh-day Adventist Pioneers 12
Uriah Smith 13
SDA Bible Commentary and *Questions on Doctrine* 14
The Statement of Fundamental Beliefs 15
The Daniel and Revelation Committee (DARCOM) and the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) 16
Summary 19

Theological Basis for the Traditional Seventh-day Adventist Understanding **20**

The Term Λοιπός Evokes the Old Testament Concept of a Saved 'Remnant' 23
The 'Rest of Her Seed' Appear in History After the 1260 Day Period 26
The 'Commandments of God' Identify This Group as a Sabbath Keeping People 28
The 'Testimony of Jesus' is a Reference to the Prophetic Gift 28

Summary **31**

CHAPTER TWO—A CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF 'THE REST OF HER SEED' **34**

Revelation 12:17–18 34
Translation & Textual Consideration 35
Literary Context 35
Structure of Revelation 12 37

Identifying 'The Rest of Her Seed' **38**

The Identity of the Woman 39
The Identity of Her Seed 41
The Identity of the Rest of Her Seed 42

1. They are Children of the Woman and Siblings of the Male Child **42**

Who is My mother and who are My brothers? 43

2. They are Distinguished From the Male Child by the Term Λοιπός **45**

Λοιπός in the New Testament 45
Λοιπός in Revelation 46
Λοιπός in Revelation 12:17 49

3. They Keep the Commandments of God and Hold Fast to the Testimony of Jesus. 51

The Commandments of God 55
The Word of God 58
The Testimony of Jesus 59
The Faith of Jesus 60

4. They Parallel 'The Saints' of Revelation 13:7 65

Revelation 13:7 is Linked Verbally to 12:17 66
Daniel 7 Links Revelation 13:7 with Revelation 12:17 67

5. They are Attacked During the 1260 Days that the Woman is in the Wilderness 69

The Dragon's War in Relation to the Verses Preceding Revelation 12:17 69
The Dragon's War in Relation to the Verses that Follow Revelation 12:17 71

Summary 72

Conclusion 74

CHAPTER THREE—EVALUATING THE TRADITIONAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST UNDERSTANDING OF 'THE REST OF HER SEED' 76

The Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Revelation 12:17 76

The Basis for the Seventh-day Adventist Assertion 76

Does Λοιπός Evoke the Old Testament Concept of a Saved 'Remnant'? 77

An Appeal to Syntax 78
An Appeal to Context 80
Summary 81

Do The 'Rest of Her Seed' Appear in History After the 1260 Days? 82

Revelation 12:17 in its Narrative Context 82
Summary 83

Do The 'Commandments of God' Identify This Group as Sabbath Keepers? 83

The Old Testament as a Whole 84
Summary 84

Is The 'Testimony of Jesus' a Reference to Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift? 85

Is The Testimony of Jesus the 'Spirit of Prophecy'? 85
Who are John's brothers? 86
The Spirit of the Prophecy 87
Keeping the Words of this Book 92
John's Visionary Experience? 92
Summary 94

Conclusion 94

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS 100

Implications and Suggestions for Further Research 101

Seventh-day Adventist Self-Understanding 101
Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Revelation 102

REFERENCES 104

INTRODUCTION

The central text for Seventh-day Adventist self-understanding is Revelation 12:17: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (KJV). From their inception, Seventh-day Adventists have found in this verse a description of their identity as God's end-time remnant people.[1]

Early Seventh-day Adventists were convinced that their movement was the one referred to in Rev 12:17—the "remnant of her seed", that is, "the church of the last days called by God to fulfill a special mission."[2] This identification was based on the understanding that 'the remnant' referred to here is a specifically 'end-time' movement that appears in history after AD 1798, keeps the seventh-day Sabbath and possesses the prophetic gift. Official Seventh-day Adventist publications continue to identify τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς ('the rest of her seed') of Revelation 12:17 with the Seventh-day Adventist Church on the basis of this understanding.

Purpose of the Study

The present study seeks to evaluate the Seventh-day Adventist assertion that their movement is the one designated in 12:17 as 'the remnant'. In order to make such an evaluation, this study will first examine the historical development of the

[1] Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, "God's End-Time Remnant and Charges of Exclusivism and Triumphalism," *Reflections - The BRI Newsletter*, April 2009, 3; Frank M. Hasel, "The Remnant in Contemporary Adventist Theology," in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiological Perspective*, ed. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 160–163; Gerhard Pfandl, "The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy," in *Symposium on Revelation-Book II*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 323–325.

[2] Pfandl, "The Remnant Church," 323.

traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding and then identify the theological premises that undergird it. A thorough contextual study of the phrase τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς ('the rest of her seed') will then be undertaken, drawing on OT imagery as well as on the NT and the immediate context in the book of Revelation, from which an evaluation of these theological premises will be made.

Outline of the Study

In Chapter One consideration will be given to the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the identity of 'the rest of her seed' in Revelation 12:17. The development of the traditional understanding will be traced from the time that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was established through to the present day. Attention will be given to the methods and assumptions that have historically been used by Seventh-day Adventists to arrive at this understanding. Consideration will also be given to the methods and rationale applied by contemporary Seventh-day Adventist scholars who currently advocate for the traditional understanding. The basic theological premises that form the foundation of the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding will then be identified and articulated so that a careful evaluation can be undertaken in the following chapters.

Chapter Two will present a thorough contextual study of the phrase τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς ('the rest of her seed') as it occurs in Revelation 12:17. The identity of the woman and her child will first be established, before giving consideration to key contextual features that enable an identification of 'the rest of her seed.' These contextual features will be examined by giving attention to the relevant OT background, the broader NT context, and specifically the immediate context in the book of Revelation.

Chapter Three will present an evaluation of the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the phrase τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς ('the rest of her seed') in light of the conclusions reached in Chapter Two. A discussion of the implications of this evaluation will conclude the study.

Limitations of the Study

Several views exist among contemporary Seventh-day Adventist theologians about the identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς ('the rest of her seed'), referred to typically as 'the remnant'. It is not the purpose of this study to provide a survey of these various views, or to address them in any way. The focus of this study is on the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding, as presented in the official and semi-official denominational publications.

The Remnant

It should be noted that it is not the purpose of this study to seek to determine whether or not the claim made by the Seventh-day Adventist Church that it is 'the remnant church' is a valid claim in an absolute sense. That claim may be able to be established from other passages. The purpose of this study is to identify those designated τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in 12:17 and to evaluate the claims that Seventh-day Adventists have made in applying to themselves the characteristics of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς found in this verse.

The 1260 Days

In giving consideration to the historical timing of the event of 12:17, it is also not the purpose of this study to evaluate the Seventh-day Adventist position that the 1260-day period should be understood to symbolize a literal period of 1260 years

reaching from AD 538 through to AD 1798. Nor has it been its purpose to consider any alternative interpretation of this time period. Whether this time period is literal, symbolic of 1260 years, or a figurative representation of an unspecified time period is not the point of this study. The discussion in this study will focus solely on the relationship between the event of 12:17 and the 1260 days of 12:6 and 12:14. The goal is to determine how the dragon's attack on τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς relates to that 1260-day period.

Ellen G White's Prophetic Gift

It should be added that it is also not the purpose of this study to evaluate the ministry of Ellen G. White, nor to determine whether or not hers was a genuine manifestation of the prophetic gift. With regard to the ministry of Ellen G. White, the purpose of this study is to determine whether or not the phrase 'testimony of Jesus' in 12:17 is a reference to the prophetic gift that is understood by Seventh-day Adventists to have been manifested in her life.

METHODOLOGY

The method used in this study assumes the well-established Protestant principle that the Bible is its own interpreter. This principle, along with the Protestant grammatical-historical method and the historicist-premillennial school of prophetic interpretation, provided the framework within which William Miller and subsequent Sabbatarian Adventists studied the Scriptures.[3] Early Seventh-day Adventists, it seems, did not set about to intentionally formulate their own systematic hermeneutic by which scripture interpretations were arrived at, but certain principles were assumed or carried over from both their Millerite and Protestant denominational heritage.[4] These principles became evident as doctrines were adopted and defended and have been articulated elsewhere.[5]

It is not the purpose of this study to critique Seventh-day Adventist hermeneutics, or the specific methodology that led to the traditional understanding of Revelation 12:17. Rather, the intention is to conduct a basic exegesis of the passage in question, from which an evaluation can be made of the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding itself.

To that end, this study will first examine the historical development of the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding and then identify the theological

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[3] Alberto R. Timm, "Historical Background of Adventist Biblical Interpretation," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid, vol. 1, Biblical Research Institute Studies (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 5. For Miller's rules of interpretation, see Kai Arasola, *The End of Historicism: Millerite Hermeneutic of Time Prophecies in the Old Testament* (Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 1990), 50–53.

[4] Don F. Neufeld, "Biblical Interpretation in the Advent Movement," in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Committee, 1974), 117.

[5] C. Mervyn Maxwell, "A Brief History of Adventist Hermeneutics," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 4, no. 2 (Autumn 1993): 209–226; Neufeld, "Biblical Interpretation," 117–121; Timm, "Understanding Scripture," 5–12.

premises that undergird it. A contextual study of the phrase τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς as it occurs in Revelation 12:17 will then be undertaken, beginning with a consideration of any significant translation and textual issues. This will be followed by a consideration of the wider literary context in which this phrase occurs, including a brief overview of the structure of Revelation 12 and an introduction to the characters that feature in verse 17—the dragon, the woman, and her seed. Of these, it is the identity of the woman and her seed that will be examined most fully in order to establish a sound basis for seeking to accomplish the primary objective—that of identifying τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in Revelation 12:17.

Once the identity of the woman and her seed have been established, attention will be given to the contextual features that identify τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς. These features will be examined one by one, giving specific attention to the meaning of key words, to syntactical relationships, to the literary form and structure of the passage and its immediate context, and to the literary parallels that serve to clarify the meaning of the expressions in the passage being studied.

With the exegetical process completed, the study will conclude by evaluating the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in light of the conclusions reached through the process outlined above. This evaluation will consist of an examination of the theological premises that undergird the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding as identified earlier in the study.

A brief presentation of the implications of this study for the traditional Seventh-day Adventist position and some suggestions for further research are made in closing.

CHAPTER ONE—THE TRADITIONAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST UNDERSTANDING OF 'THE REST OF HER SEED'

Historical Development of the Traditional Seventh-day Adventist Understanding

Early Seventh-day Adventist Pioneers

Early Seventh-day Adventists were convinced that their movement was the one referred to in Rev 12:17—the "remnant of her seed" (KJV), "the church of the last days called by God to fulfill a special mission."[6] As early as 1849, Joseph Bates, who would go on to become one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, used Rev 12:17 to describe Adventists as the remnant.[7] In 1874, eleven years after the Seventh-day Adventist Church was formally established, G. I. Butler, General Conference president from 1871 to 1888, commented on Rev 12:17 in an article entitled "Visions and Prophecy":

> Is there then no people in whom these conditions combine in these last days? We believe they truly do in Seventh-day Adventists. They have everywhere claimed to be the "remnant" church for the last twenty-five years . . . Do they keep the commandments of God? Every one knowing anything about this people can answer that this is the most important part of their faith . . . In regard to the spirit of prophecy, it is a remarkable fact that from the first of their existence as a people, S. D. Adventists have claimed that it has been in active exercise among them.[8]

Less than a decade later, in 1883, W. H. Littlejohn wrote in *Review and Herald*:

> Be it known, therefore, that S. D. Adventists claim to be the ones whom John saw in vision, and whom he styled the "remnant who keep the commandments

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[6] Pfandl, "The Remnant Church," 323.

[7] Joseph Bates, *A Seal of the Living God. A Hundred Forty Four Thousand of the Servants of God Being Sealed* (New Bedford, MA: by the author, 1849), 45–46.

[8] George I. Butler, "Visions and Prophecy," *Review and Herald*, June 2, 1874, 193.

> of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ"… As it regards the two prominent points of the faith of the remnant church spoken by John, it is well known that S. D. Adventists claim to hold and practice both of them. These points are, first, the keeping of the commandments of God, and, secondly, the having or possessing of the testimony of Jesus Christ.[9]

Uriah Smith

Of all the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it was Uriah Smith who was to become recognised as one of the Church's leading authorities on the book of Revelation. In 1873 he published *Thoughts on Revelation* and in 1881 this was reprinted in combination with his earlier work, *Thoughts on Daniel*, as *Thoughts Critical and Practical on Daniel and the Revelation.* A second edition of this later work was published in 1892, in which Smith states with regard to Revelation 12:17:

> Verse 17 brings to view another and a final outburst of his wrath, this time against the last generation of Christians to live on the earth. We say last generation; for the war of the dragon is directed against the remnant of the woman's seed; that is, the remnant of the seed, or individuals, that constitute the true church; and no generation but the last can truthfully be represented by the remnant. . . . This remnant is characterized by the observance of the commandments of God, and having the testimony of Jesus Christ. This points to a Sabbath reform to be accomplished in the last days. . .[10]

Here he does not explicitly identify the Seventh-day Adventist Church as the remnant of 12:17, but the implication is clear. Three years later in his book *Synopsis of the Present Truth* he refers to Rev 12:17 and then comments:

> By the woman we are to understand the church; by her seed, the members of the church throughout this dispensation. Therefore the remnant of her seed can refer to only one body of people, the last generation of Christians upon the earth. These are characterized by keeping the commandments of God, and having the testimony of Jesus Christ. In Rev 19:10 we have the definition of what is here called 'the testimony of Jesus Christ.' Said the angel to John, 'the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.' This the reader will at once recognize as one of the gifts in the church. . . . That the gift of prophecy is

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[9] W. H. Littlejohn, "Seventh-Day Adventists and the Testimony of Jesus Christ," *Review and Herald*, August 14, 1883, 14.

[10] Uriah Smith, *Thoughts Critical and Practical on the Books of Daniel and the Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Co., 1892), 530–531.

> manifested, according to the Scriptures, in connection with the third angel's message, we refer the reader to works published at the *Review and Herald* office, entitled the 'Spirit of Prophecy' and the 'Testimony to the Church.'[11]

Again, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not mentioned explicitly, but it is clear that Smith understands it to be the fulfillment of this verse—a conclusion which is stated explicitly in a sermon delivered to the 1891 General Conference:

> In Revelation 12:17 is found language with which you are all familiar: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." As "the woman" is a symbol of the church, the seed of the woman is the number of believers in any generation, and "the remnant of her seed" means of course the last generation of the church. Here is a positive prophecy that the last church will be characterized by this special feature, they will have the testimony of Jesus Christ. But what is the testimony of Jesus Christ? Revelation 19:10: "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." . . . We believe that we are fulfilling this scripture; that we have reached this time.[12]

This identification of the "remnant" of Rev 12:17 with the Seventh-day Adventist Church can also be found in the writings of many of the other pioneers,[13] but these few examples are typical of the early Seventh-day Adventist understanding "that they were the last group of God's chosen people prior to the coming of Christ, and that they alone were complying with the conditions specified in Rev 12:17."[14]

SDA Bible Commentary **and** ***Questions on Doctrine***

This self-understanding has been perpetuated by Seventh-day Adventist thought-leaders in various publications throughout the denomination's history up to

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[11] Uriah Smith, *Synopsis of the Present Truth* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1884), 302–303.

[12] Uriah Smith, "The Spirit of Prophecy and Our Relation to It," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, March 18, 1891, 150.

[13] Hasel, "The Remnant," 162.

[14] Don F. Neufeld, ed., "Remnant Church," in *Seventh-Day Adventist Encyclopedia M-Z*, 2nd rev. ed., Commentary Reference Series Volume 11 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996), 435.

the present.[15] For example, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, first published in 1953, states with regard to Rev 12:17:

> From the very first, Seventh-day Adventists have . . . humbly believed their movement to be the one here designated as the 'remnant.' No other religious body . . . meets the specifications laid down in ch. 12:17. Hence none other has a valid, scriptural basis for claiming to be '*the* remnant' of v. 17.[16]

In 1957 the book *Questions on Doctrine* was published b the Seventh-day Adventist Church to help explain Adventism to conservative Protestants and Evangelicals. In this book it was also clearly stated: "We believe that the prophecy of Revelation 12:17 points to the experience and work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church."[17]

The Statement of Fundamental Beliefs

This understanding was formally articulated most recently in 1980 in what is now article no. 13 of the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church:

> **13. Remnant and Its Mission**: The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this

[15] Hasel, "The Remnant," 162.

[16] Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 2nd ed., vol. 7, Commentary Reference Series (Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 815.

[17] *Seventh-Day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), 187.

worldwide witness. (Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jude 3, 14; 1 Peter 1:16-19; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Rev. 21:1-14.)[18]

In explaining this statement, the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe…: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (first published in 1988 and revised in 2005) states that "Revelation 12:17 contains a description of the last remnant in God's chosen line of loyal believers—His loyal witnesses in the last days before Christ's second coming."[19] In answer to the question "What are the remnant's characteristics?" it is stated that the remnant appears "after the 1260 years of persecution" and is characterized by keeping 'the faith of Jesus' (Rev 14:12), keeping 'the commandments of God' (Rev 12:17 & 14:12), and having 'the testimony of Jesus' (Rev 12:17).[20] Their identity is also closely connected with their mission—the proclamation of the three angel's messages of Revelation 14:6–12. While it is not stated explicitly that the 'remnant' of Rev 12:17 is to be identified with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is clear from the context that this is understood.[21]

The Daniel and Revelation Committee (DARCOM) and the Biblical Research Institute (BRI)

In 1981 the Daniel and Revelation Committee was formed by the Church's General Conference Committee for the purpose of addressing the challenges coming from Desmond Ford and from preterist/higher-critical perspectives to the church's interpretation of Daniel, Leviticus, and Hebrews. After a decade of ongoing study, this Daniel and Revelation Committee eventually published through the SDA Biblical

[18] "The Remnant and Its Mission," in *Seventh-Day Adventists Believe …: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 181.

[19] Ibid., 190.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 190–192.

Research Institute[22] a series of seven volumes known as the DARCOM Series. Having focused on issues in Daniel, Leviticus, and Hebrews in the first five books, the committee turned its attention to matters pertaining to the book of Revelation, and in 1992, published the *Symposium on Revelation—Books I & II* as volumes 6 and 7 in the Series. This two-book symposium included an article by Gerhard Pfandl, entitled 'The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy', that specifically addressed the Church's understanding of Rev 12:17.[23] In this article Pfandl recognised that "Revelation 12:17 has always been important to the self-understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist people. The church identifies itself with 'the remnant' who 'keep the commandments of God' and who have the testimony of Jesus Christ."[24] He further affirmed that "Seventh-day Adventists from their very inception have seen themselves as the fulfillment of this prophecy. They have claimed the two identifying marks and applied them to the Ten Commandments—in particular to the Sabbath—and to the life and work of Ellen G. White."[25]

The latest installment from the Biblical Research Institute, published in 2009 and entitled *Toward a Theology of the Remnant*, continues to support and reinforce this position.[26] This book contains articles by a number of prominent SDA scholars, one of which is an article by Richard P. Lehmann entitled "The Remnant in the Book

[22] The Biblical Research Institute was established as a service department by action of the Church's General Conference Committee in 1975 for the purpose of promoting the study and practice of Adventist theology and lifestyle.

[23] Pfandl, "The Remnant Church."

[24] Ibid., 295.

[25] Ibid., 327.

[26] Angel M. Rodriguez, ed., *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiological Perspective*, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009).

of Revelation."[27] In this article Lehmann examines the characteristics of 'the remnant' in Revelation 12 and acknowledges that "since its beginning, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has perceived itself to be the remnant."[28] In the light of his examination he affirms this self-understanding and goes on to state that "today there is an eschatological remnant" and that "nothing allows us to escape the notion that the remnant is a visible, identifiable, ecclesiastical entity."[29] His conclusion that "the Seventh-day Adventist Church can be identified with that remnant"[30] is clearly stated.

In the same book Frank M. Hasel addresses the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Rev 12:17 in "The Remnant in Contemporary Adventist Theology."[31] Before discussing contemporary Seventh-day Adventist thinking on the remnant, Hasel surveys the self-understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from its historic beginnings and, like Lehmann, he acknowledges that "from early in their history, Adventists called themselves 'the remnant' without hesitation and had no reservations in identifying the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the remnant of end-time Bible prophecy."[32] He then notes how in some circles the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the remnant has broadened in recent years to include other Christians—and in some cases even non-Christians—in an invisible entity. This is a trend that Hasel rejects, because of his to understanding that the end-time remnant is

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[27] Richard P. Lehmann, "The Remnant in the Book of Revelation," in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiological Perspective*, ed. Angel M. Rodriguez, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 85–112.

[28] Ibid., 108.

[29] Ibid., 111.

[30] Ibid., 112.

[31] Hasel, "The Remnant."

[32] Ibid., 162.

"a visible entity that can be joined by all those who are willing to be faithful to all of God's commandments and to His leading."[33] Nevertheless, the position he takes is that "even though Adventists apply Rev 12:17 to themselves, this does not imply in any way that we believe we are the only true Christians in the world, or that we are the only ones who will be saved."[34]

In his concluding essay, Ángel Rodríguez reiterates what has been stated throughout the book, namely, that the "biblical characteristics of the remnant are also characteristics of the Adventist movement."[35] He also affirms Hasel's conclusion, noting that "the fact that it possesses certain characteristics means that *the remnant is a visible entity.*"[36] In summary, Rodríguez states:

> We can conclude that the remnant in Revelation is fundamentally an end-time entity that appears on the scene of human history sometime after 1798. Adventists have found in that remnant their self-identity and mission. They argue that the historical moment indicated in Rev 12 coincides with the moment when the Adventist movement was raised. They also argue that the characteristics of the remnant mentioned in Revelation apply in a particular way to the life and message of the Adventist movement, and they believe that the mission of the remnant described in Revelation is being fulfilled by them.[37]

Summary

It has been shown that early Seventh-day Adventists were convinced that their movement was the one referred to in Rev 12:17 as "the remnant of her seed" (KJV). Their conclusion was based on the understanding that 'the remnant' referred to here is

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[33] Ibid., 178.

[34] Ibid., 173.

[35] Angel Manuel Rodriguez, "Concluding Essay: God's End-Time Remnant and the Christian Church," in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiological Perspective*, ed. Angel Manuel Rodriguez, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 210.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., 216.

a specifically 'end-time' movement that appears in history after AD 1798, keeps the seventh-day Sabbath and possesses the prophetic gift. It has also been shown that official Seventh-day Adventist publications throughout the denomination's history have continued to identify τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς ('the rest of her seed') of Revelation 12:17 with the Seventh-day Adventist Church using essentially the same reasoning as that employed by the early Seventh-day Adventist pioneers. This reasoning and the theological premises that arise from it form the basis for the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς ('the rest of her seed') of Revelation 12:17. This theological basis will be explored next.

Theological Basis for the Traditional Seventh-day Adventist Understanding

The Seventh-day Adventist Church identifies itself with 'the remnant' of Rev 12:17 who "keep the commandments of God" and who "have the testimony of Jesus" on the basis of several theological premises. The first of these is that the use of the term λοιπός in 12:17 does not simply mean 'the others,' but reflects the Old Testament concept of a saved 'remnant'—"a portion of a community which is left after a devastating calamity."[38] This is the underlying premise that is at the heart of the Seventh-day Adventist understanding.

Since Seventh-day Adventists have concluded that the term λοιπός is to be understood as 'remnant' with all of the OT connotations associated with that concept, their second premise forms a logical progression. This second premise claims that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς are not Christians in general, living throughout the

[38] Pfandl, "The Remnant Church," 297.

Christian era, but rather that they are specifically an end-time group of believers who appear in history after the 1260-day period of Revelation 12:6 has come to an end.

In order to appreciate the position that Seventh-day Adventists take in regard to the time sequence in this passage, it needs to be understood that the 1260-day period is understood symbolically by Seventh-day Adventists to represent a period of 1260 years, reaching from 538 AD through to 1798 AD. This period of history, which includes the years known as the Dark Ages, is recognised by Seventh-day Adventists as a time of hardship and oppression for the faithful people of God. It is this historical period that Seventh-day Adventists see as being the fulfillment of that particular aspect of the prophecy in which the woman (i.e. the True Church) is protected from the dragon for 1260 days. Since the account of dragon's war against the 'rest of her seed' in 12:17 follows after the account of the 1260 days in John's outline of events, it is assumed by Seventh-day Adventists that the 'remnant' are therefore a group who come into existence after 1798. Gerhard Pfandl, a former associate director of the Biblical Research Institute (a department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists) and contributor to the *Symposium on Revelation*, has put it this way: "The fact that the war against the remnant is mentioned after the 1260-year persecution of the woman, indicates that the war on the remnant is carried out after that earlier era has expired. The remnant, therefore, refers to those who are living after 1798, the date the prophetic 1260 days came to an end."[39] In his recent article "The End Time Remnant in Revelation", Ekkehardt Mueller, who is currently the deputy director of the Biblical Research Institute, likewise argues that this remnant pertains to the period of time after 1798 A.D. and prior to the return of Christ: "The remnant of 12:17 is therefore an end time group of

[39] Ibid., 302.

believers, the last descendants of the faithful church of Jesus throughout the centuries of church history."[40]

From the conclusion that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in 12:17 are faithful believers in the time of the end, both Mueller and Pfandl recognise that these end-time believers are further identified by two characteristics: (1) they keep the commandments of God, and (2) they have the testimony of Jesus. Their understanding of these two identifying characteristics is representative of the traditional Seventh-day Adventist position. Mueller notes that the remnant in 12:17 are characterised firstly by keeping the commandments of God, which "includes the keeping of the biblical Sabbath anchored in the fourth commandment,"[41] and by having the testimony of Jesus, which, "according to 19:10 . . . is the 'spirit of prophecy,' the Holy Spirit that speaks through the gift of prophecy."[42] Thus, according to Mueller, the end-time believers are identified as a Sabbath-keeping people who are also in possession of the prophetic gift.

Gerhard Pfandl has similarly articulated the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the principle characteristics of the remnant of 12:17: "Seventh-day Adventists from their very inception have seen themselves as the fulfillment of this prophecy. They have claimed the two identifying marks and applied them to the Ten Commandments—in particular to the Sabbath—and to the life and work of Ellen G. White."[43]

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[40] Ekkehardt Mueller, "The End Time Remnant in Revelation," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 11 (Spring 2000): 202.

[41] Ibid., 200.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Pfandl, "The Remnant Church," 327.

The traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding of "the specifications laid down in ch. 12:17"[44] can be summarised as follows:

1. The term λοιπός in 12:17 evokes the Old Testament concept of a saved 'remnant'.
2. The 'remnant' are an end-time group of believers who appear in history after the 1260 day period of 12:6 has come to an end.
3. The phrase 'commandments of God' refers to the Ten Commandments and therefore identifies this group of believers as a Sabbath keeping people.
4. The phrase 'testimony of Jesus' is defined in Revelation 19:10 as the spirit of prophecy, and is therefore a reference to the prophetic gift that was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White.

In what follows these four claims will be examined in order.

The Term Λοιπός Evokes the Old Testament Concept of a Saved 'Remnant'

The term λοιπός in 12:17 is understood by Seventh-day Adventists to reflect the Old Testament concept of a saved 'remnant,'—"a portion of a community which is left after a devastating calamity"[45]—thus serving to designate this group as an end-time body of believers. Interestingly, it seems that throughout most of Adventist history no attempt has been made to demonstrate exegetically that λοιπός in Revelation 12:17 should be understood as 'remnant'—rather it appears to have simply been assumed that this is the case. In recent years however, we have seen the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding of λοιπός in Revelation 12:17 defended on the basis of two things—syntax and context.

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[44] Nichol, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, 7:815.

[45] Pfandl, "The Remnant Church," 297.

An Appeal to Syntax

The appeal to syntax has been presented by Leslie Pollard in what is the most thorough study of the term λοιπός in the Seventh-day Adventist context that has been recently conducted.[46] In his 2007 doctoral dissertation, "The Function of 'Loipos' in Contexts of Judgment and Salvation in the Book of Revelation", Pollard does not focus on Revelation 12:17 exclusively, but does address the use of λοιπός in that verse.

In discussing the function of λοιπός in Revelation 12:17, Pollard acknowledges that a significant number of scholars believe that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in this verse represent all believers. He notes that they identify the woman's primary seed as Christ and the 'rest' of her seed as the other siblings who are representative of all believers throughout history.[47] Pollard then seeks to counter this by appealing to syntax. He claims that the phrase τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς constitutes a partitive ablative, and therefore "the remnant is not the whole, but a portion of the whole,"[48] that is to say, οἱ λοιποὶ cannot include all believers, but only some of them. This he presents as gramatical support for the conclusion that he has reached earlier in his study, that "the remnant are contiguous with the faithful church, but not to be identified with the church throughout history."[49] Rather, "they are the followers of Christ living in the last period of this earth's history."[50]

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[46] Leslie N. Pollard, "The Function of 'Loipos' in Contexts of Judgment and Salvation in the Book of Revelation" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2007).

[47] Ibid., 372.

[48] Ibid., 373.

[49] Ibid., 371.

[50] Ibid., 368–369.

An Appeal to Context

While Leslie Pollard has appealed to syntax in his defense of the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding of λοιπός in Rev 12:17, Richard Lehmann has appealed to context: "Only the context makes it possible to distinguish an eschatological remnant from the church of which it is a part."[51] This statement is Lehmann's conclusion to his discussion of the use of λοιπός in Revelation. He notes first that "the most common usage of the noun refers to 'the others'" before suggesting that "it could be used to convey the idea of a remnant."[52] After referencing the eight occurrences of λοιπός in Revelation he returns to 12:17 and quotes Mueller: "The last text reference is of special importance, since the remnant is not confined to a local setting (3:2; 2:24) but rather is the universal remnant, namely the remnant of the overall church."[53] The underlying premise for both Mueller and Lehmann is clear—the σπέρμα of the woman must stand for the "overall church," while the λοιποὶ are the eschatological 'remnant' of that church. It is worth noting at this point that this understanding is essentially the same as that articulated by Uriah Smith many years prior and included in the Introduction to this study—that while the woman is a symbol of the true church, the 'seed' of the woman are the individuals that constitute the true church, and therefore the 'remnant' are "the last generation of Christians upon the earth."[54] It is evidently in this way that 'the rest of her seed' are understood to reflect the OT concept of a saved remnant.

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[51] Lehmann, "The Remnant," 88.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Mueller, "Remnant," 189.

[54] Smith, *Synopsis of the Present Truth*, 302.

The 'Rest of Her Seed' Appear in History After the 1260 Day Period

The second premise underlying the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding of 'the rest of her seed' is that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς are an end-time group of believers who appear in history after the 1260-day period of Revelation 12:6 has come to an end. This comment by Pfandl regarding the the identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς encapsulates the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding:

> These children are not to be identified as Christians in general, living throughout the Christian Era. The fact that the war against the remnant is mentioned after the 1260-year persecution of the woman, indicates that the war on the remnant is carried on after that earlier era has expired. The remnant, therefore, refers to those who are living after 1798, the date the prophetic 1260 days came to an end.[55]

William Shea is another contemporary Seventh-day Adventist scholar who places the dragon's war on τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς after the close of the 1260-day time period: "The final verse of the chapter, verse 17, refers to the third and final phase of conflict between the dragon and the woman. In this case, at the end of the 1260 days, it is the remnant of her seed or offspring with which the dragon aims at making war."[56] Ekkehardt Mueller comes to a similar conclusion about the timing of the war of 12:17: "As soon as Jesus is out of his reach, he [i.e., the dragon] focuses on the church for 1260 days. After that Satan turns his attention to the remnant of her offspring."[57]

The basis for this thinking is the view that Revelation 12 contains three distinct periods of world history: "the time of the early Christian church, the medieval

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[55] Pfandl, "The Remnant Church," 302.

[56] William Shea, "Time Prophecies of Daniel 12 and Revelation 12-13," in *Symposium on Revelation-Book I*, ed. Frank B Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 348.

[57] Mueller, "Remnant," 196.

ages, and the end time leading up to the second coming of Jesus Christ."[58] Pfandl references Mueller's explanation of the time frame in Revelation 12[59], which outlines the conflict as follows:

(1) Early conflict between the dragon and the woman (12:1-5)
(2) Medieval conflict between the dragon and the woman (12:6)
(3) Conflict between Michael and the dragon in heaven (12:7-12)
(4) Medieval conflict between the dragon and the woman (continued)(12:13-16)
(5) End time conflict between the dragon and the woman (12:17)[60]

The "early conflict" between the dragon and the woman is characterised by the dragon's attempt to devour the woman's child—"Satan fights God's church by turning against Jesus (12:1-5)."[61] The dragon's failure to destroy the Christ child motivates him to attack the woman: "As soon as Jesus is out of his reach, he focuses on the church itself for 1260 days."[62] This is the "medieval conflict" identified above. It is only after the 1260-day period, in Mueller's time frame, that the "end-time conflict" between the dragon and the woman takes place: "After that Satan turns his attention to the remnant of her offspring."[63] Thus Mueller's conclusion is that "Satan's warfare against the remnant therefore takes place in the last phase of world's history, which started with the 19th century..."[64]

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Gerhard Pfandl, "Identifying Marks of the End-Time Remnant in the Book of Revelation," in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiological Perspective*, ed. Angel M. Rodriguez, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 139.

[60] Mueller, "Remnant," 197.

[61] Ibid., 196.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid., 197.

It is significant that neither Pfandl, Shea or Mueller provides any exegetical support for their position—they seem to simply take it as obvious that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς are an end-time remnant that comes into existence after the 1260 days. The only rationale given is with regard to the order in which these events are mentioned in chapter 12. Even so, the order in which the events are mentioned is taken to be sufficient evidence that 'the rest of her seed' are a group of faithful believers who appear in history after the 1260-day period has come to an end.

The 'Commandments of God' Identify This Group as a Sabbath Keeping People

The third premise underlying the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς is that the first of the defining characteristics given in 12:17—τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ—refers to the Ten Commandments and therefore identifies this group as a Sabbath-keeping people.

The ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ, which constitute one half of the doublet in 12:17, are understood by Seventh-day Adventists to refer to the Ten Commandments,[65] with the expectation "that what will set the true followers of Christ apart from the rest of Christendom will be their adherence to the original fourth commandment."[66] The 'remnant' then, according to traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding, must be a Sabbath-keeping movement that appears in history after AD 1798.

The 'Testimony of Jesus' is a Reference to the Prophetic Gift

The fourth premise underlying the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς is that the second

[65] See, for example, Pfandl, "The Remnant Church," 314: "The first of these identifying marks refers to the Ten Commandments as God gave them on Sinai."

[66] Ibid., 303.

of the defining characteristics given in 12:17—τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ—is a reference to the prophetic gift that was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G White.

It is interesting to note that for several years early Seventh-day Adventists used the phrase "the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 12:17) as a synonym for "the faith of Jesus" found in Revelation 14:12.[67] However, as early as the 1850s a new interpretation began to emerge that linked "the testimony of Jesus" with the prophetic gift manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. This became the accepted understanding, in spite of the fact that Ellen White herself considered Revelation 12:17 and 14:12 to be parallel passages, and even equated "the testimony of Jesus" in 12:17 with "the faith of Jesus" in 14:12 in her writings.[68]

Since that time Seventh-day Adventists have interpreted τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ in Revelation 12:17 in light of Revelation 19:10, which states that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."[69] They have thus concluded that those who have the testimony of Jesus have, in fact, possession of the 'spirit of prophecy', which is understood as possession of the prophetic gift.[70] This prophetic gift, they believe, was manifested in their early history through the life and ministry of Ellen G. White (1827 -1915), and continues to be operative in the Church today through her

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[67] Hans K. LaRondelle, "The Remnant and the Three Angel's Messages," in *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, Commentary Reference Series Volume 12 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 886.

[68] Angel Manuel Rodriguez, "The 'Testimony of Jesus' in the Writings of Ellen G. White," in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiological Perspective*, ed. Angel Manuel Rodriguez, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 234. Significantly, Rodriguez goes on to acknowledge that "as far as I can ascertain, Ellen G. White never clearly or explicitly interpreted Rev 12:17 as pointing to her prophetic ministry within the remnant" (p. 242). He concludes that "she uses the phrase ['the testimony of Jesus'] primarily to designate the end product of that gift, namely Scripture, the message it contains, and the message of the book of Revelation" (p. 242).

[69] See, for example, Mueller, "Remnant," 200.

[70] Pfandl, "The Remnant Church," 322.

writings.[71] It is on this basis that they see themselves as the fulfillment of those in 12:17 who "have the testimony of Jesus."

The *SDA Bible Commentary* states with regard to Revelation 19:10:

> There the 'testimony of Jesus' is defined as the 'spirit of prophecy,' meaning that Jesus is witnessing to the church through the medium of prophecy. The close relationship between the 'testimony of Jesus' and prophecy is further demonstrated by a comparison between chs. 19:10 and 22:9. In ch. 19:10 the angel identifies himself as 'thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus,' and in ch. 22:9 as 'thy fellowservant , and of thy brethren the prophets.' Thus, on the reasonable conclusion that these two expressions of the angel are parallel those who have the testimony of Jesus are identified with the prophets. Since it is the distinctive work of the prophets to bear messages from Jesus to the people…, the interpretation that the testimony of Jesus refers to the 'testimony,' or 'witness' that Jesus bears to the church is strongly supported. Seventh-day Adventists thus interpret the passage and believe that the 'remnant' will be distinguished by the manifestation of the gift of prophecy in their midst. The 'testimony of Jesus Christ,' they believe, is the witness of Jesus in their midst through the medium of the prophetic gift.[72]

John's Visionary Experience?

A recent development in the defense of the traditional Seventh-day Adventist position (that the phrase τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ is a reference to the prophetic gift) has been to add a reference to Revelation 1:2 to supplement the traditional reference to Revelation 19:10 and 22:8–9. This trend is dependent on a reading of 1:2 that sees 'the testimony of Jesus' and the accompanying phrase 'all that he saw' (ὅσα εἶδεν) as references not to the content of the message delivered by Jesus, but rather to "John's visionary experience of Jesus."[73] Jon Paulien has explained it this way:

> The Greek of Rev 1:2 identifies "the testimony of Jesus" not as the Book of Revelation (called "the words of this prophecy" in verse 3) but as the visionary gift of John himself ("the testimony of Jesus, which he saw" [verse 2 – my translation]). A comparison of Rev 19:10 and 22:8–9 indicates that John

[71] Ibid., 295.

[72] Nichol, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, 7:812.

[73] See the note on Revelation 1:2 in the *Andrews Study Bible: Light. Depth. Truth* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2010), 1662, for an example of this trend.

> and his brethren "the prophets" share in "the testimony of Jesus." So when Rev 12:17 describes the remnant as "having the testimony of Jesus," the best explanation seems to be that the end-time remnant will have a visionary gift among them that is similar to John's.[74]

Here an appeal to Rev 1:2 in support of the claim that 'the testimony of Jesus' in Rev 12:17 is a reference to the prophetic gift is seen to strengthen the traditional Seventh-day Adventist view and provide further evidence that the 'remnant' will have the prophetic gift manifested in their midst.

Summary

Chapter One of this study has considered the way that Seventh-day Adventists historically have understood the identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς, specifically their understanding that their movement is the one designated in 12:17 as 'the rest of her seed' or 'the remnant.' This chapter has also identified the four theological premises that form the basis for this traditional Seventh-day Adventist assertion. These were articulated as follows:

1. The term λοιπός in 12:17 evokes the Old Testament concept of a saved 'remnant.'
2. The 'remnant' are an end-time group of believers who appear in history after the 1260-day period of 12:6 has come to an end.
3. The phrase 'commandments of God' refers to the Ten Commandments and therefore identifies this group of believers as a Sabbath keeping people.
4. The phrase 'testimony of Jesus' is defined in Revelation 19:10 as the spirit of prophecy, and is therefore a reference to the prophetic gift that was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White.

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[74] Jon Paulien, "The Best Is Yet to Come: A Vision for the Eschatological Remnant," Unpublished manuscript submitted for publication March 31, 2007: 3.

As these premises form the basis for the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς ('the rest of her seed') of Revelation 12:17, each of them was examined in order to identify and establish the reasoning and methodology behind them.

The first of these four premises states that the term λοιπός in 12:17 evokes the Old Testament concept of a saved 'remnant.' Leslie Pollard's recent defense of the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the function of λοιπός in 12:17 was reviewed. While acknowledging that a significant number of scholars believe that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in 12:17 represent all believers, Pollard defends the Seventh-day Adventist view by appealing to syntax. He claims that the phrase τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς constitutes a partitive ablative, and therefore cannot include all believers, but only a portion of the whole. Richard Lehmann's appeal to context to support the understanding of λοιπός as an eschatological remnant was also presented.

Attention was then given to the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς is an end-time group of believers who appear in history after the 1260-day period of 12:6 has come to an end. As the rationale given for this position by Seventh-day Adventist scholars was considered it became apparent that the only basis for this view is the order in which the events are mentioned in chapter 12.

The third of the four premises that form the basis for the traditional Seventh-day Adventist position is that τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ in 12:17 refer to the Ten Commandments and therefore identify τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς as a Sabbath-keeping people. It was seen that, according to traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding, the 'remnant' must be a Sabbath-keeping movement that

appears in history after AD 1798, with the expectation being that it will their adherence to the original fourth commandment that what will set the true followers of Christ apart from the rest of Christendom.

Attention was then turned to the fourth premise at the basis of the Seventh-day Adventist position—that the phrase τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ is defined in Revelation 19:10 as the spirit of prophecy, and is therefore a reference to the prophetic gift that was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. It was noted that (1) Revelation 19:10 seems to provide a ready definition of 'the testimony of Jesus' as the prophetic gift, lending support to the view that those who have the testimony of Jesus are in possession of the gift of prophecy, and (2) that a comparison of Revelation 19:10 with 22:9 seems to demonstrate that those who have the testimony of Jesus are to be identified as prophets, again supporting the conclusion that those who have the testimony of Jesus are in some way in possession of the prophetic gift.

A recent development in the defense of this position was also mentioned, namely, that 'the testimony of Jesus' in Revelation 1:2 should be considered to be a reference to John's visionary gift, thus supporting the claim that 'the testimony of Jesus' in Revelation 12:17 is a reference to the prophetic gift.

CHAPTER TWO—A CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF 'THE REST OF HER SEED'

The purpose of this chapter is to present a contextual study of the phrase τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς as it occurs in Revelation 12:17. This study begins with a consideration of any significant translation and textual issues, followed by a consideration of the wider literary context in which this phrase occurs. This includes a brief overview of the structure of Revelation 12 and an introduction to the characters that feature in verse 17—the dragon, the woman, and her seed. Of these, it is the identity of the woman and her seed that is examined most fully in order to establish a sound basis for seeking to accomplish the primary objective—that of identifying τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς.

Having established the identity of the woman and her seed, attention is given to five key contextual features that identify τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς. These features are examined one by one in order to determine who or what is being referred to as τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in Revelation 12:17. This chapter concludes with a summary of the findings from this examination.

Revelation 12:17–18

[ὁ δράκων]

καὶ ὠργίσθη …
ἐπὶ τῇ γυναικὶ

καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς
τῶν τηρούντων τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν
Ἰησοῦ.

καὶ ἐστάθη
ἐπὶ τὴν ἄμμον τῆς θαλάσσης.

Translation & Textual Consideration

[the dragon]
and …was enraged with the woman,
and went away to make war with the rest of her seed,
who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.
and he stood on the sand of the sea.

No significant textual problems affect the translation of 12:17. However, there is a significant variant in verse 18: ἐστάθην ("I stood" 1st sing. aor. pass.) in place of ἐστάθη ("he stood" 3rd sing. aor. pass.). The importance of this variant for the structure of Revelation is noted by David Aune.[75] He recognizes that ἐστάθη "must refer to the dragon and so concludes 11:19-12:17 by providing a transition to 13:1-18." On the other hand, ἐστάθην "must refer to John and can also be understood as introducing a new text unit in 12:18–13 :18."[76] While it is noted that manuscript evidence is divided, it is recognized that the manuscript evidence for ἐστάθη ("he stood") is earlier and better. It is therefore the position taken in this paper that ἐστάθη ("he stood") is most likely to be the correct reading, following as it does two other third-person singular verbs in verse 17, ὠργίσθη, "was enraged," and ἀπῆλθεν, "went." The subject of both verbs is explicitly the dragon, suggesting that the third verb in the sequence should also refer to the dragon.

Literary Context

The presence of a chiastic structure, favoured by a significant number of contemporary Seventh-day Adventist scholars, will not be assumed in this study. While there are obvious parallels between Revelation's prologue and epilogue,

[75] David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52b, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 716.

[76] Ibid.

elsewhere the connections are very subjective. Rather than being supported by the text, a chiastic structure may actually be an unhelpful imposition onto the text. The implications for exegesis are outlined by David A. deSilva, who states:

> There is a segment of scholarship that exhibits a penchant for hunting for, and celebrating the uncovering of, a previously hidden chiastic outline as if it were buried treasure. However, the results of this quest have time and again exhibited the dangers of preferring form to content, ingenuity to exegesis, misreading and misrepresenting biblical texts for the sake of establishing the presence of a (debatable) literary device. This, in turn, detracts from sound exegesis—or, at least, *dis*tracts us from the same. Scholars who have assumed 'chiasmus' to provide a potentially reliable map to any textual territory have too often seen what is not present in the text, failed to notice what *is* present in the text, and offered a structural lens that threatens to blur others' ability to read the text accurately.[77]

Again highlighting the danger in this approach, deSilva notes in the conclusion to his article "how the prior assumption of the presence of a chiasmus leads to the failure to read the text carefully, question assumptions in the history of interpretation, and to test the soundness of one's arguments."[78] It is for these reasons the presence of a chiastic structure will not be assumed in this study.

The structure proposed by Richard Bauckham presents a more natural outline of the book and has been adopted in this study.[79] Bauckham structures the book as follows:

1:1–8	Prologue
1:9–3:22	Inaugural vision of Christ and the churches including seven messages to the churches
4:1–5:14	Inaugural vision of heaven leading to three series of sevens and two intercalations:
6:1–8:1; 8:3–5	Seven seals
8:2; 8:6–11:19	Seven trumpets
12:1–14:20; 15:2–4	The story of God's people in conflict with evil

[77] David A. deSilva, "X Marks the Spot? A Critique of the Use of Chiasmus in Macro-Structural Analyses of Revelation," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30.3 (2008): 344.

[78] Ibid., 369.

[79] Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 21–22.

15:1; 15:5–16:21	Seven bowls
17:1–19:10	Babylon the harlot
19:11–21:8	Transition from Babylon to the New Jerusalem
21:9–22:9	New Jerusalem the bride
22:6–21	Epilogue

Revelation 12:17 is found in the section that Bauckham has labeled 'the story of God's people in conflict with evil.' This section includes chapters 12, 13, and 14, and concludes with the redeemed on the sea of glass in 15:2–4. Bauckham notes that "the main function of chapters 12–15 is to deal much more fully with the subject that was adumbrated in the two intercalations (7:1–17; 10:1–11:13): the people of God in their conflict with the forces opposed to God."[80]

Structure of Revelation 12

Structurally, Rev 12 constitutes one vision consisting of multiple parts.

1. The Characters of the Conflict (12:1–6)
2. The Conflict in Heaven (12:7–12)
3. The Conflict on Earth (12:13–17)

Revelation 12:1–4 introduces a pregnant woman who is about to give birth, and a great red dragon that stands before the woman, ready to devour her child as soon as it is born. The woman gives birth to a male child, who escapes the dragon's grasp and is caught up to God's throne (v. 5). The woman, who has now become the dragon's target, then flees into the wilderness where she is protected for 1260 days (v. 6).

Before the account of the persecution of the woman is resumed in 12:13 there is a brief reference to war in heaven, resulting in victory for Michael and his angels and the casting out of the dragon (Satan) and his angels to the earth. Heaven is invited to rejoice at this triumph, but the earth is warned of the devil's great wrath, which is due to his awareness of the fact that he now has only a short time.

[80] Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 17.

The account of the dragon's persecution of the woman, which began in 12:6, is resumed in 12:13: "when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he pursued (ἐδίωξεν) the woman who gave birth to the male child." The language indicates a sequence of events—the dragon's pursuit of the woman follows his realization that he has been thrown down to the earth. Presumably his intention is to devour the woman, having been unsuccessful in his attempt to devour her firstborn. In order to escape, the woman is given "the two wings of the great eagle," for the purpose of flying into the wilderness, where she finds refuge from the serpent for a period of "a time, times, and half a time." This verse clearly parallels verse 6 in that it also describes the flight of the woman into the wilderness, where she is protected from the dragon's attack. Here, though, the flight is described in terms that echo Israel's flight from Egypt (cf. Ex 19:4), and the same time period is given in the language of Daniel 7:25 and 12:7—"a time, times, and half a time" rather than 1260 days.

In the wilderness, the woman is out of the dragon's reach and therefore safe from his attacks. The dragon, though still "enraged at the woman," and having been unsuccessful in his attempts to destroy her or her firstborn, now turns his attention to τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς (Rev 12:17).

Identifying 'The Rest of Her Seed'

While the primary concern in this study is to determine the identity of this group designated τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς, in order to establish that identity it is first necessary to identify the woman and her firstborn.

The Identity of the Woman

To identify "the woman" spoken of in 12:17 it is important to recall 12:1 where she is first introduced. There she is described in terms of her appearance—"clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."

This combination of sun, moon, and stars is an allusion to Genesis 37:9, where Joseph recounts his dream of the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowing down to him.[81] That these symbols should be understood to represent Joseph's father (Jacob/Israel), his mother (Rachel), and his eleven brothers—the sons (later to become the tribes) of Israel, is evident from the next verse (v. 10).

The use of this imagery in Rev 12:1 indicates that "the woman" is to be understood firstly as a symbol of Israel—the OT people of God.[82] That the woman represents the people of God throughout redemptive history becomes evident as chapter 12 unfolds.[83] Gregory Beale concludes that "this woman is a picture of the faithful community," and he anticipates what is to follow, adding "both before and

[81] E. W. Bullinger, *The Apocalypse*, 2nd ed. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1909), 388, says, "This at once takes us back to Genesis xxxvii. It is the only scripture in the whole Bible where we have anything corresponding to this sign." See also Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 456.

[82] Osborne, *Revelation*, 456.

[83] Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, Rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1997), 232. With regard to the patristic interpretation of the woman in Rev 12, H. B Swete, *Commentary on Revelation* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1907), 148, notes that "the ancient expositors in general, beginning with Hyppolytus and Methodius, understood the Woman with child to represent the Church . . . the majority take the birth-pangs to symbolize the spiritual travail of the Church . . ." He continues with a poignant observation: "Doubtless the Church of the Old Testament was the Mother of whom Christ came after the flesh. But here, as everywhere in the Book, no sharp dividing line is drawn between the Church of the Old Testament and the Christian Society; the latter is viewed as the Jewish Church come to its maturity. Thus the woman who gave birth to the Christ is afterwards identified with her who after His departure suffered for her faith in Him (v. 13) and who is the mother of believers (v. 17, cf. Gal. iv. 27)."

after the coming of Christ."[84] J. A. Seiss also looks further ahead in the chapter to reach a similar conclusion: "And when we contemplate all the splendid particulars respecting this woman, how she is assailed by Satan, and the destiny of the offspring she bears, there is hardly any room left for doubt, that it is the collective body of the Church or people of God that we are to see in this picture."[85]

The second feature of her description is found in 12:2—"she was with child; and she cried out, being in labour and in pain to give birth." Furthermore, in verse 5, we are told that "she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to his throne." This imagery, too, is consistent with our identification of the woman as Israel or the people of God. Robert Mounce notes the fact that "the OT frequently pictured Israel as a woman in travail. Isaiah speaks of Israel in bondage as 'a woman with child and about to give birth [who] writhes and cries out in her pain' (Isa 26:17; cf. 66:7; Mic 4:10)."[86]

The imagery of the woman and her child in Revelation 12 is drawn from Isaiah 66:7–10, 22, "where Zion is referred to as a mother suffering labour pains and bearing a 'male.'"[87] While the child in Revelation 12:5 is not named, this can be none other than the Messiah,[88] indicating again that the woman must represent the faithful community out of whom the promised Messiah appears. And just as "the

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[84] G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 625.

[85] J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1964), 279.

[86] Mounce, *Revelation*, 232.

[87] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 677.

[88] The identification of the male child as the one who will "rule all the nations with a rod of iron" is a clear allusion to Psalm 2, which was an important messianic Psalm for early Christians. Cf. also Rev 19:15.

female figure of Zion is always explained in the OT as the many people of Israel (see . . . Isaiah 49:14–25; 50:1; 51:1–3, 16-20; Ezekiel 16; Hos. 4:4–5),"[89] so here in Revelation 12 the woman "represents the community of faith in both the Old and New Testament ages."[90]

The Identity of Her Seed

Having established the identity of the woman, we now turn our attention to the identity of "her seed". As David Aune points out, the phrase "her seed" is a very unusual expression, because seed is normally associated with a male progenitor.[91] The term σπέρμα (seed) occurs only here in Revelation and is almost certainly an allusion to Genesis 3:15 in which God addresses the serpent with these words: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed."[92] This is a passage that was understood in some circles of early Judaism and by early Christians to refer to the birth of the Messiah.[93] Thus the reference to "her seed" in 12:17 is linked to the male child of verses 5 and 13—the Messiah.[94] He is the woman's firstborn offspring.[95] The "rest of her seed" then, must be His siblings—the

[89] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 676–677.

[90] Ibid., 631.

[91] Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 708.

[92] Osborne, *Revelation*, 485; J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 153; G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St John the Divine*, 2nd ed., Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: A. & C. Black, 1984), 160.

[93] Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 708.

[94] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 677.

[95] Michaels, *Revelation*, 154.

'other' children of the woman.[96] Who are these other children? How are those designated "the rest of her seed" to be identified?

The Identity of the Rest of Her Seed

Both the context and the passage itself provide important information that makes possible a sound identification of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς. Having established the identity of the woman and her seed, attention will now be given to five key contextual features that identify τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς. The following five characteristics will be considered:

1. They are children of the woman and siblings of the male child;
2. They are distinguished from the male child by the term λοιπός;
3. They keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the testimony of Jesus;
4. They parallel "the saints" of 13:7;
5. They are attacked during the 1260 days that the woman is in the wilderness.

These features will be examined one by one in order to determine who or what is being referred to as τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in Revelation 12:17.

1. They are Children of the Woman and Siblings of the Male Child

It has been noted already that a study of the context shows that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς stands in relation to the "male child" who is also a seed of the woman (vs. 5). The relationship between the "male child"and τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς will be explored at length when the function of λοιπός is considered, but for now it is enough to note that the woman has other children besides the "male child" and that the "male child" has siblings.

[96] Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 708.

Having established that the woman represents the faithful people of God—His Church in both the Old and New Testament ages—"the rest" of the woman's children must be understood in some way as children of the Church. This idea is not without precedent, for in Galatians 4:26 similar language is used to teach that all believers are children of "the Jerusalem above."[97]

Likewise, if the "male child" is to be understood as the Messiah, then it must be intended that "the rest" of the woman's children be understood as the brothers (and sisters) of Jesus. The fact that a number of NT passages also speak of believers as the brothers of Jesus (See, for example Romans 8:29 & Hebrews 2:11–13) has led some to the conclusion that "the rest of her seed" in Revelation 12:17 must also be a reference to believers. In his *Commentary on Revelation*, H. B. Swete concludes: "That believers are (1) brethren of the Incarnate Son, and (2) children of the Church, is taught elsewhere in the N.T. (Rom, viii. 29 & Gal. iv. 26). From these two conceptions, combined with that of the Church as the Mother of Christ, it follows that the Seed of the Woman is not to be limited to the Messiah, but embraces all who are Christ's."[98]

Who is My mother and who are My brothers?

This conclusion that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς is a designation that embraces all who are truly Christ's is illuminated by a statement recorded by three of the Gospel writers. It is this statement from Jesus that could perhaps be most helpful at this stage in shedding light on the identity of those whom John portrays as the siblings of the Messiah. In Matthew 12:48 (cf. Mark 3:33) Jesus asks a rhetorical

[97] Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, 160; Significantly, Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, vol. 41, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1990), 215, notes that when Paul states that "she is our mother," "the possessive pronoun 'our' refers to all believers in Christ, not just one group of Christians in Galatia."

[98] Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, 160.

question that is significant in the light of the imagery of Revelation 12: "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" He then answers his own question by stretching out his hand toward his disciples and saying, "Behold, my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother" (vv. 49-50). Luke's account of the same incident has Jesus giving a slightly different response that clarifies what it means to do the Father's will: "My mother and my brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:21).

Jesus' statement is consistent with the conclusion that the woman of Revelation 12—the "mother" of the Messiah—should be understood to represent the faithful people of God. Those whom Jesus acknowledges as his siblings—his "brothers and sisters"—are essentially defined in the same way: they too are the faithful people of God. So if both the woman and her offspring are to be defined in the same terms, how then should the apparent distinction made between them in the text be understood? It has been suggested by a number of commentators that while both the woman and her offspring symbolise faithful believers, the woman of Revelation 12 represents believers as a whole—"the corporate universal church"[99]—while "the rest of her seed" symbolise the individual believers who make up the community of faith.[100] This is a helpful distinction which will become clearer as consideration is given to the remaining charcteristics of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς. The function of λοιπός in distinguishing τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς from the male child of 12:5 will now be considered.

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[99] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 678; Caird, *Revelation*, 159.

[100] Alan Johnson, "Revelation," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 519; Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 708; Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, 160; Caird, *Revelation*, 159.

2. They are Distinguished From the Male Child by the Term Λοιπός

It has been noted above that the "the rest of her seed" stand in contast to the "male child" who is also a seed of the woman (v. 5). The term that John uses in 12:17 to distinguish these other offspring of the woman from the male child is λοιπός. An examination of this term will provide insight in determining the identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς.

The *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* gives this definition of λοιπός: "'pertaining to the part of a whole which remains or continues, and thus constitutes the rest of the whole'—'rest, remaining, what remains, other'."[101] Likewise, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and Other Early Christian Literature* gives 'remaining' as the primary definition, followed by two related options that are relevant to our study : "1) pertaining to that which remains over, esp. after action has been taken, *left*" and "2) pertaining to one not previously cited or included, *other, rest of.*"[102]

Λοιπός in the New Testament

The term λοιπός occurs fifty-five times in the New Testament. It is used thirteen times in the synoptic Gospels and, while λοιπός occurs in the LXX more than 120 times with the meaning "remnant" (mostly for יתר, remnant, and 10 times for שׁאר or שׁארית, remnant),[103] it is never used in the Gospels in the technical sense of a

[101] Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 615.

[102] Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 602.

[103] W. Gunther and H. Krienke, "Remnant, Leave," in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 248.

"remnant". Rather it is used in the more general sense of "leave" or "the others".[104] In the LXX, the terminology of the Old Testment remnant motif is most frequently translated into Greek words formed from λεῖμμα/λείπω ("remnant, remainder"/"leave behind"),[105] so when Paul does address the remnant theme explicitly in Romans 9:27 and 11:5, the Greek nouns are ὑπόλειμμα and λεῖμμα respectively, not λοιπός. W. Gunther and H. Krienke note that Paul "uses the adj. without any specialized meaning, and in this he is not unlike other NT writers: other . . . ; the others . . . ; all the others . . . ; the other things, the rest . . ."[106] Without exeption then, λοιπός is used in both the Gospels and the Epistles in a comparison between two groups—"the ones" are set over against "the others" (οἱ λοιποι).

Λοιπός in Revelation

The term λοιπός does not appear in John's Gospel or in 1, 2 and 3 John, but it is found 8 times in the book of Revelation (2:24; 3:2; 8:13; 9:20; 11:13; 12:17; 19:21; 20:5). In this study, is particular interest is given to the function of λοιπός in Revelation 12:17; but before attention is focused there consideration will be given to the use of the term elsewhere in Revelation. The following examination of these other occurrences reveals much about John's use of the term in 12:17.

Revelation 2:24: But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. (NASB)

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[104] Ibid., 252–253. See, for example, the faithful virgins vs. the other (foolish) virgins (Matt. 25:10f); the two disciples of Emmaus vs. the other disciples of Jesus (Mark 16:12f); the disciples of Jesus vs. the other listeners of Jesus (Luke 8:10); the pious Pharisees vs. the other (sinful) people (Luke 18:9-11); the 11 disciples vs. the other disciples of Jesus (Luke 24:9f).

[105] V. Herntrich and G. Schrenk, "Λειμμα," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. IV (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1967), 194–198.

[106] Ibid., 252.

Here "the rest (τοῖς λοιποῖς) who are in Thyatira" are the faithful ones who are distinguished from those in Thyatira who have accepted Jezebel's teaching and have "known the deep things of Satan." The term λοιπός is used here simply to make a distinction or contrast between those who have accepted the teachings of 'Jezebel' and those who have not. In 2:24 the whole is the church of Thyatira, and having identified those in the church of Thyatira who have been led astray, τοῖς λοιποῖς are simply "the others"—"the part of the whole which remains or continues, and thus constitutes the rest of the whole."[107]

Revelation 3:2: Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. (ESV)

The church in Sardis is virtually dead, but "what remains" should be strengthened.. The whole is the church of Sardis and "what remains (τὰ λοιπὰ)" are the things that are about to die in contrast to the things that are already dead. The term λοιπός is used here as in 2:24 to make a distinction or contrast between two groups—the things that are about to die and the things that have died already.

Revelation 8:13: Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" (NASB)

In Rev 8:13, "the remaining (τῶν λοιπῶν) blasts of the trumpet" are the blasts to come from the sounding of the final three of the seven trumpets. The sounding of the first four trumpets has been described in 8:6–12, and the final three are distinguished from the four trumpets that have already sounded by the term λοιπός. Here, λοιπός is clearly used in the sense of "others" or "remaining ones." In 8:13 the whole is the entire sequence of seven trumpets and 'the other trumpets' (ESV) are the final three in contrast to the four that have already sounded.

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[107] Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1:615. See also Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 602, who cites the occurrence of *loipos* in Rev 2:24 as an example of the definition "pertaining to being one not previously cited or included, other, rest of".

Revelation 9:20: The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. (NASB)

The use of λοιπός in Rev 9:20 is also in the sense of 'others' or 'remaining ones.' The whole is the entire population of mankind and "the rest (οἱ λοιποὶ) of mankind" are the people who were not killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke, and brimstone. They are 'the others' and are distinguished by the term λοιπός from the "third of mankind" that are specifically identified as having been killed by these plagues (9:18).

Revelation 11:13: And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. (NASB)

In Rev 11:13, the whole is the entire population of "the city" and "the rest (οἱ λοιποὶ) [who] were terrified, and gave glory to the God of heaven," are those residents who survive the earthquake. They are 'the others' who are distinguished by the use of λοιπός from the "seven thousand people" who were killed in the earthquake.

Revelation 19:21: And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh. (NASB)

In 19:21 the whole is "the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies" (19:19) and "the rest (οἱ λοιποὶ)" are those kings of the earth and their armies who are "killed with the sword which came out of the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse" in contrast to the beast and the false prophet who are thrown into the lake of fire. They are distinguished by λοιπός from the "two [who] were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone." Here we should note that λοιπός covers the vast majority, not a small group, and all wicked.

Revelation 20:5: The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. (NASB)

In 20:5 the whole is all those who have died and "the rest (οἱ λοιποὶ) of the dead" are the dead who did not come to life until the end of the thousand years. They are 'the others' as distinguished from those who "came to life and reigned with God for a thousand years" (20:4).

Λοιπός in Revelation 12:17

Several important features of John's usage of λοιπός become evident from the above examples. Firstly, it appears that λοιπός in the book Revelation carries a neutral nuance in that it has the basic sense of 'the others'. In three of the occurrences examined above, a reference to a small, faithful remnant is possible (2:24; 3:2; 11:13), however each occurrence of λοιπός can be understood in its context as a simple reference to 'the others' or 'the remaining ones' and such a translation seems sufficient to do justice to the meaning of the text.

Secondly, it is significant that each time John uses the term λοιπός he specifically identifies the part of the whole that does not remain as distinct from and in contrast to that part of the whole that does remain – i.e. 'the others'. So in Revelation 12:17, the whole is the seed of the woman, which by definition must refer to all of her offspring, including the "male child" born to the woman in 12:5. Thus "the others" in 12:17 are specifically the seed of the woman who stand in contrast to, and are to be distinguished from, the "male child".[108]

[108] Mounce, *Revelation*, 242. Pfandl, "The Remnant Church," 302, acknowledges this fact when he notes that "a contextual study of Revelation 12:17 shows that 'the remnant of her seed' stands in contrast with the 'man child' who is also a seed of the woman (vs. 5)." However, he then argues that "these children are not to be identified as Christians in general, living throughout the Christian era," but rather "refers to those who are living after 1798..." and concludes that the "rest of her seed" are "the faithful believers in the time of the end."

Thirdly, in each case, John gives only two groups: those that remain, and those that don't. He leaves no room for a third, middle group (of the same class) that fits neither category. So in Rev 12:17, it cannot be possible that John is referring to a group of faithful believers at a particular point in history who are distinguished not only from the "male child" (Rev 12:5), but also from any intermediate group that may be found to exhibit the same characteristics—"who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus". If John is consistent, "the rest of her seed" must be distinguished solely from the male child who "was caught up to God and to His throne," and the "rest of her seed" must therefore refer to all of the woman's other children—apart from this male child—not only to a small portion at a particular point in history.

Therefore, in light of John's use of the term λοιπός throughout Revelation, it seems that in 12:17 John is simply introducing the fact that the woman has other children (apart from the male child) against whom the dragon now directs his wrath. These other children are considered to be the brothers and sisters of the male child. As has been noted already, this understanding of believers as brothers of Christ is consistent with New Testament teaching elsewhere (e.g. Matt 25:40; Heb 2:11–12). Particularly significant is Luke 8:21, where Jesus identifies His mother and His brothers as those "who hear the word of God and do it." This verse not only confirms that Jesus has "brothers", it also suggests that the expression that qualifies the "rest of her seed"—"who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus"—should be understood as a reference to faithfulness to the word of God. This qualifying phrase is the third identifying feature of 'the rest of her seed' and will be explored next.

3. They Keep the Commandments of God and Hold Fast to the Testimony of Jesus.

In Rev 12:17, the "rest" of the woman's seed are defined as τῶν τηρούντων τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ. In this definition two characteristics of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς are given: (1) they keep the commandments of God; and (2) they have the testimony of Jesus. It follows, then, that in order to correctly identify the τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς the meaning of these terms must be determined. In this section an attempt to do that is made by examining the way in which these terms are used, both within the book of Revelation itself and elsewhere in the New Testament.

It is important at the outset to recognise that this identification of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in 12:17 by two key characteristics is not unique in the book of Revelation. Rather, there is a consistent defining of God's people throughout the book in terms of their faithfulness to these two features. Hans LaRondelle observes that

> John's Apocalypse mentions repeatedly that the true church of Christ perseveres in *two* basic tenets of faith and morality. These are described six times, with slight variations, in 1:2, 9; 6:9; 12:17; 14:12; 20:4. This twofold description of true worship functions as the divine standard to define the difference between true and apostate worship. The historical range of these texts covers the entire Christian era, not one exclusive segment of time.[109]

Although the terms used vary slightly, a comparison of the occurrences reveals that the variations are merely stylistic, and that the different terms appear to be

[109] Hans K. LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible* (Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997), 281.

used synonymously. Ian G. Wallis has presented these occurrences in the following table:[110]

14:12	τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ		τὴν πίστιν Ἰησου
12:17	τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ	ἐχόντων	τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ
1:2	τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ		τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
1:9	τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ		τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ
6:9	τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ	διὰ	τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν εἶχον
19:10			τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησου
20:4	τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ	διὰ	τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ

This table shows that the two characteristics that define τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in 12:17 are not used in isolation, nor are they unique in their function. They form a doublet that is thematically significant and that is repeated elsewhere in the book in terms that are semantically equivalent. This fact is noted by Wallis, who concludes with an important observation regarding interpretation: "This table suggests that certain phrases are used interchangeably by the author and are semantically equivalent. More specifically, it appears that, on the one hand, τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεου and τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεου and, on the other, τὴν πίστιν Ἰησου and τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησου are utilized in this way." While this conclusion seems straightforward, Wallis adds a caution, noting that "the situation, however, is more complex and ambiguous."[111] His caution derives from the fact that while in 1:2 the doublet is clearly a reference to the book of Revelation itself, further uses of the phrases "cannot simply be equated with the Apocalypse, but must embrace other dimensions of early Christian witness to God's work in Christ."[112] Wallis' caution is valid and, therefore, before seeking to determine the meaning of these phrases as they

[110] Ian G. Wallis, *The Faith of Jesus Christ in Early Christian Traditions*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 84 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 169.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid., 170.

are used in 12:17, the meaning of the doublet in the book's introduction and its function in defining the faithful throughout the book must be considered briefly.

Gerhard Pfandl has noted that "since Revelation 1:2 sets the stage, the interpretation of further occurrences of this double expression in Revelation must take into account the meaning it has in this introductory statement."[113] Here at the beginning of the book of Revelation, "both τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ and τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ are identified with the ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ given to John and contained in the following work. In the next verse, this same entity is referred to as τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας (1:3), a form which is echoed repeatedly in the final chapter."[114] So it is readily apparent that in Rev 1:2 the phrase τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ describes the content of the Apocalypse.

Yet even though this is the case in Revelation's introduction, the other references considered above suggest that, in many cases, a broader and more dynamic understanding is also intended. For example, following Rev 1:2, verse 9 explains that John is on Patmos because of τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ. This cannot be a reference to the Apocalypse because John had not received it yet. It could be argued that his presence on the island was voluntary and that he had gone there in order to receive it, but his description as a "fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus" suggests that he was exiled as a result of his faithfulness to the gospel message.[115] "We see then a second import of the phrase, 'the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.' In 1:2 it refers to the content of the book of Revelation; in 1:9 it is in a broader sense the gospel as the revelation of

[113] Pfandl, "The Remnant Church," 309.

[114] Wallis, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 169.

[115] Ibid., 170.

Christ's life and work."[116] Therefore, we can conclude that the meaning of the phrases τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ and τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησου, and their synonyms τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ and τὴν πίστιν Ἰησου, cannot simply be equated with the book of Revelation itself in every instance, but, in some cases at least, they must embrace a broader understanding of God's revelation. It seems possible then, in light of John's use of these terms in 1:9, that "'the word of God' in John's time referred to the Old Testament, and the 'testimony of Jesus' to what Jesus had taught in the gospels and through His prophets, such as Peter and Paul"[117] as Pfandl suggests. If this is the case, then they could be identified as "what we today would call the OT prophetic message and the NT apostolic witness."[118]

More attention will be given shortly to how these expressions should be understood, but for now it is enough to recognize that these doublets "are conceptually and thematically significant and that they cover essentially the same territory even when the contextual parameters vary slightly."[119] These statements serve to distil and crystallize the issue in the conflict and in doing so bring clarity to what is at stake.[120] In the words of Kenneth Strand:

> In the book of Revelation, faithfulness to the "word of God" and to the "testimony of Jesus" separates the faithful from the faithless, and it brings

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[116] Pfandl, "The Remnant Church," 310. Also Mounce, *Revelation*, 55: "In Revelation 1:2 'the word of God and the testimony of Jesus' described the content of the Apocalypse. Here the phrase refers more broadly to the content of John's preaching."

[117] Pfandl, "Identifying Marks," 144.

[118] Kenneth A. Strand, "The Two Witnesses of Rev 11:3–12," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1981): 134.

[119] Sigve K. Tonstad, *Saving God's Reputation: The Theologial Function of Pistis Iesou in the Cosmic Narratives of Revelation*, Library of New Testament studies 337 (London: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 170. See also David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, vol. 52a, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1997), 80–81.

[120] Tonstad, *Saving God's Reputation*, 164.

about persecution that includes John's own exile and the martyrdom of other believers (see again Rev 1:9; 6:9; 12:17; 20:4; etc.).[121]

Having established the significance of the doublet within the wider context of the Revelation, we will now consider the expression τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ.

The Commandments of God

The word ἐντολή is used in the Septuagint 50 times for מִצְוָה, and in the Psalms the plural ἐντολαί is also used for פִּקּוּדִים.[122] It simply means an order, a mandate or an ordinance in the sense of a 'command' or 'commandment'.[123] It occurs 67 times in the New Testament, and in almost every instance it refers to a command ordained by God or Christ.[124] In Revelation the term ἐντολή is found in only two passages—12:17 and 14:12. In both instances the terms ἐντολή and τηρέω are used together and are more closely defined by the genitive τοῦ θεοῦ, a subjective genitive, meaning that the commandments are from God.[125] So here in Rev 12:17 ἐντολή clearly refers to divine commandments—the 'commandments of God.'

It is not always clear, however, what is meant in the New Testament by the expression "the commandments of God."[126] Sometimes it seems to be a reference to the entire Torah, and sometimes it refers specifically to the Ten Commandments or

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[121] Strand, "The Two Witnesses," 133.

[122] G. Schrenk, "Εντολή" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. II (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1967), 546.

[123] Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 340.

[124] M. Limbeck, "Εντολή" in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 459.

[125] Johannes Kovar, "The Remnant and God's Commandments: Revelation 21:17," in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiological Perspective*, ed. Angel M. Rodriguez, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 116.

[126] Ibid., 115.

even to just a few of these commandments.[127] Consequently, there is disagreement among scholars concerning the meaning of the phrase τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ as it occurs in Revelation 12:17. Robert H. Mounce suggests that the phrase could be taken in a general sense, similar to its usage in 1 Corinthians 7:19: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God."[128] David Aune argues that τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ in Revelation 12:17 is a reference to the second table of the Decalogue focusing specifically on its ethical requirements,[129] while Grant Osborne contends that "the actual thrust of the phrase is to all the commandments in the Word."[130] As we have noted already in the introduction, Seventh-day Adventists have always understood τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ in Revelation 12:17 to be the Ten Commandments.

In seeking to understand what is being referred to by the expression τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ in 12:17 it is important to note that in the six doublets we find in Revelation itself (1:2, 9; 6:9; 12:17; 14:12; 20:4) there seems to be a high degree of fluidity and overlap between τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ and τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ.[131] Whereas 12:17 and 14:12 have τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ coupled with the "testimony" or "faith" of Jesus, 1:2, 1:9, 6:9 and 20:4 each utilise the expression τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ instead. This interchange of expression is also seen elsewhere in the NT. Sigve Tonstad notes an example: "A case in point is found in the Gospel of John, where Jesus says, Ἐὰν ἀγαπᾶτέ με, τὰς ἐντολὰς τὰς ἐμὰς τηρήσετε (Jn 14.15). Equally

[127] Ibid.

[128] Mounce, *Revelation*, 242.

[129] Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 709–712.

[130] Osborne, *Revelation*, 486.

[131] Tonstad, *Saving God's Reputation*, 171.

significant in the same discourse is the statement, ’Εάν τις ἀγαπᾷ με τὸν λόγον μου τηρήσει (Jn 14.23).”[132] Again, in 1 John 2:3–5 we find τὰς ἐντολὰς and τὸν λόγον are used interchangeably with no apparent difference of meaning intended:

> By this we know that we have come to know Him, ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν. The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν,is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον, in him the love of God has truly been perfected.

While it is acknowledged here that there are clear differences between the accepted Johannine writings and Revelation, the Johannine usage of these terms should not be ignored in the interpretation of τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ in Revelation 12:17. “The intermingling in the Johannine writings of ‘my word’, ‘my commandments’, and the emphasis on keeping his words and commandments represent a striking area of concern common to the Johannine writings and Revelation, expressed in similar sounding terminology.”[133]

At very least, it should be recognized that the phrases are used interchangeably in the book of Revelation (compare 12:17 with 1:9; 6:9; and 20:4), in the Johnannine writings (compare John 14:15, 21 with 14:23–24; John 15:10 with 15:20; and 1 John 2:3–4 with 1 John 2:5), and even in the Synoptics (e.g. Matt 15:3–6 and Mark 7:9–13, where the meaning includes a specific reference to the Ten Commandments, but is not limited to them).[134] This fact gives considerable weight to the suggestion that John uses the expression τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ in Revelation as a functional parallel to the

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[132] Ibid. Tonstad explains: “In these examples are found all the three elements that are characteristic in Revelation, αἱ ἐντολαί, ὁ λόγος, and the accompanying verb τηρεῖν. To be sure, in the texts in John, Jesus speaks of ‘my commandments’ and ‘my words’, but this does not weaken the parallel because Jesus declares that ‘the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me’ (Jn 14.24). Indeed, when Jesus tells his disciples to keep ‘my commandments’, there is no doubt that the commandments he has in mind are ‘my Father’s commandments’ (Jn 15.10), and thus ‘the commandments of God’ no less than in Revelation.”

[133] Ibid., 172.

[134] Wallis, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 170.

expression τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ. If this is the case, then his usage of τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ in 1:9; 6:9; and 20:4 should serve to clarify the meaning of τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ in 12:17.

The Word of God

Ranko Stefanovic notes that "'the word of God' in the Old Testament functions as a technical expression for the message ('the word of the Lord') that the prophets received from God (Jer. 1:2; Hos. 1:1; Joel 1:1; Jon. 1:1; Zeph. 1:1; Zech. 1:1)."[135] Kenneth Strand sees in John's use of the expression "the word of God" a reference to this "OT prophetic message" that served as a "pre-verification of the Christian announcement."[136] He concludes that the expression "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus"—symbolised by two lampstands in 11:4—"refer to God's word in its twofold aspect of OT prophetic forecast and NT confirmatory proclamation."[137] This conclusion essentially identifies τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ in 1:9; 6:9; and 20:4 with the prophetic message of the Old Testament scriptures. It is the word of God that came through the OT prophets. If this is the case, and τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ in 1:9; 6:9; and 20:4 is a reference to what we now call the Old Testament,[138] then it is possible, and even likely, that the parallel phrase τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ is also a reference to the Old Testament.

So while there may be some merit to Tonstad's claim that the expression τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ "cannot escape the ethical ring and the impression that it embodies

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[135] Ranko Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2002), 54.

[136] Strand, "The Two Witnesses," 132.

[137] Kenneth A. Strand, "The Two Olive Trees of Zechariah 4 and Revelation 11," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 1982): 259–260.

[138] Pfandl, "Identifying Marks," 144, states explicitly that "'the word of God' in John's time referred to the Old Testament," but gives no references to support his claim.

the constitutional basis of the divine government" and therefore "invest the terms with a particular focus"[139] (i.e. it is a reference to the Ten Commandments), it seems more likely that the usage of the term in Revelation in connection with the term, 'word of God', reflects a broader emphasis. This will become more evident as the meaning of the partner phrase τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ is considered in the next section.

The Testimony of Jesus

The second characteristic feature of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in 12:17 is that they are in possession of τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ. The noun μαρτυρία—translated simply as 'testimony'or 'witness'[140]—occurs nine times in Revelation, three times unqualified (6:9; 11:7; 12:11), and six times in the expression τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ (1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10 [twice]; 20:4). Two grammatically possible explanations concerning the meaning of τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ have been put forward. The first view takes the last word in the phrase τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ as an objective genitive and interprets it as our witness to Christ.[141] The second view takes the phrase as a subjective genitive and understands τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ as Jesus' own testimony—"the testimony borne by Jesus."[142]

In four places in Revelation (1:2, 9; 12:17; 20:4), the expression τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ is found in apposition to τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεου or τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ. It would seem reasonable to conclude that the two genitives must therefore be

[139] Tonstad, *Saving God's Reputation*, 171.

[140] Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 618.

[141] See Pfandl, "Identifying Marks," 141 for a list of references.

[142] See, for example, Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 242.

identical in type.[143] Τοῦ θεοῦ is clearly subjective—τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεου is the word God has spoken, and τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ are God's commandments. Therefore in the phrase τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ, the genitive Ἰησου should also be understood as a subjective genitive—it is the personal testimony of Jesus.

The likelihood that τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ in 12:17 refers "to what Jesus had taught in the gospels and through His prophets, such as Peter and Paul"[144] has already been mentioned. It can be identified as "what we today would call … the NT apostolic witness."[145] In considering again the way that John's uses the expression τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ in 12:17it should be noted that "the summary statement of Rev. 14:12 functions as a perfect *parallel* to Rev. 12:17."[146] Whereas in 12:17 the identifying features are τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ and τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ, in 14:12 they are τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ and τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ. It is evident from this parallel that "the expression 'the faith of Jesus' in 14:12 serves as a clarifying equivalent to 'the testimony of Jesus' in 12:17."[147] Thus it is in 14:12 that we find an important key to understanding the identity of those who have τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ.

The Faith of Jesus

Like τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ, the phrase τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ in 14:12 can also be understood in two ways—as either an objective or subjective genitive. It seems that most commentators simply assume that τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ is an objective genitive,

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[143] Fred Mazzaferri, "Martyria Iesou Revisited," *The Bible Translator* 39, no. 1 (January 1988): 120.

[144] Pfandl, "Identifying Marks," 144.

[145] Strand, "The Two Witnesses," 134.

[146] LaRondelle, *End-Time Prophecies*, 285.

[147] Ibid., 286; Tonstad, *Saving God's Reputation*, 180.

meaning that the saints either have "faith in Jesus" or remain "faithful to Jesus."[148] This is reflected in the majority of recent translations that employ some degree of dynamic equivalence.[149]

It is likely, however, that the phrase should be understood as a subjective genitive—'Jesus' faith'—in the same way that τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ is best understood as 'Jesus' own testimony'. It has been noted already that the first genitival construction in the doublet τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ is an unambiguous subjective genitive.[150] It has also been noted that the parallelism between τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ or τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ and τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ in 1:2, 9; 12:17; and 20:4 suggests that both genitives be taken as subjective. In that 14:12 functions as a parallel to 12:17, it follows that if "Jesus is the subject in 'the testimony of Jesus' (12:17), he should also be seen as the subject of τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ (14:12)."[151]

As a subjective genitive, τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ can also be interpreted in various ways. Sigve Tonstad has identified three possiblities: 'the faithfulness of Jesus;' 'the faith of Jesus' understood as the faith demonstrated by Jesus; and 'the faith of Jesus' understood in a doctrinal sense—i.e. 'the Christian faith'.[152] Tonstad's conclusion is that τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ in 14:12 refers first of all to Jesus' own faithfulness, and so he

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[148] Pfandl, "Identifying Marks," 153, 155.

[149] 'Faith in Jesus' is the choice of Phillips (1959), the NASB (1977), NJB (1985), NASU (1995), NLT (2007), ESV (2011). 'Faithful to Jesus' or 'loyal to Jesus' is the choice of the NEB (1976), GNB (1976), and NIV (2011).

[150] Tonstad, *Saving God's Reputation*, 179.

[151] Ibid., 180.

[152] Ibid., 184–189.

prefers the translation 'the faithfulness of Jesus'[153] as the best way to understand the phrase. This, however, is unlikely in the light of Revelation 2:13—"did not deny my faith"—which almost certainly speaks of 'faith' rather than 'faithfulness'.[154]

Prior to Tonstad, Hans K. LaRondelle also argued for the subjective reading but opted instead for understanding τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ in a doctrinal sense. He proposed that "this 'faith of Jesus,' which his followers 'keep' is . . . the objective faith or teachings of Jesus, which formed the very substance of 'the apostles' teaching' (Acts 2:42)."[155] Before LaRondelle, William G. Johnsson had taken a similar position, making this insightful observation with regard to the saints in 14:12:

> They keep the faith of Jesus. This expression does not mean that the people of God have faith *in* Jesus (although they do), because the faith of Jesus is something they *keep*. "The faith" probably refers to the Christian tradition, the body of teachings that centre in Jesus. Jude 3 may provide a parallel: "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." When God's loyal followers keep the faith of Jesus they remain true to basic Christianity—they "keep the faith."[156]

This understanding fits better with Revelation 2:13, and is consistent with similar usage of ἡ πίστις elsewhere in the NT (such as Acts 6:7; Gal 1:23; 1 Tim 4:1, 6; 5:8; 6:21; 2 Tim 3:8; 4:7; and Jude 3). Similarly, G. K. Beale identifies τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ as "the objective gospel traditions having their origin in Jesus, since it is parallel with the preceding 'commandments from God.'"[157] He further argues: "that πίστις refers

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[153] Ibid., 193. Tonstad is too quick, in my view, to discount the possibility of "faith of Jesus" being used in a doctrinal sense.

[154] R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 61; Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 184; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 246.

[155] LaRondelle, *End-Time Prophecies*, 286.

[156] William G. Johnsson, "The Saints End-Time Victory Over the Forces of Evil," in *Symposium on Revelation–Book II*, ed. Frank B Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 38, 39.

[157] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 766.

to the doctrinal content of the Christian faith (cf. Jude 3) is further evident from 2:13, where the word occurs with the same meaning."[158] This is the position taken by Pfandl in the most recent Seventh-day Adventist publication on the subject: "We concur with Johnsson and Beale that 'the faith of Jesus' refers primarily to the doctrinal content of the Christian faith which is centered in Jesus, rather than to faith in Jesus which is usually expressed with *pisteuo* and *en* or *eis*, 'believe in.'"[159]

Thus if τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ in Revelation 14:12 refers to the content of the Christian faith that has its origin in the teachings of Jesus, then it is likely that the parallel τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ in 12:17 is to be understood in a similar way. It too must be a reference to "the objective faith or teachings of Jesus."[160]

This understanding is consistent with the way that Jesus' testimony is described elsewhere in the NT, such as in John 3:31, 32: "The one who comes from heaven is above all, He testifies (μαρτυρεῖ) to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony (τὴν μαρτυρίαν αὐτοῦ)." Here it is said of Jesus that he testifies "to what he has seen and heard." Presumably these are things he has been shown by, or heard from, the Father. The point being made here is that no one believes him—no one "accepts his testimony." Jesus testimony is, therefore, the message that he shares with humanity, which has its origin in the Father.[161]

In John 5:31–36 and 8:13–18, Jesus' testimony is specifically about who he is and where he is from. In John 5, Jesus contrasts his own testimony about his identity and origin with the testimony that others have borne about him, while in John 8, Jesus

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[158] Ibid.

[159] Pfandl, "Identifying Marks," 156.

[160] LaRondelle, *End-Time Prophecies*, 286.

[161] A similar chain of revelation is evident also in Rev 1:1–2, where the testimony of Jesus is the message given to Jesus by God, and which is then communicated to John via an angel.

affirms the validity of his own witness against the Pharisees' attempts to discredit him. In both passages, Jesus' testimony is the message that he bears.

No references to τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησου are found outside of John's Gospel and Epistles, and the book of Revelation. However, the phrase "testimony of Christ" (τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ) is used in 1 Corinthians 1:6 and "the testimony of our Lord" (τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν) is found in 2 Timothy 1:8. Obviously there are differences in that 1 Corinthians and 2 Timothy use μαρτύριον whereas John uses μαρτυρία,[162] and in that each phrase uses a different appellation for Christ. But whether or not the first century readers would have understood them differently is hard to tell.[163]

What can be said is that τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησου is a reference first to the message borne by Jesus himself—a message that originates with God and is shared with all who will receive it—and second, in light of the parallel with τὴν πίστιν Ἰησου, it seems in Revelation to have come to refer also to the teachings of Jesus borne by the apostles. These teachings from Jesus and about Jesus, together with τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ, constitute the Christian faith. To hold on to τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ as do those in Rev 12:17, is to remain true to basic Christianity—it is, as we have seen, 'keeping the faith.'

As the doublet τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ and τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ is considered in light of the above, the significance of the "two-witnesses" theology that permeates the book of Revelation, which was noted at the outset (1:2, 9; 6:9; 12:17; 14:12;

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[162] Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 618–619, gives the definition "confirmation or attestation on the basis of personal knowledge or belief, testimony" for μαρτυρια, and "that which serves as testimony or proof, testimony, proof" for μαρτυριον. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1:418, gives "the content of what is witnessed or said—'testimony, witness'" for both.

[163] Pfandl, "The Remnant Church," 310, contends that to the hearer or reader in the first century the three phrases would have all conveyed the same meaning.

20:4), can now be more fully appreciated. While in a basic sense the two witnesses are God and Jesus (cf. John 8:17–18), the emphasis is placed on the message they bear—the "word" and the "testimony" respectively. The thought expressed seems to reflect to some degree the distinction made in Hebrews 1:1–2, where God's two channels of communication are described: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe" (NIV). Here we see the prophetic witness of the Old Testament contrasted with the testimony of Jesus Himself, resulting in a two-fold testimony that closely resembles what we have identified in the book of Revelation. Granted, there is certainly an understanding in Hebrews that is not evident in the Apocalypse—that the testimony of Jesus is superior to God's previous revelation—yet the elements that comprise the two-fold testimony are essentially the same. There is the message from God that was communicated through the prophets prior to the coming of Christ, and then there is the message borne by Jesus himself—'the word/commandments of God' and 'the testimony of Jesus.' It is to this two-fold testimony that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς remain faithful.

4. They Parallel 'The Saints' of Revelation 13:7

There is an explicit connection between those designated as τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς (in 12:17) and those designated as τῶν ἁγίων (in 14:12)—both are identified by their faithfulness to the 'commandments of God' and the 'testimony/faith of Jesus.' The implication is that the terms are synonymous—that τῶν ἁγίων of 14:12 *are* τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς of 12:17. This connection

between τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς and τῶν ἁγίων becomes significant as we consider the parallel between Revelation 12:17 and 13:7.

Revelation 13:7 is Linked Verbally to 12:17

Leslie Pollard has observed that "Revelation 13:7 is linked verbally to 12:17 by the aorist infinitive ποιῆσαι πόλεμον ("to make war")."[164] But instead of using the expression τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς to describe the object of the Sea Beast's hostility, 13:7 employs τῶν ἁγίων. Pollard recognises that these terms are being used synonymously and argues that "by replacing *loipos* (in 12:17) with *hagioi* (in 13:7), John shifts the primary Old Testament background from Gen 3 to Dan 7."[165] Stephen Pattemore also recognises the significance of Daniel 7—"Like the blasphemous words of the beast, the war against the saints (13:7) is a motif directly out of Daniel's vision (Dan 7:21)"[166]—and goes on to highlight the connection between Revelation 13:7 and 12:17: "Whatever the interpretation of the αγιοι in Daniel's context, here they are clearly the people of God, the 'rest of [the woman's] children, those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus' (12:17)."[167] The following diagram shows the parallels:

Revelation 12:17	***Revelation 13:7***	***Revelation 14:12***
…to make war with	…to make war with	
the rest of her seed …	the saints …	…the saints …
commandments of God …		commandments of God …

[164] Leslie N. Pollard, "The Function of *Loipos* in Contexts of Judgment and Salvation in the Book of Revelation" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2007), 388.

[165] Ibid.

[166] Stephen W. Pattemore, *The People of God in the Apocalypse: Discourse, Structure, and Exegesis*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 128 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 168.

[167] Ibid., 168–169.

testimony of Jesus. faith of Jesus.

In 12:17, war is made against τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς, who are identified by keeping 'the commandments of God' and having 'the testimony of Jesus.' In 13:7, war is made against τῶν ἁγίων who are identified in 14:12 by keeping 'the commandments of God' and 'the faith of Jesus.' The connection between 'the testimony of Jesus' and 'the faith of Jesus'—that they are essentially synonymous in this context—has already been noted. It would seem then, that τῶν ἁγίων of 13:7 are to be understood as τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς of 12:17 and therefore that the war waged against them by the sea beast is the war initiated by the dragon in 12:17. Further evidence for this conclusion becomes apparent when the background in Daniel 7 is taken into consideration.

Daniel 7 Links Revelation 13:7 with Revelation 12:17

The conflict initiated by the dragon in 12:17 and carried out by the sea beast in 13:7 has its background in the conflict between the little horn and the saints in Daniel 7. This has been recognised by Stephen Pattemore: "The reference to the dragon making war on the children of the woman, 12:17, acts in two directions. It recalls Daniel 7 to active consideration, and links it immediately to the audience of faithful witnessing Christians. Their experience is to be understood in the context of Daniel's vision."[168]

Daniel 7:21–22 describes a little horn that makes war with the saints and overpowers them (ἐποίει πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων καὶ ἴσχυσεν πρὸς αὐτούς, Theod.) until the Ancient of Days comes, and judgment is given to the saints of the Most High. The interpreting angel explains that the little horn represents a king who will

[168] Ibid., 165.

oppress the saints of the Most High, and that they will be given into his hand for a period designated as "a time, times, and half a time" (Dan 7:24–26). The 1260-day period in Revelation 12:6, 14 calls to mind this period of "a time, times and half a time" during which the little horn makes war with the saints.

The wording of 13:7 also calls to mind the little horn's war with the saints. Thus in addition to the connection between Revelation 12:17 and 13:7, we note here the close parallel between Revelation 13:7 and Daniel 7:21:

Revelation 13:7	***Daniel 7:21***
And it was given to him	And that horn
to make war with the saints	was waging war with the saints
and to overcome them	and overpowering them

Further parallels linking the two passages include the fact that both the little horn and the sea beast have mouths speaking great things (Dan 7:8, 11, 20; cf. Rev 13:5), and that the saints are given into the hand of the little horn for "a time, times, and half a time" (Dan 7:25) just as the sea beast receives authority to act for "42 months" (Rev 13:5).

In view of these parallels, it is reasonable to conclude that the great conflict portrayed in Daniel 7 between the little horn and the saints that continues for "a time, times, and half a time" is the very conflict that is introduced in Revelation 12:17 and described further in 13:1–10. This would place the action in Revelation 12:17—the dragon going off to make war with the rest of the woman's seed—at the start of the 1260-days, not after them. In Revelation 12:17 the dragon is only beginning the war which is waged through the sea beast (Rev 13:1–10) and which continues for 1260

days. This brings us to the fifth key characteristic of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς—they are attacked during the 1260 days that the woman is in the wilderness.

5. They are Attacked During the 1260 Days that the Woman is in the Wilderness

It is likely that the dragon's war against τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς is carried out during the 1260 day period for at least two reasons. The first reason emerges from a consideration of how the event of Revelation 12:17 relates to the verses that precede it; the second emerges from a consideration of how 12:17 relates to the verses that follow.

The Dragon's War in Relation to the Verses Preceding Revelation 12:17

In examining the connection between Revelation 12:17 and the preceding verses, Beale's caution must be noted: "The relation of v 17 to the preceding verses is one of the most difficult problems in the Apocalypse, and no solution is without its problems."[169]

Beale may be correct, but seeing the event portrayed in 12:17 as occurring at the start of the 1260 days is the only solution that does justice to the narrative flow of 13–17. The dragon, having been thrown down to the earth, pursues the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman is given the two wings of the great eagle in order that she might be able to fly away from the dragon to the place of refuge that God has prepared for her in the wilderness. There she will be protected for a period designated as either 1260 days (12:6) or 'a time and times and half a time' (12:14). As she flies to her wilderness refuge, the dragon spews "water like a river out of his mouth, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent"

[169] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 676.

(v. 15). This effort to destroy the woman while she is still vulnerable is foiled as the earth comes to her rescue by opening its mouth and drinking up the river which the dragon spewed out of his mouth. The fact that the dragon, though still angry with the woman, now turns his attention to the rest of her offspring (v. 17) is clear indication that at this point in the narrative she has reached her place of protection and is shielded from further attack. Revelation 12:17 must therefore mark the beginning of the 1260 days of protection for the woman. It is now "the rest of her offspring" that are targeted by the dragon while she is protected in her wilderness refuge.

David Aune reaches the same conclusion. In regard to the serpent's pursuit of the woman in 12:15–16, Aune observes:

> This brief episode would be appropriate *before* the woman reached her sanctuary in the wilderness mentioned in v 14. Otherwise (to keep a generally chronological order), one must suppose that the period of her protection ended in v 14 and that she was again vulnerable to the renewed attack of the serpent (=dragon). (d) The very fact that the dragon does not pursue his attack in the fourth and concluding subsection (v 17) but turns his anger on the offspring of the woman, however, suggests that she has indeed reached her sanctuary in the wilderness and is therefore not subject to further attack.[170]

This is the best way to make sense of the fact that even though the dragon is described specifically as being enraged with the woman, he does not make war with the woman, but rather with her offspring. If this war occurs after the 1260 days, as Seventh-day Adventists have maintained, then there is no reason for the dragon to attack the woman's offspring rather than the woman herself. Her protection was to be for 1260 days, and therefore it may be presumed that after that period she would be vulnerable once again to the dragon's attack and that he would resume his foiled pursuit. The dragon goes to make war with the woman's offspring for the simple reason that he

[170] Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 664.

cannot make war with the woman herself. She is safe in the wilderness, protected by God during the 1260-day period.

Commenting on the dragon's activity in Revelation 12:17, J. A. Seiss notes that "it is not the organised Church which is the object of this new outbreak of the Dragon's wrath; for the church as a visible body is in the wilderness beyond his grasp."[171] He then goes on to highlight the connection between 12:17 and the verses that follow: "The organs through which the Dragon puts forth all this bloody rage against the Woman and the remnants of her seed are described in the next chapter."[172]

The Dragon's War in Relation to the Verses that Follow Revelation 12:17

There is a certain parallel between the dragon's attack on the woman's firstborn and his attack on τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς: "in verse 4, the dragon 'stood' before the woman when she was about to bear her child, and at the end of the narrative the dragon 'stood' upon the sand of the sea."[173] The dragon's taking his stand before the woman (v. 4) is followed by a statement of intent—"so that when she gave birth he might devour her child" (ἵνα ὅταν τέκῃ τὸ τέκνον αὐτῆς καταφάγῃ)—indicating that his stance is in preparation for his attack on the child. In the same way, the dragon's taking his stand on the seashore is followed by the description of a sea beast who makes war with the saints and overcomes them (13:7) *during* a period of 42 months (13:5). This suggests that his stance in 12:18 is in preparation for his attack on the saints at the beginning of the 42-month (1260-day) period.

As in 12:4, the dragon's stance is in preparation for attack, but in 12:18 it is not the woman's child but τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς that are the focus.

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[171] Seiss, *The Apocalypse*, 319.

[172] Ibid.

[173] Shea, "Time Prophecies," 349.

Therefore what follows in 13:1–10 must be a description of his attack on τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς—the waging of the war introduced in 12:17.[174] If the 1260-day period of 12:6 is synonymous with the 42-month period of 13:5, then it must be concluded that the dragon's war with τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς is carried out through the sea beast *during* the 1260-day/42-month period rather than after it. This is also the conclusion reached by Caird: "This three and a half year period . . . begins when Satan goes off to make war on the rest of the woman's children, and to that end calls forth the monster from the abyss. For forty-two months is also the period during which the monster is allowed to wage war against God's people (xiii. 5)."[175]

Thus from a consideration of both the verses that precede and that follow 12:17, it is evident that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in 12:17 are to be understood as representing God's people during the 1260-day (42-month) period.

Summary

In seeking to determine the identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς the focus has been on five key features apparent from the text itself and from the surrounding context. These five features have together provided a clear picture of all faithful believers during a specified period of 1260 days or 42 months.

It was noted first that by definition τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς are the offspring of the woman introduced in Revelation 12:1 and are also the siblings of the male child of 12:5. Having identified the woman as the faithful people of God and

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[174] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, Proclamation Commentaries (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 82: "The whole section [i.e., Rev 12:18-14:5] thus expands upon the announcement of 12:17 that the dragon wages war with the rest of the woman's offspring, who clearly are characterised as Christians." See also Craig S. Keener, *Revelation*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 325.

[175] Caird, *Revelation*, 159.

the male child as Christ, it was seen that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in 12:17 are believers who are children of the Church and brothers and sisters of Christ. This is consistent with how believers are portrayed elsewhere in the NT, such as Galatians 4:26; Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:11-13; and Luke 18:21.

It was then noted that the function of the term λοιπός in Revelation is to distinguish between the part of the specified whole which remains or continues (i.e. 'the rest') as distinct from the part of the whole that has been previously cited—it is used in the sense of 'the others' or 'the rest of'. It was shown that every time John uses the term λοιπός he specifically identifies the part of the whole that does not remain as distinct from and in contrast to that part that does. So in Reveltion 12:17, the whole is the seed of the woman and by definition must include all of her offspring. In 12:5 John specifically identifies the male child as the part of the whole that does not remain. Thus the λοιποὶ are all of the woman's other children, apart from this male child. They stand in contrast to and are to be distinguished from the 'male child', but the term λοιπός gives us no basis for distinguishing them further from any who might be found to exhibit the same characteristics— τῶν τηρούντων τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ.

The examination of John's use the of the terms τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ and τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ showed that these terms are used interchangeably with τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ and τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ respectively, with no apparent change of meaning intended. It was also shown that these two terms are used to identify the faithful throughout the book of Revelation (1:3, 9; 6:9; 12:17; 14:12; 20:4) and that, significantly the historical range of these references covers the entire Christian era, not one exclusive segment of time. It was concluded that the expression 'the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus' is most likely John's way of

referring to what we now know as the Old and New Testaments and that 'the rest of her seed' are 'saints' who are identified as such by their faithfulness to the teachings of the Bible (Rev 14:12).

It was then noted that there is a strong parallel between τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in 12:17 and τῶν ἁγίων in 13:7. The two verses are linked verbally by the aorist infinitive ποιῆσαι πόλεμον ("to make war") and both τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς and τῶν ἁγίων are identified the same way—in 12:17 τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς are identified by keeping 'the commandments of God' and having 'the testimony of Jesus' and in 14:12 τῶν ἁγίων are identified in 14:12 by keeping 'the commandments of God' and 'the faith of Jesus.' These parallels indicate that τῶν ἁγίων of 13:7 are the same group as τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς of 12:17 and that the war waged against them by the sea beast is the same war initiated by the dragon in 12:17. Since the war against the saints described in 13:7 is waged during the 42 months of 13:5, the action in Revelation 12:17—the dragon's going off to make war with the rest of the woman's seed—must be occurring at the start of the 42 months/1260 days.

Consideration of the narrative flow of the passage supports the conclusion that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in 12:17 are to be understood as a portrayal of God's people during the 1260-day (42-month) period identified in 12:6, 13 and 13:7.

Conclusion

A very clear picture of the identity of 'the rest of her seed' in Revelation 12:17 has emerged from an examination of the five key features of the text and its surrounding context. 'The rest of her seed' must include all faithful believers from

throughout the Christian era. These faithful believers are portrayed as experiencing persecution during a period specified as 1260 days or 42 months.

Having established the identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς from this contextual study, an evaluation may now be made of the assertion made by Seventh-day Adventists that their movement is the one designated in 12:17 as 'the remnant' and that none other meets the specifications laid down in that verse.

CHAPTER THREE—EVALUATING THE TRADITIONAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST UNDERSTANDING OF 'THE REST OF HER SEED'

Consideration was given in Chapter Two to the identity of those designated τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in Revelation 12:17. From an examination of the context it was concluded that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς are faithful believers—synonymous with the 'saints' of 13:7 and 14:12—throughout the Christian era, who are attacked during a period of 1260 day/42 months. In this chapter the historic Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς will be examined and evaluated in that light of the conclusions reached in Chapter Two.

The Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Revelation 12:17

With regard to the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς, Pfandl's comment below is typical: "These children are not to be identified as Christians in general, living throughout the Christian Era."[176] Rather, the Seventh-day Adventist position is that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς are an end-time group of believers who appear in history after the 1260 day period of 12:6 has come to an end. This end-time 'remnant' is understood to be the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Basis for the Seventh-day Adventist Assertion

Chapter One of this study has considered in some detail the way that Seventh-day Adventists historically have understood the identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς, specifically their understanding that their movement is the one designated in

[176] Pfandl, "The Remnant Church," 302.

12:17 as 'the rest of her seed' or 'the remnant.' That chapter also identified the four theological premises that form the basis for this traditional Seventh-day Adventist assertion. These were articulated as follows:

1. The term λοιπός in 12:17 evokes the Old Testament concept of a saved 'remnant.'
2. The 'remnant' are an end-time group of believers who appear in history after the 1260-day period of 12:6 has come to an end.
3. The phrase 'commandments of God' refers to the Ten Commandments and therefore identifies this group of believers as a Sabbath keeping people.
4. The phrase 'testimony of Jesus' is defined in Revelation 19:10 as the spirit of prophecy, and is therefore a reference to the prophetic gift that was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White.

Each of these premises was examined in Chapter One in order to identify and establish the reasoning and methodology behind them. This chapter will now examine each of these claims once again and evaluate them against the background of the contextual study of the phrase τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς ('the rest of her seed') that was presented in Chapter Two.

Does Λοιπός Evoke the Old Testament Concept of a Saved 'Remnant'?

The first of these four premises states that the term λοιπός in 12:17 is understood by Seventh-day Adventists to evoke the Old Testament concept of a saved 'remnant,'[177] thus serving to designate this group as an end-time body of believers.

[177] Ibid., 297.

It was noted in Chapter One that throughout most of Adventist history no attempt was made to demonstrate that λοιπός in Revelation 12:17 should be understood as 'remnant'—rather it appears to have simply been assumed that this is the case. Only in recent years has the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of λοιπός in Revelation 12:17 been defended—on the basis of syntax and context.

It was shown in Chapter Two that while λοιπός does occur in the LXX more than 120 times with the meaning "remnant",[178] its thirteen occurances in the synoptic Gospels never reflect the technical sense of a "remnant". Rather it is used in the more general sense of 'left' or 'the others'.[179] This was also found to be the case with Paul's usage of the term. It was concluded that without exeption, λοιπός is used in both the Gospels and the Epistles to make a ditinction and contrast between two groups—the ones' which are set over against the others' (οἱ λοιποι).

As John's use of λοιπός in Revelation was examined it was shown that in Revelation also, John utilises λοιπός in its basic sense of 'the others' regardless of size or morality. It was demostrated that even in 12:17 λοιπός carries a neutral nuance, in that, while the woman's child is Jesus (12:5), so her 'other' children are *all* the faithful, not just a small core of Christians at the end of time.

An Appeal to Syntax

In Leslie Pollard's recent defense of the SDA understanding of the function of λοιπός in 12:17 he acknowledges that a significant number of scholars believe that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in 12:17 represent all faithful believers. However,

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[178] Gunther and Krienke, "Remnant," 248.

[179] Ibid., 252–253. See, for example, the faithful virgins vs. the other (foolish) virgins (Matt. 25:10f); the two disciples of Emmaus vs. the other disciples of Jesus (Mark 16:12f); the disciples of Jesus vs. the other listeners of Jesus (Luke 8:10); the pious Pharisees vs. the other (sinful) people (Luke 18:9-11); the 11 disciples vs. the other disciples of Jesus (Luke 24:9f).

Pollard defends the traditional Seventh-day Adventist view by appealing to syntax. He claims that the phrase τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς constitutes a partitive ablative, and therefore cannot include all believers, but only a portion of the whole. The book *Syntax of the Greek New Testament* by James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery is cited as the reference for this grammatical insight.[180] Their explanation is as follows:

> **The Ablative**
> The ablative case is used to express the idea of separation. It indicates such things as point of departure, source, origin.
> Inasmuch as both the genitive and the ablative employ the same case form, one must first decide whether a word in the second inflected form is genitive or ablative. This can usually be done by asking whether the use of the word reflects kind, description, definition—in which case the word is genitive—or separation—in which case the word is ablative.[181]
>
> **Partitive Ablative**
> If a word in the ablative indicates the whole of which the word it modifies is a part, it is a partitive ablative. This use might also be called the ablative of the whole or the ablative of the divided whole. In a five-case system, it is called the partitive genitive. Indeed, many eight-case grammarians also classify it as a genitive. The fact that the part is derived from and in some sense is separated from the whole and the fact that the use is found with the prepositions απο and εκ, which are always used with the ablative, make it probable that it should be treated as ablative.[182]

Whether the eight-case system used by Brooks and Winbery is superior or inferior to the five-case system used by most grammarians today will not be entered into here. Rather, in this study it will be assumed that Pollard's claim is reasonable, and that there is at least some validity in identifying the phrase in question as a partitive ablative. It will be seen, however, that such a claim does nothing to counter the view that the 'rest of her seed' represent all faithful believers. If the above criteria

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[180] James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979).

[181] Ibid., 19.

[182] Ibid., 28.

are applied to the phrase τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς it could be said that τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς is the whole of which τῶν λοιπῶν is a part, and therefore that τοῦ σπέρματος is a partitive ablative.

It is certainly true that τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς is the whole of which τῶν λοιπῶν is a part. However, Pollard's claim that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς cannot include all believers does not logically follow. In context, the woman's seed refers not only to believers but also to the male child. The whole is therefore greater than all believers for it includes this male child. The portion of the whole which is distinguished by the use of τῶν λοιπῶν *is* all believers in that they are identified as distinct from the male child who has been caught up to God and to His throne. This is exactly the function of λοιπός—to distinguish what remains from what doesn't.

It seems then that the view that Pollard seeks to refute—that the woman's primary seed is Christ and the 'rest' of her seed are the other siblings, and thus represent all believers—is the most natural way to read the text and is, in fact, supported by the syntactical evidence that Pollard presents. On the other hand, the position that Pollard takes does not follow logically from his own evidence.

An Appeal to Context

Richard Lehmann's appeal to context to support the understanding of λοιπός as an eschatological remnant was also presented and examined in Chapter One. It has been demonstrated already that the context actually suggests otherwise.

It was shown in Chapter Two that the woman's seed refers not only to the believers who compose the "overall church," but also to the male child. So τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς refers not to a part of the church, but rather to all faithful believers as distinct from the male child. To conclude that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ

σπέρματος αὐτῆς pictures a "remnant from the church" in the same way that the OT pictured a 'remnant from Israel' is, in fact, not justified by the context.

Summary

In order to evaluate whether or not the term λοιπός in Revelation 12:17 evokes the OT concept of a saved remnant, primary consideration needs to be given to John's intention in his use of the term. It has already been shown in this study that in each of the seven other occurrences in Revelation λοιπός carries a neutral nuance in that it has the basic sense of 'the others', and that in 12:17 'the others' stand in contrast to and are distinguished from the 'male child' born to the woman in 12:5. This use of λοιπός leaves no room for a third, middle group of believers who exist between the time of the male child and the appearance of an end-time remnant after 1798. If John is consistent, τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς must be distinguished only from the male child who "was caught up to God and to His throne," and τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς must therefore refer to all of the woman's other seed, apart from this male child—not just a small portion at the end of time.

Therefore, in light of John's use of the term λοιπός throughout the book of Revelation, it does not seem likely that in Revelation 12:17 he intending to refer to an exclusively end-time group of believers that correlate to OT conceptions of a saved remnant. It has been demonstrated in this study that the woman's primary seed is Christ, and therefore it is more likely that the 'rest' of her seed are intended to be understood as the other siblings who are representative of *all* faithful believers.

Do The 'Rest of Her Seed' Appear in History After the 1260 Days?

The second premise upon which the traditional Seventh-day Adventist position is based states that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς is an end-time group of believers who appear in history after the 1260-day period of 12:6 has come to an end.

As the rationale given for this position by Seventh-day Adventist scholars was considered in Chapter One it became apparent that the only basis for this view is the order in which the events are mentioned in Revelation 12. However, as it was noted in Chapter Two, nothing else in the text suggests that the dragon's war against τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς occurs after the 1260-day period mentioned earlier. In fact, it would seem more likely that this war is carried out during the 1260-day period for the two reasons outlined in Chapter Two—the relation of 12:17 to the verses that precede it, and its relation to the verses that follow.

Revelation 12:17 in its Narrative Context

In Chapter Two it was noted that Revelation 12:13–16 describes the dragon's failed attempts to destroy the woman *before* she reaches her place of refuge, and it was shown how the dragon's attack on τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς (12:17)—though still enraged at the woman—indicates that at that point in the narrative the woman is now safe in the wilderness and shielded from further attack. The conclusion was made that Revelation 12:17 must mark the beginning of the 1260 days of protection because it is only at this point in the narrative that the woman has reached her place of refuge.

It was also noted that the sea beast (13:1) is the agent though which the dragon makes his attack on τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς and it was argued that what follows in 13:1–10 must be a description of his attack—the waging of the war

introduced in 12:17. On the basis that the 1260-day period of 12:6 is synonymous with the 42-month period of 13:5, it was concluded that the dragon's war with τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς is carried out through the agency of the sea beast *during* the 1260-day/42-month period rather than after it.

Thus the immediate context indicates that the event of 12:17—the dragon's attack on τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς—should be placed at the start of the 1260 days rather than after it. Logic also indicates that this is the case. It is stated that the woman goes into the desert for 1260 days so, logically, the end of the 1260-day period should be marked by the woman's coming out of the desert—for if she does not come out of the wilderness at the end of this time period then she is in there for longer than 1260 days. However, no reference is made to her exit and it might be presumed that she is still in the wilderness when the dragon wages his war on τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς.

Summary

In light of the above, τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς cannot be limited to an end-time group of believers who appear in history after the 1260-day period of 12:6 has come to an end. Rather, they must represent faithful believers who are attacked by the dragon during the 1260-day/42-month period designated in 12:6, 14 and 13:5.

Do The 'Commandments of God' Identify This Group as Sabbath Keepers?

The third of the four premises that form the basis for the traditional Seventh-day Adventist position is that τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ in 12:17 refer to the Ten Commandments and therefore identify τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς as a Sabbath-keeping people. It was shown in Chapter One that, according to traditional

Seventh-day Adventist understanding, the 'remnant' must be a Sabbath-keeping movement that appears in history after AD 1798, with the expectation being that it will their adherence to the original fourth commandment that what will set the true followers of Christ apart from the rest of Christendom.

The Old Testament as a Whole

In this study it has been established that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς are best understood as faithful believers throughout the Christian era. It has also been shown in this study that the expression τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ does not refer to the Ten Commandments exclusively. In light of the parallels noted in Chapter Two, it is evident that limiting τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ to a reference to the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20 is too narrow, and that a broader understanding of the phrase must certainly be intended. Having noted that John uses the expression τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ in Revelation as a functional parallel to the expression τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ, it seems more likely that τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ refer to OT as a whole—not just the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20. Together with τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ the reference is to the totality of Scripture—the prophetic witness of the OT coupled with the apostolic witness of the NT. Thus it is implied that throughout Christian history God's people are identified by their faithfulness to what is now known as the Bible.

Summary

Inasmuch as faithfulness to τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ in the Bible must necessarily include faithfulness to the Ten Commandments and consequently the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath, it does seem reasonable to conclude that God's design was that His people be recognised throughout Christian history as a Sabbath-keeping people—even though history testifies to the reality that this has not always been the case.

However, in light of the evidence presented here and in the previous section, it seems very unlikely that the reference to τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ in 12:17 indicates the rise of a Sabbath-keeping movement after the end of the 1260 days in AD 1798.

Is The 'Testimony of Jesus' a Reference to Ellen G. White's Prophetic Gift?

The fourth premise underlying the Seventh-day Adventist position is that the phrase τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ is defined in Revelation 19:10 as the spirit of prophecy, and is therefore a reference to the prophetic gift that was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White.

It was noted in Chapter One that (1) Revelation 19:10 seems to provide a ready definition of 'the testimony of Jesus' as the prophetic gift, lending support to the view that those who have the testimony of Jesus are in possession of the gift of prophecy, and (2) that a comparison of Revelation 19:10 with 22:9 seems to demonstrate that those who have the testimony of Jesus are to be identified as prophets, again supporting the conclusion that those who have the testimony of Jesus are in some way in possession of the prophetic gift. A recent development in the defense of this position was also noted, namely, that 'the testimony of Jesus' in Revelation 1:2 should be considered to be a reference to John's visionary gift, thus supporting the claim that 'the testimony of Jesus' in Revelation 12:17 is a reference to the prophetic gift.

Is The Testimony of Jesus the 'Spirit of Prophecy'?

On the surface, Revelation 19:10 does seem to provide a ready definition of τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ: "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Taken at face value this verse seems to be saying that the expression τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ is a

reference to the prophetic gift and, therefore, that those who have the testimony of Jesus are in possession of the gift of prophecy. A casual comparison of Revelation 19:10 with 22:9 certainly seems to support the conclusion that those who have the testimony of Jesus are to be identified as prophets, for whereas the angel in 19:10 identifies himself as "a fellow servant of yours and your brothers who have the testimony of Jesus," the angel in 22:9 is "a fellow servant of yours and of your brothers the prophets." Thus on the surface it seems clear from all of this that those who have the testimony of Jesus are in some way in possession of the prophetic gift.

There are, however, a number of problems with this line of reasoning. The most significant is the failure to carefully consider the extent of the parallel between 19:10 and 22:9.

Who are John's brothers?

John's brothers are described in 22:9 not only "the prophets," but also as "those who keep the words of this book."[183] David Aune has also noted this, stating that "while 19:10 suggests that John's brothers are those who maintain their testimony about Jesus, 22:9 indicates that John's brothers are the prophets and those who obey the commands in this book."[184] The parallel with 19:10 suggests that it is both "the prophets" *and* "those who keep the words of this book" that have "the testimony of Jesus"—not only those with the prophetic gift but all faithful Christians.

Revelation 19:10	***Revelation 22:9***
But he said to me, "Do not do that.	But he said to me, "Do not do that.
I am a fellow servant of yours	I am a fellow servant of yours

[183] As John addresses his audience at the very beginning of the book, he identifies himself as "your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus" (1:9). This would suggest from the outset that John's 'brothers' should not be limited to other prophets, but rather should include all who are faithful to "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (1:9) in the face of hardship and suffering.

[184] David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52c, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 1186.

and of your brothers	and of your brothers
	[*the prophets and those*
[*who hold the testimony of Jesus*].	*who keep the words of this book*].
Worship God."	Worship God."

This table shows clearly that "the prophets" and "those who keep the words of this book" in 22:9 are to be understood as parallel to those "who hold the testimony of Jesus" in 19:10.[185] But the questions remain, why does the angel add the explanation: 'For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy' in 19:10, and what does it mean?

The Spirit of the Prophecy

Literally, Revelation 19:10 translates, "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of *the* prophecy." Translating the verse this way is more consistent with the way the expression τῆς προφητείας is used elsewhere in the book. Every occurrence of τῆς προφητείας in Revelation is listed below:

1:3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear *the words of the prophecy* (τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας), and keep the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

11:6 These have the power to shut up the sky, in order that rain may not fall during *the days of their prophesying* (τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς προφητείας αὐτῶν)

19:10 For the testimony of Jesus is *the spirit of the prophecy* (τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας).

22:7 Blessed is he who keeps *the words of the prophecy of this book* (τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου).

22:10 Do not seal up *the words of the prophecy of this book* (τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου), for the time is near.

22:18 I testify to everyone who hears *the words of the prophecy of this book* (τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου)…

22:19 …and if anyone takes away from *the words of the book of this prophecy* (τῶν λόγων τοῦ βιβλίου τῆς προφητείας ταύτης)…

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[185] This is challenged by Pfandl, "Identifying Marks," 145, who argues that there is no grammatical necessity to link "those keeping the words of this book" with "the testimony of Jesus" in 19:10. But this fails to recognize the extent of the parallel, as we shall see.

It is readily apparent that the phrase τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας is a reference to the words of the book of Revelation. The striking parallels between Rev 1:1–3 and 22:6–21 make it clear that "the words of the prophecy" in 1:3 are "the words of the prophecy of this book"—the written composition, as the phrase "the things written in it" (i.e., in the prophecy) suggests.[186]

Revelation 1:1-3	***Revelation 22:6-10***
δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ to show his servants	6 δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ to show his servants
ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει... the things which must shortly take place…	ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει.... the things which must shortly take place…
3 Μακάριος ὁ ἀναγινώσκων Blessed is the one who reads	7 μακάριος ὁ τηρῶν Blessed is the one who keeps
καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες and those who hear	
τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας the words of the prophecy	τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας the words of the prophecy
καὶ τηροῦντες τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα, and keep the things written in it,	τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου. of this book…
	9 τοὺς λόγους τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου· the words of this book…
	10 τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας The words of the prophecy
	τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου, of this book,
ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς. for the time is near.	ὁ καιρὸς γὰρ ἐγγύς ἐστιν. for the time is near

Clearly, τῆς προφητείας in 1:3 and 22:7, 10, 18, and 19 refers explicitly to the book of Revelation itself, and τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας are the words of the book of Revelation.

[186] Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 21.

As consideration is given to the meaning of τῆς προφητείας in 19:10 it is necessary to recognise the strong parallels, not only between 19:10 and 22:9, but between the passages in which they occur – 19:9–10 and 22:7–10.

Revelation 19:9-10	***Revelation 22:6-10***
Blessed…	
And he said to me, "These are true words of God."	And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"…
	Blessed is he who keeps the words of τῆς προφητείας (the prophecy) of this book."
And I fell at his feet to worship him.	And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things.
And he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren *who hold the testimony of Jesus;* worship God.	And he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren *the prophets and those who keep the words of this book*; worship God."
For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of τῆς προφητείας (the prophecy)."	And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of τῆς προφητείας (the prophecy) of this book, for the time is near."

Here it is seen that the reference to τῆς προφητείας in 19:10 is paralleled by a similar reference to τῆς προφητείας in 22:10, but in 22:10 τῆς προφητείας is defined as being τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου (the prophecy of this book). This parallel would suggest that τῆς προφητείας of 19:10 is also a reference to 'the prophecy of this book'—i.e. the book of Revelation.

There is also a significant grammatical parallel between the phrases τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας in 19:10 and τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας in 22:10. In view of their grammatical similarity, it is reasonable that the two phrases— τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας and τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας—should be understood in a similar way

unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise. Logic would dictate that τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας should naturally be understood as referring to the spirit of the book of Revelation, in the same way that τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας refers to the words of the book of Revelation. This being the case, the function of the expression ἡ γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστιν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας should be understood not as defining the testimony of Jesus as the prophetic gift, but rather as stating that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit—i.e. the reality, essence, substance, disposition, and characteristic—of the prophecy of the book of Revelation. [187]

Other commentators have reached a similar conclusion with regard to the meaning of τὸ πνεῦμα in this verse. Leon Morris notes that if the phrase 'the testimony of Jesus' is taken to mean 'the testimony which Jesus bore,' then "the meaning is that the message Jesus gave is the spirit, the heart of all prophecy."[188] Martin Kiddle prefers the rendition, "for the testimony borne by Jesus is the breath of all prophecy."[189] Grant Osborne concedes that "if Ιησοῦ is a subjective genitive, it could mean 'the testimony Jesus gave is the essence of prophecy'."[190] Robert Mounce considers the possibility of taking the testimony of Jesus as an objective genitive and then concludes that "it is better, however, to retain the subjective genitive (as earlier in the same verse) and interpret the saying accordingly. It could mean that

[187] Cf. the NLT which translates τὸ πνεῦμα as "the essence": "For the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness for Jesus." Fred Mazzaferri, in "*Martyria Iesou* Revisited," 119, argues that πνεῦμα "cannot assume so banal a nuance as essence in so significant a verse as 19:10." Yet he does not seem to have considered the extent of the parallel noted here, nor the fact that τῆς προφητείας in 19:10 refers primarily to the book of Revelation rather than merely to prophecy in a general sense.

[188] Leon Morris, *The Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed., rev. ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 20 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), 222.

[189] Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John*, Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963), 383.

[190] Osborne, *Revelation*, 678.

the witness or testimony that Jesus bore is the essence of prophetic proclamation—the principle that dominates prophecy."[191]

Whether they choose to understand τὸ πνεῦμα as heart, breath, or essence, each of these commentators recognises essentially the same thing—that it is Jesus who speaks through the prophets and that it is his message that forms the essential substance of their prophecy. But it has been argued in this study that Rev 19:10 is specific, in that it refers specifically to John's prophecy—the book of Revelation. J. Ramsey Michaels is hesitant, but acknowledges the possibility:

> So *the testimony of Jesus* is the spirit or essence of Christian prophecy. Whether it is also "the spirit of *the* prophecy," referring to the book of Revelation itself (1:3; 22:7, 18-19), is more difficult to say (it does have the definite article in Greek). If it is, then *the testimony of Jesus* is virtually equivalent to the title "revelation of Jesus Christ" at the beginning of the book (1:1).[192]

That the reference is to the book of Revelation is not so difficult to see when the parallel with 22:10 is considered—as this study has shown. Sigve Tonstad is more certain, but sees application to Old Testament prophecy as well: "John, himself engaged in a prophetic mission, is told that 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of the prophecy', meaning his own prophecy to be sure, but also including the entire body of Old Testament prophecy, the imprint of which is seen on nearly every concept, symbol and verse of Revelation."[193] So rather than defining 'the testimony of Jesus' as the prophetic gift, 19:10 is stating that 'the testimony of Jesus' is the very heart or essence of Revelation's prophecy. It is in this way that 'those who heed the words of this book' are 'holding fast to the testimony of Jesus'.

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[191] Mounce, *Revelation*, 349–350.

[192] Michaels, *Revelation*, 214.

[193] Tonstad, *Saving God's Reputation*, 181.

Keeping the Words of this Book

As the parallels between 19:9–10 and 22:6–10 are considered again, it can be seen that holding τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ —in the same way as τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς do in 12:17—is equated with keeping the 'words of this book'. This makes perfect sense in the light of what has been established—that τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ is the spirit or essence of the book of Revelation. The verb 'to hold' in both 19:10 and 12:17 is ϵχω. The meaning of ϵχω is "to have, to hold, to have as one's possession" and it is used in Rev 6:9; 12:17; and 19:10 in the sense of "holding fast to."[194] So to "hold the testimony of Jesus" and to "keep the words of this book" are essentially the same thing in this context, as the parallel would strongly suggest. When people keep "the words of the prophecy of this book" they are holding fast to the testimony of Jesus, because the testimony of Jesus is the essence of the prophecy.

John's Visionary Experience?

It was noted above that a recent development in the defense of the traditional Seventh-day Adventist position considers 'the testimony of Jesus' in Revelation 1:2 to be a reference to John's visionary gift, thus supposedly providing support for the claim that 'the testimony of Jesus' in Revelation 12:17 is a reference to the prophetic gift.

Yet the context of Revelation 1:2 makes the meaning 'the testimony of Jesus' plain. In Revelation 1:2—"who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all that he saw"—'the testimony of Jesus' refers back to the first verse, which says that God gave Jesus Christ this special message, and Christ in turn sent it to John by an angel. In other words, what we now have as the book of

[194] Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 421.

Revelation is ‘the testimony of Jesus’. So the context indicates that ‘the testimony of Jesus’ is not “John’s visionary experience of Jesus”—it is simply a reference to the *content* of the message from God, borne by Jesus to John.

A comparison with John 3:31, 32 supports this conclusion: “He who comes from heaven is above all. What he has seen and heard, of that he testifies; and no one receives his testimony.” Here the process is essentially the same as the one already noted in Revelation 1:2. There are things that Jesus has seen and heard (from God), and Jesus in turn shares this information with those who will receive it. The information that he shares is what constitutes “his testimony”—“his testimony” is the message he bears. Again, the emphasis is on the *content* of the message, not the *experience* of those who are its intended recipients.

Thus, an appeal to Revelation 1:2 in support of the claim that ‘the testimony of Jesus’ in Revelation 12:17 is a reference to the prophetic gift is unwarranted and does nothing to strengthen the traditional Seventh-day Adventist view. In fact, a careful consideration of Revelation 1:2 actually brings the traditional view further into question in that 1:2 shows clearly that τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ is the message borne by Jesus Himself.

What the foregoing demonstrates is that Revelation 19:10 is not the key that unlocks the meaning of the phrase τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ in Revelation 12:17. Rather, as has been shown in Chapter Two, it is in 14:12 that we find the key to understanding the meaning of τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ in 12:17 and the identity of those who have it. It was noted that the summary statement of Revelation 14:12 functions as a perfect parallel to 12:17 and that the expression τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ in 14:12 serves as a clarifying equivalent to τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ in 12:17. It was concluded in Chapter Two that ‘the faith of Jesus’ in Revelation 14:12 is a reference to the content

of the Christian faith that has its origin in the teachings of Jesus, and, therefore, that the parallel 'testimony of Jesus' in 12:17 must also have a similar meaning—it too refers to "all the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament . . . the whole New Testament, which relates to Jesus."[195]

Summary

It is evident that the phrase τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ in 12:17 is not a reference to the prophetic gift that was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As shown in Chapter Two, the phrase τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ is a reference first to the message borne by Jesus himself—a message that originates with God and is shared with all who will receive it. Second, in view of the parallel with τὴν πίστιν Ἰησου, the phrase seems in Revelation to have come to refer also to the teachings of Jesus borne by the apostles. These teachings from Jesus and about Jesus, together with τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ, constitute the Christian faith. To hold on to the τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ, as those in Revelation 12:17 do, is to remain true to basic Christianity—it is 'keeping the faith.'

Conclusion

The identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς was investigated in Chapter Two by examining of the context of 12:17. It was concluded that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς are faithful believers—synonymous with the 'saints' of 13:7 and 14:12—throughout the Christian era.

In Chapter Three attention has been directed to evaluating the way that Seventh-day Adventists historically have understood the identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ

[195] Ellen G. White, "MR No. 324 - The Church and Its Mission," in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5 (Silver Spring, MD: E. G. White Estate, 1990), 290.

σπέρματος αὐτῆς, specifically their understanding that their movement is the one designated in 12:17 as 'the remnant' and that none other meets the specifications laid down in that verse. Four premises that form the basis for the Seventh-day Adventist assertion were identified as follows:

1. The term λοιπός in 12:17 evokes the Old Testament concept of a saved 'remnant.'
2. The 'remnant' are an end-time group of believers who appear in history after the 1260 day period of 12:6 has come to an end.
3. The phrase 'commandments of God' refers to the Ten Commandments and therefore identifies this group of believers as a Sabbath keeping people.
4. The phrase 'testimony of Jesus' is defined in Revelation 19:10 as the spirit of prophecy, and is therefore a reference to the prophetic gift that was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White.

Each of these premises was examined and evaluated in light of the conclusions reached in Chapter Two.

The first of these four specifications states that the term λοιπός in 12:17 evokes the Old Testament concept of a saved 'remnant.' However it was noted (1) that λοιπός is never used elsewhere in the NT in the technical sense of a "remnant" (rather it is used in the more general sense of "leave" or "the others"); and (2) that in Revelation John utilises λιοπός in its basic sense of 'the others' regardless of size or morality.

Leslie Pollard's recent defense of the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the function of λοιπός in 12:17 was evaluated and found to be inadequate. While acknowledging that a significant number of scholars believe that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ

σπέρματος αὐτῆς in 12:17 represent all believers, Pollard defends the Seventh-day Adventst view by appealing to syntax. He claims that the phrase τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς constitutes a partitive ablative, and therefore cannot include all believers, but only a portion of the whole. When that claim was examined it was found that reading the phrase τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς as a partitive ablative does nothing to counter the view that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς represent all believers. Richard Lehmann's appeal to context to support the understanding of λοιπός as an eschatological remnant was also evaluated and found to be unjustified.

The conclusion was reached that there is no evidence to support the claim that the term λοιπός in 12:17 evokes the Old Testament concept of a saved 'remnant.' Rather, in light of John's use of the term λοιπός throughout the book of Revelation, it is highly unlikely that in Revelation 12:17 he is referring to an exclusively end-time group of believers that correlate to the OT concept of a saved remnant.

Attention was then given to the Seventh-day Adventist understanding that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς is an end-time group of believers who appear in history after the 1260-day period of 12:6 has come to an end. As the rationale given for this position by Seventh-day Adventist scholars was considered it became apparent that the only basis for this view is the order in which the events are mentioned in chapter 12. Since nothing else in the text suggests that the dragon's war against τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς occurs after the 1260-day period mentioned earlier in the sequence, it was concluded that in fact it was more likely that this war is carried out during the 1260-day period for the two reasons given in Chapter Two—the relation of 12:17 to the verses that precede it, and its relation to the verses that follow. As in Chapter Two, it was again concluded that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς cannot be limited to an end-time group of believers who appear in history after the 1260-day

period of 12:6 has come to an end. Rather, they are faithful believers who are attacked by the dragon during the period designated in 12:6, 14 and 13:5.

The third of the four premises that form the basis for the Seventh-day Adventist position is that τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ in 12:17 refer to the Ten Commandments and therefore identify τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς as a Sabbath keeping people. Having noted that John uses the expression τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ in Revelation as a functional parallel to the expression τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ, it was evident that limiting τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ to a reference to the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20 is too narrow, and that a broader meaning must be intended. It seems more likely therefore that τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ refer to the Old Testament as a whole—not just the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20.

This being the case, the coupling of τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ with τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ points to the totality of Scripture—the prophetic witness of the OT coupled with the testimony borne by Jesus and the Apostles in the NT. It was concluded then that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς are to be identified throughout history by their faithfulness to what today is called the Bible, rather than being identified at the end of history by their faithfulness to one particular commandment—that is, the reference to the τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ in 12:17 does not indicate the rise of a Sabbath-keeping movement after the 1260 days ended in AD 1798.

Attention was then turned to the fourth premise underlying the SDA position—that the phrase τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ is defined in Revelation 19:10 as the spirit of prophecy, and is therefore a reference to the prophetic gift that was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. It was noted first that Revelation 19:10 does seem to provide a ready definition of ‘the testimony of Jesus’ as the prophetic gift, lending support to the view that those who have the testimony of Jesus are in

possession of the gift of prophecy; and that a comparison of Revelation 19:10 with 22:9 seems to demonstrate that those who have the testimony of Jesus are to be identified as prophets, again supporting the conclusion that those who have the testimony of Jesus are in some way in possession of the prophetic gift.

When this conclusion was evaluated in light of the findings of Chapter Two and the structural parallels within Revelation, a number of problems with this line of reasoning were identified. First, it was seen that this conclusion failed to carefully consider the extent of the parallel between 19:10 and 22:9. A comparison of the two passages showed that those who have or 'hold fast to' the testimony of Jesus are both "the prophets" *and* "those who keep the words of this book". Secondly, it was shown that the phrase, "the spirit of prophecy", would be better understood as "the spirit of *the* prophecy"—a reference to the prophecy of the book of Revelation itself rather than the prophetic gift. Thus, rather that defining τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ as the prophetic gift, 19:10 is stating that 'the testimony of Jesus' is the very heart or essence of Revelation's prophecy. It is in this way that 'those who heed the words of this book' are 'holding fast to the testimony of Jesus.'

On this basis it was concluded that the phrase τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ in 12:17 is not a reference to the prophetic gift that was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. It is a reference first to the message borne by Jesus himself and second, in parallel with τὴν πίστιν Ἰησου, it seems in Revelation to have come to refer also to the teachings of Jesus borne by the apostles and recorded in the New Testament.

The claim made by Seventh-day Adventists that their movement is the one designated in 12:17 as 'the remnant' is not supported by the evidence from the text or the context—τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς are not portrayed specifically as an end-time (post-1798) Sabbath-keeping remnant who are in possession of the prophetic

gift. Τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς may however include such a group, to the degree that such a group meets the criteria that is found in the text and context—they are faithful believers who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the testimony of Jesus.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Revelation 12:17 is the central text for Seventh-day Adventist self-understanding, in that Seventh-day Adventists have found, and continue to find, a description of their identity as God's end-time remnant people in this verse. Seventh-day Adventists have been convinced from the outset that their movement is the one referred to in this verse—the "remnant of her seed" (KJV), the church of the last days called by God to fulfill a special mission.

The present study set out to accomplish two things:

(1) to examine the identity of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς of Revelation 12:17;

(2) to evaluate the Seventh-day Adventist assertion that their movement is the one designated in 12:17 as 'the remnant' and that none other meets the specifications laid down in that verse.

The first objective was accomplished by giving consideration to five key contextual features that enabled a sound identification to be made. It was determined that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς are believers, faithful to the Old and New Testament Scriptures, throughout the Christian era, identified elsewhere in Revelation as 'the saints.'

The second objective was addressed by examining the four theological premises upon which the Seventh-day Adventist Church has made its assertion, and evaluating those premises in light of the identification of 'the rest of her seed' made in Chapter Two. It was determined that the Seventh-day Adventist movement is not specifically identified as 'the remnant' in 12:17. However, it was recognized that Seventh-day Adventists are to be considered part of τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς

to the degree that their personal faith and practice is in harmony with the teachings of the Bible—'the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus'.

Implications and Suggestions for Further Research

Having concluded that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς are faithful Christians throughout the Christian era, consideration must now be given to the implications of this conclusion. These implications can be placed in two categories—implications for Seventh-day Adventist self-understanding, and implications for our understanding of the book of Revelation.

Seventh-day Adventist Self-Understanding

If it is accepted that 12:17 does not speak of a 'remnant'—a last-day church identified by the keeping of the Sabbath commandment and the gift of prophecy—there is a significant question that must be asked: Given their historic understanding of Revelation 12:17, how are Seventh-day Adventists to see themselves now? To put this question another way, on what then do Seventh-day Adventists now base their self-understanding?

It may be that enough evidence might be found in other passages of Scripture for Seventh-day Adventists to continue to identify themselves as an end-time 'remnant'. If that can be done, then Seventh-day Adventists self-identity as an end-time remnant may remain intact. However, given that the Seventh-day Adventist appropriation of the remnant motif is based largely on its historicist interpretation of Revelation 12–14 and specifically its interpretation of 12:17, it remains to be seen whether or not such an achievement is possible.

Seventh-day Adventists might take a different approach and seek to identify themselves in relation to what is coming rather that what has been. For example, instead of viewing themselves as a 'remnant', it may be more appropriate for Seventh-day Adventists to see their movement as a 'forerunner' for Jesus' second advent in the way that John the Baptist was a forerunner before Jesus' first advent—"and it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah . . . to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17 NASB). These two 'identities' are not mutually exclusive—in fact Seventh-day Adventists already use both—but it may be that the second could take precedence if the first is found to be inadequate.

Alternatively, it may be sufficient for Seventh-day Adventists simply to identify themselves as Sabbath-keeping Christians who are anticipating the soon return of Jesus. These were the distinctive beliefs that set Seventh-day Adventists apart from other Christians 150 years ago when the Church was formally established. Seventh-day Adventists must now ask if they still have an essential contribution to make in regard to these truths. It is certainly possible that this contribution is enough to give Seventh-day Adventists a sense of identity and purpose apart from an understanding of themselves as an end-time remnant.

Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of Revelation

The second category of implications concerns the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the book of Revelation. First, the findings in this study enable the identification of the issue that is portrayed throughout the book as being at the heart of the ongoing conflict between the dragon and the people of God.

It has been shown that τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς in 12:17 are characterized by their keeping of 'the commandments of God' and having 'the

testimony of Jesus'. It was also demonstrated that the use of these two key characteristics to identify 'the rest of her seed' is not unique in the book of Revelation. Rather, God's people are consistently defined throughout the book in terms of their faithfulness to these two features, even though there is some stylistic variation in the way that the terms are used elsewhere (cf. Rev 1:9; 6:9; 14:12; 20:4). These statements serve to distil and crystallize the issue in the conflict and in doing so bring clarity to what is at stake. In the words of Kenneth Strand: "In the book of Revelation, faithfulness to the "word of God" and to the "testimony of Jesus" separates the faithful from the faithless, and it brings about persecution that includes John's own exile and the martyrdom of other believers (see again Rev 1:9; 6:9; 12:17; 20:4; etc.)."[196] It was argued that the historical range of these texts covers the entire Christian era, not one exclusive segment of time, thereby providing the basis for an underlying story of conflict that runs through the book of Revelation.

The second finding of this study that has implications for the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Revelation is that the event of 12:17—the dragon's attack on τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς—is at the start of the 1260 days rather than at the end. If 12:17 is not placed in the 'end-time' (i.e. after the 1260 days), how should the events of chapters 13 and 14 be understood? The Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the specific events and characters portrayed in chapters 13 and 14 has not been addressed in this study. However, the findings of this study have very significant implications for the understanding of these chapters. Future research could explore these implications.

[196] Strand, "The Two Witnesses," 133.

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