

The End Time Remnant in Revelation

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The term “remnant” (*loipos*) is found several times in Revelation (2:24; 3:2; 8:13; 9:20; 11:13; 12:17; 19:21; 20:5). In a number of translations this term is sometimes rendered “others.” In contrast to the term “church,” the word “remnant” does not only apply to true believers. In several cases it is even used with a negative connotation. The remnant can be a faithful or an unfaithful remnant. While the latter will be destroyed, the faithful remnant is identified by certain characteristics. The following diagram illustrates how the term “remnant” is used in Revelation:

- (1) *The “remnant” without a direct connection to the church:*
 - (a) The rest of the trumpets (8:13)
 - (b) The survivors:
 - The rest of the people (the surviving two thirds of the population), who are not destroyed by the plagues (9:20)
 - The inhabitants of the city (minus 7000), who are not killed (11:13)
 - (c) The remnant as a group of people who are subject to judgment:
 - The rest (worshippers of the beast) are killed (19:21)
 - The rest of the (other) dead were resurrected after the millennium (20:5)
- (2) *The remnant in connection with the church*
 - (a) Possibly negative:
 - The remnant (neuter) in connection with the church of Sardis which is about to die (3:2)¹
 - (b) Possibly positive:

¹A faithful remnant is apparently mentioned in Rev 3:4. Yet the word in use here is not *loipos*, but *oliga*—in the plural “some,” “a few.” See also Gerhard Hasel, “The Remnant in Scripture and the End Time,” *Adventists Affirm*, Fall 1988: 11, and “Who are the Remnant?,” *Adventists Affirm*, Fall 1993: 9.

MUELLER: THE END TIME REMNANT IN REVELATION

The survivors of 11:13 are terrified and give glory to God. In light of 14:7 they seem to turn to God and become a faithful remnant.

- (c) Positive, the faithful remnant:
 - In the church of Thyatira (2:24)
 - The end time remnant (12:17)

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. We will focus on this.

I. The Remnant in Rev 12–14

1. The Literary Context

The account of the remnant in Rev 12:17 is part of the fourth major segment in the Apocalypse (Rev 11:19–14:20), the centerpiece of the book. Three series of sevens—the letters to the churches, the seals, and the trumpets—precede it. In Rev 12–14, this device of sevens is interrupted and a group of three dominates the scene. Yet in its structure this vision resembles the preceding series of sevens.²

Battle with Evil Forces

a. The Temple Scene (11:19)

The temple scene in Rev 11:19 functions as a preparation for the succeeding issues, just as previous temple scenes introduced individual series of sevens. The location mentioned in Rev 11:19 is the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary (Exod 40:20–28). The ark of the covenant is not only visible but is in the center.

The ark of the covenant is linked to three important elements or concepts:

(1) The ark contained the ten commandments (Exod 25:21; Deut 10:1–2). Therefore, the introductory scene raises the question of what will happen to God’s unceasingly binding law during church history and in the end time and how this is related to faithfulness to God.

(2) The ark was covered with the mercy seat (Exod 25:21). Salvation comes only by the grace of God through Jesus’ substitutionary self-sacrifice. Those who break the law can be forgiven and the individual can receive pardon on the condition of faith, which, according to the New Testament, has no merit of itself.

(3) The day of atonement is alluded to. Only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest was allowed to enter the most holy place (Lev 16), whereas the congregation remained worshiping in front of the sanctuary. This

²Cf. Kenneth A. Strand, “The Eight Basic Visions,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 6:42.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

was a symbolic judicial rite to portray the ultimate elimination of sin which will take place at the end of time.

All three aspects appear in the “prophetic description” (Rev 12–13), as well as in the “spotlight on last events” (Rev 14).

- (a) God’s law (Ten Commandments):
 - Observance (12:17; 14:12)
 - Rejection (12:4, 15; 13:4, 6, 8, 12, 14, 15; 14:11)
- (b) Grace on the basis of Jesus’ sacrificial death and the response by faith (12:11; 13:10; 14:12)
- (c) Worship and judgment:
 - True worship and judgment (14:7)
 - False worship (13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:11)

b. The Prophetic Description (12–13)

(1) The Dragon and the Woman (12:1–17)

The dragon, the woman, the male child, Michael, and the remnant are the main characters in Rev 12. The following little chiasm shows how they appear there:

- A The woman, the son, and the dragon (12:1–6)
- B Michael and the dragon (12:7–12)
- A’ The woman, the remnant, and the dragon (12:13–17)

This chapter is clearly divided into three sections.³ The first and the last sections correspond to each other. Yet the middle section is also connected to the other two parts: A and B are associated by the phrases “he cast to the earth” (namely the stars, v.4) and “he was cast” (namely Satan and, in addition, his angels—v.9). B and A’ are linked by the common theme of battle (vs.7, 17). The following outline provides an overview of the chapter:

- A *The woman, the child, and the dragon* (12:1–6)
 - 1. Introduction of the woman (1–2)
 - 2. Introduction of the dragon (3)
 - 3. The dragon against the stars and the woman’s child—attempt to kill the child (4)
 - 4. Birth of the son and His ascension (5)
 - 5. Flight of the woman into the desert (1260 days) (6)
- B *Michael and the Dragon* (12:7–12)
 - 1. The battle and the results (7–9)
 - 2. Evaluation in a hymn (10–12)
- A’ *The woman, the remnant, and the dragon* (12:13–17)

³Cf. Hubert Ritt, *Offenbarung des Johannes*, Die Neue Echter Bibel (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1988), 65.

MUELLER: THE END TIME REMNANT IN REVELATION

1. Action: *The dragon*—persecution of the woman who gave birth to the son (13)
2. Response: The eagle—the woman escapes into the desert (3 1/2 times) (14)
3. Action: *The serpent*—attempt to kill the woman (15)
4. Response: The earth—rescue of the woman from the dragon (16)
5. Action: *The dragon*—war against the remnant (17)

A4 and A5 are linked to A'1 and A'2 by the topics persecution and rescue. The description of the woman in A1 is mirrored by a description of the remnant in A5. In A3 and A'3 the common thought is the attempt of murder.

In section A the woman has given birth to the male child, which is attacked by the dragon. As a parallel section A' mentions the woman bringing forth the remnant⁴ that are pursued by the wrath of the dragon. After a time of suffering the child is taken away to God. Suffering is not mentioned in 12:5, but is hinted at in 12:11 by the mention of the blood of the Lamb (section B). Apparently, the remnant of her offspring have to endure distress before they, as redeemed ones, can stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion (14:1).

The woman is a symbol for God's true church. In the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament, God's people are compared to a woman—Isa 54:5–6; Eph 5:25–32. As soon as God's people separate from the Lord, they become, as a group, a harlot—Jer 3:20; Eze 23:2–4. Indeed, in the book of Revelation the faithful church (chap. 12) is contrasted with a church that has fallen away from the Lord, the harlot Babylon (chap. 17).

The male child is Jesus Christ: (1) Ruling with a rod of iron is taken from Ps 2, a messianic psalm. (2) This expression is used in Rev 19:15, and there it is applied to Jesus. (3) That the child is caught up to God and His throne points toward the ascension of Jesus and His inauguration at the right hand of God.

The dragon is Satan (12:9). He is the first part of the satanic trinity that appears in 12–14. Since after His ascension the dragon cannot attack Jesus any longer, he turns specifically against God's church and the remnant of her offspring. Apparently, the dragon carries out this battle against the remnant through the beast out of the sea (13a) and the beast out of the earth (13b).⁵ The sea beast, which appears immediately after the dragon and declares war against the saints, receives its power and authority directly from the dragon (13:2). The dragon went "to make war with the remnant" (12:17, *poiēsai polemon meta tōn loipōn*). The sea beast is given power to "to make war with the saints [*poiēsai polemon meta tōn hagiōn*] and to overcome them" (13:7). The beast out of the earth

⁴Cf. Eduard Lohse, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, NTD 11 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 76. He calls the remnant and the Messiah "children of the woman."

⁵Cf. Ulrich B. Müller *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar, vol. 19 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1984), 247, who states that chap. 13 develops what it means: that the dragon cast out of heaven battles against Christians and starts a final assault against those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus (12:17).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

speaks like a dragon (13:11), is connected to the sea beast, and has also received its power and does not in itself possess it (13:14.15).

(2) The Beast out of the Sea and the Saints (12:18–13:10)

An overview of Rev 13a reveals the following structure:

1. *Description of the beast and the reaction of humanity* (13:1–4)
 - a. Description of the beast (1–3a)
 - (1) Appearance of the beast
 - (2) Authority from the dragon
 - (3) Deadly wound and recovery
 - b. Reaction of humankind: *Worship* (3b–4)
2. *Actions of the beast and reaction of humanity* (13:5–8)
 - a. Actions of the beast (5–7)
 - (1) *It was given to him* a mouth speaking blasphemies
 - (2) *It was given to him authority* to act for 42 months
 - (3) He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, the tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven
 - (4) *It was given to him* to make war with the saints
 - (5) *It was given to him authority* over the nations
 - b. Reaction of humanity: *Worship* (8)
3. *The threefold “If anyone . . .” and the attitude of the saints: “Here is . . .”* (13:9–10)

The beast out of the sea is clearly dependent⁶ on the dragon and collaborates with him. In contrast to the description and the actions of the sea beast (13:1–8), there is the brief description of the saints starting with the words “Here is . . .” (13:10b). The sections 13:1–4 and 13:5–8 seem to be parallel.⁷ In both parts mouth, blasphemy, power, and worship are mentioned.⁸ Death through the

⁶Cf. also the expression “it was given to him” in Rev 12:18; 13:2.4.

⁷Cf. William H. Shea, “Time Prophecies of Daniel 12 and Revelation 12–13,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, 6:354–359, and William G. Johnson, “The Saint’s End-Time Victory over the Forces of Evil,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book II*, 7:24.

⁸The section 13:5–7 seems to have a chiasm structure. Charles Homer Giblin, *The Book of Revelation: The Open Book of Prophecy*, Good News Studies 34 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991), 133–134, supports this view. However, he includes passages 3b–4 and 8, both of which talk about false universal worship. He calls the section 13:3b–8 “the concentrically-structured, dramatized scene of false worship.” The following table of 13:1–10 seems to point towards two parts plus an appendix or contrast:

V. 1	beast heads	names of blasphemy	
V. 2	beast dragon	mouth	dragon gave power
V. 3	beast heads/mortally wounded		
V. 4	beast dragon	he (dragon)	make <i>earth</i> gave authority war worship
V. 5	(it)	mouth/blasphemy	was given/authority was given
V. 6	(it)	God	mouth/blasphemy/blaspheme name
V. 7	(it)	saints	was given/make authority was given war

MUELLER: THE END TIME REMNANT IN REVELATION

sword at the end of the passage (13:10) might be a reminder to the mortal wound at the beginning of the text. Twice universal worship of humankind is mentioned. Unfortunately, it is not directed toward God, but to the dragon and to the beast. The actions of the sea beast are directed against God and against the saints.

(3) The Beast out of the Earth and the Inhabitants of Earth (13:11–19)

In contrast to the passage on the sea beast and the saints, Rev 13b makes no reference to the saints, even though the two beasts are closely interrelated. However, Rev 13b extensively points to those who dwell on earth (13:8; 13:12; 14:14), a group of people consistently presented in a negative way throughout the book of Revelation. The beast out of the earth exercises its power through force. Everyone who submits to this force is part of these inhabitants of earth. On the other hand, whoever does not worship the image of the beast is threatened with death. Whoever does accept the mark of the beast has to anticipate an economic boycott. This group that resists the beast is not mentioned by a specific name.

Rev 13b can be outlined as follows:

1. *Description of the beast* (11)
2. *Actions of the beast* (12–17)
 - a. First beast (twice), pressure to *worship*—inhabitants of the earth (12)
 - b. Signs (twice)—inhabitants of the earth (13–14a)
 - c. The image of the beast (four times), pressure to *worship*—inhabitants of the earth (14b–15)
 - d. Mark of the beast (twice)—sixfold description of the inhabitants of the earth (16–17)
3. *Those who understand: “Here is . . .”* (18)

Just as in the preceding section, the topic of worship is used in two different verses. Again, it is a misguided worship which is in opposition to the true worship of God.

(4) Conclusion

Satan is fighting against the church (Rev 12), especially against the remnant (12:17). He fights them through the beast out of the sea (Rev 13a) and through the beast out of the earth (Rev 13b), which erects an image. Even though the beast of the sea and the image are not identical, they both pursue the same goal. The final question revolves around the issue of worship: worship of God or wor-

V. 8 (it)	lamb/	<i>earth/slain worship</i>
V. 9		
V. 10	saints	

This table would allow for a chiasmic structure of Rev 13:3b–8 if viewed from the perspective of worship only. Yet the other elements contradict such a conclusion.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

ship of man-made systems, and therefore actually worship of Satan. Everyone opposed to false worship and obedient to God will have to face severe problems. Still, there will be people who will hold fast to their faith (13:10) and obedience to God (12:17).

c. The Spotlight on Last Events (14:1–13)

(1) The 144,000 (14:1–5)

Starting with Rev 14:1–5, the perspective has changed. This results in the following outline:

- (1) “I saw”—the Lamb and the 144,000 (1)
- (2) “I heard”—the new song of the 144,000 (2–3)
- (3) Characteristics of the 144,000 (4–5)

The Lamb and the 144,000 stand on Mount Zion. Those who have been condemned and persecuted in chap.13 now triumph with the Lamb.⁹ Instead of the mark of the beast on their foreheads, these people bear the name of the Lamb and of the Father. They belong to God. He keeps them. They are similar to Him. They sing a new song, a song of their personal experience in the final battle between truth and error, God and Satan. They are purchased. Even though they were unable to buy or sell (13:17), Jesus has bought them. Salvation was expensive. It cost Jesus His life.

The 144,000 have not defiled themselves with women. They are virgins. This means they have not entered into a relationship with false religion or they have separated themselves from it.¹⁰ They follow Jesus every step of the way (cf. John 10:27–28) and are transformed through God’s grace.

(2) The Three Angels’ Messages (14:6–13)

The three angels’ messages have apparently brought forth the 144,000 and are the messages proclaimed by the 144,000. These messages, and especially the first one, are the eternal gospel. Although judgment is quite prominent, the goal is salvation of each individual through Jesus Christ.

The *first message* emphasizes worship of the creator in contrast to worship of man-made systems and worship of Satan. It accentuates obedience to God and the pre-advent judgment.¹¹ The *second message* proclaims the fall of Baby-

⁹Lohse, 84, labels Zion as “die Stätte der endzeitlichen Bewahrung” (the place of end time preservation).

¹⁰Cf. the woman in chap. 12 and the harlot in chap.17, Jezebel in 2:20, furthermore, 2:14 and 18:2.4.

¹¹The wording in 14:7 points back to the fourth commandment. To worship God as the creator also implies keeping His day holy, the day that He instituted at creation as a commemoration of creation. While the healing of the fatal wound of the beast leads to a new conflict on earth, heaven is conducting the pre-advent judgment and actively sides with the true believers.

MUELLER: THE END TIME REMNANT IN REVELATION

lon.¹² In the *third message* the angel announces God's final judgment on those who worship the beast or its image and carry the mark of the beast. God responds to the Babylonian wine of wrath with His own wine of wrath (Ps 75:9). The followers of the beast have persecuted God's people, but God intervenes on the behalf of His children.¹³

The blessing that follows points out that although some might have to pay for their loyalty and their relationship to Jesus with their life—they may die during the end time—they are blessed. They may rest until the resurrection.

d. The Glorious Climax: The Twofold Harvest of the Earth (14:14–20)

After the proclamation of the last of the three angels' messages in Rev 14a, when the division of all people into two groups—the bearers of the mark of the beast and the bearers of the seal of God—is final. Then three additional angels appear, together with the one who is like a son of man—Rev 14b. They are ready to reap the harvest of the earth. Jesus returns, and with His second coming the twofold harvest of the earth begins:

(1) The wheat harvest: Those who belong to Jesus will be caught up to Him. They are ripe.

(2) The wine harvest: The remaining people will be destroyed. Because they have rejected God's message of Rev 14:7–12 addressed to them, they are also ripe, ripe for their downfall. Even though the judgment will be troublesome, God's remnant can rejoice over their deliverance from the dragon, the beast out of the sea, and the beast out of the earth.

¹²In order for us to understand the meaning and significance of the term Babylon, we have to examine this expression in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen 11; Isa 14, Dan, as well as in its New Testament context. In the New Testament, it is used as a code-name for Rome (1 Pet 5:13). In Revelation, Babylon is described in detail in chaps. 17–18. The great city Babylon stands in contrast to Jerusalem, the city of God—11:2, 8; 14:1, 8; 16:19. In chap. 17:1–5, Babylon is depicted as a harlot. Thus, it also stands in contrast to the woman clothed with the sun in Rev 12, a symbol of the faithful church. Babylon represents a religious system that has fallen away from God. Its destruction is announced, and God's people are called to separate from it in order to avoid judgment (18:2, 4). The remnant has nothing to do with Babylon. Cf. Ekkehardt Mueller, "Babylon in Revelation" (unpublished manuscript).

¹³The mark of the beast is indirectly defined 14:12. Those who receive this mark are contrasted with the saints. The saints are characterized by their patience, faith in Jesus, and keeping of the commandments. Evidently, these characteristics are lacking in the first group. These people are not faithful to Jesus and his commandments, or they only partially respect the law found in the ark of the covenant of the heavenly sanctuary (11:19). Yet partial obedience still counts as disobedience (Jas 2:10–12). This is supported by the understanding of the seal of God in Rev 7, the counterpart of the mark of the beast. John may have had in mind Ezek 9:4–6 when he wrote about the seal of God. Those who are brokenhearted about the sins among God's people, those who turn away from their sins and turn to God with all earnestness, will be the ones to receive the seal of God. They do not disregard God's will, because they love their Lord (John 14:15) and expect their salvation only from Him. All those that are not sealed by God will eventually be left to the "sealing" by the beast and its image.

2. The Time Frame

a. The Overall Time Frame

Rev 12–14 covers at least the time from Jesus' first coming to his second coming. The male child who is born by the woman and ascends to God is without doubt Jesus. Thus, His life from His birth to His ascension (12:5) is sketched out. The one like a son of man, coming to the harvest on a cloud (14:14), is once again Jesus, this time at His second coming.

In this vision of the battle between the satanic trinity and God's people, we find several time elements:

- (1) In 12:6 the woman remains in the desert for 1260 days.
- (2) In 12:14 it is three and a half times.
- (3) The sea beast rages for 42 months.

These time elements are all identical: Three and a half years at 360 days each amount to 1260 days or 42 months. Seven times they are mentioned in the Bible, twice in Daniel and five times in Revelation:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| (1) Dan 7:25 | 3 1/2 times: Persecution of the saints |
| (2) Dan 12:7 | 3 1/2 times: Dispersion of the holy people |
| (3) Rev 11:2 | 42 months: Trampling of the holy city |
| (4) Rev 11:3 | 1260 days: The witnesses clothed in sackcloth |
| (5) Rev 12:6 | 1260 days: The woman in the desert |
| (6) Rev 12:14 | 3 1/2 times: The woman in the desert |
| (7) Rev 13:5 | 42 months: Actions of the sea beast directed against God |

The 1260 days that the woman has to undergo the desert experience correspond—according to the year-day principle—to 1260 years, lasting from 538 A.D. until 1798 A.D. Christians suffered from many persecutions.¹⁴ Rev 12–14 describes the time of the early Christian church, the medieval ages, and the end time leading up to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

b. The Time Frame of Rev 12

Rev 12 also contains these three periods of world history. In the first stage, Satan fights God's church by turning against Jesus (12:1–5). As soon as Jesus is out of his reach, he focuses on the church itself for 1260 days. After that Satan turns his attention to the remnant of her offspring.

The descendant of the women at the beginning of Rev. 12 finds a certain parallel in the descendants of the woman at the end of Rev 12.¹⁵ The dragon opposes all of them. The battle against the remnant in 12:17 is elaborated on in Rev 13, where the dragon uses his agents to fight the faithful remnant.

¹⁴The year-day principle and identification of the historical dates for the 1260 days cannot be addressed in this study. See William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 1:56–93, 116–123.

¹⁵Also cf. the expression "he stood" in 12:4 and in 12:18.

MUELLER: THE END TIME REMNANT IN REVELATION

The battle of the dragon in Rev 12 is outlined below. Notice that (1) and (2) comprise the first part of the chapter and (4) and (5) the third part.

- (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 woman¹⁶ (12:17)

Satan's warfare against the remnant therefore takes place in the last phase of world's history, which started with the 19th century and in which the great antitypical day of atonement is held.

c. The Time Frame of Rev 13a

Rev 13a mentions the same time element that has already appeared in Rev 12. It is the 42 months that lasted until 1798 AD. Furthermore, a deadly wound that heals is pointed out. The miraculous recovery leads to the worship of the dragon and the beast. Since it appears that Rev 13:1–4 and Rev 13:5–8 are parallel, we have to place the healing of the fatal wound after the 42 months.¹⁷

Because John relates a vision that he saw (13:1), he talks about events as if they had happened in the past, although in his time they were still future. Noteworthy is the change of tenses in 13:8. John switches from the previously used aorist to the future tense, thereby placing the universal worship of 13:8 after the 42 months.¹⁸

The sea beast resembles the dragon in several aspects. However, there is a significant difference: While the heads of the dragon are crowned, the horns of the sea beast are crowned. This difference seems to point to a later phase in the historical development.

In Rev. 12–14 the phrase “to make war” is used twice:

- (1) The dragon went *to make war against* the remnant (12:7).
- (2) The sea beast is given authority *to make war against* the saints (13:7).

This strong literary parallel points out that probably from Rev 13:7 onward the end time aspect dominates Rev 13a, which occurred already in 13:3–4. Ob-

¹⁶Cf. William H. Shea, “Time Prophecies of Daniel 12 and Revelation 12–13,” *ibid.*, 349.

¹⁷In 13:1–4, “blasphemy” and “mouth” are mentioned prior to the fatal wound. In 13:5–8 the blasphemy is connected to the 42 months. Universal power and universal worship seem to follow this period. It is interesting that the deadly wound (13:3) in just one of the heads of this creature leads to the deadly condition of the whole dragon (13:14). The beast is a counterfeit of the Lamb that also was deadly wounded (“slaughtered”—13:8; 5:9–12) and was resurrected (1:18; 2:8). The beast experiences a resurrection as well, leading to its universal worship (13:14).

¹⁸Vgl. Leon Morris, *The Book of Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, revised edition, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 164.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

viously, the remnant are the saints of 13:7, even though the term saints is used in a broader sense in other passages of Revelation.¹⁹

d. The Time Frame of Rev 13b

The key to the question of when the beast out of the earth in Rev 13b is going to become active, to erect the image, and to force the inhabitants of earth to worship it, is probably found in the postulate of Rev 13b that at that time the sea beast is already present and that it existed prior to the second beast.

- (1) It is designated as the “first beast” (13:12).
- (2) The beast out of the earth exercises the power of the first beast (13:12).
- (3) Rev 13:12, 14 refers back to the healing of the fatal wound of the sea beast and considers it as having happened in the past. Therefore the events of Rev 13b take place after the healing of the fatal wound and more or less simultaneously with its universal worship.

Just as from our present perspective the universal worship of the sea beast in Rev 13a is still future, so Rev 13b points to events still to come. A distinct group of worshipers of the beast or its image does not exist yet. So far there a universal death decree for those who refuse to worship man-made systems and/or specific people has not been issued.

e. The Time Frame of Rev 14

Whereas Rev 14:1–5 proleptically points to the final salvation, Rev 14:6–12 relates a message that will be proclaimed shortly before the second coming of Jesus. The second coming itself is symbolically described in 14:14–20. The crisis at the end of chap. 13 increases in intensity to the point that one fears that not a single faithful believer would be able to survive. Rev 14:1–5 forms a contrast: There are 144,000 standing as the redeemed next to Jesus. Evidently, these are the remnant. The contrast between Rev 13b and 14a can be roughly sketched out in the following way:

- A. Propaganda of the beast out of the earth (13:11–15)
 - B Followers of the beast out of the sea (13:16–18)
 - B' Followers of the lamb (14:1–5)
- A' God's last message (14:6–12)²⁰

3. Interchangeable Terms

Rev 12 mentions not only the woman, but also the remnant of her offspring. Rev 13a talks about the saints, Rev 13b about the counterpart to the inhabitants of the earth, and Rev 14a about the 144,000.²¹ As mentioned earlier, there are

¹⁹Cf. 5:8; 8:3–4; etc.

²⁰Cf. Johnson, 14.

²¹Cf. C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares—Vol. 2* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1985), 309.

MUELLER: THE END TIME REMNANT IN REVELATION

similarities between the remnant and the saints. Although the term saints in Revelation is used in a wider sense, it seems that 13a concentrates on the end time saints as the remnant.

Rev 13b mainly emphasizes the inhabitants of the earth and does not mention God's people with a direct name. Death decree and boycott are to force everyone to universal false worship. Looking at 13:15–17, we can conclude that there will be people who will not bow down in false worship. These are the living remnant. Rev 14:1–5 shows that followers of the lamb are facing the followers of the beast, and true believers can be assured of the ultimate victory, even if it does not look like that today. Thus, at least partially, the 144,000 are similar to the remnant. Most interesting is the use of the phrase “those that keep the commandments.” In 12:17 this phrase is used in relation to the remnant, whereas the identical phrase in 14:12 is used in connection with the 144,000.

Summary: The dragon battles against the son of the woman, against the woman, and then against the remnant. This war is fought in Rev 13 by the agents of the dragon, the beast out of the sea and the beast out of the earth. The issue is worship. Although it comes to almost universal worship of the satanic trinity, one group is excluded: the remnant, who are the saints and the 144,000.

There is a close connection between Rev 13 and 14a. The different sections of these chapters contain striking similarities. All of them start with the formula “I saw” and end with the expression “here is.” The first and third “here is” sentence have a close resemblance.

- A. The beast out of the sea (13:1–10)
 - (1) “I saw . . . “
 - (2) Description of the beast and its activity
 - (3) “*Here is* patience and faith . . . “
- B. The beast out of the earth (13:11–18)
 - (1) “I saw . . . “
 - (2) Description of the beast and his activity
 - (3) “*Here is* wisdom . . . “
- C. The 144,000 and the three angels' messages (14:1–12)
 - (1) “I saw . . . “
 - (2) Description of the 144,000
 - (3) “I saw . . . “
 - (4) Three angels' messages
 - (5) “*Here is* patience . . . faith”

The interconnectedness of the sections points to the common theme of war against the church, especially the end time church.

II. The Characteristics of the Remnant

The concept of the remnant appears in the Old Testament over and over again. The remnant are people who (1) have escaped hardships and disasters

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

(Ezek 6:8–9; Isa 10: 20), (2) have rejected false religious systems (1 Kgs 19:18), and (3) have turned away from injustice (Zeph 3:13). These are the remnant of God’s people.

In Rev 12–14 three texts are interwoven that describe the main characteristics of the remnant. The references are Rev 12:17, Rev 13:10, and Rev 14:12. The last two belong to the “Here is” statements.

Rev 12:17 Keep the commandments; Testimony of Jesus

Rev 13:10 Patience; Faith

Rev 14:12 Keep the commandments; Patience; Faith of Jesus

Thus, the essential characteristics of the remnant are found:

(1) *Keeping the commandments* (12:17; 14:12). The remnant keep the commandments of God, thus demonstrating their love and loyalty toward their Lord. The most prominent of the commandments, next to the commandment to love God and your neighbor, are the ten commandments. In the introductory scene the ark of the covenant already pointed indirectly to them. The observance of the commandments of God includes the keeping of the biblical Sabbath anchored in the fourth commandment.

(2) *Testimony of Jesus* (12:17). The remnant have the testimony of Jesus. According to 19:10 this is the “spirit of prophecy,” the Holy Spirit that speaks through the gift of prophecy. In the parallel text, Rev 22:9, the word “prophets” replaces the phrase “testimony of Jesus.” The remnant lift up God’s word and exhibits genuine manifestations of the gift of prophecy (1Cor 12:7–11; Eph 4:11)—including the book of Revelation—that comes from Jesus and in which Jesus testifies about Himself.²²

²²An exhaustive discussion on the question of translating this text with a genitivus subjectivus or a genitivus objectivus can be found in an article by Gerhard Pfandl, “The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book II*, 7:295–333. On 321–322 he summarizes important results:

- (1) In the New Testament the term *marturia* (testimony) is mainly used by John.
- (2) Outside of the Book of Revelation *marturia* used in a genitive construction is always a genitivus subjectivus..
- (3) In the Apocalypse all references to *marturia* can be interpreted as a genitivus subjectivus.
- (4) The parallelism in 1:2, 9 and 20:4 between the “word of God” and the “testimony of Jesus” makes it evident that the “testimony of Jesus” is the testimony that Jesus Himself give, just as the “word of God” is the word that God speaks. This applies also to the parallelism in 12:17 between the “commandments of God” and the “testimony of Jesus.”
- (5) In 12:17 the remnant “have” the “testimony of Jesus” This does not fit the idea of giving testimony about Jesus.
- (6) The context of the New Testament makes it necessary to view the content of the “testimony of Jesus” as Jesus Himself. The testimony of Jesus is Christ’s self-revelation through the prophets. It is His testimony, not the believer’s testimony about Him.
- (7) The parallelism between 19:10 and 22:8–9 indicates that the one who has the “testimony of Jesus” has the gift of prophecy. The “testimony of Jesus” is the Holy Spirit, who inspires the prophets.

MUELLER: THE END TIME REMNANT IN REVELATION

(3) *Patience* (13:10; 14:12). The remnant are characterized by patience or perseverance. In difficult times, they do not give up, do not let go their relationship with God, and do not lose their hope in Jesus' soon return.

(4) *Faith* (13:10; 14:12). Rev 13:10 talks about the faith of the saints. In Rev 14:12 the remnant are identified as having faith in/of Jesus. Of course saints have faith in Jesus, and some interpreters understand this expression in this way.²³ Others suggest translating the phrase as "the faith of Jesus" and understand it to reflect the Christian doctrine, as it is contained in the New Testament. In any case, the remnant faithfully holds on to Jesus and His doctrine.

By describing the 144,000 and relating the three angels' messages, Rev 14a furnishes some additional information about the remnant:

- (1) *Property of God and Jesus* (14:1, 3–4)
 - (a) Names of Jesus and the Father on the forehead (14:1)
 - (b) Purchased (14:3–4)
 - (c) First fruits (14:4)
- (2) *No false worship* (14:4)
 - (a) Not defiled with women (14:4)
 - (b) Virgins (14:4)
- (3) *Followers of the lamb* (14:4)
- (4) *Truthfulness and blamelessness like sacrificial animals* (14:5)
 - (a) Without a lie (14:5)
 - (b) Without a blemish (14:5)²⁴
- (5) *Worldwide proclamation of three angels' messages* (14:6–12), including:
 - (a) Proclamation of the eternal gospel (14:6)
 - (b) Call to worship God by fearing and honoring Him (14:7)
 - (c) Announcement of the judgment (14:7)
 - (d) Worship of the Creator (14:7.9–11)
 - (e) Appeal to separate from Babylon (14:8)²⁵

III. Identification of the Remnant

As one tries to find the remnant of Rev 12:7 today, one is faced with the questions whether or not the remnant represent different Christian denomina-

Therefore the remnant as a group have, according to 12:17, the gift of prophecy. Cf. Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 72, and Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 247. Adventists, therefore, apply the phrase "spirit of prophecy" (as a synonym for "testimony of Jesus") also but not exclusively to the ministry of E. G. White.

²³In this case, it is a genitivus objectivus. Cf. R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Scribner's, 1920) 1:369; Mounce, 277; Pfandl, 322.

²⁴Cf. Ritt, 74. He also summarizes the characteristics of the 144,000 in four points.

²⁵Cf. Johnson, 36–39. He doesn't specifically talk about the remnant, calling it God's people instead, but he describes God's people in Rev 14:1–12 in ten points.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

tions, whether or not they are located within a specific church, and whether or not they are scattered believers here and there.

The biblical characteristics do not permit us to extend the remnant to diverse Christian denominations, since the necessary criteria are not generally exhibited. What about scattered believers versus a visible church? A number of considerations lead us to the conclusion that the remnant of Rev 12:17 must be more than scattered believers independent from each other:

(1) *The time sequence.* Rev 12–14 provides a time frame into which the remnant has to be placed. It is the time after 1798 A.D. and prior to the return of Jesus when this remnant occurs. The remnant of Rev 12:17 is therefore an end time group of believers, the last descendants of the faithful church of Jesus throughout the centuries of church history. In human history they are the very last remnant, with evidently no others following them. If this remnant has existed since the 19th century, it seems probable to conclude that the majority of them can be found in a visible church.

(2) *The succession of the woman of Rev 12.* God's church, from early Christianity until the 18th century, did not consist only of single, independent Christians. It seems obvious to expect that the remnant as what is left of the woman in the end time would also form a visible group of people.

(3) *The characteristics.* Besides the time fixation, the remnant manifests certain characteristics that allow it to be identified. These characteristics are distinct and at least partially visible criteria helping others to readily recognize the visible remnant.

(4) *The contrast to Babylon.* The contrast to the woman in Rev 12, from which the remnant emerges, is Babylon, the prostitute. Just as Babylon is visible and recognizable as a system of religious and quasi-religious groups, so the contrasting group, the remnant, should at least partially be visible. The characteristics of the remnant are necessary to be able to distinguish between it and the harlot.

(5) *The call to separate from Babylon.* The remnant has nothing in common with Babylon. Yet, God's people who are still in Babylon are called to come out (18:4). The call to come out does not make much sense if one does not know where to go. In addition, the New Testament clearly teaches that Christians cannot exist in self-chosen isolation (Heb 10:24–25; Act 2:46–47). Christians need a church to which they may belong and which supports them.

(6) *The gift of prophecy.* One of the characteristics of the remnant is the Holy Spirit as manifested in the gift of prophecy. According to Rev 12:17 the remnant has this gift, and yet the New Testament points out that not every believer possesses this gift (1Cor 12:11–30). Apparently, the remnant appears as a church and collectively has this gift.

(7) *The worldwide commission.* Evidently, the remnant is commissioned to proclaim the three angels' messages throughout the world. The fulfillment of

MUELLER: THE END TIME REMNANT IN REVELATION

this commission by individual believers is impossible; however, a visible church can carry out such a mission.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that even though their church has limitations and imperfections, it bears the characteristics of the remnant of Rev 12–14 and therefore represents God’s end time church of the remnant. At the same time the church acknowledges that it is called to live up to the ideal presented in Scripture as well as to invite people from all nations, tribes, languages, and peoples to join God’s remnant. This does not mean that each Seventh-day Adventist is saved. Neither does it deny that God has faithful children in other denominations and religions who He wants to lead to true worship and joyful preparation for Jesus’ second coming. To these believers the call of Rev 18:4 is issued to leave end time Babylon.²⁶

Conclusion

The doctrine of the remnant in Revelation is broader than it appears at first sight. Apparently the end time remnant of 12:17 are more or less identical with the saints of Rev 13a, the group that does not worship the beast and its image in Rev 13b, and the 144,000 of Rev 14a. This remnant is heavily persecuted by the satanic trinity and is finally threatened with death. Yet those who make up the remnant are assured that the final victory is theirs. They display the characteristics of loving God with all their hearts and following Jesus. In carrying the name of God and of Jesus (14:1) instead of the name of the beast (13:16–17) on their foreheads, they are declared to be God’s and Jesus’ property through Jesus’ self-sacrifice on the cross, and in their character they have become similar to their Lord and God.

Seventh-day Adventists as a church bear the characteristics of the remnant. Therefore the church should and must be conscious of its identity and, being filled with joy and with God’s power, should proclaim the everlasting gospel. Feelings of inferiority and false pride are equally inappropriate. Always God’s church is His church only because of His grace. On the other hand, not every Adventist is automatically part of the remnant, and not every non-Adventist is necessarily excluded from the remnant. Therefore, each individual believer is challenged to live in closest harmony with God and portray the characteristics of the remnant, just as the church is called to live up to its vocation and its commission.

²⁶The issue of the remnant is also discussed in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, DC: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 152–169; *Schlüsselbegriffe adventistischer Glaubenslehre* (Hamburg: Advent-Verlag, 1973), 48–51; Siegfried H. Horn, “Remnant,” in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1960), 908–909; Richard Lehmann, “Die Übrigen und ihr Auftrag,” in *Die Gemeinde und ihr Auftrag: Studien zur adventistischen Ekklesiologie*, ed. von Johannes Mager (Hamburg: Saatkorn-Verlag, 1994), 2:73–101; Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 7:812–815.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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