

The Apocalypse and its Socio-Religious Impact

**An assessment of
the translation of Rev. 12.17
by modern English language Bible versions
in the context of the Johannine usage of
‘μαρτυρία’ and its cognates
by Conrad Vine.**

I hereby certify that the attached is my own work and conforms to the College’s policy on academic honesty as outlined in the College prospectus.

Date:

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Word count: 4,183 words.

Course #: BIST512

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Introduction

Focal theory

The publication of *The Clear Word Bible: A Paraphrase to Nurture Faith and Growth* in 1994¹ provides a private Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) paraphrase of the Bible. Not designed for ‘in-depth study’², *The Clear Word* is intended ‘to stimulate a new experience of faith and spiritual growth’³. It remains uncertain however whether a mass audience⁴ would always use *The Clear Word* as intended, resulting in the potential misuse or misinterpretation of what is erroneously taken for ‘Holy Scripture’⁵.

¹ Blanco, Jack J., *The Clear Word Bible: A Paraphrase to Nurture Faith and Growth* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1994).

² The preface to *The Clear Word* categorically states that ‘it is not intended for in-depth study or for public reading in churches. Those who are better qualified have given readers of the Holy Scriptures excellent translations for such purposes and undoubtedly will continue to do so as additional manuscripts come to light’. See Blanco, Jack J., *The Clear Word Bible: A Paraphrase to Nurture Faith and Growth* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1994), p. vi.

³ The preface of *The Clear Word* further states that ‘this paraphrase is intended to provide the reader with fresh insights into the gracious character of God, the living ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the struggles of the early Christian church to survive. It is written in the hope that the Holy Spirit may use it as an agency to stimulate a new experience of faith and spiritual growth’. See Blanco, Jack J., *The Clear Word Bible: A Paraphrase to Nurture Faith and Growth* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1994), p. vi.

⁴ Such a mass audience would inevitably contain a broad range of literacy, cognitive, theological and critical skills.

⁵ The preface to *The Living Bible Paraphrased* succinctly outlines the potential dangers in the production and use of paraphrases, stating that ‘there are dangers in paraphrases, as well as values. For whenever the author’s exact words are not translated from the original languages, there is a possibility that the translator, however honest, may be giving the English reader something that the original writer did not mean to say. This is because a paraphrase is guided not only by the translator’s skill in simplifying but also by the clarity of his understanding of what the author meant and by his theology. For when the Greek or Hebrew is not clear, then the theology of the translator is his guide, along with his sense of logic, unless perchance the translation is allowed to stand without any clear meaning at all’, *The Living Bible Paraphrased* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971).

Purpose of the paper

Given the multitude of translations available today⁶, the paper will provide an assessment of the translation of Rev. 12.17 by modern English language Bible versions⁷ in the context of the Johannine usage of ‘μαρτυρία’ and its cognates⁸. The paper’s hypothesis is that a full understanding of Rev. 12.17 is not possible without an appreciation of the Johannine usage of ‘μαρτυρία’ and its cognates⁹.

Significance of the paper

The paper is significant because through understanding the Johannine usage of ‘μαρτυρία’ and its cognates, the author believes that discerning readers may gain a fuller and more critical appreciation of which translations provide a fully equivalent translation, formal or dynamic, and which translations provide only a partially equivalent translation, thereby advertently or inadvertently excluding theological import.

Method and methodology

The paper will utilize the following method (outline of the paper’s structure): a) introduction (parameter setting); b) brief outline of relevant translation

⁶ The modern reader is confronted with a wide range of translations, ranging from formal equivalents such as what is popularly known as the *King James Version* and the *New International Version* to dynamic equivalent translations such as the *Good News Bible*, *New English Bible*, and the *New Living Translation* to paraphrases such as *The Living Bible Paraphrased*, *The Clear Word*, and *The Message*.

⁷ The author for the current paper has made a detailed study of Rev. 12.17 using the following versions: *King James Version*, *New King James Version*, *New International Version (UK)*, *New International Version*, *New Revised Standard Version*, *Revised Standard Version* and *New American Standard Version* (all formal correspondence translations); *Good News Bible*, *New Living Translation*, *New English Bible*, *Revised English Bible* (dynamic equivalent translations); and *The Clear Word*, *The Message*, and *The Living Bible Paraphrased* (all paraphrases).

⁸ The cognates in question will be ‘μαρτυρεῖν’, ‘μάρτυς’ and ‘μαρτύριον’.

⁹ Therefore any translation should reflect the complexity of thought within the Johannine usage of ‘μαρτυρία’ and its cognates.

concepts; c) brief outline of Rev. 12.17's possible translations and subsequent SDA theological implications; d) outline of the Johannine use of 'μαρτυρία' and its cognates; e) assessment of selected translations against the above mentioned Johannine study; and e) conclusions.

The paper will use the above method because any valid conclusions about the validity of certain versions' translation of Rev. 12.17 require an assessment against the Johannine usage of 'μαρτυρία' and its cognates.

Limitations and delimitations

The paper will not engage in a systematic exegesis of Rev. 12.17, trace the historical developments in the interpretation of the verse, nor analyze the non-Johannine usage of 'μαρτυρία' and its cognates.

The paper will however assume common Johannine authorship of the Gospel according to John, the Epistles and Revelation¹⁰, outline the major themes incorporated within the Johannine usage of 'μαρτυρία' and its cognates, and identify which of the selected translations do not reflect the full or partial theological import of Rev. 12.17.

¹⁰ The debate concerning authorship of the Gospel according to John, the Epistles, and Revelation remains inconclusive. As textual criticism advances, and more MSS are located, the understanding of scholarship changes, although not always in mutual harmony. Whilst recognizing the apparent differences in style, vocabulary and syntax between the Greek of Revelation and the Gospel of John, this paper will assume common Johannine authorship for the Gospel of John, the Epistles, and Revelation based on the evidence presented by modern conservative scholars, most notably by Guthrie. See Guthrie, Donald, *New Testament Introduction* (London, UK: The Tyndale Press, 3rd [rev.] edn., 1970), pp. 931-82.

Outline of Relevant Translation Concepts

Translation approaches

Bible translations may be categorized broadly as follows: formal correspondence¹¹, dynamic equivalence¹², and paraphrases¹³.

Dangers in translation

For all versions, but primarily for formal correspondence versions, whilst intelligibility is necessary, ‘one of the greatest surprises for Bible translators is to find that a perfectly intelligible translation of the Scriptures may not be acceptable’^{14 15}.

¹¹ According to Huddleston, ‘formal correspondence recognizes that each source text has a particular form and that the goal is for the target language text to duplicate that form as closely as possible’. See Huddleston, Mark, ‘Equivalent Dynamics: for whom do I translate?’, *The Bible Translator* 39 (January 1988), pp. 122-25. For examples of formal correspondence translations, see Footnote 6 above.

¹² According to Huddleston, the phrase ‘dynamically equivalent’ does not imply that ‘each source text has a particular dynamic and the goal of a dynamically equivalent translation was to instill just that dynamic into the target text’, rather, ‘I saw that dynamic equivalence really meant “dynamic and equivalent”, i.e., dynamic in reference to the target language, and SEMANTICALLY equivalent in reference to the original meaning of the source text’. See Huddleston, Mark, ‘Equivalent Dynamics: for whom do I translate?’, *The Bible Translator* 39 (January 1988), p. 122. For examples of modern dynamic equivalence translations, see Footnote 6 above.

¹³ According to the Preface of *The Living Bible Paraphrased*, the purpose of a paraphrase ‘is to say exactly as possible what the writers of the Scriptures meant, and to say it simply, expanding where necessary for a clear understanding by the modern reader’. See *The Living Bible Paraphrased* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971), Preface.

¹⁴ Nida, Eugene A., ‘Intelligibility and acceptability in Bible translating’, *The Bible Translator* 39 (July 1988), p. 301.

¹⁵ Translations which primarily seek to convey the grammatical and lexical senses of the source text may not be acceptable because ‘many people prefer a translation of the Scriptures which they only partially understand’. See Nida, Eugene A., ‘Intelligibility and acceptability in Bible translating’, *The Bible Translator* 39 (July 1988), p. 301. Nida argues that evidence from medicine, traditional healing and religious expression over the past two millennia indicates a human preference for ambiguity and texts which invite further thought and contemplation. He argues that ‘the rhythmic character of liturgical texts with their hypnotic flow of sound seems to echo people’s traditional sentiments about the nature of a religious experience...people make a serious mistake if they think that understanding a text means comprehending merely the logical structure and the purely designative or defining meanings of the lexical and grammatical structures...no translator can be satisfied with a mere lexical-grammatical transposition of a text. Means must be found to provide what some people have called “the tone, the spirit and the

Rhetorical impact¹⁶ may contribute more to a translation's acceptability than lexical precision, and must be allowed for in addition to purely formal correspondence¹⁷.

Dynamic equivalence translations¹⁸ face another challenge: allowing for 'heterogeneity in linguistic competence'¹⁹. Native speaker audiences may give differing forms identical denotations²⁰, but widely varying connotations²¹, so translations should seek to provide the original denotation(s) and connotation(s) from the source text in the target text without incurring variant denotations and connotations.

In practice this means that translators should seek not 'dynamic equivalence' but 'equivalent dynamics', recognizing the multiple dynamics or senses within a

genius" of the source text. If one fails at this level, the translator has robbed the text of much of its value and the receptor has been cheated. But success at this level results in a masterpiece'. The author of this paper believes that Nida's discussion on the linguistic underpinning and approach to translation identifies an important reason for the continued importance and popularity of the *Kings James Version* within his experience of his particular faith community. See Nida, Eugene A., 'Intelligibility and acceptability in Bible translating', *The Bible Translator* 39 (July 1988), pp. 301-08.

¹⁶ Rhetorical impact includes esotericisms or ambiguities.

¹⁷ According to Nida, 'the relative importance of lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical features appears to be in the reverse order. The rhetorical patterns are the most strategic for producing acceptability, while the grammatical and lexical features are proportionately less crucial'. The lack of direct association between intelligibility and acceptability is starkly illustrated by the use of 'tongues' or 'glossalia' within some churches in the modern era: language which is completely unintelligible to the listener, but whose possession and use is highly prized and sought after within certain communions. See Nida, Eugene A., 'Intelligibility and acceptability in Bible translating', *The Bible Translator* 39 (July 1988), p. 302.

¹⁸ A more recent term for 'dynamic equivalence' is 'formal equivalence'. See Huddleston, Mark, 'Equivalent Dynamics: for whom do I translate?', *The Bible Translator* 39 (January 1988), p. 123.

¹⁹ This concept was first outlined by Hartmut Wiens in 'Notes on Linguistics', No. 3 (July 1986).

²⁰ Denotation is defined as 'the meaning or significance of a term, as distinct from its implications or connotations'. See Brown, Lesley (ed.), *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary of Historical Principles Vol. 1* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 633.

²¹ Connotation is defined as 'an association or idea suggested by a word in addition to its primary meaning'. See Brown, Lesley (ed.), *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary of Historical Principles Vol. 1* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 482.

source text, and capturing these within a multi-dimensional translation in the target text²².

Technical concerns

All translations must decide which source text(s) to use²³, and whether and how to indicate to their readers variant MSS readings or alternative translations for given pericopes. These decisions, their modality and their criteria are often outlined in the Preface to any given translation²⁴.

²² Failure to recognize this may result in advertent or inadvertent distortion or outright exclusion of theological import within the target text.

²³ For example, the *King James Version* used the *Textus Receptus*, whilst modern formal correspondence translations such as the *New Revised Standard Version* and the *New International Version* prefer to adopt an eclectic approach, using modern critical editions (particularly for New Testament translation) and incorporating variant readings where they are deemed important enough for textual criticism, theological or target reader concerns. This approach is summarized by the *Guiding Principles for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible*, developed by the United Bible Societies and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in 1968. Having agreed that a 'common Greek text should be used in all interconfessional translations', the *Guiding Principles* further stated that 'though a critical text must form the basis of any adequate translation, it is recognized that conservative tendencies in both Roman Catholic and Protestant constituencies require that certain passages of the New Testament found in the *Textus Receptus*, but no longer supported by the consensus of modern critical judgement, be included in the text of the translation. In such instances, however, it is necessary that the textual evidence be marked in some way by footnotes or appropriate *sigla*. The extent of textual adjustment will depend, of course, upon the local situation, and will need to be covered carefully by clear and detailed principles'. See Scanlin, Harold P., 'Bible Translation as a Means of Communicating New Testament Textual Criticism to the Public', *The Bible Translator* 39 (January 1988), pp. 110-11.

²⁴ The presentation of critical material within a Preface allows the critical reader the opportunity to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses, theological presuppositions, target readership and purpose of a given translation. Of the translations examined during the course of research for this paper, every translation included a Preface which outlined in greater or lesser detail the decisions taken in the areas of textual criticism, theological presuppositions, and the approach taken to alternate MSS readings and alternative translations. As a general observation based on the research for this paper, the Prefaces to the formal correspondence versions are more extensive and in-depth than those provided for the dynamic equivalence and paraphrase translations. The proliferation of study / reference / life application Bibles across a range of versions should not distract the critical reader from the information contained within the Preface to a given version, as all the additional comments, notes, footnotes, maps and other reader helps provided in the study / reference / life application Bibles are based around the text as provided within a given version, and are therefore to a large extent dependent upon the theological presuppositions, textual criticism approach and criteria for outlining alternate MSS readings or variant translations of the original translator(s). See Footnote 6 above for a list of the versions used in the course of the study for this paper.

Such translation decisions are critical, for the inclusion or exclusion of alternate MSS readings or alternative translations for given pericopes through appropriate *sigla* may include, exclude, broaden or tightly define a given theological concept, and lead to unwarranted or uni-dimensional theological conclusions.

Given the above challenges in translation²⁵, we now turn to Rev. 12.17, and address the translation difficulties this pericope presents.

²⁵ In essence, translations face *inter alia* a number of challenges to their acceptability: providing over-literal translations; capturing the equivalent dynamics of a source text rather than just providing a dynamic equivalent; imposing or excluding theological presuppositions; reflecting textual criticism issues; and recognizing and allowing interpretative and theological ambiguities.

Translation of Rev. 12.17 and SDA Theological Implications

Differing interpretations possible

Commentators have long grappled with Rev. 12.17²⁶, particularly 12.17c, which reads as follows: ‘τῶν τηρούντων τὰς ἐντολάς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ’²⁷. Should we understand ‘τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ’ as ‘the testimony of Jesus’ (subjective genitive²⁸) or as the ‘testimony to Jesus’ which the Church bears towards Christ (objective genitive²⁹)?

In grammatical terms, there are no definitive rules or precedents for guiding the interpretation of such genitive constructions: Abbot-Smith argue for Rev. 1.2³⁰, 9³¹, 6.9³², 12.11³³, 12.17³⁴, 19.10³⁵ and 20.4³⁶ as objective genitives³⁷, whilst

²⁶ ‘...καὶ ὠργίσθη ὁ δράκων ἐπὶ τῇ γυναικὶ καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς τῶν τηρούντων τὰς ἐντολάς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ...’, ‘Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her children, those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus’ (NRSV). All Greek text during this paper will be taken from Barbara Aland and Kurt Aland (eds.), *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart, Germany; Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 27th edn., 1993).

²⁷ Literally, ‘the one’s keeping the commandments of God and having the testimony of Jesus’, (my translation).

²⁸ A subjective genitive is defined as happening ‘if the word in the genitive produces the action implied by the noun of action, it functions as the “subject” of the verbal idea contained in the noun of action and is therefore a subjective genitive. To put it another way, if the noun of action were replaced by a cognate verb in the active voice, the word in the genitive would be put in the nominative case and would become the subject of the verb’. See Brooks, James A., and Winbery, Carlton L., *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1979), p. 15.

²⁹ An objective genitive is defined as happening ‘if the word in the genitive receives the action implied by the noun of action, it functions as the object of the verbal idea contained in the noun of action and is, therefore, an objective genitive’. See Brooks, James A., and Winbery, Carlton L., *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1979), p. 15.

³⁰ ‘ὃς ἐμαρτύρησεν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὅσα εἶδεν’, ‘who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw’ (NRSV).

³¹ ‘Ἐγὼ Ἰωάννης, ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν καὶ συγκοινωνὸς ἐν τῇ θλίψει καὶ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ὑπομονῇ ἐν Ἰησοῦ, ἐγενόμην ἐν τῇ νῆσῳ τῇ καλουμένῃ Πάτμῳ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ’, ‘I, John, your brother who share with you in Jesus the persecution and the

Arndt & Gingrich argue for Rev. 1.2, 9 being subjective genitives³⁸. We should note however, as Turner has explained, ‘in Greek the distinction between objective and subjective genitive is a question entirely of linguistics’³⁹.

This grammatical ambiguity is reflected in commentaries on Revelation’s ‘μαρτυρία’ genitive constructions, with some commentators opting for

kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus’ (NRSV).

³² ‘Καὶ ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν πέμπτην σφραγίδα, εἶδον ὑποκάτω τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ἐσφαγμένων διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν εἶχον’, ‘When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God and for the testimony they had given;’ (NRSV).

³³ ‘καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐνίκησαν αὐτὸν διὰ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν καὶ οὐκ ἠγάπησαν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῶν ἄχρι θανάτου’, ‘But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death’ (NRSV).

³⁴ ‘καὶ ὠργίσθη ὁ δράκων ἐπὶ τῇ γυναικὶ καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς τῶν τηρούντων τὰς ἐντολάς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ’, ‘Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her children, those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus’ (NRSV).

³⁵ ‘καὶ ἔπεσα ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ. καὶ λέγει μοι· ὅρα μὴ· σύνδουλός σου εἰμι καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ· τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον. ἡ γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας’, ‘Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’ (NRSV).

³⁶ ‘Καὶ εἶδον θρόνους καὶ ἐκάθισαν ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς καὶ κρίμα ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς, καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν πεπελεκισμένων διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ οἵτινες οὐ προσεκύνησαν τὸ θηρίον οὐδὲ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἔλαβον τὸ χάραγμα ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτῶν. καὶ ἔζησαν καὶ ἐβασίλευσαν μετὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ χίλια ἔτη’, ‘Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years’ (NRSV).

³⁷ See Abbot-Smith, G., *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (London, UK: T. & T. Clark, 1923, 2nd edn.), p. 279.

³⁸ See Arndt, William F. and Gingrich, F. Wilbur, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 494.

³⁹ Turner, N., *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. III, Syntax* (Edinburgh, UK: T. & T. Clark, 1963), p. 212.

exclusively subjective genitive interpretations⁴⁰, others for objective genitive interpretations⁴¹, and yet others allowing for both interpretations⁴².

SDA interpretation of Rev. 12.17

Within both the nascent and current SDA movement, Rev. 12.17 was, and remains, of seminal importance, providing the identity and self-understanding of the remnant church that was the object of Satan's wrath after the conclusion

⁴⁰ For example, Strathmann states quite simply in relation to the genitive constructions found in Rev. 1.2, 9, 6.9, 12.17, 19.10b&c and 20.4 that 'the gen. is a subj. gen.'. Mazzaferri concludes having considered all the evidence in Revelation that 'the above evidence strongly attests that in the genitive is subjective'. See Strathman, 'μάρτυς, μαρτυρεω, μαρτυρία, μαρτύριον' in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 500 and Mazzaferri, Fred, 'μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ Revisited', *The Bible Translator* 39 (January 1988), pp. 114-22. According to Gerhard Pfandl, further scholars who support the subjective genitive interpretation include James Moffat, M.C. Tenney and A.A. Trite. See Pfandl, Gerhard, 'The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy' in Frank B. Holbrook (ed.), *Symposium on Revelation Book II* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1992), pp. 295-33.

⁴¹ For example, William Barclay simply states with reference to Rev. 12.17 that 'finally, in verse 17 John has the picture of the dragon going to war with the rest of the family of the woman, with those who keep God's commandments and who are faithful in their witness, with the rest of the Church'. Petros Vassiliadis discusses the translation of 'μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ' and concludes that because of semantic changes in the denotation and connotations of the word 'μαρτυρία' to include a new denotation referring specifically to being faithful in witness to physical martyrdom, all such genitive constructions in Revelation are objective genitives, and Rev. 12.17 in particular may be 'rendered as follows: "What inspires the prophets is that they can witness (even unto death) to Jesus".' According to Gerhard Pfandl, further scholars who support the objective genitive interpretation include M.E. Osterhaven and Ray F. Robbins. See Barclay, William, *The Revelation of John* (Edinburgh, UK: The Saint Andrew Press, 1953), p. 107, Vassiliadis, Petros, 'The Translation of μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ in Revelation', *The Bible Translator* 36 (January 1985), pp. 129-34, and Pfandl, Gerhard, 'The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy' in Frank B. Holbrook (ed.), *Symposium on Revelation Book II* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1992), pp. 295-33.

⁴² G.K. Beale allows for both subjective and objective interpretations in his commentary on Revelation, as does David Aune in his three volume commentary on Revelation. According to Gerhard Pfandl, further scholars who support both subjective and objective genitive interpretations include Massynberde Ford, A. Barnes, R.H. Charles and G.E Ladd. It is interesting to note that whilst Pfandl himself argues strongly for a subjective genitive interpretation of all the 'μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ' instances within Revelation, he does not entirely rule out the possibility of an objective interpretation in any of the instances examined, preferring instead to argue that 'in the book of Revelation all the genitive constructions with 'μαρτυρία' can be understood as subjective genitives'. See Beale, G.K., *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), pp.181-20, 621-728, Aune, David, *Word Biblical Commentary Revelation 1-5* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1997) and Pfandl, Gerhard, 'The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy' in Frank B. Holbrook (ed.), *Symposium on Revelation Book II* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1992), pp. 295-33.

of the 1,260 days of Rev. 12.6⁴³. This self-understanding was predicated on an historicist interpretation of prophecy, and on a subjective genitive interpretation of 12.17 (and the conceptual parallels with Rev. 19.10), was espoused by the SDA pioneers⁴⁴, by E.G. White⁴⁵, and is today affirmed in official denominational documents⁴⁶.

⁴³ The current focus and importance of the remnant motif and subjective genitive understanding of Rev. 12.17 is witnessed during the March 2004 Workers' Meetings conducted by the South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, when Dr Ekkehardt Mueller from the Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists presented a paper to the assembled ministerial workers entitled 'The End Time Remnant in Revelation', during which he espoused and emphasized the traditional SDA interpretation of Rev. 12.17 and 19.10.

⁴⁴ According to Gerhard Pfandl, amongst the pioneers there were many leaders who espoused the self-identification and understanding of Rev. 12.17 as applying to the nascent SDA movement, including G.I Butler, W.H. Littlejohn, U. Smith and J.N. Loughborough. See Pfandl, Gerhard, 'The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy' in Frank B. Holbrook (ed.), *Symposium on Revelation Book II* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1992), pp. 324-25.

⁴⁵ E.G. White was quite clear concerning the identification of the nascent SDA movement with the remnant church identified within Rev. 12.17. Various quotations may be provided, but the following quotations may be taken as evidence for her understanding: 'We have the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is the spirit of prophecy'... 'Let us be careful not to make an outcry against the only people who are fulfilling the description given of the remnant people who keep the commandments of God and have faith in Jesus, who are exalting the standard of righteousness in these last days'... 'It is the voice of Christ that speaks to us through the Old Testament. "The testimony of prophecy is the spirit of prophecy", Revelation 19.10'. See White, Ellen G., *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1923), p. 114, 58, and White, Ellen G., *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), p. 381.

⁴⁶ For example, the publication by the Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists entitled 'Seventh-day Adventists Believe...a Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamentals' states that 'John defines "the testimony of Jesus" as "the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19.10). The remnant will be guided by the testimony of Jesus conveyed through the gift of prophecy', and the Daniel and Revelation Committee Series of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Volume 7, *Symposium on Revelation: Exegetical and General studies, Book II*, includes an exposition of the SDA church's perspective on Rev. 12.17, which concludes by stating that 'the testimony of Jesus – Christ's witness – refers to the prophetic gift, which is also present in the remnant church. God promises that through the Spirit of prophecy – the Holy Spirit – He will again manifest Himself in a special way to the remnant church to keep and to guide them in the last days, when Satan will make special efforts to destroy them...the prophetic origin of the Advent movement and God's gracious guidance through the prophetic gift of Ellen G. White should make us more aware of the responsibility that we as a church have, and it should spur us on to finish the work God has given us to do'. See Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, 'Seventh-Day Adventists Believe...A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines', Review and Herald Publishing Association (1988), pp. 152-69, and Pfandl, Gerhard, 'The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy' in Frank B. Holbrook (ed.), *Symposium on Revelation Book II* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1992), pp. 295-33.

Given the above discussion, the SDA movement's self-understanding and prophetic consciousness of its role in salvation-history would be rendered untenable should an objective genitive interpretation of Rev. 12.17 prevail within the movement⁴⁷.

Whilst there is no evidence of such a shift within current SDA theological thought, the wide diversity of theological training and critical skills within the SDA movement combined with the large variety of Bibles being used with differing interpretations of Rev. 12.17 may contribute towards theological uncertainty on this most central of SDA theological motifs.

This paper will therefore turn to an analysis of the Johannine use of 'μαρτυρια' and its cognates in order to provide an assessment of the translation of Rev. 12.17 by modern English language Bible versions.

⁴⁷ Indeed, such a shift in understanding would contribute towards a potentially fatal crisis of identity.

Johannine use of ‘μαρτυριον’

Gospel and Epistles

The word ‘μαρτυριον’⁴⁸ does not appear in these writings, so nothing may be concluded.

Revelation

The word ‘μαρτυριον’ only appears once in Revelation (Rev.15.5⁴⁹) in the phrase ‘τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου’, ‘the tent of witness’. This use of ‘μαρτυριον’ does not exhibit any martyrological sense⁵⁰, nor does it contribute towards the prophetic motif included in Rev. 12.17, rather it reflects the non-Johannine and LXX usage in which ‘μαρτυριον’ is used in the sense of witness for the prosecution in a judicial setting, not to convert but to determine the opponent’s guilt⁵¹. Based on the above, nothing of significance to the interpretation of Rev. 12.17 may be drawn from the Johannine usage of ‘μαρτυριον’⁵².

⁴⁸ ‘μαρτύριον, ου’ noun: testimony, witness; evidence, proof; opportunity to testify.

⁴⁹ ‘Καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον, καὶ ἠνοίγη ὁ ναὸς τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ’, ‘After this I looked, and the temple of the tent of witness in heaven was opened’ (NRSV).

⁵⁰ The martyrological sense is explicitly witnessed in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* from the 2nd century AD.

⁵¹ Strathmann outlines the main senses of the use of μαρτυριον in the Old Testament, non-Johannine New Testament, and LXX, including the use ‘in the sense of witness for the prosecution’, as a ‘witness to something’, and as a ‘witness in the active sense’. While he concludes that ‘in clear distinction from ‘μάρτυς’, ‘μαρτυρεῖν’, ‘μαρτυρία’ there is in the NT no trace of any inclination to develop the use ‘μαρτύριον’ of in the direction of the Church’s martyrological useage in the 2nd century’, it may also be concluded that there is nothing in the Old Testament, non-Johannine New Testament and LXX that would either suggest a predominantly subjective or objective genitive interpretation for this particular word, nor participation in a prophetic motif. See Strathman, ‘μάρτυς, μαρτυρεω, μαρτυρία, μαρτύριον’ in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), pp. 474-14.

⁵² This conclusion is reached by other exegetes, including Alison A. Trites in her study of the diachronic semantics of ‘μάρτυς’ and its transition from the denotation of ‘a witness in a court

Johannine use of ‘μάρτυς’

Gospel and Epistles

The word ‘μάρτυς’⁵³ does not appear in these writings, so nothing may be concluded from these writings⁵⁴.

Revelation

‘Μάρτυς’ appears five times in Revelation, each of which instance will now be examined.

In Rev. 2.13⁵⁵ Antipas is designated ‘my witness, my faithful one’, and his martyrdom is then recorded, ‘...who was killed among you...’. Despite the use

of law with no expectation of death’ to the denotation in the 2nd century AD where ‘the idea of a witness disappears, and the words μάρτυς... μαρτύριον are used absolutely to refer to martyrdom’. See Trites, Alison A., ‘and Martyrdom in the Apocalypse’, *Novum Testamentum* Vol. XV (January 1973), pp. 72-80.

⁵³ ‘μάρτυς, μάρτυρος’, masculine noun: witness; martyr.

⁵⁴ According to Strathmann however, ‘it is basic to remember that non-Biblical Gk. already uses the concept of witness both in the sense of witness to ascertainable facts and also in that of witness to truths, i.e., the making known and confessing of convictions...both uses are also found in the NT’. Debate rages in academic circles over the exact evolution of both the denotation and connotation of the word from that outlined above within early Christian circles to that which specifically denoted martyrdom, i.e. being killed for one’s confession of faith, as witnessed in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*. Manson argues that the evidence for the diachronic semantic change in the meaning of ‘μάρτυς’ can be traced ‘in the Old Testament and in the extra-canonical Jewish writings’, i.e. that the change in denotation and connotation for ‘μάρτυς’ was happening long before Revelation was written, and that therefore we are to understand the use of ‘μάρτυς’ in Revelation in martyrological terms, and therefore the ‘μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ’ phrases as subjective genitives. Trites however conducts a detailed semantic study on the topic and after postulating a five stage diachronic semantic development in semantic denotation and connotation for ‘μάρτυς’, concludes that ‘μάρτυς’ is definitely moving towards the fourth and fifth stages of semantic development [i.e. towards an exclusively martyrological understanding], but it is still questionable whether the martyrological understanding of the word has become part of the dictionary definition of the word [specifically at the time of the writing of Revelation]’. See Manson, T.W., ‘Martyrs and Martyrdom’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 39 (1956-57), pp. 463-84 and Trites, Alison A., ‘and Martyrdom in the Apocalypse’, *Novum Testamentum* Vol. XV (January 1973), pp. 72-80.

⁵⁵ ‘οἶδα ποῦ κατοικεῖς, ὅπου ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατανᾶ, καὶ κρατεῖς τὸ ὄνομά μου καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσω τὴν πίστιν μου καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἀντιπᾶς ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου, ὃς ἀπεκτάνθη παρ’ ὑμῖν, ὅπου ὁ σατανᾶς κατοικεῖ.

of juridicial terms within Rev. 2.13⁵⁶ Antipas is not designated a ‘μάρτυς’ because he was executed⁵⁷.

In Rev. 11.3⁵⁸ the two witnesses are such not because they are martyred, but because they engage in verbal activity, prophesying. Their eventual death (Rev. 11.7-8) is outlined subsequently, i.e. the term ‘μάρτυς’ has yet to acquire the formal denotation of martyrdom. Their role however is thrice defined within the pericope as being prophetic⁵⁹, which ‘invites the [Johannine] nexus, ‘μάρτυς’ equals ‘προφήτης’⁶⁰.

In Rev. 17.6⁶¹, the repeated use of ‘ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος’ and of the definite article ‘τῶν’ syntactically differentiates the saints and the witnesses, both of whom are martyred. The two terms (‘saints’ and ‘witnesses’) are not coterminous: they are set in contradistinction one to another. To be killed for one’s faith does not necessarily make one a ‘μάρτυς’. However, the parallel descriptions of Rev.

⁵⁷ ‘I know where you are living, where Satan's throne is. Yet you are holding fast to my name, and you did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan lives’ (NRSV).

⁵⁶ Juridicial terms such as ‘θρόνος’, ‘σατανᾶς’ and ‘ἀρνέομαι’.

⁵⁷ The concept of martyrdom is conveyed by the explanation ‘ὅς ἀπεκτάνθη παρ’ ὑμῖν’, so his martyrdom is as a result of his witness.

⁵⁸ ‘Καὶ δώσω τοῖς δυσὶν μάρτυσίν μου καὶ προφητεῦσουσιν ἡμέρας χιλίας διακοσίας ἐξήκοντα περιβεβλημένοι σάκκους’, ‘And I will grant my two witnesses authority to prophesy for one thousand two hundred sixty days, wearing sackcloth’ (NRSV).

⁵⁹ Rev. 11.3 defines the role of the two witnesses as being ‘to prophesy’, Rev. 11.6 defines the time of their witnessing as being ‘during the days of their prophesying’, and Rev. 11.10 explicitly refers to them as ‘these two prophets’ (NRSV).

⁶⁰ Mazzaferri, Fred, ‘μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ Revisited’, *The Bible Translator* 39 (January 1988), p. 115.

⁶¹ ‘καὶ εἶδον τὴν γυναῖκα μεθύουσαν ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν ἁγίων καὶ ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν μαρτύρων Ἰησοῦ. Καὶ ἐθαύμασα ἰδὼν αὐτὴν θαῦμα μέγα’, ‘And I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly amazed’ (NRSV).

16.6⁶² and Rev. 18.24⁶³ strongly suggest that whilst ‘the saints’ are a distinct group, the concepts of ‘μάρτυς’ and ‘προφήτης’ are parallel, a conclusion further suggested by Rev. 11.3⁶⁴.

In Rev. 1.5⁶⁵ and Rev. 3.14⁶⁶ are two references to Christ as ‘ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός’. The parallel description of Antipas in Rev. 2.13 as ‘ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου’ and the description of Christ in Rev. 1.5 as ‘ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν’ suggest that the ‘μάρτυς’ is only ‘πιστός’ because of faithfulness in witness unto death⁶⁷.

Moreover, Rev. 3.14 parallels ‘ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου’ with ‘Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἀμὴν’, i.e. the faithful and true witness is depicted as one who speaks words, not primarily as one who dies, and Rev. 1.5 within its immediate context is the

⁶² ‘ὅτι αἷμα ἁγίων καὶ προφητῶν ἐξέχεαν καὶ αἷμα αὐτοῖς [δ]έδωκας πίνειν, ἅξιοί εἰσιν’, ‘because they shed the blood of saints and prophets, you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!’ (NRSV).

⁶³ ‘καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ αἷμα προφητῶν καὶ ἁγίων εὐρέθη καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐσφαγμένων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς’, ‘And in you was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slaughtered on earth’ (NRSV).

⁶⁴ According to Strathmann, ‘The witness is now the one who persuasively declares the truth of the gospel...the name is reserved for those who are at work as evangelistic witnesses. See Strathman, ‘μάρτυς, μαρτυρεῶ, μαρτυρία, μαρτύριον’ in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 495.

⁶⁵ ‘καὶ ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς. Τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς καὶ λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ’, ‘and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood’ (NRSV).

⁶⁶ ‘Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Λαοδικεῖα ἐκκλησίας γράψον· Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἀμὴν, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός καὶ ἀληθινός, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ’, ‘And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God’s creation.’ (NRSV).

⁶⁷ Trites argues further that ‘indeed, πιστός seems to be used in the Apocalypse against a background of death and martyrdom’. She argues that the word ‘πιστός’ is used throughout Revelation (in 1.5, 2.10, 2.13 and 17.14) in connection with the idea of being faithful unto death, that a witness that is not unto death is somehow not to be characterized as being ‘πιστός’. See Trites, Alison A., ‘and Martyrdom in the Apocalypse’, *Novum Testamentum* Vol. XV (January 1973), pp. 79-80.

initial sentence of the ‘Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ’⁶⁸. Christ has received a revelation from God, which Christ is mediating to John via an angel, the contents of which are described in Rev. 1.3 as ‘τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας’⁶⁹. Christ’s faithfulness is therefore not only on account of His death, but because He is faithful in passing on the revelation, the ‘words of prophecy’ He has received from God.

In summary, the Johannine usage of ‘μάρτυς’ includes two motifs: that of (faithful) witness unto death⁷⁰; but primarily of witness equalling prophetic or verbal activity, and given the prologue’s⁷¹ focus on a distinct revelation coming from God through Christ in the medium of prophecy, this would suggest a primary understanding of ‘τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ’ as being subjective genitive.

⁶⁸ Rev. 1.1.

⁶⁹ ‘Μακάριος ὁ ἀναγινώσκων καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας καὶ τηροῦντες τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα, ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς’, ‘Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near’ (NRSV).

⁷⁰ The concept of witness unto death may be argued as leading towards an objective genitive understanding of Rev. 12.17, with the remnant Church being defined, *inter alia*, as being Christians witnessing (unto death) to Christ. Although however the term ‘μάρτυς’ does denote martyrdom by the mid 2nd century AD, the internal evidence from the Johannine usage of the term does not support such a clear-cut understanding within Revelation. Those pericopae which refer to witnesses who subsequently die do not include within the term ‘μάρτυς’ the specific understanding of martyrdom, rather each pericope explicitly states subsequent to the term ‘μάρτυς’ that those individuals who engaged in witness activity were killed because of their witness.

⁷¹ Rev. 1.1-3.

Johannine use of ‘μάρτυρειν’

Gospel and Epistles

The non-Johannine New Testament usage of ‘μάρτυρειν’, which focussed on the activity of a ‘μάρτυς’, i.e. the declaration or confirmation of facts based on personal knowledge⁷², acquires a Christological significance in these Johannine writings. ‘Μάρτυρειν’ occurs eighteen times in these writings⁷³, and apart from John 2.25⁷⁴, 7.7 and 21.24⁷⁵, each instance specifically concerns the person and significance of Christ.

Such Christological witness uses a ‘μάρτυρειν + περι’ construction with a (reflexive) personal pronoun, and incorporates the witness from seven sources: John the Baptist; other humans; the works of Christ; the self-witness of Christ;

⁷² Examples of ‘μάρτυρειν’ being used in the sense of providing a positive report about someone else or something else may be seen in Luke 4.22, Acts 6.3 and Acts 10.22. Examples of ‘μάρτυρειν’ being used in the sense of providing a general witness in which God or the Holy Spirit are the subject of the judgements may be found in Acts 13.22, Heb. 11.2, 4, 5 and 39. The notion of religious witness, of providing a specific witness to a defined faith or religious experience, is evidenced in the use of ‘μάρτυρειν’ in Acts 23.11.

⁷³ See John 1.7, 8, 15, 2.25, 5.31, 5.36, 5.39, 7.7, 8.13, 8.14, 8.18 (twice), 10.25, 15.26, 18.23, 21.24, 1 John 5.9 and 1 John 5.10.

⁷⁴ ‘καὶ ὅτι οὐ χρεῖαν εἶχεν ἵνα τις μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου· αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐγίνωσκεν τί ἦν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ’, ‘and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone’ (NRSV), and ‘οὐ δύναται ὁ κόσμος μισεῖν ὑμᾶς, ἐμὲ δὲ μισεῖ, ὅτι ἐγὼ μαρτυρῶ περὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἐστίν’, ‘The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify against it that its works are evil’ (NRSV). The above two verses, whilst not directly concerned with either the significance or personhood of Christ, are nevertheless related to Christ indirectly, with John 7.7 relating to a witness which Christ provides against the world in the ‘traditional’ non-Johannine Scriptural use of the verb.

⁷⁵ ‘Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ μαθητὴς ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ τούτων καὶ ὁ γράψας ταῦτα, καὶ οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀληθὴς αὐτοῦ ἡ μαρτυρία ἐστίν’, ‘This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true’ (NRSV). This verse relates to the entire life and work of Christ in general, and whilst it includes the Christological concepts contained within the Gospel of John, the witness provided is not exclusively related to the Christological concepts, including also the historical details.

the Old Testament; the Father; and the Holy Spirit⁷⁶. The Johannine usage of ‘μάρτυρειν’ however goes beyond that of purely ‘μάρτυς’, incorporating within Christ’s self-testimony both the meaning and the evidence for its truth: separate evidence is no longer required - the self-testimony of Christ is self-validating, and invites acceptance or rejection.

For John, purely being a witness to the historicity of the Christ-event is not sufficient: understanding the full significance of the person and role of Christ and passing to eternal life is only possible for those who believe in and accept the testimony about Him⁷⁷.

Those who receive either Christ’s self-testimony or the testimony about Christ (1 John 5.9⁷⁸) in faith (‘ὁ πιστεύων εἰς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ’) become new witnesses themselves to the nature and significance of Christ, and subsequently engage in evangelical witness themselves. Thus the Johannine usage of

⁷⁶ This seven-fold concept of witness to the person and nature of Christ was outlined by J.H. Bernard in his commentary on the Gospel of John. See Hindley, J.C., ‘Witness in the Fourth Gospel’, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 18 (1965), pp. 319-37.

⁷⁷ In 1 John 1.1-3 we read the evangelical purpose of the Epistle, ‘We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us – we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ’. The apostolic witness is not purely to the historicity of the Christ-event, but to the eternal significance and meaning of the Christ-event, and John is inviting the readers to accept by faith the eternal significance of his testimony about Christ in order that they may partake in the eternal benefits of Christ’s salvific life, death and resurrection. 1 John 5.6-12 outlines for the reader a number of sources of testimony concerning Christ, e.g. human testimony, that of the Holy Spirit, that of the Father, and that of His baptism and death, and offers the reader the chance to appropriate through faith the benefits of believing in such witness, i.e. eternal life.

⁷⁸ ‘εἰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαμβάνομεν, ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ μείζων ἐστίν· ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ ὅτι μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ’, ‘If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son’ (NRSV).

‘μάρτυρειν’ implies religious witness, witness to the significance and person of Christ, a witness that ‘ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν’ both by the Father and by Christ Himself.

Revelation

‘Μάρτυρειν’ appears four times in Revelation, each of which instance will now be examined.

In Rev. 1.2⁷⁹, ‘μάρτυρειν’ is used to describe the contents of all that John has seen – ‘τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ’. ‘Μάρτυρειν’ is not used in association with what John himself testifies to, but rather to describe all that he saw in the ‘Ἀποκάλυψις’, that objective revelation which he has received. Furthermore, that to which he testifies is described in Rev. 1.3 as ‘τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας’, a similar prophetic parallel to that witnessed in the Johannine use of ‘μάρτυς’.

In Rev. 22.16⁸⁰, ‘μάρτυρειν’ is used to describe the angel’s role in mediating the (objective) revelation from Jesus, whilst in Rev. 22.20⁸¹ we are to understand that Christ is testifying to ‘ταῦτα’, which in the context may be primarily

⁷⁹ ‘ὃς ἐμαρτύρησεν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὅσα εἶδεν’, ‘who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw’ (NRSV).

⁸⁰ ‘Ἐγὼ Ἰησοῦς ἔπεμψα τὸν ἄγγελόν μου μαρτυρῆσαι ὑμῖν ταῦτα ἐπὶ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ῥίζα καὶ τὸ γένος Δαυὶδ, ὁ ἀστὴρ ὁ λαμπρὸς ὁ πρωϊνός’, ‘It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star’ (NRSV).

⁸¹ ‘Λέγει ὁ μαρτυρῶν ταῦτα· ναί, ἔρχομαι ταχύ. Ἀμήν, ἔρχου κύριε Ἰησοῦ’, ‘The one who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!’ (NRSV).

understood as the 'Αποκάλυψις' in its entirety: an objective reality that operates over and beyond any individual or that individual's actions.

Rev. 22.18⁸² includes a warning from Christ to the recipients of the 'Αποκάλυψις', the contents of which are called 'τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου'. The parallel descriptions in the final exhortation of the contents of the 'Αποκάλυψις' as 'τῶν λόγων τοῦ βιβλίου τῆς προφητείας ταύτης'⁸³, 'τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου'⁸⁴ and 'τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου'⁸⁵ mirror the prophetic motif identified with 'μάρτυρειν' in Rev. 1.2-3 above.

In summary, the Johannine usage of 'μάρτυρειν' includes two motifs: that of decision-demanding religious witness to the person and significance of Christ; and within Revelation itself there is a clear linkage with the prophetic motif, in which Christ mediates to John, who then subsequently testifies to, an objective 'ἀποκάλυψις' ultimately from God.

⁸² 'Μαρτυρῶ ἐγὼ παντὶ τῷ ἀκούοντι τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου· ἐάν τις ἐπιθῆ ἔπ' αὐτά, ἐπιθήσει ὁ θεὸς ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὰς πληγὰς τὰς γεγραμμένας ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ', 'I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book' (NRSV).

⁸³ 'καὶ ἐάν τις ἀφέλῃ ἀπὸ τῶν λόγων τοῦ βιβλίου τῆς προφητείας ταύτης, ἀφελεῖ ὁ θεὸς τὸ μέρος αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ ξύλου τῆς ζωῆς καὶ ἐκ τῆς πόλεως τῆς ἁγίας τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ.', 'if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book' (Rev. 22.19, NRSV).

⁸⁴ 'καὶ ἰδοὺ ἔρχομαι ταχύ. μακάριος ὁ τηρῶν τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου', 'See, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book' (Rev. 22.7, NRSV).

⁸⁵ 'Καὶ λέγει μοι· μὴ σφραγίσῃς τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου, ὁ καιρὸς γὰρ ἐγγύς ἐστιν', 'And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near' (Rev. 22.10, NRSV).

Johannine use of ‘μάρτυρια’

Gospel and Epistles

‘Μάρτυρια’ appears 21⁸⁶ times in these writings, of which 14 are in a genitive construction⁸⁷. Based on individual exegetical reasoning, every genitive construction is a subjective genitive – there is not a single instance of an objective genitive, even among the 14 translations examined for this paper⁸⁸.

The translations examined unanimously provide an objective genitive translation for ‘μάρτυρια’, e.g. ‘witness to or about Christ’, only in ‘μάρτυρειν + περι’ constructions and not once (out of 196 verses examined⁸⁹) wherever ‘μάρτυρια’ is in a genitive construction⁹⁰.

In John 8.17⁹¹ and 3 John 1.12⁹² ‘μάρτυρια’ is used in the sense of the (judicial) witness men give about each other. However, in the remaining instances the use

⁸⁶ See John 1.7, 19, 3.11, 32, 33, 5.31, 32, 34, 36, 8.13, 14, 17, 19.35, 21.24, 1 John 5.9 (three instances in this verse), 5.10 (two instances in this verse), 5.11 and 3 John 1.12.

⁸⁷ The fourteen use of ‘μάρτυρια’ in genitive constructions are John 1.19, 3.11, 32, 33, 5.31, 8.13, 14, 17, 19.35, 21.24, 1 John 5.9 (three instances in this verse), and 1 John 1.12.

⁸⁸ During the research for this paper, the author examined the following versions: *King James Version*, *New King James Version*, *New International Version (UK)*, *New International Version*, *New Revised Standard Version*, *Revised Standard Version* and *New American Standard Version* (all formal correspondence translations); *Good News Bible*, *New Living Translation*, *New English Bible*, *Revised English Bible* (dynamic equivalent translations); and *The Clear Word*, *The Message*, and *The Living Bible Paraphrased* (all paraphrases).

⁸⁹ 196 instances comes from the multiplication of the 14 versions of the Bible used during the course of the research for this paper by 14, the number of ‘μάρτυρια’ genitive constructions in the non-Revelation Johannine writings.

⁹⁰ See Footnote 65 above for a list of those verses in the Gospel of John and Epistles of John where such a construction (‘μάρτυρειν + περι’) is translated as ‘testimony to’ or ‘testimony about’ or ‘witness to’ or ‘witness about’.

⁹¹ ‘καὶ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ δὲ τῷ ὑμετέρῳ γέγραπται ὅτι δύο ἀνθρώπων ἡ μαρτυρία ἀληθῆς ἐστίν’, ‘In your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is valid’ (NRSV). Christ is here referring to the Mosaic law’s stipulation for two witnesses to present evidence in judicial cases

of ‘μάρτυρια’ corresponds to the Johannine use of ‘μάρτυρειν’ (see above): they ‘denote an evangelistic witness to Christ’s nature and significance, calling for faith’⁹³, or more simply, ‘the point of ‘μάρτυρια’ is that believers should be won’⁹⁴. Indeed, apart from the seven-fold ‘μάρτυρια’ in the Gospel of John, the ‘αὐτοῦ ἡ μαρτυρία’ of John 21.24 is written not merely as an historical record but ‘ἵνα πιστεύ[σ]ητε ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ’⁹⁵.

The ‘μάρτυρια’ genitive constructions are therefore not only exclusively subjective genitives in syntactical terms, but they correspond to the Johannine use of ‘μάρτυρειν’, i.e. they provide a witness to the person and significance of Christ.

Revelation

‘Μάρτυρια’ occurs 9 times in Revelation⁹⁶, 6 of which are in ‘μάρτυρια Ἰησοῦ’ genitive constructions⁹⁷, 2 of which are in simple (non - ‘μάρτυρια Ἰησοῦ’) genitive constructions⁹⁸, and 1 of which is in a non-genitive construction⁹⁹.

and the inability of an individual to be convicted on the word of a single person alone, e.g. Deut. 17.6.

⁹² ‘Δημητρίῳ μεμαρτύρηται ὑπὸ πάντων καὶ ὑπὸ αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας· καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ μαρτυροῦμεν, καὶ οἶδας ὅτι ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν ἀληθὴς ἐστίν., ‘Everyone has testified favorably about Demetrius, and so has the truth itself. We also testify for him, and you know that our testimony is true’ (NRSV).

⁹³ Vassiliadis, Petros, ‘The Translation of μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ in Revelation’, *The Bible Translator* 36 (January 1985), p. 131.

⁹⁴ Strathman, ‘μάρτυς, μαρτυρεῶ, μαρτυρία, μαρτύριον’ in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), pp. 474-14.

⁹⁵ John 20.31. ‘But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name’ (NRSV).

⁹⁶ See Rev. 1.2, 9, 6.9, 11.7, 12.11, 17, 19.10a, 19.10b and 20.4.

⁹⁷ See Rev. 1.2, 9, 12.17, 19.10a, 19.10b and 20.4.

⁹⁸ See Rev. 11.7 and 12.11.

⁹⁹ See Rev. 6.9. Rev. 6.9 will not be examined during the course of this paper because it does not contain a relevant genitive construction, however it should be noted that within the general

Rev. 1.2 is the first ‘μάρτυρια Ἰησοῦ’ genitive construction¹⁰⁰. The final clause ‘even to all that he saw’ used in apposition to ‘τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ’ indicates John is primarily referring to the contents of the “ἀποκάλυψις” he has received¹⁰¹. The revelation has been mediated through an angel by Christ, who Himself has received it from God. The ‘ἀποκάλυψις’, i.e. ‘ὅσα εἶδεν’, is therefore an objective reality mediated along a chain of revelation which John is recording, not a witness to Jesus.

As the ‘ἀποκάλυψις’ is then defined in Rev. 1.3 as ‘τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας’, not only is the prophetic motif involved (as seen above with ‘μάρτυς’), but Rev. 1.2 explicitly outlines Christ’s central role (together with God) in mediating prophetic revelation. Based on the above, one may conclude that the ‘μάρτυρια Ἰησοῦ’ genitive construction is, as with all the non-Revelation Johannine constructions, to be interpreted as a subjective genitive¹⁰².

context of Johannine usage of ‘μαρτυρία’ stated above, the most likely interpretation of this verse would suggest that those who have been killed for the ‘word of God’ and ‘because of the testimony which they held’ (my translation) have died because they held onto a testimony which they had received from Christ, not because they witnessed to Christ unto death, although this conclusion is of course debated amongst scholars, many of whom understand this verse to refer to the testimony which those who died held unto death.

¹⁰⁰ ‘ὃς ἔμαρτύρησεν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὅσα εἶδεν’, ‘who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw’ (NRSV).

¹⁰¹ This means that the pericope concerned is not referring primarily to the witnesses of the Old Testament and the New Testament together, or of the law and the prophets, or of the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles as is suggested by commentators, but that John is primarily defining ‘τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ’ as the contents of the forthcoming verses, of Revelation in particular.

¹⁰² This conclusion is also reached by other scholars such as Pfandl, Mazzaferrri, Strathmann, Trites, Stefanovic, Beale, Charles, and Beasley-Murray. See Stefanovic, Ranko, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2002), and Beasley-Murray, G.R., *The Revelation: The New Bible Commentary Revised* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970).

Rev. 1.9¹⁰³ states that John was banished to Patmos ‘διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ’. As he received ‘τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ’ (Rev. 1.2) on Patmos, ‘τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ’ of Rev. 1.9 cannot refer to the specific ‘ἀποκάλυψις’ contained within Revelation, the meaning of Rev. 1.2. Commentators and translations are split as to whether Rev. 1.9 is a subjective or genitive construction¹⁰⁴: however, for syntactical and exegetical reasons ‘there is no need to split the phrase and take the first half, “the word of God,” as a subjective genitive and the second half, “the testimony of Jesus,” as an objective genitive. Both genitives may be taken as subjective genitives’¹⁰⁵.

Rev. 11.7¹⁰⁶ and 12.11¹⁰⁷ contain identical ‘μαρτυρία’ genitive constructions (‘τὴν μαρτυρίαν αὐτῶν’ and ‘τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν’). In both instances the

¹⁰³ ‘Ἐγὼ Ἰωάννης, ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν καὶ συγκοινωνὸς ἐν τῇ θλίψει καὶ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ὑπομονῇ ἐν Ἰησοῦ, ἐγενόμην ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τῇ καλουμένῃ Πάτμῳ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ’, ‘I, John, your brother who share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus’ (NRSV).

¹⁰⁴ Many modern commentators understand ‘the testimony of Jesus’ in Rev. 1.9 to refer to the gospel concerning Jesus Christ. Within the context of Revelation and the times in which it was written (Nero’s or Domitian’s persecutions), John is more likely to have been exiled because of his preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ rather than for preaching the beliefs of Judaism of his time. The apostolic witness to Christ, the apostolic *kerygma*, was focused on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, this event being the defining moment in salvation-history and the moment in which the old age was overtaken by the coming era (Heb. 9.26). As it is likely that John was exiled for witnessing to the person and significance of Jesus of Nazareth, we may see internal consistency between Rev. 1.9 and the Johannine concept of ‘μάρτυρειν’ outlined above, which may be understood within the Johannine context as referring to the decision-demanding evangelistic witness to the person and significance of Jesus Christ.

¹⁰⁵ Pfandl, Gerhard, ‘The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy’ in Frank B. Holbrook (ed.), *Symposium on Revelation Book II* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1992), p. 310.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Καὶ ὅταν τελέσωσιν τὴν μαρτυρίαν αὐτῶν, τὸ θηρίον τὸ ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου ποιήσει μετ’ αὐτῶν πόλεμον καὶ νικήσει αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀποκτενεῖ αὐτούς’, ‘When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them’ (NRSV).

¹⁰⁷ ‘καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐνίκησαν αὐτὸν διὰ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν καὶ οὐκ ἠγάπησαν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῶν ἄχρι θανάτου’, ‘But they have conquered him by

subsequent killings of the two witnesses and the martyrs are described in the immediate contexts: they are therefore not martyrs because they were killed *per se*, rather they were killed for their testimony, a testimony that in both cases was verbal, and in the case of the two prophets, described as ‘prophecy’¹⁰⁸. In addition to this link with the aforementioned prophetic motif, these two verses may be understood as being subjective genitive constructions: the witnesses give a prophetic testimony that is not about themselves, but which has been given to them, and the martyrs do not testify about themselves, but maintain a testimony that has been passed to them.

Rev. 19.10 includes two references to the ‘μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ’, of which a determination of the meaning of the second will define whether the first is a subjective or objective genitive¹⁰⁹.

Commentators are not agreed whether the final clause¹¹⁰ is a subjective or objective genitive: a liberal theological position would suggest an objective genitive understanding, e.g. ‘what inspires the prophets is that they can witness

the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death’ (NRSV).

¹⁰⁸ The testimony of the two witnesses of Rev. 11 is verbal prophecy (Rev. 11.3, 6 and 10), whilst the martyrs of Rev. 12.7-12 are killed because of ‘the word of their testimony’ (NRSV). Both witnesses and martyrs are therefore

¹⁰⁹ ‘καὶ ἔπεσα ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ. καὶ λέγει μοι· ὄρα μὴ· σύνδουλός σου εἰμι καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ· τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον. ἡ γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας’, ‘Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’ (NRSV).

¹¹⁰ ‘ἡ γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας’.

(even unto death) to Jesus'¹¹¹, or 'the testimony that Christians bear to Jesus'¹¹², is the spirit of prophecy, whereas a conservative theological position would argue for a subjective genitive understanding, i.e. the spirit of prophecy involves 'a direct, miraculous revelation from God to specially selected individual prophets'^{113 114}.

To determine which understanding is primary, a number of factors must be considered: 1) the use of 'ἔχειν'¹¹⁵ instead of 'μάρτυρειν'. As stated above, the Johannine use of 'μάρτυρειν' means 'witness to', whereas 'ἔχειν' has no such concept in either its active or middle voices¹¹⁶, its primary meaning being 'to have' or 'to hold'; 2) the parallelism of action (attempted worship of an angelic being and the refusal thereof by the same angelic being) and of content with

¹¹¹ Vassiliadis, Petros, 'The Translation of μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ in Revelation', *The Bible Translator* 36 (January 1985), p. 134.

¹¹² Caird, G.B., *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (London, UK: A. & C. Black, 2nd edn., 1984), p. 238.

¹¹³ Maxwell, C. Mervyn, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation for You and Your Family* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1985), pp. 403-05.

¹¹⁴ Although not within the remit of the current paper, it is interesting to note that in 1 Peter 1.11 we read that '...inquiring about the person or time that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated when it testified in advance to the sufferings destined for Christ and the subsequent glory...', i.e. the concept is presented that it was the Spirit of Christ that inspired the Old Testament prophets to prophecy rather than the prophets themselves providing their own inspiration in their prophetic witness. Christ is presented as being the mediator of, and inspirer of, the Old Testament prophets, a role not dissimilar to that presented in Revelation. Understood in the light of 1 Peter 1.11, we may understand the 'testimony of Jesus' in Rev. 19.10 to refer to the objective inspiration by and from Jesus for His prophets that provides them with their inspiration to prophecy as they do. As Caird says, 'it is unthinkable that John, who so obviously believed in his own prophetic inspiration by the Spirit of God, should have committed himself to the view that the sole source of his inspiration was his own testimony to Jesus, that he was in fact self-inspired'. See Caird, G.B., *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (London, UK: A. & C. Black, 2nd edn., 1984), p. 238.

¹¹⁵ The verb means 'to have'.

¹¹⁶ According to Pfandl, 'the lexical meaning of 'ἔχω' in its active transitive form is "to have, to hold, to have in one's possession". It can mean further "to bring about, cause, consider" or "have the possibility, can, be able, be in a position". The middle participle of 'ἔχω' in the NT means "to hold oneself fast, to cling to". Not one case is given by Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich in which 'ἔχω' has the meaning of "to bear". See Pfandl, Gerhard, 'The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy' in Frank B. Holbrook (ed.), *Symposium on Revelation Book II* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1992), p. 312.

Rev. 22.8-9¹¹⁷, in which those who ‘have the testimony of Jesus’ (Rev. 19.10) are referred to as ‘prophets’ in Rev. 22.9, leading to the conclusion that ‘τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου’ of Rev. 19.10, who ‘have the testimony of Jesus’, are in fact prophets; and the use of ‘τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει’ in the conclusion to each of the seven letters to the churches¹¹⁸. John is very conscious that what he is writing are in fact the words of ‘τὸ πνεῦμα’, and not his own testimony to Jesus.

Based on the above, we may infer that Rev. 19.10c includes a subjective genitive construction, and therefore so does Rev. 19.10b. ‘The ‘μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ’ is the witness which they have, not as Christians, but as Christian prophets. They have it, not as a secure possession, but as a task, i.e., in order that they may pass it on, as John himself attests the witness of Jesus’¹¹⁹.

In Rev. 20.4¹²⁰ the beheadings come as a result of individual witness, with witness not being defined in martyrological terms, as seen with ‘μάρτυς’ above.

¹¹⁷ ‘Κάγὼ Ἰωάννης ὁ ἀκούων καὶ βλέπων ταῦτα. καὶ ὅτε ἤκουσα καὶ ἑβλεψα, ἔπεσα προσκυνῆσαι ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ δεικνύοντός μοι ταῦτα. καὶ λέγει μοι· ὄρα μὴ· σύνδουλός σου εἰμι καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῶν τηρούντων τοὺς λόγους τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου· τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον’, ‘I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!’ (NRSV).

¹¹⁸ See Rev. 2.7, 11, 17, 29, 3.6, 13 and 22. Mazzaferri argues with reference to these verses that John was very conscious that what he was writing was not his own testimony, but a prophecy that comes from ‘τὸ πνεῦμα’, indeed he concludes by suggesting a paraphrased translation of Rev. 19.10c, ‘prophecy is inspired by Jesus and the Spirit alike [by which he means the Holy Spirit], and is their personal testimony when proclaimed’. See Mazzaferri, Fred, ‘μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ Revisited’, *The Bible Translator* 39 (January 1988), p. 120.

¹¹⁹ See Strathmann, ‘μάρτυς, μαρτυρεῶ, μαρτυρία, μαρτύριον’ in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 501.

¹²⁰ ‘Καὶ εἶδον θρόνους καὶ ἐκάθισαν ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς καὶ κρίμα ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς, καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν πεπελεκισμένων διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ οἵτινες οὐ προσεκύνησαν τὸ θηρίον οὐδὲ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἔλαβον τὸ χάραγμα ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον

Although this lack of martyrological connotation weakens the case for an objective genitive, this pericope may be understood both as subjective or as objective: the context allows both options. Whilst the parallelism with ‘καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ’, a subjective genitive, may suggest an overall subjective objective understanding for the verse, the evidence is inconclusive, and one may interpret the verse in both senses.

So how to translate Rev. 12.17? A primary understanding of a subjective genitive interpretation would be strongly suggested by the consistent overall Johannine usage of ‘μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ’ as subjective genitives, the lexical meanings of ‘ἔχειν’, the parallelism with Rev. 22.8-9, the multi-layered Johannine usage of ‘μάρτυς’ (and the unproven diachronic semantic development to a purely martyrological denotation), the consistent links with the prophetic motif, and John’s self-understanding of his prophetic role and inspiration.

However, given the movement towards a martyrological understanding of ‘μάρτυς’, the Johannine usage of ‘μαρτυρεῖν’ as ‘evangelistic witness to Christ’, and the concept of witness to the person and significance of Christ within ‘μαρτυρία’, a limited objective genitive understanding may not be excluded.

Any translation therefore would need to allow for both understandings, not

καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτῶν. καὶ ἔζησαν καὶ ἐβασίλευσαν μετὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ χίλια ἔτη’, ‘Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.’ (NRSV).

excluding either with their respective theological import, so we now turn to a brief assessment of how the versions reviewed for this paper present Rev. 12.17.

Assessment of Selected Translations

Translations used

For this paper, a selection of formal correspondence, dynamic equivalent and paraphrase versions were examined for their translation of the all the Johannine texts using ‘μαρτυρία’ and its cognates¹²¹.

The presentation of Rev. 12.17 was strictly literal for all the formal correspondence versions reviewed. The formal correspondence versions (‘having / maintaining / holding the testimony of Jesus’) thereby encourage individual exegesis of the text through allowing the text to maintain its theological depth and ambiguity.

However, each of the dynamic equivalent and paraphrase versions (except *The Message*) presented an interpretative position rather than a formal translation, two versions presenting a subjective genitive understanding, and four an objective genitive understanding¹²² (*The Message* presented a formal translation, recognizing the theological richness of the text). Furthermore, the

¹²¹ As stated above, the author for the current paper has made a detailed study of Rev. 12.17 using the following versions: *King James Version*, *New King James Version*, *New International Version (UK)*, *New International Version*, *New Revised Standard Version*, *Revised Standard Version* and *New American Standard Version* (all formal correspondence translations); *Good News Bible*, *New Living Translation*, *New English Bible*, *Revised English Bible* (dynamic equivalent translations); and *The Clear Word*, *The Message*, and *The Living Bible Paraphrased* (all paraphrases). The results from the detailed analysis of each of the above versions’ presentation of the Johannine use of ‘μαρτυρία’ and its cognates was used during the preparation and analysis related to this paper.

¹²² The *Good News Bible* and *The Clear Word* both presented a subjective genitive construction, although there was some ambiguity in *The Clear Word*’s presentation of the text, whilst the *New Living Translation*, *New English Bible*, *Revised English Bible* and *The Living Bible Paraphrased* all presented objective genitive constructions.

presentations of the parallel passage, Rev. 19.10, exhibited an identical interpretative pattern for the dynamic equivalent / paraphrase versions¹²³.

Given the above discussion¹²⁴ on dynamic equivalence and equivalent dynamics, it is evident that whilst the formal correspondence versions maintain the theological richness of the Rev. 12.17, of the seven dynamic equivalent / paraphrased versions reviewed, 6 presented a uni-dimensional theological understanding in their translation, excluding theological import, and failing therefore to present equivalent dynamics of the source text in the target language.

Concerning textual criticism and translational concerns, all of the Prefaces reviewed addressed these issues, some directly, some implicitly¹²⁵.

Of the formal correspondence versions, because of the adherence to formal correspondence translations across the versions, only the NRSV¹²⁶ included a footnote, providing an alternate (objective genitive) translation¹²⁷.

¹²³ This point is important to note, because Rev. 19.10 is viewed as the interpretive key to understanding Rev. 12.17. The same 6 of the 7 dynamic equivalent / paraphrase translations reviewed which provided subjective genitive or objective genitive interpretations of Rev. 12.10 provided identical interpretations of Rev. 19.10, a mutually reinforcing approach which, assuming that the exegete will interpret Scripture from Scripture, would lead the exegete to gain a primary understanding of these passage in accordance with the theological presuppositions of the translators. This would lead to a situation in which the student without honed exegetical or critical skills may unwittingly accept the presuppositions of the translator without realizing that the texts in question incorporate a multi-dimensional understanding and subsequent theological understanding.

¹²⁴ See pages 6-9 above.

¹²⁵ Typical issues addressed included how to present using various critical *sigla* variant MSS readings, how to present alternate translation readings, how to present parallel pericopes, e.g. in the Synoptics, how to present Old Testament quotations and how to add explanatory notes, e.g. where weights or measures have been updated to modern metric equivalents. The formal correspondence versions include much more explicit and detailed discussions of these issues, whilst the dynamic equivalence and paraphrase versions include much more limited discussions, some of which are implicit rather than explicitly stated.

Of the dynamic equivalent / paraphrase versions however, not a single version included a critical *sigla*, giving no hint of the possibility of an alternate translation. Furthermore, in the parallel and critical text (Rev. 19.10) necessary for understanding Rev. 12.17, only the *Living Bible Paraphrased* included a critical *sigla*, providing an alternate (formal correspondence) translation in addition to its primary objective genitive translation of its ‘μαρτυρία ἰησοῦ.

Therefore, when we examine the use of critical *sigla* to reflect alternate MSS or translations, the formal correspondence versions do not need to present alternative readings, because each of their translations incorporates the multi-dimensional theological import of Rev. 12.17. However, of the dynamic equivalent / paraphrase versions, despite the presentation of theologically uni-dimensional translations, not a single critical *sigla* is provided to indicate the possibility of an alternate translation, and for Rev. 19.10, an important text for exegeting Rev. 12.17, only 1 of the 7 formal equivalent / dynamic versions provides a critical *sigla*, which in itself does not balance the theological position taken in the translation as given¹²⁸.

¹²⁶ *New Revised Standard Version*.

¹²⁷ The *NRSV* assumes that the reader would understand the formal translation as a subjective genitive, even though the formal translation is not presented as an explicit subjective genitive.

¹²⁸ The *Living Bible Paraphrased* gives an objective genitive translation for Rev. 19.10b, whilst in the critical *sigla* provided, instead of providing an alternate subjective genitive translation, a merely formal translation is provided. This has the effect of providing the reader with ‘one side of the [interpretative] coin’, without providing the other, even through the use of a critical *sigla*.

Conclusion

Translations face a number of challenges to their acceptability: providing over-literal translations; capturing the equivalent dynamics of a source text rather than just providing a dynamic equivalent; imposing or excluding theological presuppositions; reflecting textual criticism issues; and recognizing and allowing interpretative and theological ambiguities.

However, given the paper's purpose¹²⁹ and hypothesis¹³⁰, a translation should reflect the complexity of thought within the Johannine usage of 'μαρτυρία' and its cognates'.

One's primary understanding of 'τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ' in Rev. 12.17 provides clear theological implications, as witnessed by the SDA church's self-understanding from this verse.

The Johannine use of 'μαρτυρία' and its cognates however presents a multi-dimensional theological understanding, which incorporates both the notion of an objective testimony received from, or inspired by, Christ, and through the cognates the concept of evangelistic witness to the person and significance of Christ.

¹²⁹ '...the paper will provide an assessment of the translation of Rev. 12.17 by modern English language Bible versions in the context of the Johannine usage of 'μαρτυρία' and its cognates ...'.

¹³⁰ '...that a full understanding of Rev. 12.17 is not possible without an appreciation of the Johannine usage of 'μαρτυρία' and its cognates...'.

Once's choice of translation therefore¹³¹ for use in personal study should reflect this multi-dimensional theological understanding, allowing rather than excluding the full theological import of the verse, and presenting the equivalent dynamics of the source text (Rev. 12.17) rather than mere partial equivalence.

The critical SDA reader of Scripture should be aware of these issues, and despite the broad promotion of *The Clear Word* amongst SDA members¹³², should keep in mind the warning contained in the Preface, stating that *The Clear Word* 'is not intended for in-depth study'. *Caveat emptor!*

¹³¹ Recognizing that there are differing uses of Bibles, e.g. for private devotions, personal study or public liturgical reading, this paper is commenting only on the suitability of translations for personal study, as that is the forum in which the issues raised in this paper are most likely to be addressed, rather than in public liturgical reading or personal devotions.

¹³² This broad promotion occurs in the literary outlets managed by the SDA church, in which during the past 12 months in the author's experience *The Clear Word* has received very forthright promotion and aggressive sales techniques.

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