

They followed the Scriptures in simplicity, and refused to recognise the authority of the apostate Roman Church. Their own written confessions of faith, as well as the accusations of their enemies, bear witness to the remarkable purity of their lives and worship. History also records that similar companies of "Protestants", before the Reformation, were found in Southern France, the British Isles, Syria and Abyssinia.

Satan launched a "flood" of Papal armies in Europe and Mohammedan hordes in the Middle East, in a furious effort to exterminate the fugitive Church. However, God provided miraculous protection, and "the earth helped the woman" in three remarkable ways:

Behind lofty mountain bulwarks, in caverns, valleys and forests.

Through enlightened European rulers who befriended the Reformation.

In the great American "New World" across the Atlantic.

Thus, in each generation of the Dark Ages, God preserved companies of faithful witnesses who are corporately represented by the fugitive woman. These heroic witnesses comprised "God's underground", who, like the faithful 7,000 in Elijah's day, "refused to bow the knee to Baal".

(The second stage extends from A.D. 538 to the end of Papal supremacy in A.D. 1798.)

#### Stage III.—In the Last Days (v 17)

After she emerges from her wilderness refuge at the end of the 18th century, and steps upon the public stage again, Satan continues his bitter warfare against the "remnant" Church—the last remaining portion of the woman's "seed".

Angry at past failures, and knowing that he has only a short time, Satan now fights with the fury of desperation (v 12). However, in spite of all opposition, the "remnant" Church steadfastly keeps the commandments of God and clings to the original "testimony of Jesus Christ".

(The third stage extends from A.D. 1798 to the Second Advent.)

### 3.—THE THREE MARKS OF GOD'S "REMNANT CHURCH" IN REVELATION 12

The evidence contained in v 17 enables us to identify God's true Church in the last days with absolute certainty. Three clear marks of identity are given.

**It is the "remnant" of the Church's Seed.** Therefore, it must be identical in doctrine, character and objectives with the original piece—the Apostolic Church.

**It keeps the Commandments of God.** This must refer to God's Commandments in their original, unchanged form, in contrast with the traditions of men.

**It has the Testimony of Jesus Christ.** The "testimony of Jesus" through His prophets (I Peter 1 : 10, 11) is another name for the Biblical "Gift of Prophecy", by which inspired men produced the Holy Scriptures (II Peter 1 : 21), and by which God still guides His Church today (Rev. 19 : 10).

#### *Conclusion* Why has God given US a chance to hear these things?

So that we will be assured of God's power to preserve His Church amid the very fiercest trials (Matt. 16 : 18).

So that we will be able to identify God's true Church today, beyond the shadow of a doubt.

So that we will resolve to throw in our lot with God's "Remnant Church", take part in its work, and share in its final triumph.