

So, why the different media for communication (opening seals in ch. 6, sounding trumpets in chs. 8—9, and pouring bowls in ch. 16)? Each discloses a different aspect of the workings of God. Opening seals expresses the work of divine communication. The pouring of libation bowls links the destruction of the church's mortal enemies with the sacrificial death of Christ. The sounding of the trumpets must be understood within the rich context of associations in the religion of Israel with the sounding of trumpets used for worship. Most readers may think immediately of the sounding of the trumpet in Joel 2:15 to signal the beginning of a fast—as in Yom Kippur. Many will think of the sounding of trumpets at the battle of Jericho ("and the walls came tumbling down"). But less familiar is the importance of the sounding of the trumpet as God spoke to Moses on Sinai. In Exodus 19, we see many features of Revelation 8—9 in these verses: "On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled. Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God" (Exod 19:16–17a). The linkage with the voice of God and thunder, smoke, fire, and a trembling, burning mountain that we see in Revelation 8—9 represents a theophany, as in Exod 19:18–19: "Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the LORD had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole mountain shook violently. As the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses would speak and God would answer him in thunder."

This is important. In 1:10, as John was beginning his revelation, he said "and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet." Then he saw "one like the Son of Man" (1:13) whose "eyes were like a flame of fire, and his voice was like the sound of many waters" (1:14–15). In 4:1, John reminds us of this voice that was "speaking to me like a trumpet." This emphasis on a voice like a trumpet surely recalls the manifestation of God on Sinai in Exodus 19. Given the significance of the rescue from Egypt and the declaration of the Torah at Sinai in Judaism, this is an incredibly important connection. It is a Christian connection, associating the redemption wrought in Christ with the Sinai covenant of Israel's exodus. In both, God acts on behalf of God's people. In Revelation 8—9, that connection is not only with the Sinai theophany but also with the rescue from Egypt by means of the ten plagues, the meaning of the parallels between the ten plagues, the sounding of the seven trumpets, and the pouring of the seven bowls.

F. THE TURNING POINT: VISIONS OF A WOMAN, BEASTS, AND MARTYRS (12:1–15:8)

12:1–15:8 is the largest single section of Revelation. It contains seven sections and fills three and a half of the average sized chapters (of some eighteen verses) of Revelation. Griblin recognized that it is coordinated off by 11:19a ("Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of the covenant was seen within his temple") and 15:5–8 ("And the temple of the tent of witness was opened...and the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were ended"). The seven scenes between 11:19 and 15:4 constitute the turning point of Revelation. The first three scenes present the attacks:

- by "the dragon/serpent" (evil itself) (12:1–17); then
- by "the beast from the sea" (imperial cult from Rome) (13:1–10); and
- by "the beast from the land" (imperial cult locally administered) (13:11–18).

The perfect center of this section is in 14:1–5, the song of the 144,000, which is followed by three scenes, just as this section began with three scenes. The scenes after 14:1–5 move inexorably toward the defeat of the serpent and the beasts. They are:

- "Angels declare the fall of Babylon" (14:6–13)
- "The coming of the Son of Man and harvest of wheat and grapes" (14:14–20)
- "Seven angels are given seven bowls of plague" (15:1–8)

From here on, it is all "downhill" for the forces of evil. Revelation 12:1 begins a series of visions: "A great portent appeared in heaven," and in the three parts of this chapter we see a gradual movement from heaven to earth:

- A. The woman and the dragon in heaven (12:1–6);
- B. Michael and his angels defeat the dragon and drive it to earth (12:7–12); and
- A'. The dragon attacks the woman on earth (12:13–17).

12:1–6 and 12:13–17 both have "the woman and the dragon." The victory of Michael and his angels over the dragon in 12:7–12 is between these two scenes and anticipates the turning point in 14:1–5.

who accuses them day and night before our
God.

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.

Rejoice then, you heavens

and those who dwell in them!

But woe to the earth and the sea,

for the devil has come down to you

with great wrath,

because he knows that his time is short!"

(vv. 10–12)

Clearly, Satan was thrown down. But exactly when? The "martyrs" are indicated by the first line of 12:11, "But *they* have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony [*martyria*]." John's conviction seems to be that just as Jesus was killed, so are the persecuted members of the church martyred. And since these martyrs are by baptism "in Christ," their death is no more a true ending than was the death of Christ. The word "conquered" is in the past tense. The death of Christ was in the past, but its effects continue in the present and the future. And this passage seems to refer to events of the near future, as the devil "knows that his time is short" (12:12d). So, the voice encourages the readers or hearers (past and present) to rejoice, even in the face of present and future martyrdoms. It is a hard message but a true one that must be entered into again and again. John solemnly assures us that the victory has in a certain sense already been accomplished.

By the end of chapter 12, John returns to the image of the woman (12:17) with whom the dragon was angry. As the dragon attacked her in 12:1–6, so now we are told in 12:13b that "he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child." That woman is "given two wings of the great eagle" (12:14). We are reminded of Exod 19:4, when God said to the Israelites after they reached Sinai, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself." This is partly why Christians interpret the woman as Mary even though the vision is not limited to the mother of Jesus. The woman is also mother Zion, and the author's concern extends to her children. God literally rescued the people of Israel in the exodus. The details of what John says in 12:15–16 about the river of water and the earth opening its mouth to absorb the destruction are related to events described in Exod 15:10–12 and Num 16:23–35.

In Rev 12:14, God removes the woman to the wilderness, where she is nourished. If the woman represents, even in part, the church, this seems to indicate that the church must step away from the reigning culture, as Israel fled from Egypt. Shortly ahead, in 18:4, we read, "Come out of her, my people / so that you do not take part in her sins." The "her" is "Babylon the great" (18:2), which John uses to refer to Rome. This verse (18:2) has been taken seriously and literally by many dedicated Christian communities over the centuries, like the Quakers, the Mennonites, or the Amish. The idea of stepping out of the prevailing culture as these different movements do to varying extents usually fails to impress the mainstreams of modern Christianity. But the church can be diminished if it accepts uncritically all the expectations and requirements of cultural, political, economic, religious, or nationalist powers that dominate specific regions of the world. The discernment by subjugated peoples about what they should resist is not a simple matter, particularly when it involves strong empires that wield the power to kill people whom they deem to be obstacles to the order imposed by their state. From the viewpoint of the author of Revelation, the Roman Empire, like ancient Egypt, had stepped beyond its legitimacy to rule. The insight of the author is that Rome's power is not purely military or even religious. It is supported by Rome's fabulously successful domination of trade, hence the role of the denizens of trade, namely, the kings, the merchants, and the sailors who lament in chapter 17.

In the present, we must bear in mind that the means to obstruct or change the commands of our rulers are available to us in ways they were not available to first-century Christians. These are not simple matters, and they must be worked out in all humility. But do we take seriously enough the call to go out into the wilderness to hear the voice of God? Do we trust that God will protect us there?

The next phase of the "turning point" (section F) is in chapter 13. This chapter is less difficult than chapter 12, but because of the numerology it uses in relation to "the beast," it has often been misinterpreted, sensationalized, or simply not understood. In chapter 12, the difficulty was understanding how or when the martyrs "have conquered him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb" (12:11a.) The time of rescue by God seems to be future, but soon. Yet it also seems to be to some extent a past event in the death of martyrs, or even in the death of Christ. The martyrs are called blessed in that they "die in the Lord," as we will see in 14:13. But several decades before Revelation, during the time of St. Paul, "dying in Christ" was an expression used of baptism (2 Cor 5:14; Rom 6:4; cf. Gal 2:19). This will prove to be part of the solution

As chapter 12 progresses through chapters 13 and 14, we see six more visions marked by phrases like "And I saw" (13:1) or "Then I looked" (14:14). The other six visions begin in 13:1, 13:11, 14:1, 14:6, 14:14, and 15:1 (A. Collins 32). A glance at the structural outline in the introduction above reveals that we are now at the pivotal or axial section of Revelation. The final, dramatic conclusion of the book is surely the angelic interpretation of the new Jerusalem in 21:9–22:5, but a crucial breakthrough or turning point of the book is found in chapters 12–15. Here we see what the struggle is really about. It is not simply a promise of life and worship *after* death, but involves a call to life and worship *in the midst* of death. The dominant thematic chord throughout this sequence of visions is that worship is due to God alone.

In 12:1–3, the dragon attacks "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (v. 1). This dragon is described with the features of the four great beasts from Daniel 7. In fact, Daniel 7 shows that it is four different beasts (lion, bear, leopard, and a "terrifying...devouring...stamping" beast with ten horns), but his four beasts have a total of seven heads and ten horns, as does the dragon in Rev 12:3. The connections to the visions of Daniel 7–12 are essential for understanding Revelation 12. Monsters are an important feature of apocalypses. They present unnatural combinations that evoke disgust or horror. The monsters of Daniel 7, like the monsters in 1 Enoch 7–8, are frightening combinations. First Enoch is a compilation of five apocalyptic books, the first of which is the "Book of Watchers" (1 Enoch 1–36). It was written in the 200s BCE. First Enoch 6–9 tells the story of giants who are the offspring of angels (spirit beings) and human beings. The point the author of 1 Enoch makes is that the Hellenistic monarchs, with their high-powered economy, sophisticated methods of war, and pretensions of divine ancestry were an unnatural and terrible combination. This is just what the Romans were in the eyes of the author of Revelation, particularly when the Roman emperors were demanding worship, as Domitian (81–96 CE) was insisting in the 90s.

The identification of the woman in Revelation 12 is debated. By the third century CE, church fathers were already making connections to the Virgin Mary. How can 12:1–2 and 12:17 not involve Mary, the mother of Jesus? But a careful reading of Isa 66:1–17 is worthwhile. Isaiah 66:1–6 sets a context that involves the problem with false worship in the restored temple of Israel after the return from exile. In Isa 66:7–16, the tone changes and the author describes a miraculous birth without pain. Isaiah refers to the mother involved as Zion (66:8) and Jerusalem (66:10). This,

and not Matthew 2, is the primary source for the narration in Revelation 12. Still, a very strong case for an association with Mary can be made from Rev 12:5: "And she gave birth to a son, a male child who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. But her child was snatched away and taken to God and to his throne; and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there she can be nourished for one thousand two hundred sixty days." This verse is not referring to the flight of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus into Egypt as described in Matt 2:13–15. In Rev 12:6b and 12:14, the reference is to 1,260 days (as "a time, and times, and half a time") and the by now familiar three and a half years of the persecution by Antiochus IV that appears in Daniel 7–12. The author of Revelation proclaims that the church is being protected for the three-and-a-half-year period—the time of persecution. That is the historical context that is operative here. The "taking up" of Jesus in Rev 12:5b—"her child was snatched away and taken to God and to his throne"—is more likely a reference to Jesus' return to the Father than an escape from the clutches of Herod.

The middle portion of this chapter is 12:7–12. The heavenly vision in 12:1–6 involves a great red dragon with some of the features of the four beasts in Daniel 7. In Rev 12:7, we read, "And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon...and his angels." Then we see that "the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth and his angels were thrown down with him" (12:9). This is a climactic moment in Revelation. In the vision of chapter 12, the victory has already been won. Also, the identity of the dragon is completely established. It is the devil, or, in other words, "the accuser," which is what "Satan" means. What is difficult about this passage is the fact that the devil, through the nefarious work of the Roman Empire, is able to do great damage here on earth, and John's first readers (or hearers) were already experiencing violence and death. John's conviction is that, despite the present suffering it can cause, the great dragon is not able to defeat the heavenly forces of God. The song that immediately follows provides a reassuring answer. It is an essential facet of the "turning point" of the book:

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming,
"Now have come the salvation and the power
and the kingdom of our God
and the authority of his Messiah,
for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown
down,

to the difficulty of understanding Revelation 13; the other is understanding how the Roman imperial cult worked at the time of Revelation.

In chapter 12, the beast was called "the dragon." There John used the Greek word *drakōn* eight times. But three times he used the word "serpent" (Gk. *ophis*; 12:9, 14, 15). In 12:9, for instance, he says, "The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world." So, the dragon and the serpent are one and the same. But when we hear "that ancient serpent," our mind should also turn to the serpent in Genesis 3, who begins a conversation with a woman about whether food laws need to be observed. That is relevant here. Food issues have been present since Revelation 2—3, where certain of the letters (2:14–16 and 2:20) that mention eating "food sacrificed to idols" seem to allude to the imperial cult as it is dealt with in chapter 13.

Relevant also to chapter 13 is a passage from Isaiah about the end time that refers to a serpent, namely, "On that day the Lord with his cruel and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea" (Isa 27:1). This passage may well have contributed to John's understanding not only of the serpent/dragon, but also of the beast from the sea in Revelation 13. Leviathan is described in Job 41 as a sea beast, and in the chapter just before that (Job 40:15–24) as Behemoth, a beast from the land. Note that in Revelation 13 we see a beast from the sea (vv. 1–10) and a beast from the land (vv. 11–18). For proper interpretation, we need to keep the distinctions between the following:

- (1) the great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns. The dragon seems to be the evil one himself. The other beasts are his tools. This great red dragon has the features (such as the number of heads and horns) that connect it directly to the beast in Dan 7:1–8. This beast acts in Rev 12:3–9 and 12:13–15.
- (2) The beast from the sea is drawn from the depiction of Leviathan in Job 41:1–34 and Isaiah 27. It acts in Rev 13:1–10.
- (3) The beast from the land is modeled on Job 40:15–24. In Rev 13:11–18 it is associated with local enforcers of the imperial cult.

Revelation 13 begins with a description of the beast from the sea that echoes the description of the four beasts in Daniel 7 with ten horns, seven heads, and ten crowns (vv. 1–2). Many features of this description of the beast from the sea also appear in Revelation 17, where the great harlot is described. If anyone hearing the Book of Revelation did not understand

the reference to "the beast from the sea" in chapter 14, they would certainly understand it when they hear it in chapter 17, in which the great harlot "is seated on many waters" (17:1). The woman is "sitting on a scarlet beast...[with] seven heads and ten horns" (17:3) is "clothed in purple and scarlet" (17:4), and was "drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus" (17:6). These all point to oppressive Roman rule. If that were not enough to indicate code language for Rome, there are other indications: "the woman" of chapter 17 sits on seven mountains (17:9); her kings "will make war on the Lamb" (17:13); and "the woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth" (17:18). These definitely symbolize Rome.

The reference in 13:3, "one of [the beast's] heads seemed to have received a death-blow, but its mortal wound had been healed" seems to be a belief documented in an apocalyptic work called the Sibylline Oracles (especially books 4 and 5, see 4:119–124; 5:28–35; 5:137–154; 8:151–159), in which an emperor whose initial is 50 (the number fifty was indicated by the letter N, as in Nero), who killed his mother and fled to the east, will return to destroy his enemies. Nero had been murdered in 68 CE, but there was widespread belief that he had not really died and would return. This reference may refer to this belief.

The other beast in 13:11–18 "rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon" (13:11). This refers to someone from within Asia Minor, since he "rose out of the earth," rather than came from the sea. He does not seem dangerous but is like a lamb. Nevertheless, he speaks like a dragon (e.g., the dragon in ch. 12). The work of this beast is most clearly associated with the imperial cult when we read in 13:13–14 and 16–18 the following lines:

It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of all... it deceives the inhabitants of earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that had been wounded by the sword [or that had received the plague of the sword] and yet lived;...also it causes all...to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell who does not have the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name...Let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six.

Some manuscripts have the number as 616 rather than 666. That number is fully comprehensible in the light of what we know of *gematria*, an ancient

Rev 13
↓

NUM
666
↓

technique of assigning each letter of the Greek, Hebrew, or other alphabets a numerical value. For example, $\aleph$ is 1; β is 2, and so on. In gematria, a person may add up the numerical values of specific words and then consider what other words (either names or attributes) may match it. For instance, if the name John Smith totaled 280 in Greek letter/numbers, and so did the expression "great and loving father," you might use it as an argument in favor of John Smith. The number 666, when transliterated into Hebrew, happens to be the numerical value of the name *Nerō(n) Kaisar*. This may seem a weak argument, because it requires that one place the name in Hebrew letters, but most scholars find the interpretation sensible because it explains the fact that some manuscripts of Revelation have 616 instead of 666. The Greek form of Nero Caesar has an n after the σ in Nero; the Latin form does not have the n after the σ . The value of n is 50, so the difference between the Roman and the Greek forms of the name also explains the text critical problem. It was during the reign of Nero that Peter and Paul were martyred (Koester 596–99). So, the 666 is almost certainly a cipher for Nero.

The marking on the forehead and on the hands may not be literally intended. It has been explained as having to do with coins struck by the Roman government, but this is not a necessary explanation. It is well known that failure to take part in the Roman imperial cult could have significant economic disadvantages. The best reason for the choice of the forehead and the hands as the place of the mark is that "many Jews bound the text of God's command onto their foreheads and hands by leather bands known as phylacteries" (Koester 595). The basis of the selection of the forehead and the hands is Exod 13:11–16 describing the ritual of redemption of a first born. The last words of that passage are, "It shall serve as a sign on your hand and as an emblem on your forehead that by strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt" (Exod 13:16). We will hear more references to the Exodus as we continue.

Another special significance of 666 is that it is a "triangular number." A triangular number is one that is arrived at by adding all the numbers before a particular number, down to one. So, four triangular is $4 + 3 + 2 + 1$, which is ten. Ten is "four triangular." But why is it called triangular? Consider how bowling pins are set up. There are ten. Ten is the triangular of four. If you represented the numbers $4 + 3 + 2 + 1$ by dots (each on a separate line) you will see a triangle. The number 666 is a triangular of thirty-six (meaning: $36 + 35 + 34 + 33 \dots$ down to $+ 1$). But it just so happens that thirty-six is a triangular of eight ($8 + 7 + 6 \text{ etc.} \dots + 1$). The name Jesus (Gk. $\text{IH}\Sigma\text{O}\Upsilon\text{S}$) is made up of six

Greek letters of the following values: $\text{I} = 10$; $\text{H} = 8$; $\Sigma = 200$; $\text{O} = 70$; $\Upsilon = 400$; and $\text{S} = 200$. Now solve: $10 + 8 + 200 + 70 + 400 + 200 = x$. The correct answer is 888. That number was excellent in relation to Jesus, who rose on the first day of the week, in other words, on the eighth day. From the vantage point of the days of the week, 666 would be "Friday, Friday, Friday" and 888 "Sunday, Sunday, Sunday." This symbolism was certainly not lost on the author of Revelation.

This section of Revelation must be concluded by a brief discussion of what we know about the Roman imperial cult, and how it is essential for understanding the emphasis on worship in the book. Two documents are especially important, namely a letter of Pliny (the Younger) to Trajan in the year 112, and a poetic work of Horace, the *Carmen Saeculare* or "Song of the Ages."

The letter of Pliny, who served as governor of Bithynia-Pontus, to Trajan, is a personal letter dated to 112 CE. It was published by the Roman historian, Pliny. The lower portion of Bithynia-Pontus was only two hundred miles from Laodicea (one of the seven cities of Revelation). At the time, there were Roman laws that called for punishing Christians, and Pliny wanted to be sure he was not going too far or not far enough. His procedure was to ask the accused whether they were Christians and if they said yes, he would repeat the threat of execution two more times. Pliny added,

Those who denied that they were, or had ever been, Christians, and who repeated after me an invocation to the gods, and offered adoration with wine and incense, to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for that purpose, together with those of the gods, and who finally cursed Christ...these I thought it proper to discharge.

Clearly, this indicates how important the imperial cult was to the Romans, as it was used as a litmus test for releasing or executing people accused of being Christians. Pliny expressed confidence that this "contagious superstition" would probably be ended soon, and it is good if "a door be left open to repentance." It is also clear from this that worship was at the heart of the battle.

The other pertinent document is the "Secular Hymn," or "Song of the Ages" (*Carmen Saeculare*), originally written by the poet Horace in 117 BCE for the celebration of the centennial festival. The festival was a three-day event, and was celebrated by Emperor Domitian in the year 88 CE. Like the letter of Pliny, the issue of worship is important. The song would be

sung at the end of the festival by two choirs of twenty-seven boys and twenty-seven girls. Even in these short excerpts, one can see many of the features and images of the visions and hymns in the Book of Revelation. The full text is less than two pages and well worth examining, but here is a pertinent excerpt taken from Joseph P. Clancy, *The Odes and Epodes of Horace: A Modern English Verse Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960):

Phoebus (i.e., Apollo), and Diana, ruler of forests,
the sky's bright beauty, O honored gods,
to be honored forever, grant our prayers in this
time of devotion...

when the words of the Sybil have commanded a
choir of chosen virgins and chaste young boys
to chant a hymn to the gods who are gladdened
by our seven hills.

Life-giving Sun, whose bright chariot brings forth
the day and hides it again,
who are reborn new and the same, may you see
nothing greater than Rome, the City...

May the earth be fertile for harvests and herds and
give to Ceres her garland of wheat ears;
may the crops be nourished by Jupiter's good
breezes and showers.

Put your weapons away, be mild and gentle, listen
to the prayers of boys, Apollo;
(and Diana) moon goddess, crescent queen
of constellations, listen to virgins. (188-89)

Notice here the emphasis on Apollo and Diana, the imagery of worship, reverence, purity, as well as connections with the past, and hopes for the future. When Revelation was written, it was difficult to imagine a time when the Roman Empire would be a memory and Christianity would have largely replaced the worship of the Greco-Roman gods and goddesses, but this is what happened.

It is worth thinking about what are the forces in our own times that render a life lived in communion with Christ in loving relationships with others who seek the call and the direction of God in Christ. We work more hours, acquire more things, seek more connections that will enhance the chances of success for us or our children. This is not to suggest an inward gazing form of relationships with other Christians who think like us. Different religious movements can draw inspiration and energy from each other by mutual contact, with respect and even reverence for what is truly good and truly of God. Why is it so difficult to make time and space for religiously motivated leisure in our time? Do time off from work and growing salaries only serve to enable us to collect yet more

impressive cultural or natural experiences? The obstacles to deeper living in communions of faith are not the same as what Christians of the first century faced, but are they not, for all that, the more seductive?

God

In Rev 14:1-5, we arrive at the center of the book. It is the central vision of the seven visions of the "turning point" from 12:1-15:8. Nearly everything in Revelation so far has led to this point and nearly everything after these verses will be affected by it. Griblin argued that verbal markers of symmetry can be seen from the end of chapter 11 to the end of chapter 15. In 11:19, "*God's temple in heaven was opened*, and the ark of his covenant was seen"; and the seven visions began. In 15:5, within the seventh vision, we read "*And the temple of the tent of witness in heaven was opened*." So 11:19 and 15:5 stand as two book-ends. Immediately after 11:19, we read, "*A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun*," and shortly before 15:5-8, in 15:1, "*Then I saw another portent in heaven, great and amazing*." The only reservation I have about Griblin's structure is that he has 15:1 as a parallel to 12:1-18, the woman and the dragon. Still, the striking word parallels and the particular location of the seven visions in 12:1-15:8 and its axial function suggest that Griblin is right. In his own words on 14:1-5, "At the critical center...of the cosmic panorama opened up by the seventh trumpet blast lies a brief but heartening vision of the triumph of the saints" (Griblin 136). What is convincing is the way these seven visions relate to each other. They also recall words and images from earlier chapters, as well as anticipate words and figures from the rest of Revelation after chapter 14. This passage shows "the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion...and with him were one hundred forty-four thousand." This brings us back to the vision in chapter 7 of the 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel and harks back to the worship scenes in chapters 4-5, especially when he mentions the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. Revelation 14:1-5 then, is a worship scene.

It is also important that the 144,000 "had his [the Lamb's] name and his Father's name written on their foreheads." This recalls the imperial cult demand in 13:16 that required people "to be marked on the right hand or the forehead." Revelation 14:1 is a deliberate rebuttal to the command to be marked by the name and number of the emperor (13:16-18). Then the author hears "a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder" (14:2), which should recall the vision of Jesus in 1:15b, in which John noted that "his voice was like the sound of many waters."

Revelation 14:1-5 also points ahead to 19:6: "Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great