

The Controversy Over the Commandments In the Central Chiasm of Revelation

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Like Ezekiel's wheels within wheels, chiasms in biblical literature operate on several different levels. There are those cases in which they occur in very local and limited passages, a verse or two or a poetic bicolon. A larger scope may be taken into account in an overall narrative, sometimes equivalent to a chapter in the English Bible. Ed Christian has outlined three of these cases in an article in which I played a part. Christian has outlined a chiasm which covers Rev 12, another which covers Rev 14, and a third which extends through the second half of Rev 13, the narrative which deals with the land beast.¹

There are also cases in which a grand chiasm spans a biblical book. Once again, Revelation provides an example. In this case the prologue parallels the epilogue, the 7 churches parallel the victorious church at the end of the book, the "historical" seals parallel the "eschatological" seals of Rev 19–20, and the trumpets parallel the plague bowls, in a seven-fold outline for Revelation with the central narrative covering chapters 12–14. The thesis of this present study is that this central narrative also has a chiasm which extends over the entire three chapters. This interpretation does not compete with the individual chiasms in chapters 12, 13, and 14, for they are part of the wheels within the wheel. This does mean, however, that there is a relatively intricate series of literary relationships within this passage and in the entire book which only increases one's appreciation for the inspired artistry of the book.

A basic outline for this type of literary structure that covers Rev 12–14 is given below as a basis for further discussion. I have included here the scenes from the heavenly sanctuary in 11: 19 and 15:5–8, as they also appear to be related as reciprocals.

A 11:19 Ark of the Covenant: Sanctuary Scene plus the Commandments

¹ See William H. Shea & Ed Christian, "The Chiastic Structure of Rev 12:1–15:4: The Great Controversy Vision" *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 38/2 (Autumn 2000).

SHEA: THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE COMMANDMENTS

- B 12:1–2 The First Great Portent (Gr. *semeion*): The Pure Woman
- C 12:3–4a The Second Great Portent (*semeion*): The Great Dragon
- D 12:4b–5 The Male Child: The First Coming of Christ
- E 12:10–12 The Voice From Heaven: Blessing in Heaven but
 Curse on the Earth
- F 12:17 Keep the Commandments and the Testimony of
 Jesus
- G 13:1–18 The Sea Beast and the Land Beast (*en bloc*)
- H 14:1–5 The Lamb and 144,000 on Mount Zion
- G' 14:6–11 The Three Angels' Messages (*en bloc*)
- F' 14:12 Keep the Commandments and the Faith of Jesus
- E' 14:13 The Voice from Heaven: Double Blessing on Earth
- D' 14:14–20 The Son of Man: The Second Coming of Christ
- C' 15:1 The Third Great Portent (Gr. *semeion*): The 7 Plagues
- B' 15:2–4 The Remnant of the Woman's Seed in Heaven
- A' 15:5–8 The Temple of the Tent of the Testimony: The Sanctuary Scene plus
 the Commandments

A/A', 11:19 + 15:5–8. The Two Sanctuary Scenes with the Commandments

These two scenes set in the heavenly sanctuary introduce the main lines of prophecy which follow them. Rev 11:19 is the fourth sanctuary scene and introduces the prophecy of Rev 12:1–15:4, the main prophecy in the center of the book. Rev 15:5–8 introduces the next major line of prophecy, dealing with the plagues. Thus a conflict may be perceived here in that Rev 15:5–8 belongs to the next line of prophecy, not the one with which we are concerned here. As Jon Paulien has pointed out, however, there is a literary feature in Revelation known as duodirectionality. In this way a passage may point both backward to what has preceded it and forward to what follows. The sanctuary scene in Rev 15:5–8 appears to be used in that way. Its primary function is to introduce the following prophecy, but it also functions as a conclusion to what precedes it. Thus, there is a relationship between these two sanctuary scenes.

Both of these sanctuary scenes depict or refer to a common feature of the sanctuary. In 11:19 the heavenly sanctuary is opened in such a way that John sees the Ark of the Covenant there. This we may refer to as the great heavenly original. In the earthly sanctuary the Ark of the Covenant was located in the Most Holy Place. That place was opened but once a year, on the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement was a day of judgment in the camp of ancient Israel, a time when those who did not enter into the spirit of the day were to be cut off from the camp. It was also a time when the final dealing with sin in the cultic year took place. That foreshadows what is described in Rev 12:1–15:4. It is an eschatological controversy that takes place toward the end of time. The sanctuary scene sets the frame of reference for the following prophecy in that

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

time of the end.

A central purpose of the Ark of the Covenant is that it served as the box containing the tables of the Law, the Ten Commandments. Thus, by focusing upon the Ark of the Covenant, this introductory sanctuary scene also focuses upon the Ten Commandments contained in that Ark. The controversy in the end time described in Rev 12:1–15:4 should, therefore, involve the Ten Commandments. Rev 15:5–8 focuses upon that same element in even more specific terms. This scene is set in the “temple of the tent of the testimony.” The word used here for “testimony,” *marturia* in the genitive, does not refer to the general testimony or witness that is given by the saints through the ages elsewhere in Revelation. In this case it is placed in the context of the tent (*skene*) in the temple in heaven. The language used in this context points back to the earthly tent or the tabernacle in the wilderness. There was a “testimony” (Hebrew, *‘eduth*) in that earthly sanctuary: the Ten Commandments. This usage occurs first in Exod 25:21–22, where the instructions about building the Ark of the Covenant are given. The same use for this “testimony” follows twenty more times in the book of Exodus. In this first passage the Ark is called the Ark of the Testimony, i.e., of the Ten Commandments. These are the cultic and linguistic parallels that should be used to interpret the tent of the testimony in the temple in heaven.

To fill out this translation more fully, it should be translated as “the temple of the tent of the ten commandments” in heaven. That makes the connection even more specific, and it parallels the use of the Ark of the Covenant in Rev 11:19. There is a sense, however, in which the action referred to in these two sanctuary scenes is reciprocal. In 11:19 the prophetic view takes us into the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. In 15:5–8 the action takes us out of that arena and out of the heavenly sanctuary in its entirety. The Shekinah glory of God flares up at the time depicted in 15:5–8 so that no one can enter the temple; all must come out of it. No more ministry of intercession is to be carried on there after that. Probation for the human race has ended. Then the plagues will fall. This scene is also parallel to the inauguration of the tabernacle in the wilderness described in Exod 40:34–35. On that occasion too the glory of God flared up to so great an extent that even Moses could not enter the tent (see also Lev 9:24). Thus this powerful manifestation of the glory of God accompanied the commencement of its ministry on earth and the conclusion of its ministry in heaven. Also relevant to understanding the sanctuary scene of 15:5–8 and the plagues which are poured out onto the earth immediately afterward is Lev 10:1–3, where fire comes out from the presence of the Lord and destroys Nadab and Abihu. For them there was no more opportunity for repentance, but only the execution of God’s judgment against them. Likewise with the plagues.

Thus, these two sanctuary scenes are related not just by position in the text but by theme and content. Both scenes deal with the setting for the Ten Commandments, and the commandments are specifically referred to by title in the second instance. In the first case a ministry of judgment takes place toward

SHEA: THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE COMMANDMENTS

those commandments, and in the second instance the movement is away from the commandments after their place in the ministry of heaven has been completed.

B:C::C':B', 12:1–4 // 15:1–4: the Four Great Portents in Heaven

The first of these two passages opens with a depiction of the great pure woman clothed with the sun, moon, and stars. This is called a sign, a portent (Greek, *semeion*). The second scene in the first passage is also called a portent, using the same Greek word. There the great red dragon is seen with its seven heads and ten horns. This great red dragon is identified in 12:9 as Satan, the Devil. In a secondary sense it is the earthly agency through which he sought to destroy the man child of the woman, Jesus, when he was born into the world. The agency he utilized in attempting to destroy the baby Jesus was the troops of Herod, the puppet king Rome had placed upon the throne of Judea. Thus Rome bears the ultimate responsibility for this attempt on the life of Jesus. The woman is not Mary but the church, as is made clear in the various Daughter of Zion texts in the Old Testament. After the ascension of Jesus, described in verse 5, the woman, representing the church, flees into the wilderness to escape the persecution the devil launches against her.

Here then are the first two portents that appear in heaven: the woman representing the church bringing baby Jesus into the world, and the dragon, the devil, unsuccessfully attempting to destroy him.

The third “portent in heaven” in this sequence appears in Rev 15:1, using the same Greek word *semeion* for it. The portent now is the picture of the seven angels with the seven bowls of the plagues, ready to pour them out upon the devil’s adherents at the end of time. Thus there is not only a linguistic link between these two passages but a thematic one, too. 12:3 describes the actions of the devil and 15:1 describes the final consequences for his adherents in the end time. It is of passing interest to note that the number seven is used twice in both of these passages. Also, the dragon in 12:3 has seven heads with seven crowns, while in 15:1 there are seven angels with the seven plague bowls.

If there is a correspondence here between the second and third portents, those in 12:3 and 15:1, where is the other portent to match that of the depiction of the pure woman in 12:1–2? It is present but in this case it is not labeled as a portent. In 15:2–4 the victorious saints stand on the sea of glass in heaven singing the song of Moses and the Lamb, the words of which are given here. This is not labeled as a portent because it is a description of an actual scene set in heaven, but it still is related to the woman shown in the first portent. These victorious saints represent the end stage of the seed of the woman, the remnant, those who have gained the victory in the final conflict described Rev 12–14. There is an organic connection between these saints and the woman who symbolizes the church through the ages. But she is a symbol and they are real. Thus, they cannot be a portent or sign; they are what the portent or sign stands for.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

These relations may be outlined as follows:

- A 1st portent: the woman, the church at the beginning of the era
- B 2nd portent: the dragon/devil, beginning the era
- B' 3rd portent: plagues for the devil's final adherents
- A' (4th portent): 15:2–4: rewards for woman's final adherents

**D/D' 12:4–5 // 14:14–20: The First
Coming of Christ and His Second Coming**

The first coming of Christ is told only in brief. First, Rev 12 mentions that the woman, the church, was pregnant and in labor (v. 2). Then verse four describes how the dragon stood before the woman waiting for her to deliver her child, like a satanic midwife, but he was unsuccessful in his attempt to devour the child. Verse 5 next indicates that the child was a son (Greek, *huion*). The text then skips over his entire earthly ministry to go directly to his ascension to the throne of God and the promise that he would rule the nations with a rod of iron (v. 5b). This promise is fulfilled in Rev 19:15, indicating that at His Second Coming he will rule the nations with a rod of iron.

The description of the Second Coming in 14:14–20 is more extensive than the description of His First Coming in 12:4–5. There is one linguistic link between the two, however, in that Christ is introduced with the title, "Son of Man." The word for son here is the same as that which was used in the earlier passage, but it now has added to it the genitive form of "Man" to produce the Messianic title of prophecy that appears in Dan 7:13 and was used extensively by Christ in the gospels. (See Matt 24:30, 25:31 for examples of this use in the context of the Second Coming.)

Rev 14:15–20 goes on to tell of the harvest of the earth at the time of the second coming, and for this there is no parallel in terms of the first coming in 12:4–5. The link has already been made, however, in terms of His two comings to earth. There is also the reverse involved here. In 12:5 he was caught up to the throne of God, and in 14:14 he comes down from that position to earth for His harvest. So there is also motion in the opposite directions connected with these two comings.

E/E' 12:10–12 // 14:13: Voices from Heaven with Curse and Blessing

The first part of the succeeding passage in Rev 12 is not paralleled in Rev 14. This is the section from 7–9 telling of the war in heaven between Michael and the dragon, that old serpent, Satan, the devil. Their following troops of angels fought, Satan lost, and he and his angels were cast out of heaven. No parallel for this is found in 14:13, even though it underlies the controversy that continues there.

After Satan and his angels were cast out and down to earth, John "heard a loud voice in heaven" (v. 10). The words spoken by this loud voice come in three statements. First, in v. 10, the victory by God and His Christ over the ac-

SHEA: THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE COMMANDMENTS

cuser of the brethren is celebrated. Then, in v. 11, we are told how the earthly saints can also gain the victory over him, through the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony, even unto death if necessary. Verse 12 concludes this speech with a general observation about who has benefited from this (heaven) and who will suffer from it (earth). “Rejoice then, O heaven and you that dwell there, but Woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short.”

With some liberty we might describe the effect upon heaven as a blessing to those who dwell there. They no longer have to deal directly with the devil. There is, however, another side to this coin: the effects of this course of events on the earth. The word Woe is used to describe these effects. Another word for pronouncing a woe is to pronounce a curse, using the word in the technical sense of the word, as it is used in Deut 27–33. In sum, we have here a blessing pronounced upon those in heaven who no longer have to suffer visitation by the devil, but the curse is pronounced upon the earth because his activities are now confined to that realm. In addition, knowing his time is short (12:12), he carries out his attacks upon the saints with greater wrath. So there is the blessing for heaven, but the curse for the earth.

Rev 14:13 opens with a similar voice from heaven pronouncing a blessing upon a special class of saints, those die while the messages of the three angels are being given. “And I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth.’ ‘Blessed indeed,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them’.” It is interesting that the word for blessing is used twice in this passage, first directly by the voice from heaven, and then reinforced by the Spirit who pronounces a second blessing. These two blessings correspond directly to the blessing heaven received in 12:12, but now the blessing is down here on earth. The woe that was pronounced then has also been turned into a blessing, in spite of the continuing assaults of Satan upon the saints. Like those in heaven, these saints who rest from their works are now safe and out of his range. These relations may be outlined as follows:

12:10 - a loud voice in heaven	14:13a - a voice from heaven
12:12a - rejoice in heaven	14:13b - blessed are the dead
12:12b - woe on earth	14:13c - blessed indeed

While this is the whole content of the second passage, 14:13, it parallels only the conclusion to the first passage, 12:7–12. This is appropriate, since 14:13 is purely eschatological in character, while the controversy depicted in 12:7–12 applies to the nature of the controversy between the woman—the church—and the devil throughout the Christian era.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

**F/F' 12:17 // 14:12: Keep the Commandments
of God and the Faith of Jesus**

In the end stage of the controversy between the dragon and the woman the remnant of her seed—the church of the end time—is given two identifying characteristics: they “keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus” (12:17). These same two characteristics are repeated after the description of the contents of the messages of the three angels: “Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (14:12). The wording of the phrase about keeping the commandments of God is essentially identical in these two passages, thus providing a very direct linguistic parallel. The phrase that follows differs slightly. In the first instance the verb for “having” the testimony of Jesus is stated in the first instance but not in the second. The word for faith (*pistis*) has taken the place of the word for testimony (*marturia*). For our practical purposes here these two statements may be considered essentially identical.

While these two statements are often referred to by Seventh-day Adventist commentators, no explanation has been sought for why it would be repeated. Once the literary structure of the overall passage is considered, a very good reason for its recurrence can be found—because they stand at the same locations in their respective parts of the outline, and this reinforces their message about the commandments.

The question may then be asked, which commandments of God are in view here? That question is answered by reference to the introductory sanctuary scenes, both the one that precedes these passages and the one that follows it. It is the commandments that reside in the Ark of the Covenant, according to the first of these two introductory sanctuary scenes. It is the Testimony residing in the Tent, now in the Temple in heaven, to which the second of these two sanctuary scenes refers. In that context the Testimony referred to must be the Testimony of the Law, the Ten Commandments, referred to twenty times in the book of Exodus as residing in the tent. The Ten Commandments are the Testimony of the Tent and of the Ark, and thus they provide a direct correlation with the two passages which refer to those commandments of God in 12:17 and 14:12. These four passages taken together indicate that a serious question about this final controversy in this central passage of Revelation involves the Law of God.

The Central Sections on Worship

The verb “to worship” does not occur in Rev 12. Nor does it occur in Rev 14:12–15:4, even though a scene of worship is shown in that section (15:2–4). In the central sections of Rev 13 and 14:6–11, however, the verb for worship occurs eight times (*proskuneo* in its various forms). By weight of vocabulary, therefore, the controversy in this central section of Revelation reaches its height when it comes to worship. The question is, will mankind worship God or the beast and its image? The distribution of these verbs is not even—there are five

SHEA: THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE COMMANDMENTS

occurrences in Rev 13, compared to only three occurrences in the messages of the three angels. In one of the five instances in the former passage, however, there is reference to those who will not worship the image (13:15), so one could say this occurrence belongs in God's column with the messages of the three angels. That would make the distribution more even thematically, even though this one occurrence appears earlier in the text.

In the outline given above, it was noted that these two sections were written *en bloc*. That is to say, even though each of these passages contains three main elements and are related to each other, they are not related in inverted order. They come in a parallel order. Thus, the first angel's message (14:6–7) relates most directly to the story of the sea beast (13: 1–8). The second angel's message relates to the poetic interlude between the story of the sea beast and the story of the land beast (Rev 14:8 and 13:9–10). The third angel's message parallels the story of the land beast (14:9–11 and 13:11–18). This is pointed out most directly by noting that the third angel's message is a warning against worshiping the image to the beast and receiving its mark, because the narrative about the land beast describes the origin of these elements.

Another way to put this is that these central sections are in parallel, whereas the elements which frame them are in chiasmic order. Since there is a final central section, however, the chiasm continues to its apex in 14:1–5. Thus, the parallel sections of chap. 13 and 14:6–11 are taken *en bloc*, and those blocks fit into the chiasmic construction, even though elements within them follow a parallel order rather than a chiasmic order.

GI/GI' Rev 13:1–8 and 14:6–7:

The Sea Beast and the First Angel's Message

As Ed Christian has perceptively noted in his forthcoming analysis of the passage that deals with the sea beast,² it is not in chiasmic order. Rather it contains two sections that parallel each other. The second is a restatement of the first, with modifications and additions. That is important for relating the first angel's message to the sea beast narrative, for in essence, it relates mainly to the second section, vs. 5–8. There is a difference in the tense of the verbs involved here, for the two references to worship at the end of the first section, in v. 4, are put in the past: "Men worshipped the dragon, for he had given authority to the beast, and they worshipped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast and who can fight against it?'" When verse eight is reached, the reference is to the future, "and all who dwell on the earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain."

My understanding of the orientation of these verbs is that they point in two directions. The worship verbs at the end of the first section, in v. 4, point back-

² See note 1.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

wards to what happened during the 42 months before the beast received its almost deadly wound. In the second passage, vs. 5–8, and especially the worship verb in v. 8, the focus is forward, after the deadly wound was healed. That puts this second section more in the end time than in the historical flow where the first reference belongs.

If the first angel's message corresponds in some way to this, that explains why the verb for worship occurs there only once. The focus of the verb for worship in 14:7 is in the future, in the time of the revived beast. At that time there will be a very sharp and distinct contrast in worship, between those who agree to worship the beast and those who hold out for worshipping the Creator God (14:7).

The only part of the first angel's message that refers back to this first section about the sea beast in 13:1–4 is the reference to the "everlasting gospel." The beast has preached its own blasphemous gospel, especially during the period of 42 months when it was given authority. But the preaching of the true gospel of God goes back far beyond that. It goes back to the apostolic era, it goes back to Christ, and it goes back into Old Testament times. Ultimately it goes back to the establishment of the plan of salvation before the foundation of the world (cf. the parallel in 13:8 as to when the Lamb's book of life was first written).

When it comes to the distribution of the first angel's message, that is paralleled in the second section of the narrative of the sea beast (13:5–8). More specifically, it is paralleled in the same wording, as is shown in the following comparison.

13:7	14:6
The sea beast is given authority (again) over every tribe and people and tongue and nation.	To proclaim to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.

If one identifies the four elements in the first passage as A:B:C:D, then those elements in the next passage come in the order of D:A:C:B. These comprise two pairs in which both of the elements have been inverted. The healed beast proclaims its authority over the same worldwide territory the first angel proclaims its message over, but in a manner of speaking, they go in different directions because they have different messages.

It is also interesting to see that in the second passage dealing with the sea beast (vs. 5–8), the list of blasphemies is expanded and made more specific. In the first section (vs. 1–4), the text simply says it had a blasphemous name upon its head (v. 1). Here now, in the second section, that statement is expanded to take in three main aspects of God that are blasphemed. These can be paralleled in a general way by the three commands that come with the first angel's message:

SHEA: THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE COMMANDMENTS

Blasphemies in 13:6:	Commands in 14:7:
Against God	Fear God
Against His name	Give glory to Him
Against His dwelling (that is, those who dwell in heaven)	Worship Him as Creator

A fairly direct relationship can be seen between the first two word pairs. While one power blasphemes against God, at the same time the call is given to fear Him. When his name is blasphemed, the saints are called to give glory to Him. The third statement is less direct, since one refers to heaven and the other identifies the elements in this earth that He created. This identification of Him as Creator has relations elsewhere in Rev 13, more specifically with the image that the land beast is to make, and that relationship is described further below after the section on the sea beast has been surveyed.

**G2/G2' 13:9–10 // 14:8: The Poetic Interlude and the
Historical Interlude (the 2nd Angel's Message)**

Between the description and discussion of the sea beast and the land beast there is a brief passage of poetry. It is written with good Hebrew parallelism of thought and it has been outlined especially well by Ed Christian in our forthcoming study on the literary structure of Rev 12–15. After the introductory line of v. 9, “If anyone has an ear, let him hear,” a pair of bicola follow:

If anyone is to be taken into captivity, to captivity he goes;
If anyone slays with the sword, with the sword he must be slain.

In context this “he” refers to the deadly wound of the sea beast, not just a general aphorism. This was a power that slew with the sword during the period of 42 months when it was given authority. During that period it “was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them” (13:7). Now it receives its just desserts. It has slain with the sword, and now it is to be slain with the sword. It had sent into captivity; now it must in turn go into captivity.

This is then followed by what appears to be the central verse of this section of Revelation, and thus of the book as a whole, “Here is the call for endurance and faith of the saints.” Given the location of this exhortation in the literary structure of the book, one can refer to it as the central call or appeal of the book.

The parallel passage in the second angel's message has also been written in something of a quasi-poetic style. This style is hinted at by the repetition of the verb at the very beginning of the message. The message itself is brief, consisting of only two main statements:

Fallen, Fallen is Babylon the great,
She who made all nations drink of the wine of her impure passion.

These two statements in 13:10 and 14:8 are also connected thematically. The first refers to a political or military fall. The second refers to a spiritual fall.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

While they are not identical, they share in the same general idea, which is worked out in different ways in the two different contexts.

**G3/G3' Rev 13:11–18 // Rev 14:9–11: The Sea Beast
and the Image and the Third Angel's Message.**

Ed Christian has worked out the chiasm of this section especially well. It runs, in brief, something like this:

- A Exercising the authority of the first beast, v. 1–2a
- B Worship, v. 12b
- C The deadly wound that was healed, v. 12c
- D Miraculous signs, how, v. 13
- D' Miraculous signs, why, v. 14a
- C' The deadly wound that was healed, v. 14b
- B' Worship, v. 15
- A' Exercising the authority of the first beast through its image, vs. 16–18

Our emphasis here is especially upon the two occurrences of the word for worship. These are found in vs. 12 and 15. They are actually reciprocals, for in the first instance it is the inhabitants of the earth who are made to worship the first beast by the second beast. In the second instance, in v. 15, the statement is negated. Those who do not worship the image of the beast are persecuted in the way described.

The organic connection between the third angel's message and the description of the land beast of Rev 13b is readily apparent. The third angel warns, in the most severe terms, against worshipping the beast and its image or receiving its mark upon the forehead or hand. Thus, the third angel warns against what is described as being set up in the description of the land beast. Not only that, but it uses the word for worship twice. In this case, those two occurrences of the word for worship form a frame or envelope around the warning contained in the center of the message. An outline which emphasizes the aspect of worship can be presented as follows:

- Introduction of the third angel, v. 9a
- A Warning about worship, v. 9b: "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand
- B Result: the destruction described in v. 10
- A' Warning about worship, v. 11 b: "these worshippers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

Thus the issue here clearly worship and its effects. One either worships the true God according to the call in the first angel's message or one worships the image to the beast and receives the dire reward that is threatened in the third angel's message. These worship passages can now be placed side by side as

SHEA: THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE COMMANDMENTS

pairs:

Rev 13:11–18	Rev 14:9–11
Descriptions of the land beast	Reference to the third angel
<i>Worship</i> of the first beast, v. 12	Warning against <i>worship</i> of the first beast and its image, v. 9
Brings fire down, v. 13	sends fire up, v. 10
Not <i>worship</i> the image, v. 15	Warning against <i>worship</i> of the first beast and its image, v. 11a
Receiving the mark, vs. 16–18	Warning against the mark, v. 11b

Thus these descriptions of worship and these warnings against worship occur in approximately the same locations in their respective passages and make up word pairs that emphasize the seriousness of worshipping the beast and its image.

True Creation and False Creation

A special aspect of these parallel passages has to do with the false creation that occurs under the description of the land beast and the description of the true creation that occurs under the first angel's message. There is a creation in each case, but they are of a different nature. The creation described under the first angel's message is the true creation. It is described especially in terms that come from the first three days of the creation week: "worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water." These aspects of creation include especially the events described in the first three days of the creation account of Gen 1. Then, beginning with the fourth day, those aspects of creation were populated, first the atmospheric heavens, then the sea and sky, and finally the earth. This takes in the astronomical bodies of the fourth day, the birds and fish of the fifth day, and the land animals and man on the sixth day. This population is referred to in the fourth commandment with the additional phrase, "and all that is in them." That extra phrase does not occur here. This reference is to the creation of the world as originally inhabited, but the inhabitants themselves are not specifically described here.

In that sense the pseudo-creation of the land beast fills that gap, but fills it with the wrong thing. The language of creation is used to describe the creation of the image of the beast. The word image is used just as it is in Gen 1:26, where God says, "Let us make man in our image." Then God went on to create the true first human pair. In the case of the land beast, it makes an image not of true man or woman, but of the first beast, a grotesque beast at that.

Then, after having formed man from the dust of the earth, God breathed into him the breath of life (Gen 2:7). That is what the land beast does to his pseudo-creation: "it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast." In this respect, this pseudo-creation follows the steps of the original creation. Then,

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

having made Adam, but before Eve was made, God had Adam speak in naming the animals (Gen 2:19). Once the image to the beast has been made, the land beast breathes life into it, and then the image itself speaks (Rev 13:15). When this image to the beast speaks, it does not name animals. It names men, those men and women who would not worship it. “Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead.” Here too is a parody of what Adam did in the Garden of Eden. God made a man and he spoke to the animals, naming them. The land beast makes an image of an animal, the first beast, and it speaks, but not to the animals; it speaks to men. It does not give men and women their names, but gives them his own mark and forces them to worship the image on pain of not being able to buy or sell or even on pain of death. This is not letting the named animals run free, as Adam did. Adam was given true dominion over the earth and the animals. The beast is given a pseudo-dominion over the earth and its inhabitants through this coercion.

Do these parallel accounts of the true creation and the false creation speak to the issue of what is involved in the worship urged here? The worship of the true Creator is urged in the first angel’s message. The elements of creation cited in that verse are especially those elements created on the first three days. These the devil—working through the beast and its image—cannot counterfeit. The memorial of that true creation, the day upon which the creator was to be worshiped, was the seventh day, the Sabbath (Gen 2:1–4).

The true beasts, like the false beast described here, were created on the sixth day. On the sixth day the beasts were created first, and then Adam and Eve were created after them. So the land beast and the sea beast it causes people to worship are a kind of third order of being that developed from the creation on the sixth day. But this creation of this false image of the false beast cannot be worshiped on the true day. It has to be worshiped on an alternate day, other than the true day of the memorial of the true creation.

It is interesting to see that the order of creation described in the first angel’s message stops with the third day. On the fourth day, the day following the end of that account of creation, the sun was created, or at least became visible on earth. The sun eventually came into its own, getting its own day in the planetary week. The first day in that week came to be called Sunday. One of the arguments that the early church fathers used to cite the superiority of Sunday over Sabbath was the fact that the sun was created on that day. That became the day of worship that was alternate to Sabbath. In itself it was an unbiblical creation, a creation of a day of worship for which there is no biblical warrant.

Thus these two days stand in tension and contrast. Sabbath, identified in the language of creation in the first angel’s message (which closely parallels the language of the fourth commandment, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is” [Exod 20:11]), and Sunday, the day which came to commemorate the

SHEA: THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE COMMANDMENTS

false creation identified in the message about the land beast. Just as these two kinds of worship stand in contrast here, so too these two days of worship also stand in contrast.

This emphasizes the fact that the central dispute in the chapters, the dispute over creation, is related to the Ten Commandments. The Locus for those commandments is given in the introductory sanctuary scene, with the Ark of the Covenant. The Ten Commandments are named as the Testimony of the Tent in the second sanctuary scene, the one with which this overall narrative closes. This connection is emphasized again in the paired statements about keeping the commandments that appear in 12:17 and 14:14. Then we come to the worship involved with the true creation and the false creation. Since worshiping the true Creator God involves one of the commandments, the worship of the false creation naturally would involve the violation of that same commandment, a pointing away to some other form and day of worship. In this way Sabbath and Sunday can be seen as comprising central elements in the controversy to come, when the image to the beast is made, set up, and given breath so it can speak and command obedience.

These elements can be selected out of the overall outline for this passage and emphasized in this way:

A Sanctuary Scene I - Ark of the Covenant, holding the Law of God, Rev 11:19

B Call to Keep the Commandments of God, Rev 12:17

C Call for Worship of the False Creation, Rev 13:14-17

C' Call for Worship of the True Creator, Rev 14:6-7

B' Call to Keep the Commandments of God, Rev 14:12

A' Sanctuary Scene 1 - Tabernacle of the Tent of the Ten Commandments, Rev 15:5

**Sanctuary Scene II: The Testimony of the Ten Commandments
in the Tent of the Temple in Heaven, Rev 15:5-8**

A final remark might be made here about the number of the beast, the enigmatic 666 which has received so much attention in the commentaries and in the popular media. A number of useful observations have already been made in the commentaries, but I will not bother to repeat those here. What is mentioned here may be taken as complementary to those earlier suggestions.

The number of the beast is given as 666. The image to the beast, in terms of the creation week, was created on the sixth day, as that was the day upon which the beasts were created. But this beast is neither a normal beast nor a normal man like those created on that sixth day. This grotesque beast is a third and inferior descendant, symbolically, of the order of that creation that took place on the sixth day. Thus it is not a 6, nor a 66, but a 666.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The normal memorial for that creation was the seventh day, the Sabbath, following after the sixth day of those created elements. The seventh day comes at the end of a seven day week, like that of the original creation. If one divides that seven day week into 666, it goes 95 times, with one day left over after that 95th week. That 95th week would normally end on a Sabbath. One day more after that would normally fall on Sunday, the first day of the next week. While there may well be other correlations available for this mystical number, it could also be seen as producing the day for the worship of the false creation of the image to the beast when the true seven day week of creation is laid alongside it. Thus, it may be possible that the seven day week of the Creator in the first angel's message may be the measure by which the number of the beast may be measured off. If so, it comes out with a contrasting day of worship

H. Rev 14:1–5: On Mount Zion, the Lamb and the 144,000

The way in which the overall structure of Rev 12–15 has been worked out here ends up with Rev 14:1–5 at the apex of this chiasm. There we see the victorious ones with their leader, the Lamb. If one were only left with the three angels' messages standing in contrast to the messages about the sea beast and the land beast, then one might ask the final question, who won? This central piece answers that question — the Lamb wins, and His followers with him. The mark of the Son and the Father on their foreheads stands in contrast to the mark of the beast that was urged at the end of the preceding chapter.

The place where they stand is of literary and typological interest. First, they stand on a mountain. At the very peak of this literary construction there is a mountain peak, and the Lamb and his followers stand there. This is very similar in nature to the construction of the Flood Story of Gen 6–9, as outlined originally by U. Cassuto and then by others following him. The very center of the Flood Story is where the Ark comes to land on the Mountains of Ararat and “God remembered Noah” (Gen 8:1–4, with the quote taken from v. 1). Just as Noah's Ark came to rest upon his mountain, so the Lamb and His followers take up their position on their mountain, and this is right at the very center of the overall literary structure of the central narrative of Revelation.

Mount Zion was far from the tallest mountain in the world. But it was the most theologically important mountain. There the Lamb gathers the 144,000 who were divided up among the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev 7). The picture is, therefore, that of the Feast of Tabernacles, the final harvest festival of the Israelite calendar. This was the time when all of the tribes came to live for a week in the booths or tents that were reminiscent of those that the people lived in during the wanderings in the wilderness, between Sinai and Zion.

That this is meant to be a representation of the heavenly mount Zion is evident not only from correlations with Heb 12:21–22, but also from correlations within the passage itself. When the song is heard from heaven (v. 2), it is the song that is sung before the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders (v.

SHEA: THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE COMMANDMENTS

3). According to Rev 4, this sets the scene as taking place in heaven. There they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb recorded in Rev 15:3–4. While the songs and setting are in heaven, the literary and theological imagery is that of earth. In this way the old Mount Zion gives way to the new Mount Zion.

The commandments of God come once more into focus here through the characteristics of the 144,000. Aside from singing the song of deliverance and aside from having the father's name written in their foreheads, they have two moral characteristics. First, they have not defiled themselves with women. In other words, they have not committed spiritual adultery, a figure drawn from the seventh commandment. Second, no lie was found in their mouth, meaning they did not bear false witness or testimony to their earthly companions, based upon the ninth commandment, nor did they take the name of the Lord their God in vain, based upon the third commandment. These then are the people who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus.

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