

Let's Take A Tour Through Our New Testament

When we come to the New Testament what is the first thing we see? Gospels. First book, a Gospel (Matthew). Second book, another Gospel (Mark). Third book, one more Gospel (Luke). Fourth book, still another Gospel (John).

This is something new. No wonder they call it **THE NEW TESTAMENT**. In my Bible there are 963 pages of Old Testament. And it is "Old". The Epistle to the Hebrews says of its Old Covenant, the Law, that it was decaying, waxing old and ready to vanish away, (Heb. 8:13). That Law has 2386 distinct commandments. I counted them. Christ expanded in "better" morals the morality revealed at Sinai and taught by the prophets. The rest, all its ceremonial and merely Jewish ordinances of ritual and obsolete legalism, he took away, nailing it to his cross, (Col. 2:14). Old Testament history is still history, its Messiah is Jesus, its devotions still stir the heart, and its history of men and nations still instructs and warns us. But its covenant of works is "dead, decayed" and abolished. There are no Gospels in the Old Testament, no Epistles, no Revelation of John, no churches. In the New Testament there are no priests, no altars, no ritual sacrifices, no holy days but the Lord's day, no family unit in salvation, for "every one of us shall give account of himself to God", (Rom. 14:12). These are two utterly distinct religions now, though the New arose out of the Old. Thirteen times Hebrews affirms that the New is in every way "better" than the Old.

My Bible has 290 pages of this **NEW TESTAMENT**, and 139 of them are taken up with these Gospels. How remarkable! Nearly half, and the first half. That is meaningful, defines Christianity, molds history, creates the missionary movement of the ages, gives a panorama of eternity as the goal and meaning of time. Our Bible, even in its climax, is not interested in human history and biographies of persons, which are, to us, history's most interesting chapters. It was not even interested in the biography of the Son of Man! What happened to him in thirty years of human life, the very meaningful years of his preparation and development as the Messiah, is simply of no interest whatsoever to revealed Christianity.

That isn't the part of his life that is revelation. If the kingdom of God were socialism, then, of course, we should have all the story told of his place and example in the problems of capital and labor, or of the longed-for totalitarian State whose necessities his life and its problems might lead to. No. The revelation we have, of the Messiah heaven gave, draws back the biographical curtain just once in his youth, after showing his heavenly origin and birth. And that is to show Jesus as a twelve-years old boy, already conscious of his eternal sonship and intimacy with his Father, knowing fully that the temple was his as much as it was God's. That is all the Gospel cared to tell of his youth and manhood up till he was thirty years old.

What then is this **gospel**, that becomes the title and proper name of four Gospels, the whole front half of the library we call the New Testament, before you are even allowed to know there is other literature in Christianity? It is **good news**, the "gospel of the kingdom," entered by the new birth and meaning Christ's reign in regenerate hearts, "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

These Gospels, through which our minds make this excursion of thought and meditation, are there for just one thing, to present the good news. And that **good news involves** two things: **THE PERSON** and **THE OBJECTIVE REDEMPTION** he wrought on Calvary, consummated and demonstrated as all-availing with God, by the resurrection. So we have the revelation of Jesus, all human, more a man than any man who reads these pages, for he is a perfect man, and as much God as the Father or the Spirit: and we see his unfolding as man's Savior, Sin-bearer Sacrifice and Substitute. Then he comes to what Mark cites his words and self-interpretation as defining his own mission, "to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Thus his whole life is gospel-defining in the very meaning of his name: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall **SAVE** his people from their sins", as Matthew prefaces his Gospel (1:21). Thus the gospel means Calvary, whose idea and purpose Luke unfolds, in the Savior's own words just before he went forth to the Cross: "the

new testament in my blood" (Luke 22:20). And in the new act and article of that redeeming death, he gave all time a sample of salvation. A wicked criminal, crucified by his side, experienced a marvelous repentance and a marvelous faith. And when all other believers became, for three days, doubters, he alone became the triumphant believer, a citizen of this new kingdom, and heard his Savior say: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" — without a good work to his credit, without baptism, without priest, without sacrament or ceremony, without church, without merit of any kind but Calvary's eternal and all-availing merit and power with God. **You are my trophy**, said Jesus. **This afternoon I enter heaven and shall there introduce you presently**. That is John's gospel, in his Gospel, which defined Calvary with the words: "It is finished!" (John 19:30). Then out of the disciples' black doubt, John brings the record back to their revived and electrified faith; and we exclaim with them: "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). This is the gospel of our Gospels, the Person of the Redeemer and the finished Redemption by that person who alone is God and man, and "bore our sins in his own body on the tree," as Peter adds his witness to proclaim (I Pet. 2:24).

Look again. Nearly half of the New Testament is made up of the Gospels. And what a gospel they tell. Having shown the Person, they hurry on with him to Calvary. Matthew devotes three and a half pages to the last week in the life of Jesus, John gives almost four pages, Luke seven and a half and John ten and a half, a total of 25 out of the 139 pages of Gospels, and six more pages to the resurrection, nearly a fourth of the Gospels. Rufus W. Weaver noted that "one seventh of the materials of the Gospels is devoted to the last twenty hours of the life of Jesus." Eternity, his eternal counsels with the Father, our eternity in heaven, was bound up in the meaning of that day.

Are you worrying, my friend, about nuclear weapons and when you may see the Russian invader in our land? You do well to use forethought, and prepare. But one thing is very probable. We shall all see Jesus before we see that invading Russian chief. Preparedness for the rendering of your account to your Lord is infinitely more important than Canavaral's launchings. Jesus has the ages planned, and they obey missionary considerations. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and THEN SHALL THE END COME" (Matt. 24:14).

I take it that you believe, as a Christian, not only that the Scriptures are inspired, which means "God-breathed", but that their gathering and union into the New Testament was God-controlled, wrought by his providence. No Roman Catholic Church made the canon of the Bible, though it has erred a lot of times on that subject. There was no Roman Catholic Church till centuries after Christ. It split off from

the original Eastern "Orthodox" (Says who?) Church, itself an apostasy that was centuries a-forming, far beyond and away from the New Testament. These post-apostolic apostasies never made the New Testament which they repudiate and disobey. Stupid thought! The same God, the Holy Spirit, who inspired "every Scripture", also watched over the gathering of it all into, first the Jewish Bible, that led the chosen people on to the Savior, and then his people, on to the full Bible. These massive parchment and papyri books were always meant for circulation. Their literary form and majesty proclaim that. The name "Gospels" came to them early. We have a papyrus, part of the Gospel of John that dates back to a few decades after John's death. And old Tatian had a Harmony of the Gospels, his **Diatessaron**, by the middle of the second century. **Diatessaron** means "through four"; and, wherever and whenever people have the four Gospels, they inevitably study the harmony of them.

So then, this divine providence, superintending the preservation and usefulness of the divine inspiration of the Word, has given us our New Testament, as arranged, with its primary emphasis on Gospels, and its order, making Matthew the bridge between the Old Testament and the New.

Now if the Holy Spirit had asked my advice, I might unthoughtedly have said: "No, Spirit of God! Don't let Matthew write the bridge Gospel. Matthew, least of all apostles, is fit for that. He held a compromised position, hated by the Roman world as a Jew, hated by the Jewish world as a renegade Jew, employee of the foreign Caesar, collecting the even more hated taxes that were imposed on a defeated but high-spirited people. Not Matthew!" Well, now. Come to think about it. God chooses hated missionaries. The Jew was the object of a vast world venom of hatred. Yet God made that hated people the channel for the Messiah, and the norm of church life for the ages, and of the authors of our New Testament. Some people are awfully worried now because the great missionary people, in our nation, are so heartily hated. Well enough! If we were universally loved and admired, then a lot of time-servers would join Christianity to be popular with us. Hatred of us helps purify the real Christians we win, as missionaries, and drives away the spurious converts that would come to us, for gain. To the first missionaries Jesus said: "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves . . . And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake" (Matt. 10:16, 22. See John 3:20; 7:7; 15:18, 25; 17:14; I John 3:13; Luke 21:16). Just how long did it take the popularity of Jesus to end in crucifixion? Whose disciples are we? Matthew, doubly hated to start in with, is the very man to start a New Testament with.

It is this doubly hated Matthew, but hated by people whom he knows and understands, who can best write the introductory book of our New Testament, as his Gospel came to be. He understood the Jew. So he writes of our Lord's kingdom, for that is the supreme Jewish topic and longing, a kingdom of God in Jewish hands. Yet it is a kingdom of the twice-born, whose citizens could just as easily be made out of rocks on a Roman road as out of stony-hearted sons of Abraham without the new birth. It is a kingdom with no army, no capital, no territory, no politicians, no cabinet (James and John and their mother to the contrary, notwithstanding), no diplomats, no budget, no State standing or support — A KINGDOM NOT OF THIS WORLD. And the jealous Pilate and hated Caesar can dismiss contemptuously their thought of annihilating this kingdom, for it "is not of this world", their world and sphere of politics, war and ambitions. Doubly wise Matthew, in his Gospel of the kingdom!

And yet it teaches no easy thing. In moral law, it is far higher than Moses' Law, which it annuls except where Jesus expands and deepens and renders more spiritual our permanent morals. Matthew quotes Jesus as saying eleven times: "BUT I SAY UNTO YOU." There is the supreme authority. Wonderful Gospel! In it Christianity is sponsored from the Ancient Scriptures: "Thus it is written", and the word "prophet" is in Matthew 39 times, vs. 7 times in Mark and 14 in John. Matthew speaks of **Israel**, in key phrases, 11 times, Mark only two times and John only four. It is the honor name of the Jewish people. But **Jews** came to be the hate-name of the chosen people, and the name of their shame in the rejection of their Messiah. When the open gulf between the Jewish world and the Christian world was opened by the final fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. and by the Jewish repudiation of Christian Jews as traitors, then it was that John wrote his Gospel. And, from that background, we see John write of "the Jews", as a body of enemies of Jesus, using the words 71 times, whereas Matthew, writing before that separation was consummated, mentions "the Jews" only five times. Thayer's Greek Lexicon says: "The apostly John . . . looked upon the Jews as a body of men hostile to Christianity, with whom he had come to see that he and all true Christians had nothing in common in respects religious matters." Matthew, though, wrote a Gospel winsome to their minds while yet not closed against their Christ. The Jew had a prejudice against pronouncing the name of God. Matthew respects that feeling and uses HEAVEN 84 times, "kingdom of heaven", etc., to avoid offending their sensibilities, whereas Mark uses the word only 20 times and John 19 times. For his Jewish world and his Roman world, Matthew was the man to write the bridge Gospel of our New Testament.

The second name you meet there is Mark. His was a prominent home in Jerusalem. Wm. Sanday thought it would be a palace on a hill opposite the temple, near Pilate's palace and Herod's. That would indicate Mark's father to be a very great man, maybe a Levite secret believer, like Nicodemus, said to be the richest man in Jerusalem, and Joseph of Arimathea. These two spent a small fortune on the burial of Jesus. Maybe Mark's father was a principal Levite, head of a great temple choir or a caretaker of the storehouse of tithes in the temple. We do not know. We know they could take a big supper of 13 men in their stride, in addition to their own Passover supper. And 120 people could hold prayer meeting in an upstairs room in their house. That is some house! How many can you get in your biggest room upstairs?

In this center of both Jewish and Christian life, Mark knew Jesus and all the Twelve, could have heard him preach maybe hundreds of times in Jerusalem and beyond, seems to have been his host in Gethsemane, Mark 14:51, 52, and would be familiar with the crucifixion and the resurrection. Under his roof the Holy Spirit came down, on Pentecost, and he heard the speaking with tongues and saw the miracles of that day. Barnabas, of his blood kin, was another great Levite, in the sight of Jews and Gentiles, and began organized foreign mission work, calling the lesser known Paul to be his aid, and cousin Mark to be their assistant. Mark is called "my son" by Peter, so was either converted under his influence or led by him into the ministry. He had been under the teaching of Peter and the rest of the Twelve in Jerusalem from 30 A. D. to, say, 47, when he went with Barnabas and Saul as far as Perga and then turned back home. After some more years in Jerusalem, with Peter and others, when the second missionary journey of Paul comes on, a sad dispute between Barnabas and Paul, over John Mark, splits up the forces; then Mark goes with Barnabas for years, while Paul takes Silas and Luke over into Europe with him. In all probability Mark had taught the new converts the substance of what we have in his Gospel for years, in Jerusalem under Peter and the rest of the Twelve, then under Barnabas and Paul, then in Cyprus with Barnabas for some years. It was probably when his life with Barnabas came to an end that he prepared his Gospel, now proven with three great leaders, Peter, Paul, and Barnabas and acceptable to all the apostles, written maybe in Jerusalem, scene of so many of the original facts. However, he does not major on the Jerusalem ministry of Jesus, but describes his public life and message in his home towns and province, probably the best way to introduce Jesus to converts and investigators coming from both the Jewish population of Palestine and the Dispersion, and to the Gentiles who might get their start in Christianity from their synagogue contacts. With that background, Mark's may well be the

first Gospel, in time of writing and general circulation. There is no sillier slavery to Roman nonsense than the idea that Mark, this great Jerusalem companion of Jesus, Peter, Barnabas and Paul, had to go away off over to Rome and hear Peter preach what we have in Mark's Gospel and then Mark wrote it down by memory, as if it were all new to him and had not been his course of lessons to new converts already for decades! That is utterly stupid. It simply shows how Rome awes and intimidates and overrides a lot of Protestant minds. No! Paul's Epistle to the Romans and Mark's Gospel were about contemporary, for if we study Mark's ministry, it seems clear that he wrote his Gospel in 55, as A. H. Strong says. He was a big man. He deliberately went over to Rome, after his years with Barnabas, and allied himself with Paul once more. And when Paul wrote to the Colossians, in 61, maybe, he was an honored house prisoner and preacher in Rome with a lot of great assistants, Mark with others. Mark has been big enough to renew his ties with Paul. But now he is going East. Paul commends him to the Colossians (4:10). He is coming to them, or by them. Where is he going? He is evidently going back to Peter, for if you look on your map you see that Colosse is on a bee line from Rome to Babylon. And we find Peter at work among the Dispersion now, in the sixties, and writing them two Epistles. And Mark has reached him; Silas, too, for Silas helps write the historical, non-figurative declaration, that they are in Babylon. And, unless you are again a slave of Romanism, Babylon it is. Mark is big enough for work in the great capitals, including Jerusalem, Rome, Babylon and many another, and he is big enough to chose to work, or not to work, with a Paul or any man of the lesser breeds. Great name, this second author of a Gospel, in our excursion through the New Testament Library.

Luke, perhaps because he is THE HISTORIAN of Christianity in its two phases of history, is the Gospel writer least molested by tradition. The traditions invented about Vol. I of his history wouldn't suit the facts about Vol. II, and **vice versa**, so most believers accept the facts about Luke and his work in the making of the New Testament, as the New Testament itself informs us. These are supreme literary works, and the author gave title to his works and is known personally to the readers as the writer, for he says: "It seemed good to ME . . ." and "The former treatise I made" (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). Now who is this "me", repeated in this "I"? The title of his book, as is natural with books always, makes clear from the time the ink was dry who the author is. If there is anything you would want to know about a Gospel, it is the author. The case is not like the Epistle to the Hebrews. That, in the older Greek MSS, is anonymous. The author writes of the great BREACH between Judaism and Christianity. He makes no crawling apology. He affirms THIRTEEN TIMES that Christ

and the New Covenant are BETTER than anything and everything that remains in the Judaism that would have none of Christ. That could be dangerous to a man after 70 A. D., and needlessly handicap his ministry wherever he might go. So the Epistle has no author named. The bearer would tell the churches he came to who the writer was. But Gospels are not written as a sword that sunders peoples. The Synoptics were written from 55 to 60, the decade before passions were inflamed by the Jewish War; and John writes when the issue is over. Hebrews is the only anonymous book in the New Testament, and for good reasons. There is as much reason to expect the other authors' names on New Testament writings as there is on the flyleaf of the book **you** are the author of. Why not have at least as much sense about New Testament books as we have about books in our own library?

The trouble with timid University and Radical Seminary graduates is they are slaves of a mania, the mania of evolution. Now I believe in **evolution under control** — Burbanks did marvels with the evolution of plants. Just before I left Rio, a big display window of the largest department store in the city was given over to two chickens. Why? **Evolution under control of mind over matter** had produced a pair of white Leghorn chickens that had no wings. Hallelujah! I just hate chicken wings, on a dish of fried chicken. Now we can be free of that misery! Breeders, subordinating evolution to minds, had developed a wingless breed of chickens. May their tribe increase. But these cowardly "Yes-men", who say "Me, too" to all the latest theories of the infidels they are afraid to disagree with, follow these Radicals in reducing everything in THE FULNESS OF THE TIMES to the condition of Genesis 1:1, when the earth was without form and void, so that from the shattered writings of our Bible they may begin to construct a Bible of their own, out of the chaos of what they have made waste and void. They take definite works of declared authors and reduce them to infinitesimal "forms". Then they evolve a "**Formgeschichte**", from this chaos they invented, into whatever theory suits their fancy. It is a slavish idolatry of the theory of mindless, Godless, chance evolution of atoms or "forms". If there was any mind at work on the Scripture product at all, it was THE CHURCH, of which they are also idolators. This monstrosity, which they make a part of the hybrid Savior, as much as your **body** is a part of you, is held to have CREATED the whole New Testament anonymously, out of atom FORMS of maybe credible original tradition, to which have been added "The Old Stories (including the Passion Narrative), myths, miracle tales, legends, editorial settings, 'frames', interpretations, revisions, constructions" and anything else you like. Such men have given up 99% of their Christianity. The one percent they keep is to serve as a front that will keep them paid by Christian endowments, and maybe

endowed city churches, that they aim to live off of, on and on, while they massacre Christianity and its Bible.

Luke, I say, is the Spirit's chosen historian of the two phases of revealed Christianity's history. One phase is the years of the second person of the Trinity, in his incarnate life and redemptive work. The other is the story of the special era of the third person of the Trinity, in the unfolding of the missionary expansion of that divinely begun Christianity of the Christ, with its endowment of power and its endowment with "the apostles's doctrine" and cooperative congregational life that took form all over the Roman world, under the full work of both the original Twelve Apostles and the Apostle to the Gentiles. This tremendous history, Luke gives us knowingly, not the one without the other, not the other without the one. It is a fourth of the New Testament, says Dr. A. T. Robertson. And we may go to that great soul and scholar — and if some men were greater souls they would be greater scholars, for it is hard to make a great scholar out of a dried-up, pygmy soul -- for our summary of Luke.

Here it is: "So this man who wrote more than a fourth of the New Testament was not a Jew . . . Hays thinks that he was a slave boy in the family of Theophilus at Antioch . . . If he lived at Antioch, he could have studied medicine there and the great medical temple of Aesculapius was at Aegae, not far away. As a Greek physician, Luke was a university man and in touch with the science of his day . . . He was the first genuine scientist who faced the problem of Christ and Christianity . . . This scientific physician, this man of the schools, this converted Gentile, this devoted friend of Paul, comes to the study of the life of Christ with a trained intellect, with an historian's method of research, with a physician's care in diagnosis and discrimination, with a charm of style all his own, with reverence for and loyalty to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior . . . Ramsey dares to call Luke, as shown by the Gospel and Acts, the greatest of all historians, not even excepting Thucydides." (**Word Pictures**, Vol. II, pp. x,xiii, xiv.)

And now JOHN! Revelation goes by historic periods, not haphazardly. There are 400 years, say scholars like A. T. Robertson and Hershey Davis, between the last page of the Old Testament and the first page of the New. And the New Testament came in two great revelation periods of writing. Ten or twelve years give us all Paul's Epistles (except the two earlier Thessalonian letters), three of our Gospels, Acts, Hebrews, and Peter's writings, James having written first of all the New Testament writers. That is nearly five sixths of our New Testament, in that great era of revelation during the two decades before the destruction of Jerusalem, with all New Testament authors in their glorious prime, and the events of Christ's life and death a quarter or a third

of a century away, giving time to see them in due perspective. Then comes the great crash, the major Jewish crash of all history, in 70 A.D. It is world-shaking, for every Jew, whether he be Christian or ultra-nationalist unbeliever. Revelation pauses another two decades, more or less. Then the one living apostle, John, gives us a sixth of the New Testament, for a Gentile Christianity, in final Scriptures.

My brother used to preach from John's Gospel as having this theme: "Jesus Preaching His Own Gospel". Twenty-two times John quotes Jesus as doing just that. The gospel of Jesus, as Jesus preached it, has three simple parts: **1. He who saves is Jesus. 2. The saved person is the believer. 3. The salvation is life eternal.** Sometimes two of the three elements are present, and the third is evident in the context. But they are John's record of how Jesus preached his own gospel, told at the end of the first Christian century and the close of the apostolic era of revelation. To this climax came the Gospel half of the New Testament.

The second section of the New Testament library is one book of history. The divine order is Gospels, then Acts; salvation, then works. You hear it said that this is the "Gospel of the Holy Spirit". Deny it, every time you hear it. It is false. There is no "Gospel of the Holy Spirit". The Holy Spirit is not our Savior. He was not wounded for our transgressions and did not bear our sins in his own body on the tree. It never pleased the Holy Spirit, either in Acts or anywhere else, to take the place of Jesus or any place with Jesus as Co-Savior. "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed", said Paul, and he had just called that one and only gospel, the "gospel of Christ." Now one of the most popular of all false gospels in our day is the "gospel of the Holy Spirit". It never pleased the Holy Spirit to make the fifth book of the New Testament a fifth Gospel. The Spirit came, in a special mission, to magnify the only Savior, not to eclipse him by being a rival or a second Savior. No matter how illustrious the theologian who said that, it is false and vicious. Disbelieve it and teach the contrary.

The apostles have a tremendous place in revealed Christianity. They are, with Jesus, the co-founders of Christianity, the founders of the churches, the authors of most of the New Testament, indirectly even of Luke's Gospel and much of Mark's probably, for Luke got his from "EYE-WITNESSES AND MINISTERS OF THE WORD" and there weren't many of these outside the apostolic group. Our one book of history of Christianity for the first thirty years after Christ's death is deliberately a history of the apostles, and it defines the Pentecostal power and plan of Spirit-led Christianity this way: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine . . ." That's Christianity, then, now and forevermore.

It is just as true of Acts as it was of the Gospels that they are not interested in biographies of any men. The common blindness today supposes that Luke tells mainly the story of Peter and Paul. Silly and senseless! HE TELLS THE CHRISTIANITY AND ITS NORM THAT WAS SET BY ALL THE APOSTLES. Someone asked me the other day what I could tell them about some less known apostle, James, Bartholomew or some other. I replied: "I can tell you a lot. He was converted under the ministry of John the Baptist, baptized by him and prepared by him for Jesus (Acts 1:21, 22; John 15:27; Luke 1:15-17). He preached with a colleague in the Holy Land, by Jesus' orders, and went with Jesus on his many tours of preaching and teaching (Mark 6:7, Mat. 10:5; Luke 8:1, etc.). They were with him in all the great experiences of his public ministry, at the Lord's Supper, in Gethsemane and at Calvary and the resurrection appearances. They were anointed with the Spirit on Pentecost, after having aided in the election of Matthias, spoke with tongues, preached to the people, wrought miracles, helped ordain the first deacons, stuck it out in Jerusalem during the persecution of Saul, made Jerusalem their center till the Jerusalem Conference, and so on. The fifth book of the Bible is exactly what it says it is in its title, a model of Christianity, set by ALL THE APOSTLES, working together. That Peter or Paul were spokesmen now and then, while at the common task, is purely incidental. We have the record of unified apostolic teaching and practice for two decades, due to continue in that "apostles' doctrine" and practice as the only true Christianity.

Next, a great wing of the Inspired Library is the Epistles. The Epistle to the Romans bears about the same Providential relation to the Epistles that Matthew does to the Gospels, introductory and summarizing. Its theme is **RIGHTEOUSNESS** — righteousness needed, righteousness lacking to all sinners, the objective righteousness of Christ, imputed righteousness, subjective righteousness, symbolized righteousness, evangelical righteousness, not works of law, experimental righteousness, providential righteousness, personal and social righteousness, civic righteousness, cooperative righteousness in benevolence, and so on. What a book! What a theme! Next to that **opus magnum** of revelation stands I Corinthians, the Ecclesiology of the New Testament. Next is II Corinthians, which Robertson found to portray "The Glory of the Ministry", in a setting of problems of church life and the cooperation of the churches. The next volumes on our Inspired Library shelves are Galatians (Broadside Against All Other gospels), Ephesians (The Universe under Christ), Philippians ("Paul's Joy in Christ"), Colossians (All the Fulness of the Godhead in Christ), I & II Thessalonians (Eschatology For Beginners), I & II Timothy and Titus (Three Volumes of Paul's course in Pastoral Theology), Philemon (The Christian Ethics of Con-

temporary Slavery), Hebrews (Christianity Better than Judaism), James (Christian Morals for Primitive Jews), I & II Peter (Christian Experience for the Jewish Dispersion), I John (How Our Fellowship Is Made Known), II John (Doctrinal Fidelity in Home Life), III John (Missionary Principles and Cooperation), Jude (Contend for the Faith, Once-for-all Delivered As the Responsibility of All Christians). What a glorious and highly educational wing of the New Testament Library, in its contents!

W. O. Carver warns us against a foolish and sometimes wicked splitting up of these Epistles. It is the habit of dividing them into the doctrinal and the "practical" parts. Never! All of all inspired Epistles is doctrinal and all is practical. Nothing is so **practical** as doctrine. The Sermon on the Mount is called doctrine but is about the beatitudes, salt and light, reinforced and reinterpreted moral law, adultery, divorce, swearing, vengeance, lawsuits, lending and borrowing, neighborliness, moral perfection (to take just one chapter)! The practical parts were always vital parts and often they were the cause or purpose of the Epistle's being written. Romans XII is just as much doctrine as Romans VII or XI.

And now the last book. It is the tower with the carillonic bells which the divine Architect raised over the whole Library. There John, deepest of all apostles and prophets, comes to his climax and the panorama of his far vision of all time and eternity. Never let your New Testament down by calling the last book of the Bible "Apocalypse" or in any way "apocalyptic". That word suggests the bizarre, the incomprehensible, the queer, the obscure and confused. John wrote no **apocalypse**: he wrote **THE REVELATION** which the living Savior gave him from on high, and "what the Spirit saith unto the churches." To say **apocalypse** is to refuse to translate, merely transliterating. Our Bible forbids that, in public worship (I Cor. 14:28). You are not to speak in an unknown tongue, without proper translation. You are doing that when you say **apocalypse**. That is Greek in English letters, and it means **revelation**. It draws back the curtain for all to be seen. Such is our Bible's final book of glory.

Here John sees Jesus, Jesus at war. There is a death struggle going on between Jesus and the Roman Emperor. Should you worship **MY LORD GOD AND SAVIOR CAESAR** or **THE LORD GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST**? That was as up-to-the-minute an issue as a summit conference on nuclear weapons is today. Jesus speaks through his beloved disciple, once his boy apostle, now an aged prisoner, the only apostle left on earth. It is heaven's farewell to men, in Holy Scriptures. How infinitely important, then. When you say John, you have gone far and high in dignity and worth. When you say **REVELATION** you go higher, into the divine. When you say

Revelation of Jesus Christ unto his servant John you have reached the highest possible level of the human and the divine. Just try opening your heart and believing it, and see what it will do to you and for you. It will give you a sense of victory, for Jesus wins. There is no timidity, no hesitancy for an instant here. Jesus reigns, not in a palace, but **IN THE UNIVERSE FOREVER**. If you read John more you would not forever, unendingly, nauseatingly be always running around talking about **THE CHURCH**, as if there was just one. Wake up and live. The Spirit talks about churches for there are tens of thousands of churches and, if we do our missionary duty, there will be millions of churches such as the Spirit willed in Revelation, the final revelation. There is no more sense in talking about **ONE CHURCH** than there is talking about **ONE HOME**. Of course, there is a Heavenly Church, just as there is a Heavenly Home, but both are figurative. The only organizations God gave mankind are homes for families and churches for the congregational life of the saved and the obedient. Wake up and hear a farewell word of your Savior to your mind and conscience: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things **IN THE CHURCHES**" (Rev. 22:16). That is final, from him who sits on the heavenly throne over all the earth and all else. The carillon bells chime sweetly and they move you to deepest harmonies of spirituality.

Here you come to a feature of the New Testament Christianity that it is just as well to be intelligent about: **THE PUBLIC READER OF THE SCRIPTURES** in the early churches. There were no printed books then. Nobody had a copy of John's Revelation when it was first known in the churches. But it was Scripture, to be read in worship and for instruction and obedience from 95 A.D. on. It was what the Spirit was saying to the churches, just then the most important of all Scriptures. "Blessed is the reader and (blessed are) the hearers", says the Greek of 1:3, one reader, an audience of hearers. You have a similar phrase in Matthew (24:15), "Whoso readeth, let him understand!" The Greek word **read** means literally to **KNOW AGAIN**. You study it, then read it for others, and good public reading is itself good exposition. The other verb is cognate with the noun **mind**, **put your mind on it, think it through**. Matthew instructs the public reader in the churches to **understand** the reference to the impending advance of the idolatrous Roman Eagles into the very temple itself, in 70 A.D. and get the churches ready for what was coming. In Jerusalem they knew and fled to Pella on an instant's notice. Arndt and Gingrich, in their Greek lexicon, here translate: "take note, think over" and so be able to explain privately language that might cause a general arrest for the Christian Jews, if it had been said plainly.

THE READER read, the church heard. And as Matthew faced a hostile Jewish Jerusalem and syn-

agogues, John faced a hostile Roman Empire and police. A lot in the Revelation was "shortly to come to pass", not two thousand years later. And the **READER** would explain the symbolism of this war between the Lord and Savior Caesar and the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In the seminary in Recife where I taught for twenty years, I had blackboards put all around the room where I taught certain classes. In teaching The Revelation of John, as our Greek Testaments have it on every page of this final Scripture, I used the whole line of blackboards. My division was twofold: I. What we can know about the contents of this Revelation. II. What We Don't Know, Because Those oral explanations of the **READER** are not preserved for us. Now **WE KNOW A VAST LOT** in this book! We **know** that Lamb, enthroned "as it had been slain", who opened all the mysteries of prophecy and defeated all the foes of God in all the universe, 5:6. We know that Lamb. And he is the theme of the whole book. We know that "Lord's day", our Sunday — no "sabbath", a week-ending seventh day to celebrate events told in Gen. 1, but a week beginning Christian day, to glory in the events that end our Gospels, the resurrection. We know that sublime figure who walks ever in the midst of the churches, Jesus the Warrior. He fights, not with carnal weapons. His sword goes out of his mouth, the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. That's our way to fight. We know those candlesticks or golden lamps. They are our churches, no — his churches. We know those stars. They are our pastors, held high and securely in his hands, molded and obedient to his will, for while they are servants, not lords over God's heritage, they are to preach under his orders, even if it costs them their job. However, they have no monopoly on the Word. The Spirit speaks to the churches, and they are severally and unanimously as responsible for keeping that message true as is the "angel" in the pulpit. He is just an angel, not an archangel, and angels are "ministering servants", not ecclesiastical bosses over the Lord's heritage, as Peter joins John in believing (I Pet. 5:3). We know those "Seven Spirits of God" (4:5). They are the third person in the Trinity (1:4), just as if there was one whole Holy Spirit for each of the seven churches. How wonderful! We know all the faults and all the virtues, all the problems and all the duties of these churches, and what the Spirit saith to the churches about it all. This is a perfect mirror in which Baptist churches look and see our faults, our duties, our heaven-given norm forever. There is no species of Catholicism or World Council on its horizon throughout all ages, world without end, Amen. We **KNOW** with absolute certainty a vast lot, a blessed, amazing, life-controlling and heart-hallowing lot about this **REVELATION**. It is no Apocalypse. The curtain is pulled back, for all to see. And we see Jesus in wonderful relationships.

How much we know! But the "secret things" we don't know (Deut. 29:29). I have been teaching since 1903 and I always obeyed the old proverb: "Teach thy tongue to say: 'I do not know!'" So, after studying so much that we know in the final Revelation, I used the same array of blackboard space to enumerate the things I don't know in John's great book of visions. I put them down, each at the top of the board, then I wrote under each phrase the interpretation given by Carroll, The Expositor's Greek Testament, the Expositor's Bible, the American Commentary, Seiss and some others. Greater confusion you never saw. Babel itself was sweet harmony, in comparison. The students saw that nobody knows. The reason why every commentary contradicts every other commentary is they are all guessing. They have no clue to the "reader's" explanation given to the seven churches of hearers originally. Now the glorious thing is that the parts of the Bible we don't understand, because they are not revealed, are not

the parts that define duty or salvation or comfort. And I think the uncertainty is purposed by the Spirit. All these dramatic figures of speech had an immediate meaning. But that doesn't affect me. Roman armies before Jerusalem are no threat in my life. The fight between the Caesars and the living Lord is over. If the details about that were explained, then they could have no meaning in our life, for they are long out of date. But we see here a great, prolonged conflict between the Lamb on his mediatorial throne and his enemies. The battles are typical of many such wars, countless conflicts in history. They give me faith in his winning the battle in which I bear arms, the Word. And so it was meant to be. You apply the general teaching to the specific case.

Thanks for your companionship on this excursion in the halls of the Divine Library. May its beauties and learning be more real and enhancing to both of us, forevermore.

W. C. TAYLOR,
Southern Baptist Missionary in Brazil 40 Years

W. C. T.