

INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION

AUTHORSHIP

There is no book of the New Testament to whose authorship the testimony of history is more definite. Within the space of a few years after the death of John, the Apostle, it was being quoted and ascribed to John by writers who either knew him in person or who obtained their information from those who sat at his feet.

Papias

Our first witness is Papias. He was overseer of the church at Hierapolis, a city near Laodicea and Colosse. It was the last home and burial place of the Apostle Philip and two of his three daughters. Eusebius quotes Polycrates, elder in the church at Ephesus, saying, "Philip, one of the twelve apostles, who sleeps in Hierapolis, and his two virgin daughters." Another of his daughters, who lived in the Holy Spirit, rests at Ephesus." *Eccles. Hist.* 111 C. 31, V. 24.

He was the author of a work of five books entitled, "An Exposition of Oracles of the Lord." The whole work has perished, except a few quotations from it by early writers, chiefly Eusebius. Eusebius says that Papias talked with the daughters of Philip. "But we must now show how Papias, coming to them received a wonderful account from the daughters of Philip."—*Eccles. Hist.* 111 39.

Irenaeus says that Papias was a companion of Polycarp and a hearer of John.

"These things are borne witness to in writing by Papias, the hearer of John, and a companion of Polycarp, in his fourth book, for their are five books compiled by him."—*Heresies* V. 33.

Papias conversed with various persons who had been followers of the apostle and inquired of them what the apostle taught. He says: "But if I meet with one who has been a follower of the elders anywhere, I made it a point to inquire what were the declarations of the elders. What was said by Andrew, Peter, or Philip. What by Thomas, James, John or Matthew, or any other of the disciples of the Lord; for I do not think I derive so much benefit from books as from the living voice of those that are still surviving."—*Eccles. Hist.* 111 39.

Papias, as best we know, was born about A. D. 70 and Eusebius says Papias bore testimony to a number of the New Testament books.

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Andrew of Caesarea, a Greek writer of the fifth century declares Papias bore testimony to the inspiration of the book of Revelation. The words of Andrew are as follows: "With regard to the inspiration of the Book (Revelation) we deem it superfluous to add another word; for the blessed Gregory, Cyril, and Theologus, and even some of still older date, Papias, Irenaeus, Methodius and Hippolytus, bore entirely satisfactory testimony to it."—Fragments of Papias VIII Anti-Nicene Library, Vol. 1.

Papias was a companion of Polycarp, who died February 23, A.D. 155. Polycarp declared at his martyrdom that he had served the Lord Jesus eighty-six years. The account reads: "Then the proconsul urging him and saying, 'Swear and I will set thee at liberty, reproach Christ;' Polycarp declared, 'Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never did me an injury, how then can I blaspheme my King, and my Savior?'"—Martyrdom of Polycarp C. IX Anti-Nicene Library, Vol. 1.

This dates his baptism as early as A. D. 70 the date of the destruction of Jerusalem. After his baptism he lived thirty years contemporary with the apostle John. And as John spent the later part of his life at Ephesus, only fifty miles from Smyrna, where Polycarp was appointed overseer of the church by the apostles (so declared by Irenaeus) he must have seen and heard John.

Thus we see that Papias, being a companion of Polycarp, who was instructed by the apostle was in a position to know the facts when he declared the book of Revelation was written by inspiration by the Apostle, John.

Irenaeus

To Papias may be added Irenaeus born between A. D. 115 and A.D. 125, who tells us he was long a pupil of Polycarp. "But Polycarp was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also by apostles in Asia appointed bishop of the church in Smyrna, whom I saw in my early youth, for he tarried a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom, departed this life, having taught things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the church had handed down, and which alone are true."—Irenaeus, against Heresies 262, 263.

Of course, with such opportunities he certainly was not ignorant of what John had written, yet he declares explicitly that John is the

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author of the book of Revelation. He makes many quotations from the Apocalypse. He also states its approximate date, saying: "We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the names of the Anti-christ; for if it were necessary that his name should be revealed at the present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen not very long since, but almost in our day, toward the end of Domitian's reign."—Against Heresies Vol. 30,3.

Justin Martyr

He was a native of the ancient city of Shechem in Palestine, which was called Flavia Neapolis by the Romans, and is now called Nablus by the Arabs. His name, and that of his father, Priscus, and his grandfather, Bacchius, are Roman, indicating possible Roman lineage. The exact date of his birth is unknown, but he wrote about 150 years after Christ. He wrote two apologies, in the first of which he says, "Lest some should, without reason and for the perversion of what we teach, maintain that we say that Christ was born one-hundred and fifty years ago under Cyrenius, and subsequently, in the time of Pontius Pilate, taught what we say He taught; and should cry out against us as though all men who were born before him were irresponsible, let us anticipate and solve the difficulty."—First apology C. 46.

Justin Martyr quotes by name the apocalypse, or the book of Revelation and cites the name of the author. "There was a certain man with us whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied by a revelation that was made to him that those who believed in our Christ should dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem and that thereafter the general and in short the eternal revelation and judgment of all men would likewise take place."—Dialogue 1 6.C.61.

Tertullian

The next witness is Tertullian, a famous Latin writer of Africa who was born in Carthage about A. D. 160 and died about A. D. 240. His knowledge of the New Testament books extended through the last quarter of the second century. He frequently quotes from Revelation, ascribing it to John.

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“John in his apocalypse is commanded to chastise those who eat things sacrificed to idols and commit fornication.” (Rev. 2:14)—Prescriptions against Heresies XXXIII 40.

Eusebius

Eusebius, called the father of Ecclesiastical History, because he wrote the first church history that has come down to our day, lived from A. D. 270 to A. D. 340. He was bishop of the church in Caesarea in Palestine. He lived through the persecution under the Emperor Diocletian which continued from A. D. 303 to 313 A. D. which he describes. He lived to see christianity established by law throughout the Roman Empire. He was commissioned by Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, to have transcribed fifty copies of the Bible for the use of the churches in Constantinople. He declares that John wrote the Apocalypse. “What shall we say of Him who reclined upon the breast of Jesus? I mean John, who has left one gospel, in which he confesses that he could write so many that the whole world could not contain them. He also wrote the apocalypse, commanded as he was to conceal and not write the voices of the seven thunders.”—Eccles. Hist. VI, XXV, P. 246.

Muratorian Canon

We turn now from the evidence of the authorship of Revelation as given by the early church fathers, to the catalogues of the New Testament books.

The earliest formal catalogue of the New Testament books now extant, is a document called the Muratorian Canon. The manuscript of this document was found in 1740 A. D. in an old library in Milan, by an Italian named Muratori, whence the title Muratorian Canon. The manuscript belongs to the seventh or eighth century and is a Latin translation from a Greek original.

It claims to have been composed by a contemporary of Pius, bishop of Rome, who died in the year 157. It could not be of a later date than A. D. 170. The existing manuscript is fragmentary having lost some lines from both the beginning and the end. It contains in the canon the book of Revelation.

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Catalogue of Council of Carthage

Some of these catalogues are found in the acts of various ecclesiastical assemblies, which set forth the books of the Old and New Testaments.

The catalogue of the Council of Carthage names all of the canonical books of the Old Testament, included in our present Bible and then gives the New Testament books in the following order: "Four books of the gospels, one book of the acts of the apostles, thirteen of the Epistles of the Apostle Paul, one of the same to the Hebrews, two Epistles of the apostle Peter, three of John, one of James, one of Judas, one book of the apocalypse of John." It concludes: "We have received from our fathers that these are to be read in the churches."

This will conclude the evidence on the authorship of the apocalypse, or the book of Revelation.

DATE OF COMPOSITION

The ancient church assigned the date of writing the book of Revelation, near the end of the reign of Domitian, the Emperor of Rome. In our study of evidence of the authorship of the apolypse as presented by Irenaeus, we found he said that John "beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen not very long since, but almost in our day, toward the end of Domitian's reign." This was in A. D. 96.

With this plain statement agree all the church fathers who speak of the subject, for the first three centuries. Beginning with the positive and definite statement of Irenaeus there is an unbroken agreement for nearly four centuries that the date of the writing of the book of Revelation belongs to the persecution of the reign of Domitian, some writers placing the exile in the fourteenth year of his reign, which extended from A. D. 81 to A. D. 96.

Clement of Rome

There is no book from an uninspired pen so highly prized by the early church as the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians. Only three manuscripts of this Epistle are now extant. One of these, long believed to be the only one, is attached to the Alexandrian Manuscript of the New Testament, as if it were a part of the

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sacred volume. One was discovered in Constantinople in 1875. The third in Syriac Manuscript of the New Testament immediately following the catholic epistles viz. James, first and second Peter, first, second and third John and Jude.

"In 1875 critics and students were startled by the appearance of a careful and complete edition published in Constantinople from a manuscript discovered in the "library of the Holy Sepulchre", in that city. Its editor is Philotheos Bryennios, Metropolitan of Serrae.

Scarcely was this discovery realized when a Syrian Manuscript of the "Two Epistles was also found in 1876 in Paris."—Charteris, *Canonicity Int.* VIII, IX.

The epistle does not bear the name of Clement, but is written in the name of "the church of God which sojourns at Rome, to the Church of God sojourning at Corinth."

While Clement's name is not attached to the Epistle, Eusebius accredited it to him. "Of this Clement there is one epistle extant, acknowledged as genuine, of considerable length and of great merit, which he wrote in the name of the Church at Rome to that at Corinth, at the time when there was a discension in the latter. This we know to have been publically read for the common benefit in most of the churches, both in former times and in our own; and that at the time mentioned an edition did take place at Corinth, is abundantly attested by Hegesippus."—Eusebius *Eccles. Hist.* 111, 16.

The epistle was written, according to the opening statement of this epistle by Clement, after some "sudden and calamitous events" had just happened at Corinth. Such persecutions frequently occurred under the reign of Domitian, and the most probable date assigned to the epistle is A. D. 96 or 97.

Clement was old enough in the year 93 to be appointed bishop of a large church like Rome and thus it would seem he lived through all the period of the apostolic writings. The earliest of the New Testament books was I Thessalonians, which was written A. D. 52, just 41 years before Clements appointment to office. He had knowledge, then, of what writings had come from the pens of the apostles up to the date of his own epistle, seeing that his epistle was written before the death of John.

While he quotes from Matthew, Luke, Mark, Ephesians, Romans, Titus, Hebrews I and II Peter, he quotes nothing from John, for none of Johns' writings had gone into circulation, and

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perhaps none of them had been written at the date of Clement's epistle. Then, this puts the date of the composition of Revelation close to the close of the first century.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE

The evidence necessary to confirm a document may be either external or internal. External evidence is that derived from other sources than the book itself, which has been the nature of the evidence we have already presented. Internal evidence is that found in the contents of the book itself. The proper method of procedure in this discussion is to first assume that the Book of Revelation is genuine, and then search its pages for evidence and reach our decision after this internal evidence is considered in connection with the external. We will consider only a few brief items.

First: An ecclesiastical organization reveals itself in the seven churches of the apocalypse which did not reveal itself until the very end of the first and the beginning of the second century. Note: Each church had an angel or man of the church through which the church is addressed. There is no evidence of an individual enjoying such a distinction before the last part of the first century.

Second: The expression "The Lord's Day" does not occur in the earlier apostolic writings. Rather, they always use the expression, "The first day of the week." (I Cor. 16:2) (Acts 20:7)

But the writers of the second century, even from its beginning use the phrase, "The Lord's Day."

This term then points to a period near the beginning of the second century.

Third: The expressions in Rev. 2:9 and 3:9 indicate a complete separation between the church and the synagogue. Such a separation did not finally take place until the time of the destruction of Jerusalem's down fall and the close of the first century.

Fourth: On the other hand, there is no internal evidence within the apocalypse against, either the genuineness of the book or the time of its writing at the end of the second century.

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THE PLACE

The place where John received the apocalypse of future events is declared by the author himself. It is the universal testimony of the early church that John survived the destruction of Jerusalem, that when the holocaust of war fell upon that city, John in obedience to the Lord's warning (Matthew 24:16) fled from the approaching desolation and took up his residence in Ephesus. There he labored among the churches established by the apostle Paul.

This region was known as Asia. This constituted the peninsula lying between the Mediterranean and the Black Seas and bounded on the west by the Aegean.

In the latter part of the reign of Domitian he was banished to a rocky isle, about 20 miles from the coast of Asia. In the southern part of the Greek Archipelago is a tiny island called Patmo, or Patmos. John declares he was banished to this small island "for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." It is only about a mile in diameter, by six or seven miles long.

CIRCUMSTANCES

A period of about sixty years had passed since the first church was founded in Jerusalem. All the other apostles had passed to their reward, receiving the crown of martyrdom, except John, concerning whom the Master had said, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John 21:15-24).

Churches had been established in the principle cities of Asia and Europe, so much so that it aroused the fears and hatred of paganism.

Beginning with Nero, the church had undergone one persecution after another. The present persecution was that of Domitian. At this period, and for many generations after this, when the church is persecuted, the persecutor is always pagan Rome.

With this understanding, we need not wonder that the last of the apostles, fore-casting the future fortunes of the church should record the fortunes and misfortunes of the last great world empire, persecutor both of the Jews and the Church of Christ.

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SYSTEMS OF INTERPRETATION

Before we begin the actual study of this wonderful book, it would be profitable to consider some of the systems of interpretation followed by men.

There is probably no other portion of the Scriptures concerning the meaning of which the interpreters have so widely differed. The differences are due to the different systems of interpretation employed. Of these are three principle ones, all containing some truth. Shall we consider the three principle systems.

The Preterist: According to the interpreters following this system, the apocalyptic visions of the book apply to events, chiefly in the history of the Jewish nation and of pagan Rome. They hold that these events have already occurred. They declare that the events took place before the visions were given and that there is no such thing as prediction in the book. Hence these interpreters are called Preterists. Most Catholic commentators hold this view.

The Futurists: Those who take this view hold that the predictions in the book apply to events still in the future and will be fulfilled in the future history of literal Israel. They assert that Israel will again occupy Palestine, that the temple will actually be rebuilt and that the Holy City will be trodden down for 1260 days by the Gentiles.

The Historical: This system holds that a succession of historical events, future when John penned of them, but now in part in the past, are portrayed by a series of visions. This system seems more nearly correct, BUT THE ERROR MUST BE AVOIDED of supposing that the book is continuously historical from beginning to end.

It must be born in mind that there is more than one series of visions; that when one series ends another follows which is synchronous, at least in part. By this we mean both series may describe events happening at the same time. These events have coincident periods.

It must ever be kept in mind that this book is definitely a book of prophecy. In the Old Testament we have a succession of prophets appearing and making their predictions. In Revelation, we have one prophet, John, proclaiming a succession of prophecies.

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He was "shown the things which were shortly to come to pass." John recorded what he saw. The future was revealed to him in a series of visions. The pictures that appeared, in panoramic form before his eyes represents future events.

Thus we see that each is a symbolical representation of what was then future, but now may be past history. Symbolical pictures follow each other in rapid succession as the seals are opened and the trumpets sounded. A careful study of the scriptural meaning of these symbols is a necessary exercise to the proper interpretation of this mysterious book.

Divisions

We must ever keep in mind that there is more than one series of visions, and that these overlap each other, revealing different aspects and features of the same period.

There are two major divisions of the book.

First: The first division covers the first eleven chapters and is divided in turn into three parts.

1. The first covers chapters one through the third. This part deals with the introduction, the vision of the Son of Man and the letters to the seven churches.
2. The second part covers chapters four through the eleventh chapter and the eighteenth verse. This part opens with a vision of the throne, followed by a vision of a book sealed with seven seals in the hand of Him who sits on the throne and continues through the seals and trumpets.

The lamb of God prevails to open the seals. As each seal is opened a vision appears which presents a symbol representing a period of human history.

Six seals are opened in succession, followed by a pause before the opening of the seventh seal. When the seventh seal is opened it is discovered to embrace seven thunders and seven trumpets. The trumpets are blown in succession, each followed by great stirring events. When the last trumpet is blown the end comes when Christ is triumphant.

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The seven seals, with the seven trumpets contained under the last seal, reach to the end of time.

Second: The second division covers the last eleven chapters of the book, and is divided in turn into three parts.

1. The first part chapters 12 to 18 opens with the vision of a woman, a symbol of the church, confronted by an enemy which appears as a sevenheaded and ten-horned beast. Later a false church, in contradistinction to the first woman—the true church, appears sitting on the seven-headed Beast. These opposing powers, under the symbolism of Babylon are finally overthrown.
2. The second part, chapters 19 and 20, describe the great victory over the Devil and his secular and religious organizations, the Millennial period and the final uprising and defeat of Satan.
3. The third part, chapters 21 and 22 describe the heavenly home of the Redeemed saints and ends with closing exhortations.

THE SCOPE OF REVELATION

The scope of Revelation is limited. It does not attempt to reveal all the everchanging history of all nations, races and kingdoms throughout the Gospel age. The question then arises: To what countries and accompanying events do the predictions and symbols apply?

If we turn to God's dealings with the Israel of God in the Old Testament as he spoke through a succession of prophets we will find a correct answer. There, we find, the central thought in all their predictions is the future history of the Old Testament People of God.

With this great divine purpose in mind, they predict the fate of the great gentile nations with whom the Jews come in contact, who affected their fortunes by aiding them or by becoming their conquerors. Hence Assyria, Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, Rome and Greece are made burdens of their prophecy.

Exactly, and by the same token, the same is true of the New Testament prophecies contained in the Book of Revelation. The prophecies deal with the future of the New Testament Israel of God, the church, and of necessity reveal much concerning the opposing powers and persecuting nations.

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It was not Christ's purpose to give in Revelation the outline of all history, hence many nations are not mentioned, but to outline the fortunes, tribulations and triumphs of the church.

The church was, in the earlier centuries, almost wholly within the confines of the vast, persecuting empire of Pagan Rome, hence this opposing power presents itself often in the prophetic visions of Patmos.

Since later the mantle of the pagan empire, fell upon Papal Rome, we find that this new religious power plays a prominent part in the unfolding symbolic visions of Revelation. So we shall see that Revelation primarily outlines the history of the church, and in subordination of this primary purpose, it portrays the history of two great persecuting powers, Pagan and Papal Rome. Finally, it portrays the triumphant church and the glories of the New Jerusalem to be enjoyed by the overcoming saints.

Author's Foreword to the Reader

To write a book upon any subject is a task that calls forth the best that in a man lieth. To write a compendium on the Book of Revelation is the challenge supreme.

The writing of any book necessarily must be predicated upon some sound reason for such an engagement. The primus mobile of writing a dissertation upon the Apocalypse must be nothing short of a burning desire to magnify the sacredness, the authenticity and the inerrant accuracy of Divine prophecy.

To pen a text-book upon a secular subject enjoins a comprehensive knowledge of the best authorities on that subject, besides added individual research. To write a commentary on Revelation requires no less than the blessed guidance of the Holy Spirit whom Christ commissioned to show the things to come.

One must be impelled by the loftiest motivation in order to even begin such an effort so confronted with mountainous difficulties.

The interpretation of any book of the Bible is a challenging endeavor. To unfold the mysteries of a book written entirely in signs and symbols, such as characterize the Apocalypse, is an Herculean task to be assumed only under the directive of the inspired Word of God.

In the anticipation of such a project, the author must confess that he found himself in "a strait betwixt two". There was a great hesitancy to take up the pen to write when remembrance called to

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mind the fearful plagues promised as a wrathful visitation from God upon those who became guilty of adding to the things contained within the Apocalypse.

Again, the prospect of having his part in the book of life and of the holy city, taken away by taking from the words of the book of prophecy, also served as a strong deterrent for many years.

After a quarter of a century and more of contemplation of such a labor, the writer, by the grace of God, the love of Christ and the energizing of the Holy Spirit, began this work. I say began. Such a work can never be said to be finished.

The first determination to be made was, on the very face of things, that of method of interpretation. Three systems presented themselves.

First, there was the futuristic system. The proponents of this method of interpretation hold that everything described in the visions of this book is yet future to be fulfilled after the rapture of the saints. Obviously, the very first verse of this book of Revelation eliminates such a system. It reads:

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him to show unto His servants *things which must shortly come to pass.*"

Second, there was the system, which for lack of better designation, I call the Spiritualistic. This is that method of interpretation which spiritualizes every thing away to where every symbol takes the meaning of each individual interpreter.

One verse of the Sacred Scriptures annihilates such an approach to the study of this great book:

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation" (11 Peter 1:20)

With the elimination of these two systems only one remained—the Historical. This system is based upon the primal declaration of the book itself, namely, that John was to "write the things which thou hast seen and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." (Rev. 1:19)

But not only is the Historical view harmonious with the book's own declaration of its purpose, but history amply substantiates this viewpoint in that the events symbolized therein have either happened or are now coming to pass. So closely have the happenings of history paralleled the prophetic pronouncements of the Apocalypse that they cannot honestly be dismissed and rejected on the ground of coincidences.

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When throughout the book one beholds the events of history fitting hand-in-glove with the succession of prophecies presented therein he must, like Thomas, come to believe with a like firmness of conviction.

This historical approach becomes all the more realistic when it is understood that the various visions given do not chronologically follow one another in point of time, although the events predicted in the vision itself are chronologically arranged. This leads logically to the second determination to be made—the starting point of each separate vision.

Like a surveyor cannot run his line without beginning at the Bench Mark, so each vision has an historical Bench Mark, or time and place of beginning. Having scripturally determined the true beginning the Spiritual surveyor is able to survey a true line of prophetic interpretation.

The visions may have the same starting point and take us over a segment of time already covered by a former vision, but this is in order to present things from a different angle, or events of a different sphere, yet all related to the life of the church throughout the gospel dispensation.

The third determination was an accurate interpretation of the meaning of the rich symbolism of the book. There has been a golden rule of interpretation, followed by lovers of God's Word, which declares:

“When the plain sense of the Scriptures makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore take every word at its primary, ordinary, literal meaning unless the facts of the context indicate clearly otherwise.”

When one enters into the realm of Revelation, certainly the concluding clause of this Golden Rule of Interpretation becomes operative. “The facts of the context indicate clearly otherwise.”

Revelation is pre-eminently a book of symbols, signs, wonders. The book is written not in common speech, like other books of the New Testament, but in sign language. “He sent and sign-ified it by His angel unto His servant John.

The interpretation of these symbols has proved to be a pitfall to many readers of the Apocalypse, although it should never have been.

If, as Peter says, “no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation,” neither are the prophetic symbols to be privately interpreted.

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Therefore, the author made, at the very outset, a fourth determination, namely, that every sign, symbol or figure is explained somewhere within the Bible itself. The Bible is its own, only and best interpreter. One may have to run the gamut of the entire Bible, but he will be richly repaid when in some "hidden corner" of God's Divine Library he discovers the meaning of some baffling symbol.

Added to the joy of a new discovery is the deep-down satisfaction of knowing God's mind in the matter.

The fifth and final determination was the naming of the book to be penned. At first no name presented itself with sufficient force to elicit lasting attention, but gradually and almost unconsciously an appropriate and scriptural title crossed and recrossed this stage of prophetic drama.

Since it was "the Revelation of Jesus Christ", it seemed altogether apropos to incorporate the name "Revelation" in whatever title was finally settled upon.

Again, since the Apocalypse was penned in a style nowhere universally characteristic of any other book of the Sacred Volume, that fact demanded consideration. Written, as it was, in the language of sign, symbol and wonder, why not call the book, "Revelation—the Wonder Book of the Bible"? And so the title was chosen.

John said, "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand." (Rev. 1:3)

The author's fervent prayer is that this book, launched upon a vast sea of books, may have so carefully charted its course by the Scriptural compass of Divine Interpretation, that its readers may land safely on that enchanted Isle of the Treasure Trove of Truth.

If it shall have afforded safe passage to one soul in reaching Heaven's Harbor of the Holy City, the labor shall not have been in vain.

Prayer

Oh Master of Wind and Wave we thank Thee gratefully
that Thou hast enabled us to walk upon the waters of
symbolic wonders.