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THE APPEAL OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION  
TO YOUNG PEOPLE  
AS RELATED TO ITS TEACHING

by

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*Gift of the author.*

*May 25, 1948*

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## INTRODUCTION

THE APPEAL OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION  
TO YOUNG PEOPLE  
AS RELATED TO ITS TEACHING

INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of the Problem

The Revelation to John is one of the most contested books of the Bible with respect to its interpretation. At the same time it is one of the books about which the layman knows least. The bewildered layman is often bombarded with individual interpretations of this last book of the New Testament in attempts of various men or groups of men to lay out a plan for the end of the ages. Unfortunately, in his uninformed state he is in no position to judge for himself which is right and which is wrong. Furthermore, because this book is admittedly hard to explain, it has remained a closed book to many who are in need of the great message for everyday life that it carries and which those who are interested mainly in its eschatological aspects have failed to bring forth fully.

Because these conditions are true it is the purpose of this paper to search out in the Revelation those of its qualities that will be of special aid to a teacher, especially of young people, to bring his students into a personal acquaintance with it so that they may the more

readily apply its teachings to their own thinking and living.

#### B. Significance of the Problem

Current times are uncertain times and young people are not among the least of those who are wondering what will eventually become, not only of themselves, but also of the world in general. Along with others they give audience to those who claim to have the answer. Too often the answer that is given and frequently received, is one that, giving to them a distorted conception of the full purpose of this great revelation of God, neglects to prepare their minds to see the practical principles concerning their own struggle with life that it contains.

The writer is not contending that those who are searching for an interpretation of the Revelation that will unfold its eschatological meaning should cease their work. Rather, he wishes to suggest that we need to prepare the student to meet any misinterpretation that may be found among views that are worthy of notice. In order to be prepared fully the student, whether he be young or old, needs to have in his possession not only a knowledge of the mechanical contents of the book, but also a strong measure of certainty as to the bases upon which God deals with men. These are inherent in the Revelation. He needs them as guides to keep his mind close to life lest he be lost in distorted and insignificant detail.

It is important that these bases be given to and

accepted by the young person especially, because all history has taught us the truth of this book, that when God is left out of the picture only calamity can be the eventual result. American youth is not totally blind to the fact that God is being left out of the picture that it is taught to paint. There are those among its ranks who realize where this course will take them. The following are excerpts from a letter that according to Dorothy Thompson was sent by an undergraduate of one of our greatest Eastern universities to the president of that institution.. After summarizing the religious training of his elders this undergraduate goes on to say,

"But what about us, the youth of America? What have we been taught to revere in the university you direct, and in other similar institutions throughout the land?

"In the modern college it is probably fair to say that Christianity has progressively lost its grip on young minds . . .

"You may well face the brute fact that our education has made the difference between us and you far more deep-striking and revolutionary than any normal variation in generations.

"Our situation has indeed grown more serious than you think. Your generation must soon pass on to our hands the torch of democracy and Christianity. Our hearts impel us to be faithful to that trust, but our heads that you have helped condition may decree otherwise. As men think, as men view the cosmos and human nature, so they must act. And when the time comes for us to act, we may embitter your declining years. We may destroy the liberal values toward which man has struggled down through the ages."<sup>1</sup>

#### C. Method of Procedure

This study is based upon a direct study of the

. . . . .

1. Youth Challenges Education, Wheaton College, p. 4, 8

Revelation in order to determine what aspects of the book would be of interest to the student so that these may be used by one who is teaching the book. This problem is approached from two directions. In the first chapter the book is viewed in terms of its characteristics as a work of literature. In the second chapter it is viewed in terms of the message it contains that would be of interest especially to young people because of their spiritual need.

The third chapter is an attempt to show how some of these qualities contained in the Revelation might be taught.

#### D. Statement of Interpretive Viewpoint

No attempt will be made to adhere to any of the major theories of interpretation by which the Revelation has been expounded. Instead of adopting any such theory as a guide through the Revelation, the book itself will be made the center of study. It will be taken for its face value to show how the student can be taught to enjoy it as it is and to apply its basic principles to his everyday experiences. This is especially fitting for growth and is basic to a well-balanced judgment on any eschatological view.

Such an approach can be generally maintained with profit by the teacher of the Revelation as he directs the class study. Where the Revelation contains material that demands some specific viewpoint on eschatological significance in order to have meaning, some truth is likely found.

in all theories, preterist, continuous-historical, futurist,  
or symbolic.<sup>1</sup>

. . . . .

1. Joseph M. Gettys, How to Study the Revelation, p. 12.

CHAPTER I

THE APPEAL OF THE REVELATION  
IN TERMS OF ITS FORM

## CHAPTER I

### THE APPEAL OF THE REVELATION IN TERMS OF ITS FORM

#### A. Introduction

When an author writes a book that he wishes to have others read, he will naturally try to write in such a way that his work will be of interest. It is a well known fact that a good message can be so buried in poor expression that it is lost to the general public. Therefore this quality of interest is sought not only so far as the message is concerned but also in regard to form and style.

That the Revelation had a wide reading public even in its earlier days is evidenced not so much by the fact that it was addressed to seven churches<sup>1</sup> as by the fact that these seven churches kept the book in circulation and passed it on till finally it found its way into the New Testament canon. This work, as a literary masterpiece, must certainly have some qualities that have caused it to survive for nearly two thousand years. If these qualities can be identified and pointed out to those who wish to teach it, their classes can be made the more interesting.

Therefore, it is the purpose of this chapter to examine the form in which the Revelation has come down to

. . . . .

1. Revelation 1:4

the modern reader and to interpret the elements of that form to those who wish to instruct others more effectively.

B. The Relation of the Book  
to Familiar Biblical Material

It has been said that

" . . . the Revelation of St. John, is not only a peculiar, but also an entirely unique phenomenon; a unique phenomenon in the very series of Biblical Books themselves, as that it can be said: As the Bible stands alone amongst the writings of the world, so does the Apocalypse stand alone amongst the writings of the Bible."<sup>1</sup>

In order to teach the Revelation more effectively it is necessary to know why this book is unique.

1. The Accustomed Literary Environment of the Reader

The average reader's accustomed literary environment is not to be found in this field of the exceptional. The average minister chooses his texts from other portions of the Bible in preference to the Revelation because they are more easily understood. The texts for Sunday School lessons are rarely taken from this relatively obscure book. It follows, because of the lack of leadership directing the attention of the reader toward the Revelation, that the average reader is better acquainted in other parts of the Bible. G. Campbell Morgan says of it, "Perhaps no book has been more neglected than this Revelation of Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup>

. . . . .

1. Johann Peter Lange, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Vol. X of the New Testament, p. 1
2. G. Campbell Morgan, First Century Message to Twentieth Century Christians, p. 7

That with which the reader is acquainted is comparatively prosaic material in which the writer says just exactly what he means. It is composed of historical documents, poetry, philosophical books and letters of exhortation and remonstrance that fall by and large into general patterns of thought and expression to which the reader has become accustomed even in non-Biblical reading material.

## 2. Apocalyptic Literature

The Revelation, however, is different from that described in the preceding paragraph. This difference, in one sweeping statement, can be attributed to the fact that the Revelation is classified with that type of Hebrew literature called apocalyptic.

Apocalyptic literature is different in basically two respects. The first difference is in respect to the content of its message.<sup>1</sup> The word "apocalypse" comes from the Greek ἀποκάλυψις, ἀποκαλύπτειν which is common in the New Testament "with the special significance of a supernatural unveiling, revelation, of divine mysteries, of the unknown and hidden things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, and divine truth."<sup>2</sup>

Professor H. T. Andrews says that a book bearing the name "claims to reveal and make plain things which are ordinarily hidden from human eyes,"<sup>3</sup> indicating that "it is

. . . . .

1. Ibsen T. Beckwith, The Apocalypse of John, p. 169.
2. Ibid., p. 167
3. Arthur S. Peake, A Commentary on the Bible, p. 431

essentially an unveiling of the future. ."<sup>1</sup>

This futuristic element in itself is enough to cause modern youth in a world of uncertainty to prick up its ears and attend to the message found here. If the message is found to have relevance his interest will remain.

Nevertheless, as already intimated, the Revelation is still a closed book to the majority. The reason for this is to be found, not in the lack of relevance of the message, but rather in the form of apocalyptic literature in which it is presented. Herein is to be found the second basic difference between apocalyptic literature and that to which the reader is ordinarily accustomed.

Beckwith presents, among others, these three characteristics of this literature that make it difficult<sup>2</sup> to be understood by people of today.

(1) It is composed of visions and raptures, becoming a literary form wrought out with great fulness of detail, often with strange symbolism and fantastic imagery such as the dragon representing Satan in the twelfth chapter of the Revelation to John.

(2) It is shrouded in an atmosphere of the mysterious. It is characteristic of these writings that the revelations are often given in strange and unintelligible

. . . . .

1. Ibid.

2. Beckwith, op. cit., p. 169-174

forms. "The symbolical beasts are unimaginable monsters with their many heads and horns springing out and warring one with another; inanimate objects are represented with attributes of men and animals; the extraordinary and unnatural are preferred to the ordinary and natural."<sup>1</sup>

(3) It is replete with literary dependence. Apocalyptists are not the full originators of the materials they use. Imagery and symbolism were drawn not only from former apocalyptic books, but also from folk-lore, myths, and fancies belonging to the orientals in common.<sup>2</sup>

But even these handicaps to the approach to this book could be used as assets if presented with that force of drama that is inherent in them. Youth is no longer youth if it fails to warm to the highly imaginative and to that which is temptingly elusive and mysterious.

### C. The Relation to Personal Experience

The autobiographical element in the Revelation has its particular appeal to the reader, helping him to enter into an experience that is made the more vivid because of its personal implications. Young people whose vivid imagination helps them to fulfill their desire of projecting themselves into the experiences of the hero are quickly captivated by such an approach.

. . . . .

1. Ibid., p. 170
2. Ibid., p. 171

# 1. Experience of the Narrator

Almost any passage in the book could be used to illustrate the difference that the use of the first person makes in the effectiveness of the narration. The first part of the sixth chapter reads as follows:

"Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say, as with a voice of thunder, 'Come!' And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and its rider had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

"When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, 'Come!' And out came another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another; and he was given a great sword.

"When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, 'Come!' and I saw, and behold, a black horse, and its rider had a balance in his hand; and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying. ."<sup>1</sup>

Here one encounters the apparent personal participation of the narrator in each event that transpires to the extent that he has himself seen and heard that which is being told. The psychological effect upon the reader is that he accepts the account on the basis that the author is speaking from personal experience. If this same passage is diluted into a mere objective account the difference in effect is immediately noticeable. Thus it might read as follows:

Now the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and one of the four living creatures said, as with a voice of thunder, "Come!" And there was a white horse, and its rider had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went

. . . . .

# 1. Revelation 6:1-6a

out conquering and to conquer. When he opened the second seal the second living creature said "Come!" And out came another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another; and he was given a great sword. When he opened the third seal, the third living creature said, "Come!" And a black horse came forth, and its rider had a balance in his hand; and what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures said. .

When the thunder is no longer represented as falling upon the ears of the narrator, the reader is no longer quite as convinced of the element of personal experience with the incident. Similarly, the rider having apparently been seen by John becomes the more real to him who hears of it.

It so happens that the paragraphs referred to above contain the two verbs that are most often used in the Revelation, "saw" and "heard". Besides these there are approximately twelve others that are used with the pronoun "I". Among them are such verbs as looked, turned, wept, was given, said, went, ate, took, and marveled. Each one serves to indicate that the writer found himself a definite part of his visions.

A number of experiences are listed in which the writer is the recipient of the action of outside forces. In the seventeenth chapter he says, "And he carried me away . . . in the Spirit into the wilderness".<sup>1</sup> ". . . I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, 'Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches. .'"<sup>2</sup>

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 17:3
2. Ibid., 1:10b-11a

The imperative "write" is used seven times as each of the seven letters to the churches is dictated by the Son of Man. In the tenth chapter the author is asked to "Seal up what the seven thunders have said . . ." <sup>1</sup> and to "Go, take the scroll which is open in the hand of the angel . . ." <sup>2</sup> and ". . . eat . . ." <sup>3</sup> This and other instances of outside forces calling upon him to act make him more than an observer; he becomes one who is taking a part in them, and whose narration is therefore the impression of being the more real and authentic.

On three occasions that which the writer records has become so real to him that he, overcome by emotion, falls down in fear and in worship. In the first chapter he has had a vision of "one like a son of man" <sup>4</sup> in the midst of the golden lampstands. The sight that he saw was one of bright gold, dazzling white, flames of fire, burnished bronze, and the sun shining with full strength. The voice that spoke to him was like the sound of many waters. Quite overwhelmed, he fell down at the feet of the vision "as though dead." <sup>5</sup> The "son of man" laid his right hand on him, saying, "Fear not, . . ." <sup>6</sup> The picture that is given in this first person account is that of one whose humanity is so

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 10:4
2. Ibid., 10:8
3. Ibid., 10:9
4. Ibid., 1:12
5. Ibid., 1:17
6. Ibid., 1:17

real that he cannot stand up in the face of this holy righteousness. That one is he to whose story the reader listens.

Preceding the first occasion of falling down to worship, recorded in the seventeenth chapter, the author has seen the downfall of Babylon<sup>1</sup> and heard the resounding chorus of "Hallelujah" repeatedly sung by the multitudes and by those gathered around the throne. Then when the angel asks him to write, "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb,"<sup>2</sup> and says, "These are true words of God,"<sup>3</sup> the writer falls down before him in the adoration of worship. This same urge to worship revealed through personal experience is seen in the twenty-second chapter. "I John am he who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me."<sup>4</sup> A quality so human in its appeal could hardly have been set forth as forcefully in the comparatively cold language of an objective observer.

So as one reads the book one finds that no single chapter is permitted to pass without an abundance of varied reminders to the reader that the narrator has personally experienced that which is narrated.

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 18:21
2. Ibid., 19:9
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 22:8

## 2. Experience of the Reader

Verbs of action used in the narrative are such as have been experienced by everybody. To see, hear, weep, eat, or any other such reference to action causes the reader to relive the sensation that he himself has experienced in connection with it. The result is that he unconsciously enters into the experience of the writer and tends to make it his own. Constant use of the pronoun "I", which is much closer to the reader than the comparatively impersonal use of "he" would be, is an open door through which the reader's feeling and emotion is continually invited to enter into the action of the verbs as referred to above.

Statements made by the writer of the Revelation in his introduction and conclusion, by their very structure, include any reader even though he may not be a member of any one of the seven churches to which the letter is addressed. In the very first verse of the book the reader is included in the reference to God's servants to whom the revelation of Jesus Christ is to be given that they may know what must soon take place. If he cannot include himself as a servant of God, he is emotionally included among those who are interested by reason of their exclusion.

The third verse of this same chapter is a beatitude which challenges the reader to find what is written within these pages; it promises him the experience of blessedness if he will keep that which he will find. The

same thought arises in the last chapter where one reads,  
"Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this  
book."<sup>1</sup>

The Spirit and the Bride are presented in the  
book. These say, "Come".<sup>2</sup> John then says, "And let him  
who hears say, 'come'. And let him who desires take the  
water of life without price."<sup>3</sup> The reader is one who has  
heard, and who being thirsty is invited to take of the mes-  
sage that is presented within the book that he has read.

As the reader reads the eighteenth verse he be-  
comes aware of the fact that this book is not one that can  
be lightly disregarded. The plagues that are listed in the  
book are, to say the least, terrifying. These are to be  
exercised on him if he should misinterpret the eternal truths  
presented within the book. Under these same conditions "God  
will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy  
city, which are described in the book".<sup>4</sup>

#### D. Relation to Literary Qualities

True to apocalyptic form, the visionary quality  
of the Revelation takes on literary characteristics that  
had been handed down from one such author to another as each  
wrote under the stress of difficult times. These character-

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 22:7b
2. Ibid., 22:17.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 22:19

istics have an important place in the present discussion.

#### 1. The Dramatic Element in the Revelation

The display of drama is one of the important elements in apocalyptic writing as related to the visions which those writers described to their benighted friends. Like many of the others John attained this dramatic suspense in the methods here described.

##### a. Scope of Space and Time

The apocalyptist treated his visions in his writing as though they had actually occurred in time and space. John's adherence to this same custom has been noted in the way he speaks very candidly of having seen with his eyes, heard with his ears, and otherwise bodily entered into them. At the same time, true to the character of a vision, he disregards laws by which a physical body, which is in the mind of the reader, is bound. Herein the reader who is subject to these laws feels, as will be noted, the sense of the dramatic.

##### 1. Space Concept

The reader finds in the Revelation to John that space as he has known it in his own experience has ceased to exist. It is no longer an obstacle to be overcome. But as his mind is able to travel at will from one part of the world to another by the medium of thought, so he is swept through the infinities of the universe as they are brought into the experience of the author.

The scene of John on the island Patmos does not

particularly tax the imagination of the reader in regard<sup>1</sup> to the concept of space, but thereafter all such experience is wrapped in the vivid aspects of that which is highly dramatic. Still, even here the device of letters dictated by the "son of man" takes the mind of the reader from the island in quick succession from one to another of seven churches<sup>2</sup> scattered throughout Asia.

Immediately following the close of the dictation the author records an experience which gives to us the essence of his dramatic experiences in regard to space throughout the entire book. In the first verses of the fourth chapter the following is recorded:

"After this I looked, and lo, in heaven an open door!  
And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me  
like a trumpet, said, 'Come up hither, and I will show  
you what must take place after this. At once I was in  
the Spirit, and lo, a throne stood in heaven, with one

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 1:9. As one reads the Revelation the problem is soon raised how John was induced to write what is there. Was his experience a bodily removal from the Island of Patmos to the places he describes? Was it an objective vision faithfully recorded? Was it a matter of subjective wrestling with current problems which he attempts to describe and answer in terms of figurative language with which people of his day were well acquainted?

Regardless of which medium brought his experience to him, this remains constant in the present approach to his book, namely: that he writes as though he were present, whether in body or in spirit, while events which he could see occurred for his enlightenment. If such then is the literary form into which the author has cast his book, it is only fair to him that present-day studies should first of all attempt to gain from it that which can be gained through the form in which he has given it to the world.

2. Ibid., chapters 2 and 3.

seated on the throne!"<sup>1</sup>

The usual concept of the location of heaven in the mind of the average reader of today is that with which most children are inculcated, namely: a place at a distance so far above the reach of the human eye that it would be quite impossible to distinguish any details even if heaven were visible to the one in the physical body. It would certainly be physically impossible to hear the voice of one who was speaking from heaven. Yet the writer simply looks and immediately sees that which he, without any hesitation or uncertainty due to lack of clear vision, describes as an open door. Though it is not directly stated, the voice which speaks to him must issue forth from this place called heaven, for it says, "Come up nither".<sup>2</sup> It is a voice like a trumpet, suggesting volume. Nevertheless, it comes from a place which according to the first and natural response of the reader is at a great distance.

This same phenomenon is observed throughout the rest of the book. In the fifth chapter after the Lamb has been found worthy of opening the sealed book the author, standing in heaven, is able to hear a doxology that is said by "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea . . .".<sup>3</sup> In the first verse of the seventh chapter the four corners of the earth are brought into the

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 4:1-2
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 5:13

scope of a single statement as one of four angels is seen standing upon each of the four corners of the earth. Distance has no meaning in the twelfth chapter where the writer sees a woman with child and in the pangs of birth appearing in heaven clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, faced by a red dragon whose tail sweeps down a third of the stars of heaven and casts them to the earth.<sup>1</sup>

Not only does the reader find that the writer's powers of perception have dramatically conquered space; he finds that the writer himself moves through it with the alacrity of thought. This also is epitomized in the first part of the fourth chapter referred to above. After the voice has spoken to him, saying "Come up hither",<sup>2</sup> the writer says, "At once I was in the Spirit, and lo, a throne stood in heaven . . ."<sup>3</sup> One must conclude from the description that follows that the author has somehow been conveyed to heaven at the moment when he entered into the Spirit. The implication is that he has come through the door into the midst of the magnificent scene which is then pictured.<sup>4</sup>

This sudden change from earth to heaven or vice versa is recorded each time as though it were but the expected and accepted occurrence, yet, naturally is accompanied on the part of the reader with that feeling of dramatic sus-

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 12:1-4
2. Ibid., 4:1
3. Ibid., 4:2
4. Ibid., 3-11

pense which is derived from the thought of the mortal in the realm of the supernatural and the divine.

Even though the writer himself may not have changed his location, the characters making up the scenes that he describes often move from the heavens to the earth, across the face of the earth, and back into heaven showing again that in the Revelation space is relative to thought, and helping to create that sense of the dramatic which makes the book so appealing to the imaginative mind of a youthful reader.

## 2. Time Concept

One cannot reduce space to the dimensions of thought and leave the concept of time untouched. The two are inextricably interwoven. If the mind can conceive of itself as being present at some distant place without actually going there it will obviously take no time to get there. At the same time one does not do away with the progression of thought from one object to another.

Let the reader look again at the first two verses of the fourth chapter, which were referred to above, this time to see in them the essence of the author's conception of time in the Revelation.

When space ceases to be a hurdle that must be overcome, time fails to have any material significance. Therefore John is able to say immediately after he has heard the voice calling upon him to come to heaven, "At once I was in the Spirit . . ."<sup>1</sup>, reporting his transfer into heaven. This

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 4:2

same underlying principle of the apparent passage of time without having the mind experience any duration of it is well illustrated by the typical rapid succession of events as recorded in the first paragraph of the ninth chapter:

"And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key of the shaft of the bottomless pit; he opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth; they were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green growth of any tree, but only those of mankind who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads; they were allowed to torture them for five months, but not to kill them. ."<sup>1</sup>

In the experience of the reader as he follows the mind of the writer, to think of an incident is to have it accomplished. The reference to the five months period would seem like a direct contradiction of this statement. Yet it will be noticed that the twelfth verse of this same chapter, coming immediately after the description of what the scorpions will do, writes finish to the picture, saying, "The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come."<sup>2</sup>

b. Movement

The sense of the dramatic is also attained by a display of constant progression and activity.

1. Sweeping Movement

The book of Revelation moves forward with a sweep-

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 9:1-5a
2. Ibid., 9:12

ing progression that carries the mind of the reader along from paragraph to paragraph and chapter to chapter with a force possessing the qualities of that which is irresistible. To one who comes to the book in piece-meal fashion, reading parts here and there, this literary masterpiece can seem only like a hodgepodge of fantastic word pictures. But he who reads it as a unified work which builds upon its own foundation ought to be read, from beginning to end, will find in it the dramatic quality of majestic movement as one great mass of drama fades naturally and in orderly fashion into another.

These concentrations of dramatic movement are found largely in eight centers interspersed by three passages that present pictures of their own, yet add definitely to the progress of thought. Thus the book might be divided roughly as follows, each part centered around some unifying picture.

- |    |               |    |                              |
|----|---------------|----|------------------------------|
| 1. | Chs. 1-3      | -- | The son of man.              |
| 2. | Chs. 4-5      | -- | The throne scene.            |
| 3. | Ch. 6         | -- | The seals.                   |
| 4. | Chs. 8-9      | -- | The trumpets.                |
| 5. | Chs. 11:13-13 | -- | The dragon and beasts.       |
| 6. | Chs. 15-16    | -- | The bowls.                   |
| 7. | Chs. 17-18    | -- | The downfall of Babylon.     |
| 8. | Chs. 19-21    | -- | Pictures of God's supremacy. |

The interspersing passages are found in chapters 7, 10-11:12, and 14.

As suggested above, the mind of the reader is led along almost involuntarily as it follows the movement of each of these centers giving way one to the other. The transfer from one to the other is made each time by means of some

tangible device or idea that the mind can easily grasp. A little observation soon makes it apparent that scenes one and two are connected by the voice of the son of man. Scenes two and three are connected by the sealed book. The thought of the reader flows from the fourth scene to the fifth, sixth, and seventh by way of the seventh trumpet. It will be noted that the destroyers to be destroyed, mentioned in 11:18 (scene 5) as a result of the blowing of the seventh trumpet, can very readily be identified with the dragon and the beasts, and with Babylon that are destroyed in these three scenes. The last two scenes are united by the hallelujah's that ring<sup>1</sup> forth after God has been shown to be victorious.

Besides the device to carry the mind from one scene to another described above, which is as the stem of an atomic mushroom cloud shooting up to blossom into another superseding it, this further method for carrying the attention is used. Three expressions, "then", "after this", and "now", appear repeatedly throughout the entire book, hardly having died out before another comes to carry the action on. They occur approximately forty-five times in nineteen out of twenty-one chapters directing the reader from one incident to the next. The occurrence of any of these three terms does not allow for the passage of time between the incidents that are thus connected. Therefore an atmosphere of rapid movement is created throughout the book, carrying the reader with it.

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 19:1-8

## 2. Detailed Movement

In the foregoing section an attempt has been made to suggest the dramatic scope of the broad sweep of movement throughout the Revelation. These larger areas are broken down into their smaller constituent parts. The throne scene<sup>1</sup>, for instance, includes also the sea of glass<sup>2</sup>, vivid descriptions of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders<sup>3</sup> that continually praise God with the repeated doxologies<sup>4</sup>, and the "Lamb standing, as though it had been slain". Each of these is a closely knit word picture of action.

So, in order to present a true picture of the detailed movement it would be necessary to reproduce faithfully almost the entire book for nearly every sentence is a bundle of drama in itself. This is well illustrated by the following quotation which records the opening of the sixth seal.

"When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale; the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?"<sup>5</sup>

It is evident that this constant high pitch of

. . . . .

1. Ibid., chs. 4-5
2. Ibid., 4:6
3. Ibid., 4:6b-11
4. Ibid., 5:6.
5. Ibid., 6:12-17

activity can only add to the dramatic tension that captures and keeps the interest of the reader of the book of Revelation.

### c. Sound and Color

Sound and colors in the Revelation are arresting and vivid. Before the reader has finished the first chapter he realizes that this book is dashed through with decisive tones demanding his attention. The "one like a son of man .<sup>1</sup>  
." amid the golden lampstands, dressed in a long robe and a golden girdle, whose head and hair are a brilliant white, whose eyes are like a flame of fire, and whose face is like the sun at its brightest, speaks with a voice like a trumpet and the sound of many waters.<sup>2</sup> Small wonder, indeed, that the author falls down at his feet as though dead, completely<sup>3</sup> overwhelmed by the magnificence of such drama.

#### 1. Sound

Throughout the book the drama of awe-inspiring sounds is kept at a high pitch. In most cases the appeal to the reader's sense of hearing comes by way of description of voices.

The relatively unqualified term of "loud voices" is found at least twelve times throughout the book as when it is used to describe "the voice of many angels, numbering

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 1:13
2. Ibid., 1:10-17
3. Ibid., 1:18

myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands"<sup>1</sup> who sing in praise of the Lamb. Once it is the "mighty voice"<sup>2</sup> of an angel and, again, a "great voice"<sup>3</sup> proceeding from the throne.

Among other descriptions of voices these are found: "like a trumpet"<sup>4</sup>, "like a lion roaring"<sup>5</sup>, and "like the sound of many waters"<sup>6</sup>. On one occasion this last description of a voice is combined with the "sound of loud thunder"<sup>7</sup> and the "sound of harpers playing upon their harps"<sup>8</sup> to describe the voice of the hundred and forty-four thousand who sing a new song before the throne.

At other times the quality of the voice is described only by a description of the number, character and situation of those who participate as in the numerous songs that are recorded as being sung. For instance, one could hardly imagine a weak voice to be forthcoming when the "four living creatures each of them with six wings, . . . full of eyes all round and within."<sup>9</sup> sing ceaselessly, day and night, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"<sup>10</sup> Even the quality of the song defies the presence of weakness.

The attention of the reader is also arrested by a medley of other sounds that crowd in upon his consciousness.

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 5:11-12
2. Ibid., 18:2
3. Ibid., 21:3
4. Ibid., 1:10
5. Ibid., 10:3

6. Ibid., 1:15
7. Ibid., 14:2
8. Ibid., 4:6b-7
9. Ibid., 4:8a
10. Ibid., 4:8b

Among them are peals of thunder<sup>1</sup> and the noise of the wings of the formidable locusts "like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle."<sup>2</sup> The reader can almost hear the thud of "great hailstones, heavy as a hundred-weight"<sup>3</sup> that drop on men from heaven till they curse God. Piercing is the quality of the woman's cry "in anguish for delivery"<sup>4</sup>, and foreboding, the "mourning aloud"<sup>5</sup> of the merchants who have lost their trade because of the downfall of Babylon.

## 2. Color

If the reader were actually to see all the vivid color and light described in the Revelation he would be quite dazzled. Many colors and shades of light are constantly flashed into his mind's eye. Among them are white, gold, red, green, scarlet, and black. The brilliant white, either as a color or a light such as fire or the sun, is used most often. As a color it is often used to describe the apparel of characters within the book.<sup>6</sup> The sight of a multitude so great that no man could number it, "clothed in white robes"<sup>7</sup> with a green palm branch in their hands standing before the Lamb and crying out their song of praise is most entrancing. As a light it comes among other forms as a star falling from heaven and blazing like a torch,<sup>8</sup> as the fiery legs of an angel<sup>9</sup>, and

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 4:5
2. Ibid., 9:9
3. Ibid., 16:21
4. Ibid., 12:1
5. Ibid., 18:15

6. Ibid., 6:11, 7:9, 15:6, 19:8
7. Ibid., 7:9
8. Ibid., 5:10
9. Ibid., 10:1

flashes of lightning issue<sup>1</sup> from the mouths of the two witnesses.<sup>2</sup>

The color gold is seen in lampstands<sup>3</sup>, girdles<sup>4</sup>, a censer<sup>5</sup>, an altar<sup>6</sup>, crowns<sup>7</sup>, and as the substance of which the streets of the new Jerusalem are made. The color red is used to describe one of the four horses<sup>8</sup> in chapter six. It is suggested more often than actually mentioned in the repeated references to blood as for instance the color of the moon<sup>9</sup>, the sea<sup>10</sup> and fountains<sup>11</sup>, and as flowing from the wine press of the wrath of God as high as a horse's<sup>12</sup> bridle for about two hundred miles. Colored precious stones shine with brilliance, especially in the description of the new Jerusalem<sup>13</sup>, while, in sharp contrast, great billowing clouds of smoke darken the sky<sup>14</sup> and the sun becomes black as sackcloth.<sup>15</sup>

So as some of these forces of color are banded together one may find the following description of " . . a throne . . . with one seated on the throne . . ."<sup>16</sup>

"And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald. Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clad in white garments, with golden crowns upon their heads. From the throne issue flashes of

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 3:5, 11:19, 16:8
2. Ibid., 11:5
3. Ibid., 1:12, 20
4. Ibid., 1:13, 15:6
5. Ibid., 8:3
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 9:7, 14:14
8. Ibid., 6:4

9. Ibid., 6:4
10. Ibid., 7:9
11. Ibid., 16:4
12. Ibid., 14:20
13. Ibid., 21:9-21
14. Ibid., 9:2
15. Ibid., 6:12
16. Ibid., 4:2

lightning, and voices and peals of thunder, and before the throne burn seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God; and before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass, like crystal."<sup>1</sup>

d. Anticipation and Suspense

The reader of the Revelation does not find opportunity to relax, feeling that action has come to a point of completion and that his attention can be turned elsewhere. The atmosphere of anticipation and suspense runs throughout the book demanding that the reader follow with his undivided interest.

1. Anticipation

From the very first verses of the book to the very last the reader is led to expect things to happen. The book opens with this statement: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him to show to his servants what must soon take place . . ." <sup>2</sup> It closes as follows: "Surely I am coming soon . . ." <sup>3</sup> Between these two statements one finds continuous expression of immediacy.

This air of expectancy is attained in two ways. First, there is a succession of statements similar to those in the preceding paragraph which indicate that only a short time will elapse before the great and mighty things described by the visions will come to pass. Thus the souls under the altar are "each given a white robe and told to rest a little

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 4:3-6a

2. Ibid., 1:1a

3. Ibid., 21:20

longer"<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, the great angel of the tenth chapter announces ". . . that there should be no more delay, but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets, should be fulfilled."<sup>2</sup>

Second, the nature of God as pictured in the book is of such a quality that it demands action in the face of evil. The first two scenes, i.e., those of the vision of the "one like a son of man"<sup>3</sup> and the throne scene<sup>4</sup>, set the stage for the book. They present a fiery righteousness<sup>5</sup> before which all creation falls in adoration. Thus the four living creatures in one of the songs of praise sing: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"<sup>6</sup> They, in their song, referring to the ongoing existence of an Almighty God, present the imminence of His future action. This same stage-set of God's demanding righteousness which is brought forth in succeeding songs can only be followed by such statements as the one found in the fourteenth chapter when an angel flying in midheaven proclaims, "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come."<sup>7</sup> Each such reference leads the reader to anticipate that action of righteous indignation which must logically follow.

## 2. Suspense

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 6:11
2. Ibid., 10:5-7
3. Ibid., 1:13
4. Ibid., chs. 4-5

5. Ibid., 4:8-5:14
6. Ibid., 4:8b
7. Ibid., 14:7

The feeling of anticipation is heightened by an atmosphere of suspense artistically introduced in the Revelation. This is done by suddenly catching up the expectant attention of the reader and focussing it upon some dramatic statement or divine pronouncement while the action of the book itself is suspended in mid-air. An illustration of this is found when after the opening of the first six seals accompanied by a medley of conquest, war, famine, death, cosmological disturbances and cries of mortal terror,<sup>1</sup> this statement appears: "When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour."<sup>2</sup> Again, after the blowing of the fourth trumpet during which a third of the sun, moon, stars, day, and night is darkened<sup>3</sup> an eagle is seen flying in midheaven, crying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets which the three angels are about to blow!"<sup>4</sup> Of similar effect is the incident in the tenth chapter where, seven thunders having sounded, John is about to record their utterances, but he is dramatically stopped by a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down."<sup>5</sup> Thus the interest of the reader, suspended along with the action itself, is dropped back into the progress of the book with

. . . . .

1. Ibid., ch. 6
2. Ibid., 8:1
3. Ibid., 8:12
4. Ibid., 8:13
5. Ibid., 8:4

a renewed vigor resulting from the shot in the arm that such statements provide.

## 2. Symbolism

Of symbolism in the Revelation it has been said that

"As in all writing which seeks to represent vividly spiritual things, especially prophecy and the literature of visions, symbolism is the instrument used most extensively in our book. Symbols, using the word in its most comprehensive scope, enter into every representation, one might almost say into every sentence."<sup>1</sup>

Yet this author, Beckwith, agrees with Peake whose "main concern is to utter an emphatic caution against pressing the symbolism too far".<sup>2</sup>

It is definitely not the purpose of the writer at this point to determine the meaning of symbols used within the book, but rather merely to make note of their abundant presence and refer to them as another point of interest to the reader.

One author has categorized the symbolical elements of the Revelation into the symbolism of largely numbers, colors, geometrical figures, elements and natural phenomena, items drawn from natural history, human relations, and human ordinances, affairs and relations.<sup>3</sup> This serves to indicate the large variety of the symbolism found within the book. In fact, so large is the variety and number

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1. Beckwith, op. cit., p. 249
2. Arthur S. Peake, The Revelation to John, p. 178
3. Lange, op. cit., pp. 14-41

that any attempt to discuss them at all adequately in the space permitted here would be ridiculous. The following illustration will suffice for the present purpose.

There is, for instance, the vivid reference, bristling with symbolic meaning, to the "great harlot who is seated upon many waters"<sup>1</sup>, a picture of unbridled evil in all its mundane glory. The author says of her that he saw her

"...sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication; and on her forehead was written a name of mystery: 'Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of earth's abominations'. And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."<sup>2</sup>

It is well known that on the whole visual methods of education are more effective than those that are auditory. Though the word pictures in the Revelation are not actually flashed on a screen, their vivid quality cannot but catch the mind's eye of the reader more consistently than a relatively prosaic account would. Especially must this be true when we consider as our subject the youthful mind that is pregnant with imaginative powers.

#### E. Summary

This chapter has been devoted to revealing those

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1. Revelation 17:1
2. Ibid., 17:3-6a

elements of form within the Revelation that help to make the book more interesting to the modern reader.

In regard to the average reader's acquaintance with this book it was noted that even though he may be better acquainted with other types of literature, that type of literature known as apocalyptic used by John in this instance is of such a nature that though it may have served as a barrier before, the wise teacher can use it to gain the interest of his students.

Next, the experience of the narrator as revealed in his story and the experience of the reader as he partakes of that first experience were considered. It was found that the book is so constructed and written that the reader is able to project himself into the progress of events.

Finally the literary qualities of the book were examined as related to dramatic forces and symbolism. The elements of drama were found to be of such a nature and quality that they are able to capture the reader's interest and keep it alive throughout the progress of the book. Of symbolism it was found that its presence within the book serves to make more vivid the word pictures that carry the author's message.

From this study of the form in which the Revelation is presented it becomes evident that it provides a number of approaches to teaching the book that can be utilized by the instructor.

## CHAPTER II

### THE APPEAL OF THE REVELATION THROUGH ITS MESSAGE

## CHAPTER II

### THE APPEAL OF THE REVELATION THROUGH ITS MESSAGE

#### A. Introduction

If the message of the Revelation is not relevant to the modern age it does not deserve to be included in the Bible which, according to Edwin Lewis "has finally but one theme -- God and his purpose with men"<sup>1</sup>. If man is to live in accordance with God's will and purpose he must know what that will and purpose is. Each book in the Bible needs to contribute to that knowledge.

It is the purpose of this chapter to study the content of the last book of the Bible to see what are the main emphases of its message, and to try to understand how these are relevant especially to the lives of young people of today.

Unless such an existing relationship can be detected and established with constructive emphases, the literary qualities which it was found to possess according to the first chapter can only remain as a challenge to the intellect and imagination. They will have no effect upon the molding and shaping of the character of youth toward a nobler end than has been realized heretofore.

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1. Edwin Lewis, A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation, p. 32

## B. A Message Accentuated by Current Conditions

People of today read their daily newspapers with apprehension. The first World War was a war to end war. But the futility of that statement has long been realized. Now after the close of another world conflict men watch fearfully as nations arm themselves in preparation for the event of a third such catastrophe.

The basic fear which underlies the tense attitude of the church mind is the apprehension that rising political powers will be unfriendly to the Christian Church and that which it stands for. Trends in countries under Russian domination undergird such fear as Christians are seen to suffer a fate similar to that which the church of Germany endured whenever its principles conflicted with those of the state. In countries such as Spain and Latin America a comparable scene is being enacted under other authorities.

Men are fearful lest such conditions should clamp their ghastly hold upon the shores of American freedom. When the basic elements of those forces that are operating thus in other countries are present within American borders as a part of its structure the possibility, unwelcome though it may be, ceases to be quite as remote as might be desired.

Thinking youth of America, if they have any access to present-day literature and the spoken word of the radio cannot but be impressed by the exigencies of the moment. It is at such a time as this that the Revelation gains a special

significance in the light of its historical background.

As noted earlier, "all the books of this type were written to bring sorely needed comfort to God's people as they dreaded their weird in some furnace of affliction."<sup>1</sup>

What was that background? According to Burnet's phrasing, it was this,

"that round about the year 95 of our era the Roman Emperor Domitian demanded that he be worshipped as 'dominus et deus', lord and god, and the Christian church would have none of it."<sup>2</sup>

This pretension to divine honours on the part of the Roman Emperor was far more than a mere infatuation of power, or "the insane arrogance of one whose head was turned by his exaltation to the highest throne on earth"<sup>3</sup>. The insistence upon the observance of this state religion can be understood when one realizes that it was advanced to meet a basic need of the Roman empire which, because of its size had become unwieldly and difficult to unify. This loose confederacy of diverse elements needed the characteristic power of religion to bind it together. For this reason the state taught its due observance as vital to the interests of the commonwealth. Since the well-being of the community under the thumb of the Roman god was dependant upon that higher power, the most serious offence against society was transgression of the regulations for his worship or the failure

. . . . .

1. Adam W. Burnet, The Lord Reigneth, p. 37
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

to pay him the honours or tributes he demanded.<sup>1</sup>

Asia Minor, the province to which the author of the Revelation refers, had special reason for allegiance to Rome because of occasional remission of taxes during times of serious earthquakes which devastated its cities. Furthermore, since the surest road to distinction open to a provincial lay through the imperial priesthood, a keen rivalry existed among the natives as to who would mount highest on the ladder toward that summit of ambition.<sup>2</sup> By the end of the century, at which time most scholars agree that the Revelation was written,<sup>3</sup> every great city in Asia Minor had its temple for emperor-worship, and in its pride as a temple-warden was apt to oppose passionately any body who dared to repudiate what it held so dear.<sup>4</sup>

While pagan religions with many gods needed only to add another god to their list of them, the Jew and the Christian being monotheistic in their outlook felt that to place the throne of a human person above the throne of God was an outrage against their faith and could not fall in line.<sup>5</sup> The Revelation, obviously, was written to give courage to those whose consequent persecution gave to the infamous Domitian the title of a second Nero.<sup>6</sup>

. . . . .

1. Peake, op. cit., pp. 108-9
2. Burnet, op. cit., p. 40
3. Beckwith, op. cit., p. 208
4. Burnet, op. cit., p. 40
5. Peake, op. cit., p. 109
6. Beckwith, op. cit., p. 204

Today, after nearly two thousand years, Nero is still raising his head in one form or another. With the background of the Revelation such as it is, the modern teacher can certainly see that this might well be a source to which students should be led as they are taught to answer the problem of evil for themselves.

Those to whom the book was written were experiencing the same fears -- only in a more intensified and personalized form that people of today are facing and in the light of which the teachers must make Christianity practical.

### C. A Message of Certainty

Questions relating to the problem of evil are as pertinent today as they have ever been in the history of mankind. Why does God let evil continue? Wherefore the continued starvation of millions? Why the threats of even darker clouds upon horizons that are still murky with the aftermath of the last storm? These are questions that, left unanswered, tend to undermine the courage of even those who consider themselves most resolute.

Youth believe they have the right to live. But unless the problem of evil is answered in their minds they must always feel that that right has been unjustly jeopardized and that their only choice is to fall back under merciless onslaught of wrong. Unless a positive answer can be found, one that will show design in the midst of apparent confusion, it will continue to be difficult for youth to

see how or why they should prepare themselves for the future. Young people need a greater measure of certainty in regard to the implications involved in the basic forces of good and evil so continually in contest.

#### 1. The Certainty of Evil

Since one who so fears forces of evil that he cannot approach them in a clear state of mind is in no position to fortify others against them, it behooves youth to find for his teacher one who is able to grasp the problems of life, adverse though they may be, with a firm hand. The student of the Revelation will soon find that here is such a source. This book contains no evasive reference as to the probability or reality of evil. On the contrary, the author not only accepts evil as an indisputable fact but handles it in such a way as to leave the indelible impression that he is fully acquainted with all of its oppressive outreaches and ramifications. Nevertheless, he never once exhibits the slightest indication of terror in the face of this with which he is confronted. His attitude can best be grasped by reviewing his treatment of the following subjects: The Reality of Satan, Activity of Evil Men, and The Suffering of the Saints.

##### a. The Reality of Satan

In a day such as this when there are those who have come to consider Satan nothing more or less than a vague principle, the abrupt references to him found in three of the letters to the seven churches are quite arresting.

Twice reference is made to those who are of "the synagogue<sup>1</sup> of Satan". When one considers that the synagogue in the Jewish mind was a place where a Personality, God, was taught and worshipped, one finds here the obvious parallel of a place where another personality, Satan, is being taught and worshipped. The activity of this second personality is suggested when it is said of him, "Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison"<sup>2</sup>. But instead of cowering before this prospect the author is able to go ahead in a very matter of fact way to point out the purpose of this action, "that you may be tested". The Supreme Source of this dictation is fully aware of the relationship of Satan to those to whom the letter is being addressed. "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is."<sup>3</sup> Then reference is made to Antipas "my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells"<sup>4</sup>.

The most vivid representation of Satan is that which is given in the twelfth chapter where he is shown as "a great red dragon"<sup>5</sup> in conflict with the forces of God under the direction of Michael. His tremendous influence and power is pictured as his tail sweeps down a third of the stars of heaven, and casts them to the earth.<sup>6</sup> He was in a position, even, to wait for the birth of one whom he

. . . . .

1. Revelation, 2:9, 3:9
2. Ibid., 2:10
3. Ibid., 2:13
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 12:3, 9
6. Ibid., 12:4

would devour, a "male child"<sup>1</sup> destined for the throne of God. Foul spirits issue from the mouth of the dragon and gather all the kings of the world to battle against God.<sup>2</sup> Finally he is to be released from confinement and is to march with the nations of the world to surround the very camp of the saints and the beloved city.<sup>3</sup>

It is seen, therefore, that the author of the Revelation has no qualms about representing the personality and the power of this terrible enemy of truth and righteousness.

b. The Activity of Evil Men

The writer gives the modern reader no hint of fear that an abundance of Satan's followers among men will overwhelm those who are followers of God. He speaks of these quite as candidly as of Satan himself. There is, for instance, not the slightest shade of apprehension in the following straightforward statement of fact which follows the blowing of the first six trumpets:

"The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot either see or hear or walk; nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their immorality or their thefts."<sup>4</sup>

Again, when the fourth angel had poured out his bowl

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 12:4-5
2. Ibid., 16:13; 19:19
3. Ibid., 20:7-9
4. Ibid., 9:20-21

on the sun and caused men to be scorched with fierce heat, the writer reports that "they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues, and they did not repent and give him glory".<sup>1</sup>

Instead of a picture of repentance, the reader sees the unperturbed account of three and a half days of rejoicing, making merry and exchange of gifts on the part of "the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations"<sup>2</sup> as they celebrate the death of God's two witnesses whose bodies are not permitted a burial.<sup>3</sup>

Today the world seems to be preparing for a third great war after having passed through the awful terrors of the last two. Instead of repentance there is an abundance of drink, immorality and selfishness. The author of the Revelation saw such a situation but he knew no terror or discouragement. He does not inspire the reader with fear, but with courage.

#### c. The Suffering of the Saints

Instead of spiritual discomfort in the presence of persecution at the hands of the powers of Satan, this book gives a consistent reassurance that all is as it should be. Not that there is any indication that the suffering is soon going to be terminated. Rather, there is very strong reason

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 16:8-9
2. Ibid., 11:9
3. Ibid., 11:7-10

to believe that it will continue. The following cannot be otherwise interpreted: "Here is a call for the endurance of the saints"<sup>1</sup> and "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth"<sup>2</sup>.

Christ shows himself to be fully aware of the suffering of his children, for in the letter to the Ephesians he says, "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance . . . I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary"<sup>3</sup>. He says also,

"I know your tribulation and your poverty . . . Do not fear what you are about to suffer . . . for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life."<sup>4</sup>

And so throughout the book there is no attempt to evade suffering on behalf of Christ. It is accepted as a part of the order of things, not fatalistically, but purposefully.

## 2. The Certainty of God

The spirit of youth will not be inspired by a so-called leader whose own ideals have been watered down to the place where they are mere pointless imitations of that which might have been. Neither can an insipid God call forth loyalty and devotion in behalf of great causes toward which the idealism of Christian young people needs

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 14:8  
2. Ibid., 14:13

3. Ibid., 2:2-3  
4. Ibid., 2:9-10

to be pledged. Currently the United States Army has put out a poster to encourage young men to join its forces. The words on it are these: "Led by the skilled and the strong". Youth desires strength of character and a superior quality in those to whom it dedicates its life.

Only a real and vital God could have induced the Christians of Asia Minor to stand up against the persecutions they were facing during the first and second centuries of Christianity. Such a God is presented in the Revelation. If that had been impossible Christianity would not have survived to perpetuate the use of this book. Modern young people find here a God fully capable of challenging the best that is in them. Within its pages are no half-wrought concepts but a picture of established certainty.

a. His Sovereignty

Burnet introduces his discussion on the fourth chapter of the Revelation as follows:

"Are you overawed and appalled by the throne of Domitian? --John says in effect--overwhelmed are you by the prestige he commands and the cruel power he wields? Then turn your gaze upon another throne, the Throne where Eternal God sits in a glory past all comprehending, while He receives the homage of angelic hosts, and asserts a power before which Domitian one day will tremble--as who should say, 'Pharaoh, King of Egypt, is but a noise'!"<sup>1</sup>

In the introductory verses to this book the author records these words: "'I am the Alpha and the Omega', says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the

. . . . .

1. Burnet, op. cit., p. 59

Almighty"<sup>1</sup>. The abiding character of God's power and glory referred to in these words is dramatized by the great throne scene in heaven where God's sovereignty is described in terms of flaming color, dazzling light, peals of thunder, and the activity of worship. John says that "a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne! And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald"<sup>2</sup>. Flashes of light-<sup>3</sup>ning, voices and peals of thunder came forth from the throne.

Thus we are introduced to the One whom all the combined forces of evil are not able to dethrone. He is the Supreme Ruler.

b. His Justice

Throughout this record written first of all to New Testament Christians immediately after Jesus' day are many references both by direct statement and by implication to the blameless character of God. The name of God is an honored mark upon those who follow Him, for as Christ says to the church in Philadelphia: "He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God."<sup>4</sup>

The white garments and the golden crowns of the

. . . . .

1. Revelation 1:8
2. Ibid., 4:2b-3
3. Ibid., 4:5
4. Ibid., 3:12

twenty-four elders speak of the need for that righteousness which alone can truly worship a God who is just in every respect. Indeed, it is written that nothing unclean shall be able to enter the holy city of God, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.<sup>1</sup> Before such a God the four living creatures never, day nor night, cease to sing:

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,  
who was and is and is to come!"<sup>2</sup>

God judges according to justice, repaying iniquity.<sup>3</sup>  
He is a jealous God who will not tolerate allegiance to any but Himself. Thus one hears the proclamation of an angel,

"If any one worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also shall drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone . . ." <sup>4</sup>

The song of Moses and of the Lamb joins this and other passages<sup>5</sup> in paying tribute to the justice in the character of God. Here one reads:

"Great and wonderful are thy deeds,  
O Lord God the Almighty!  
Just and true are thy ways,  
O King of the ages."<sup>6</sup>

As a God of justice He is also a God of mercy and compassion. Words of promise such as the following can hardly be surpassed in their expression of divine love:

"Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God Himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 21:27
2. Ibid., 4:8b
3. Ibid., 18:5-8

4. Ibid., 14:9-10
5. Ibid., 19:2
6. Ibid., 15:3

their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away."<sup>1</sup>

It would be no difficult thing for those standing before such a God to join with the choir of heavenly creatures who call forth the great doxology: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen."<sup>2</sup>

### 3. The Certainty of Salvation

The Revelation begins thus: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place . . ."<sup>3</sup> In the light of the message of this book thus far considered, that of the blunt reality of evil as well as the burning righteousness of God, the question of what the outcome of two such co-existing forces will be gathers around it the interest of those who will be affected by the consequent future, not only in time but also in eternity.

Nor are young people the least of those who ask searching questions about immortality and eternal punishment. The desire to know whether hell is a reality is no mere idle curiosity. The teacher of young people who is able to gain the confidence of those with whom he works soon finds himself facing with them the question of how God judges their lives and what the outcome will be. If there

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 21:3b-4
2. Ibid., 7:12
3. Ibid., 1:1

were no certainty of salvation such a teacher could only stand by helplessly when one of his students, a strong, healthy, young man in his later teens, says, "But if God is like that I will never get to heaven. There is too much sin in my life". Logically, unless there is some almost un-called for intercession, only disaster, from man's point of view, can result.

In the right hand of him who was seated on the throne there was a scroll filled to overflowing with a special message, a message so important that none anywhere was found worthy to break its seals and look into it. In his anxiety over the situation John wept much. Suddenly the attention of the reader is shifted. An elder announced to John, "Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll<sup>1</sup> and its seven seals." Then John writes that in the midst of this glorious scene in heaven he saw "a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain"<sup>2</sup>. This Lamb representing the Christ who wore no armour against prejudice and hatred, grief and anguish but that of divine Love, was able to reach out and take the sealed book from the hand of God.<sup>3</sup>

His basis for the great right to do so is found expressed in the new song sung by the twenty-four elders holding the golden bowls of the incense of the prayers of

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 5:5
2. Ibid., 5:6
3. Ibid., 5:7

the saints:

"Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals,  
for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst thou ransom men  
for God  
From every tribe and tongue and people and nation,  
and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God,  
and they shall reign on earth."<sup>1</sup>

This Christ who by His death ransomed men of every color,  
language and nationality providing a way of salvation for  
them now had the sole right to break the seals that were to  
bring destruction upon those who rejected Him. The terror  
of darkness that overtakes those who refuse to follow the  
Lamb serves to emphasize the certainty of redemption that  
may be had by accepting the Christ as Lord.

The great power of the sacrificial love of God  
unto certain salvation from the second death in the "lake  
of fire"<sup>2</sup> is emphasized in the Revelation by constant close  
relationship between the righteous and their Redeemer, the  
Lamb that was slain. So the elder answered his own question  
in regard to who comprised the numberless multitude from  
every walk of life on earth that John saw standing before  
the throne of God, saying, "These are they who have come out  
of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and  
made them white in the blood of the Lamb"<sup>3</sup>. The Revelation  
gives abundant promise of God's power to keep those who  
trust in Him.<sup>4</sup>

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 5:9-10
2. Ibid., 20:15, 14:9-11
3. Ibid., 7:14. See also 7:10; 14:1, 4; 12:11
4. See promises to the saints in Revelation 2 and 3

According to this book the question of the outcome of life need not be a moot question. The answer to it lies within the individual. God, through the Lamb, has spoken in no uncertain terms. There could hardly be a more beautiful call for decision than that given in the closing verses of the last chapter. "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come'. And let him who hears say, 'Come'. And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price."<sup>1</sup>

This call can be given only because the Lamb of God conquered death upon the cross and is able to stand in the very midst of the heavenly scene, victorious over sin. Now this One who says, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive<sup>2</sup> for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades", also says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."<sup>3</sup>

#### D. A Message of God in Triumph Over Evil

The author of that popular explanation of the book of Revelation, The Lord Reigneth, speaking of the time immediately after Christ had returned to the Father says:

. . . . .

1. Revelation 22:17
2. Ibid., 1:18
3. Ibid., 3:20

"Principalities and powers of evil could still deal deadly blows. The fighting men of Christ, not least those 'breathless, unhorsed, and covered o'er with blood and sweat', must many a time have asked, 'How long will this go on? Will loyalty in the end be vindicated? The kingdom Christ preached is in evidence: will it one day be in power? Will He really come again, inflict final and complete defeat upon his enemies, and reign at last in undisputed supremacy?'"<sup>1</sup>

John wrote in answer to questions such as these. In the concluding chapters of the book he pictures for his readers the swaying battle between God and evil as at length at an end, the trumpets of victory sound exultantly, and God remains supreme upon His throne.

Nor are questions such as those referred to above silenced even in the present age. The great battle is still in evidence everywhere about those who question, goading them on in their desire for an answer. The answer to them is of great moment, especially for young people who today are laying their plans for life. All must in some way or other enter the conflict. If God is hopelessly battling against the forces of darkness only to be overcome in the end, if righteousness has no more weight than straws pitched about by the winds, what future is there in being honest in a business deal -- or even in a class examination? If God is only an unproven principle there can be little point in bearing the raillery of friends who have decided against truth as the Christian sees it.

Reference has already been made to the fourth

. . . . .

1. Burnet, op. cit., pp. 13-14

and fifth chapters of this book where God and the Lamb are represented in the glory of their power and righteousness. This scene very appropriately precedes the iron clad record of God's tumultuous conflict with evil that finally comes to a head in the downfall of the great harlot called<sup>1</sup> Babylon, the commitment of the devil to the "lake of fire"<sup>2</sup> and the final scene of judgment.<sup>3</sup>

The reader is never permitted to feel that the reality of evil or the undeniable fact of its presence is in any way an abrogation of God's supremacy. At all times evil goes only as far as permitted by God. These limitations are placed upon the beast that rose out of the sea to which the dragon, representing Satan,<sup>4</sup> "gave his power and his throne and great authority".<sup>5</sup> It is written that it

"was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months . . . Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation . . ."<sup>6</sup>

The total picture, then, is one in which there is no room for doubt as to who is the ruler of this world and of eternity. The reader knows that if he casts his lot against God he must suffer with evil. On the other hand he is given a promise in the first part of the book that finds its fulfillment in the glorious picture of the city

. . . . .

1. Revelation, ch. 17-18
2. Ibid., 20:10
3. Ibid., 20:11-15

4. Ibid., 12:9
5. Ibid., 13:2
6. Ibid., 13:5-7

of the victorious, the new Jerusalem which is the Bride of  
the Lamb of the last two chapters.<sup>1</sup> The reader, if he so  
chooses, may become a victor along with Christ, for the  
promise is: "He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with  
me on my throne".<sup>2</sup>

E. A Message of Personal Challenge  
to a Life of Faith

It has been well said that life is a thing of  
mystery and trial. Some who try vainly to see a path through  
their dubious future, not knowing the strength that can be  
received from an Almighty God, say, "We can't ever make it.  
There's no use in even trying." Young people, when they  
first come into personal contact, through bitter experience,  
with the problems of pain and death are naturally confused.  
Thus one troubled girl asked,

"Why is it that God would let my cantankerous old uncle,  
who is a trial to all his relatives, live, and take my  
sweet little five-year-old cousin away from her loving  
parents? It just doesn't seem fair."<sup>3</sup>

Certainly, as Burnet says, speaking of the  
Revelation,

"it is eminently fitting that there should be some such  
book to lift and brace the human heart in its private  
struggle . . . And how often life seems incoherent 'as  
a tale told by an idiot', as if no one in heaven planned  
or cared, as if heaven were deaf to prayers and blind to  
pain! Surely it is all to the good that there should  
be a book like this to let men view life, so far as may

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 21:1-22:5
2. Ibid., 3:12
3. Question asked by a girl in the author's Intermediate Fellowship group.

be, 'sub specie eternitatis', to set life's incoherences in the light of the divine denouement--what they have seen of the play in the light of the last act-- and so confront their lot again, however forbidding it may be, with a new quietness and confidence, a new energy and hope."<sup>1</sup>

The message of certainty in a time of change and the triumph of God over evil, as referred to in preceding divisions of this chapter, are placed on a very personal basis by the writer of the Revelation. This attitude is initiated by the introductory verses of the book. That which is to follow is a special revelation to the servants of God.<sup>2</sup> The relationship of the Revelation to the reader is expressed in these words: "Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near."<sup>3</sup>

According to the Revelation, God is fully aware of the trial and the struggles that the human heart is passing through. In the dictation that John takes, letters to be sent to churches of Asia Minor, there is repeated reference to the fact that He "knows". Thus He knows their works, toil and patient endurance for His name's sake.<sup>4</sup> He knows their tribulation and poverty and the slander that is heaped against them.<sup>5</sup> Their love, faith and service did not dwindle, but rather increased.<sup>6</sup> They upheld His name in spite of their great weakness.<sup>7</sup>

The beatitudes to the faithful show that God's

. . . . .

1. Burnet, op. cit., pp. 14-15
2. Revelation, 1:1
3. Ibid., 1:3
4. Ibid., 2:1, 2

5. Ibid., 2:13
6. Ibid., 2:19
7. Ibid., 3:8

recognition of these things is no mere abstract part of His omniscience. "To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."<sup>1</sup> "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."<sup>2</sup>

"He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God . . . and my own new name."<sup>3</sup>

One finds here an active participation of the conqueror with God in the plan of the ages.

God is to be fully trusted in every circumstance of life. He is fully in control of the present as it leads into the future. Youth can look to a personal God who is personally interested to direct and to guide through the most trying hours of questioning and uncertainty. The Revelation is a call to faith during those times when life seems overwhelming -- and at all other times of life.

#### F. Summary

This chapter has been devoted to a study of the main emphases of the message in the Revelation with respect to their applicability in the lives of young people today.

It was seen, first of all, that current conditions of uncertainty in the face of great political forces that hang over America's security like a vast cloud of impending

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1. Ibid., 2:7
2. Ibid., 2:10
3. Ibid., 3:12

darkness are in part repetitious of those in existence when the book was written. It was argued from this that the book might well be in a position to contain such material as would help guide young people of today.

One main emphasis in the message noted was its element of certainty concerning basic considerations helping to stabilize Christian thinking and activity. Three of these were discussed.

The first showed the familiarity and lack of fear with which the writer was able to face evil in its various manifestations. It was seen that the Revelation while dealing frankly with evil inspires courage to face it.

The second of these considerations dealt with certainty in regard to the position and character of God. He is seen as one fully capable of meeting the highest ideals that youth can have. In His supreme glory He must be regarded as one from whom alone such ideals may be derived.

The third of these considerations is that of the certainty of salvation. It was seen that in the Revelation there is the conviction that God through the Lamb is able to give the assurance of life and salvation to whoever comes for it.

Another main emphasis was that of God in triumph over evil. It was seen that God is in full control of the forces of evil, so much so that anyone casting his lot against God will undoubtedly suffer under His wrath as all

evil eventually must suffer.

A final main emphasis considered was that of the personal challenge that the book has for those who are struggling to live the life of faith. It was pointed out that God is fully aware of the struggles of the human heart, that He commends faithfulness, and that He promises rewards to those who remain true to Him. God can be looked to as one who is personally interested in man and who will sustain him.

It is therefore concluded that the message which the Revelation contains is applicable to youth of today because problems modern young people face find their parallel in the principles of those problems which the book was originally intended to meet.

### CHAPTER III

#### APPROACHES IN TEACHING YOUNG PEOPLE USING THE APPEAL OF THE REVELATION

### CHAPTER III

#### APPROACHES IN TEACHING YOUNG PEOPLE USING THE APPEAL OF THE REVELATION

##### A. Introduction

In his book, How to Study the Revelation, which comes second in a series of study guides designed to help people in the church enjoy studying the Bible, Gettys asks this question: "Why should this book be taken so early in the series?"<sup>1</sup> He answers the question saying,

"Because of the fact that this book is 'in the air', so to speak. Everyone is asking questions about it. Both individuals and groups in the church are making an urgent plea for some help in studying this book. The importance of supplanting extreme and harmful interpretations with a direct, sane and meaningful study of the Revelation cannot be doubted. The extreme interpretations make little or no appeal to persons who are familiar with the text itself; they frequently appeal to those ignorant of the words of Scripture."<sup>2</sup>

The demand for an explanation of the Revelation is readily understood in the light of present world confusion in which great anti-Christian forces reminding the bewildered onlooker of the Satanic creatures of that book rear their heads in defiance of God. Any book entitled Who Will be the Antichrist? very quickly catches the eye of the public under these circumstances. This is especially true when its cover bears the inscription, "This book will

. . . . .

1. Joseph M. Gettys, How to Study the Revelation, Preface.
2. Ibid.

astound you, as it tells exactly who the Antichrist will be".<sup>1</sup> Other books by the same author relate the struggle between the yellow and white races, communism, and even President Truman to Bible prophecy. These are typical of much of the preaching and teaching which many young people hear today.

Regardless of whether these interpretations are true or false the wisdom of having the student himself make an unprejudiced study of the original passages in their context can be seen, since such a study will give him a basis on which to judge that which he is taught.

In the light of conditions referred to here, it will be the purpose of this third chapter to suggest practical approaches for directing young people in such an experience using the appeals of the Revelation.

#### B. Principles Governing the Approaches

The core of the study to be suggested in this chapter is that the Revelation itself is to be the main text in the hands of the student. In this type of approach it is essential that both the teacher in his preparation and the student in his study keep in mind a series of governing principles that are basic to it. These have been concretely summarized by Gettys in the form of the Ten Commandments of Interpretation.<sup>2</sup> Guided by his presentation of them, they

. . . . .

1. Dan Gilbert, Who Will be the Antichrist?
2. Gettys, op. cit., p. 14-15

might be stated as follows:

1. Make the book of the Revelation itself the center. Other helps may certainly be referred to as they are able to throw light on the meaning of the text but even these must not be permitted to force any interpretation upon the Bible.

2. Become familiar with the background of the book, noting the conditions which the early church faced during the time that it read this manuscript.

3. Go from the known to the unknown in the text of the Bible. That which is hard to understand will probably take on meaning as larger areas of that which is relatively clear are related to each other.

4. Get the major message whether or not your mind is satisfied about all the details. Do not get lost in the detail of that which is apparently meaningless. Unless the interpretation of a minor point falls in line with the major message it should not be accepted as final.

5. Recognize as a fact that this book was intended to help its readers regardless of whether they are first<sup>1</sup> century Christians or Christians of today.

6. Remain faithful to the Bible-centered approach until the entire book has been studied under its guidance. After the Revelation has been studied in this manner other approaches may be used for the value that they may have.

. . . . .

1. Revelation, 1:3

7. Do not be bound to only one commentary becoming a slave to its particular interpretation. Judge the commentary by the Bible rather than the Bible by the commentary.

8. Keep a notebook for special projects and work them out.

9. Keep a prayerful attitude. God is able to speak through the book even though all of it may not be entirely clear.

10. Keep on testing in everyday life the truths that are learned. Things often become more clear when they are experienced in this concrete way.

### C. Approach through the Book Itself

The first two chapters of this thesis were devoted to the appeal of the Revelation to young people in the light of its apocalyptic method and its message. How can these appeals be used in the actual teaching situation?

#### 1. A Teaching Approach Using the Apocalyptic Method

It must always be kept in mind by the modern teacher of the Revelation that the apocalyptic method to the apocalyptist was a means to an end. He considered it a medium of expression for conveying to others the truths that God had given to him. The literary qualities of the Revelation can not be considered an end in themselves. Today as then these are a bridge to something greater, namely, the message of the book.

The basic purpose of the teacher's emphasis upon the method of the Revelation in the classroom is to utilize it, in accordance with the findings of the first chapter of this thesis, to catch and hold the interest of the student so that he might see for himself that which this book contains for his own life. This apocalyptic method, which centers in the vision, can be analyzed as the appeal of the unusual, the relation of the book to personal experience, the fascination of the dramatic, and the teaching power of the symbolic. In order to determine how these may be utilized in a specific teaching situation, a teaching unit of chapters four and five of the Revelation will be considered briefly.

It has been noted that as the youthful reader approaches the Revelation he very suddenly finds himself in a realm of literature quite different from the major part of the Bible. This is certainly the case with respect to the throne scene of chapters four and five, and it is in this initial experience which comes upon a first reading that a point of contact can be made with the mind of the reader. Thus the way is opened to the introductory period which lays the groundwork for the fuller comprehension of the passage.

In the ideal class situation the student will have come to the realization of this constituent difference in the material at hand before the session opens by having read and re-read the passages assigned. The basic plan for

this introductory period is quite simply a candid, informal, though guided discussion that will bring out from the class the striking factors present within the section at hand. What will these be under the present circumstances?

The point of first importance is the method of revelation used here. It will be noted that the fourth chapter begins with "After this . . ."<sup>1</sup>, referring to the preceding scene into which John was initiated when, being in the spirit on the island of Patmos, he suddenly heard behind him a loud voice like a trumpet. That same voice speaks to him again, saying, "Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this."<sup>2</sup> This scene comes to him as the first one did, in the form of a vision.

Since a vision may be thought of as the human mind at play in a realm unbound by space, time, or any limitation of physical law, the fascination of the dramatic can have free play in the Revelation. So it is in the passage under consideration. The voice says, "Come up hither . . ."<sup>3</sup> and at once he finds himself in heaven. The transition from Patmos to heaven can only be imagined in one breathless sweep of the mind.

The imposing scene of the throne of God is found at first glance to be wrapped in a dazzling confusion of

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 4:1a
2. Ibid., 4:1b
3. Ibid.

color and sound. Upon closer examination one part can be distinguished from the other. Jasper and carnelian characterize Him who sits there surrounded by an emerald rainbow. The twenty-four elders with golden crowns clad in white garments surround Him. Before His throne burn seven blazing torches that might well be reflected in the crystal sea of glass before Him. From the very midst of all this colorful splendor, from the very throne itself, issue flashes of lightning, voices and resounding peals of thunder. Add to this the four living creatures, full of eyes inside and out, who sing unceasingly their song of glorious praise as well as the songs of the elders, the doxologies of unnumbered myriads of angels and of every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth and in the sea, and the drama reaches almost unimaginable heights.

But in the midst of all this suddenly is found a suspending silence that is disturbed only by the weeping of John and the consoling voice of an elder. It is here that the Lamb who alone is able to open the seals of the scroll in the hand of God is introduced.

These chapters, as also the rest of the book, are packed with symbolism that the student will need to find himself aware of in order to understand the message of the Revelation. What do the colors and the sounds imply? Do the living creatures have a special meaning? What do the elders represent? Why should there be a scroll? Who is the Lamb that can open it? Is there any significance to the

numbers that are used?

It must not be overlooked, however, as these details are recognized and dwelt on, that in the Revelation each one is a part of the whole. The author has combined them in a unified picture designed to leave one dominant impression. The emotional appeal that is built up as each detail adds its contribution should certainly be utilized in the classroom with the same convincing effect that it must have had with those who first read it.

In order to heighten the student's appreciation of the use which the Revelation makes of the visionary and symbolic apocalyptic approach it would be well to have him attempt writing a paraphrase of sections of the book in language that is used in other letters of the New Testament. The immediate effect would doubtless be a much less emotionally exalted expression as well as a blunt statement of fact concerning Emperor Domitian and his worshipers whose jealousy awaited only such a provocation to be fanned into destructive hatred. The apocalyptic method could be employed profitably and safely because the message, though hidden from the enemy, was clear to those who were schooled in its use.

This symbolism, embodying the message of the passage, is at once the means by which the reader is led on into that message and by which it is fixed in his mind. After it has been carefully analyzed with respect to its mechanical implications the introductory period of observation ceases and interpretation begins.

## 2. A Teaching Approach Centering in its Message.

Reference has been made, in the previous section, to the means by which the student comes into a living acquaintance with the particular teaching unit of the Revelation being discussed here, namely the throne scene of chapters four and five. To leave him thus with an exalted concept of the high dramatic quality of the book is obviously an uncompleted task unless the Revelation, contrary to the findings of the second chapter of this thesis, is of no value to daily thinking and living of youth. The problem at this point then is to determine how the message of this passage can be brought forth and applied in a classroom situation.

The student can be led to discover the two great foci in this passage, one in each chapter. He will see that in chapter four everything is centered about the throne of God, while in chapter five everything is centered about the Lamb which is so inseparable from the throne. For correct interpretation of the passage he will have to take these two into account first and foremost. Consequently, these are the keys with which he must start.

It is obvious that the throne represents God. That which needs to be determined is what His position is and what are the relationships of the rest of the symbolic entities to Him. Each of these, whether color, creature or sound, is found to contribute to the building up of one central thought in relation to God, the certainty of His sovereignty. Regardless of whether these might be thought

by any interpreter to be representative of some prophesied body of people or a development in world history, it is evident that they serve this practical and adequate purpose here.

No single passage of the Revelation can be fully interpreted outside of the context of the entire book and outside of the historical situation that gave rise to it. Basically, the message of the Revelation is that of the triumph of God over evil and the salvation of those who are true to Him. Therefore the emphasis of this particular section will now need to be interpreted as the introduction to the titanic struggle that is to follow as the student becomes acquainted with the book.

The power of the throne of Satan, however, is not pictured in these chapters. Nevertheless, it is evident that the scene as described would have less intrinsic meaning if there were no other level of power and glory with which to compare it. A brief study of the historical background, with which the student must be acquainted, will reveal that this contrasting, earthly power was vividly present in the minds of the original readers and that its inclusion here would have been quite superfluous. As they compared the overwhelming sovereignty of God upon His throne with the inflated character of Emperor Domitian and his blood stained chair they were challenged to uphold their allegiance to the God in whose name they were being persecuted.

This challenge can very quickly be pointed out as

relevant to the life of the student by relating it to the plight of those currently under persecution because of their faith as well as to the frequent choices he himself needs to make between God and the world. The discussion needs to reveal how this exalted picture of God can be an influence in his choosing.

It has been noted that the fifth chapter is centered about the Lamb. Acquaintance with the rest of John's writing and with the Old Testament shows it to be the Christ. The context here reveals that its power and glory are resident in the fact of its redeeming death.<sup>1</sup> Therefore it is worthy to open the seals.<sup>2</sup> As each succeeding description and song added to the certainty of God's sovereignty in the preceding chapter, so here each adds to the certainty of salvation which is provided through Christ.

This message of certainty will be found relevant to the life of the student and needs to be made so by a recognition of the difference that it makes, not only to the original reader of the Revelation, but in the same way to those today who find themselves so quickly overpowered by the forces of sin. This passage on the Lamb, supported by the references to Christ in the rest of the book, gives the student an overwhelming picture of the exalted nature of Him to whom youth are called to give their undivided and consecrated loyalty. This Lamb is called "the Lion of the

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 5:6, 9
2. Ibid., 5:9

tribe of Judah, the Root of David"<sup>1</sup> who has conquered sin by ransoming men with his blood and who therefore can open the scroll and its seven seals.<sup>2</sup> The abundant and enthusiastic testimony of celestial witnesses around the throne and the Lamb give strength to the faith of the reader in Christ's promise that "He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne".

#### D. Approaches Made Through the Field of the Arts

Young people can be readily interested in the field of the arts as related to the study of the Revelation. This is true because they are constantly being introduced to this field as they grow in their acquaintance with art both in and out of school. The nature of great art is that it is an expression of human experience. Therefore the teacher of the Revelation does well to search it for that which will relate the book he is teaching to the life of the student.

Supplementary approaches to the study of the Revelation can be made through the arts since numerous artists have based their work upon the vivid drama of this book. Narrowing this field down to where one includes only that of art and music still demands the inclusion of vast

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 5:5
2. Ibid., 5:9

amounts of material that can never be comprehended in the scope of this study. Therefore the purpose of this section will be limited to that of suggesting how some of this material might be utilized.

#### 1. Art

As one reads the Revelation one soon understands why artists should find it a fruitful field for their work. The spirit of the book cries for expression, it has a message that needs to be portrayed, and its picturesque quality quickly provides a basis upon which to work. One of the oft-depicted scenes, for instance, is that of the four horsemen of the sixth chapter. Here is purposeful action and color that calls for interpretation. Almost without exception, each unfolding scene has in it the qualities of the dramatically pictorial.

One of the best known series of illustrations on the Revelation is the woodcuts that Albrecht Durer has given to the world. These are especially adaptable to use with young people in a classroom situation along with the text of the Revelation because in them the artist has applied the Revelation to the world of his day which had problems basically similar to those of today. Since much of the interpretation of the text in them is literal, they not only require less time for adequate comprehension but also leave both the teacher and the student free to interpret the more basic message of the text for himself. Because of their nature, Durer's pictures can readily be used to impress the

mind of the student.

Durer's woodcut, "Saint John is Commanded to Swallow the Book", depicting the events of the tenth chapter will suffice to indicate the value of this artist's work with respect to the teaching situation. True to the text, Durer has very literally wrapped in a cloud the angel descending from heaven. Rays like those of the sun issue forth from his face and a rainbow is over his head. His legs are pillars, the tops of which are broken into flame while they rest, one upon the land and one upon the sea. He lifts his hand toward heaven as he swears by Him who lives forever, who is represented by a portrayal of the ark surrounded by cherubim. In the text the God by whom the angel swears is described as the one "who created heaven<sup>1</sup> and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it". Besides the clouds of the sky, the artist has represented the plants and animals of the earth as well as the creatures of the sea. Tree growth rises along one side of the picture and swans swim near the shore. The creatures of the sea are represented in the form of a duck-billed, scaled dragon that is swimming in the water. John who is kneeling beside the book in which he has ceased to write is in the act of taking the scroll from the hand of the angel, and has one corner of it in his mouth as he starts to eat it in response to the voice from heaven that is represented by an angel flying in the sky.

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 10:6

Art such as that of Durer serves to emphasize some of the literary qualities of the Revelation. It frequently pictures John's personal participation in the vision as in the above study, and because of its vivid quality invites the observer to enter into the scene. The intense detail of action is true to the original text, serving to heighten the drama in basically the same way that John originally used it. The symbolism of the Revelation is very tangibly portrayed in Durer's woodcuts. In the particular scene referred to here one finds glory and the power of God symbolized in the description of the angel and the missionary command to John symbolized in the scroll which he eats. From this it is evident that the study of art can be a definite aid to the presentation of the Revelation in an interesting and an appealing way.

The approach intended here is not that the picture should be made the center of the study, thus becoming an end in itself. It must always be used simply as an aid to the presentation of the text itself. This can be done in various ways under various circumstances. After the students have been introduced to them, whether they be Durer's or another's, they might simply be put on display in some accessible place where they will always be subject to observation and study. This will help the student to visualize the text as he studies it, as well as enhance his appreciation for art that has been born out of inspiration induced by the Revelation. It may be under some circumstances that the class in a church youth

group can come only for short periods on Sunday or on a week night. Thus it may be necessary to crowd a teaching unit into an inadequate space of time. At such a time an illustrative picture such as those of Durer might well be used, especially if a slide of it can be obtained, to visualize the scene described after it has been read by the group. Such a procedure will serve to focus the contents of the section with greater clarity in a shorter time and permit an earlier interpretation and application.

## 2. Music

Hymns and other solo and choral music based upon the Revelation have frequently caught the spirit or the atmosphere as well as the message of this book and have presented these in such a way that people can personally and actively enter into them. Young people usually like to sing. Such music used with them in which the emotional expressions and often the very words of the Revelation are translated into human experience will make the message of that book more meaningful to them.

### a. Hymns in the Revelation

Many of the greatest hymns of the church have been at least partially inspired by the Revelation. For instance, the force of the words "Come, Thou Almighty King" comes directly out of its first chapter. Jesus is referred to here as "the ruler of kings on earth"<sup>1</sup> who "is coming with

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 1:5

the clouds".<sup>1</sup> After John has thus announced that He is coming, he says, "Even so, Amen".<sup>2</sup> The implication here is the same as that of the last chapter where John says, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."<sup>3</sup> One who is in harmony with the purpose of God as expressed in the Revelation will also be in harmony with the thought of the song, "Come, Thou Almighty King".

This song is essentially an expression of that toward which John wanted to encourage his readers, namely, an expression of praise for God's greatness and trust in His almighty power. Thus Charles Wesley calls for help to sing and praise the name of Him whom he would love and adore throughout all eternity. This also is He to whom the same poet calls out saying:

"Thou Who Almighty art, now rule in every heart,  
And ne'er from us depart, Spirit of power."

It is a song that young people need to learn to sing because of the vitality of its message so in harmony with the thought of the Revelation that runs throughout each stanza. Having done this through the experiences of the Christian life and an appreciative study of the hymn with the teacher of the Revelation, it will become a door through which an unsympathetic heart of a student may enter into the life and warmth of the spirit of the Revelation, claiming that book as a reality for daily living.

. . . . .

1. Ibid., 1:7
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 22:20

Other important and well-known hymns of the church that find their sources in the Revelation can be listed as follows:<sup>1</sup>

O, Jesus Thou Art Standing	1:13-15; 17-19
Behold! A Stranger at the Door	3:20
Holy, Holy, Holy	4:8, 10, 11
All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name	5:11, 13; 19:11-15
In the Cross of Christ I Glory	5:12
Shepherd of Eager Youth	5:13
The Son of God Goes Forth to War	7:14; 19:11-15
Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand	7:17
Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun	19:6; 7; 19:16
Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken	21:2
Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life	21:2
Jerusalem the Golden	21:10, 18; 22:3, 4
Jesus, Lover of My Soul	22:17

It is the suggestion of the author that these hymns be studied for their practical value to the Christian experiences and related to their source in order to show that the spirit of John is alive in the world today and to help his book build into the lives of youth those concepts that make up a fully rounded Christian life. The songs need not all be studied at once but should be brought into the classroom one by one as their particular emphases find exceptional expression in the Revelation. If the class is one that has a worship service held in connection with it they may be used effectively at such a time with the proper introduction. Though the music referred to in the next section

. . . . .

1. See H. Augustine Smith, Lyric Religion for a more complete discussion on these and other hymns of the same nature.

will not be used for the ordinary worship service, it too may be built upon in much the same way as are the hymns.

b. Solo and Choral Music

Perhaps no choral work is as well known in Christendom as the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's The Messiah<sup>1</sup>. This is based exclusively upon the Revelation. Wherever young people sing in college and church choirs it is a favorite. The teacher of the Revelation will want to capitalize upon the acquaintance of youth with it in order to make the underlying message of the book, namely, the omnipotence of God, and man's belief in it more vivid in the actual experience of the students. If as they hear or sing this chorus, "Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth", they, because of class direction, can identify themselves with a part of "the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder-peals"<sup>2</sup> that first sang the song, this passage as well as the entire book which leads up to this glorious climax will mean so much more to them.

Besides the other part of The Messiah<sup>3</sup> taken from the Revelation, "Worthy is the Lamb" one can refer to Gaul's work entitled The Holy City as depending heavily upon this book for its inspiration. The following titles and references illustrate this:

. . . . .

1. Revelation 19:6; 11:15; 19:16
2. Ibid., 19:6
3. Ibid., 5:12-13

They Shall Hunger No More	Duet	7:17, 17
At Eventide It Shall Be Light	Trio	21:4
A New Heaven and a New Earth	Bass	21:1, 2
These Are They Which Came	Soprano	7:14, 15
I Heard the Voice of Harpers	Bass	14:2, 3
Great and Marvelous are thy Works	Chorus	15:3

#### E. Summary

The purpose of this chapter was that of suggesting practical approaches for directing young people in a first hand experience with the scriptures using the appeals of the Revelation.

In the Introduction it was noted that there is a definite need for an approach to the study of this book that will bring the student face to face with the original text, preparing him to meet extreme expositions of it. The first step toward the meeting of this need was that of presenting a series of principles that should govern the study of both student and teacher in order to give the appeals of the book their fullest opportunity to assert themselves. These principles are involved in the Bible-centered approach that is necessary.

Thereafter the two major appeals of the book were studied separately in relation to their presentation in class. The first dealt with that of teaching the appeal of apocalyptic method. It was noted that the apocalyptic medium which carries the message of John becomes the first line of study in its various aspects. An examination of its appeals becomes an introduction to the study of the text which must

find its fruition in the application of the message. Both the appeals of the method and the message were illustrated in a discussion on the throne scene of the fourth and fifth chapters of the Revelation. Under the section devoted to the method of the book the following appeals were illustrated: the appeal of the unusual, the relation of the book to personal experience, the fascination of the dramatic, and the teaching power of the symbolic. It was noted that the student could be brought to a greater appreciation of the apocalyptic method by writing a paraphrase of the text in ordinary, straightforward language.

The discussion devoted to teaching the message of the Revelation revealed the fact that this particular passage is strong in two major emphases, the sovereignty of God and the certainty of salvation provided through the death of the Lamb who is Christ. It is brought out that here youth are given an exalted picture of Him whom they are called on to follow as their Lord and God with the effect that their trust in Him will be strengthened.

In the concluding section of the chapter two supplementary approaches to the study of the Revelation were considered. In the first of these, that of art, attention was devoted to Albrecht Durer's woodcuts as an aid to the study of the vivid and dramatic qualities as well as the symbolic representations of John's book. The second approach, that of music, was presented as being largely concerned with the message of the Revelation. It was seen

that both hymns and classical music contain expressions of current feeling and belief in regard to God parallel with those of John and often inspired by his writing. These can be utilized in teaching the message of the Revelation by bridging the gap between the student and the book with their reference to present day Christian experiences.

## GENERAL SUMMARY

## GENERAL SUMMARY

### A. Restatement of the Problem

The purpose of this thesis has been to search out in the Revelation those of its qualities that will be of special aid to the teacher of young people in bringing his students into a personal acquaintance with this book so that they may more readily apply its teaching to their own thinking and living.

This has been done in two major fields, those of the method and the message of the Revelation. The study was concluded by offering suggestions and principles for making these applicable in the classroom as the student learns to know this book in a first hand examination of it under the direction of the teacher.

### B. Summary

In the first chapter dealing with the method of writing used by the author of the Revelation it was noted that the apocalyptic style in which the book is presented, though it may at first seem to be a hindrance to study, can be used constructively by the wise teacher to gain the interest of the students.

With respect to this it was found that the psychology of the book invites the student to enter into the experience of the writer. This is accomplished by the use of the pronoun "I" which personalizes the account, and by

the use of sensory verbs and verbs of action with which the reader is well acquainted because of his own experience. All in all the reader is made to feel that the experience was vital to the author and that he can identify himself with the author thus sharing that experience with him.

It was also found that literary qualities of the book are of such a nature that youth can be readily interested in it. Its drama is of a vivid quality because of its color, sound, and movement. Its symbolism as a teaching medium carries the message of the book.

In the second chapter it was seen that the message of the Revelation is one which is applicable to the lives of youth of today. It is believed that as young people are guided in the interpretation of the message with its aspects of certainty they can be led to see its relevance to their own need. The writer has no fear of evil, the character of God is one of unchanging righteousness, and the salvation which He presents can be fully depended upon. It was also noted that the Revelation is a book of personal challenge for those who are struggling to live a life of faith even in adverse conditions. God was seen as being fully aware of human trials, and ready to reward those who remain steadfast to the end. It is believed that such a message will be found practical for youth.

The final chapter was devoted to the application of the method and the message to the teaching situation. The Bible-centered approach in which the student studies

the text of the Scriptures and evaluates other literature on the Revelation in the light of this book was considered the best for the need which this study is designed to meet. All study of the Revelation making use of its appeals toward the end of personal acquaintance with the text needs to be made in harmony with principles that govern this approach. The main emphases in the actual study were illustrated by considerations of selected passages.

Finally, approaches to the Revelation as an aid to the study made of the actual text were referred to in the fields of art and music in which the artist or the composer has attempted to interpret a part of the Revelation in his production. These were considered to be of value each in its way. The artist, Durer, has capitalized upon the apocalyptic quality in his work bringing out much of the drama that the teacher will wish to present to the class. Music has been found to emphasize the message of the book and shows that the spirit of the Revelation is active in the thinking and living of people in current times. It can often be used to illustrate the emphasis that John wishes to make and to make it more real in the experience of youth.

This study has revealed that the Revelation is filled with those practical qualities that will aid the teacher in an interesting presentation of the book to the end that the student will become personally acquainted with it and desire to apply its principles to his own thinking and living. It is concluded that an inadequate use has

been made of this book by teachers of the Bible in the light of the great and valuable resources for spiritual guidance which it contains for times of tumult such as these faced by the world today.

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