

“Blessed Is He Who Reads” (Rev 1:3)

Jn 20:24-31; Jn 21:24-25

- I. A WRITTEN GOSPEL** reminds us that oral discourse, and its retention, are often faulty
- A. A *Caveat*: oral discourse important, in some ways essential in the here-and-now
 - 1. Evaluate texting vs. telephone vs. face-to-face communication
 - a. Nuances important—e.g. tones, facials, pauses
 - b. Uniqueness of voices—as particular as fingerprints
 - 2. Superiority/primacy evident in teaching, preaching, even when students are overtly passive—because listening actually a participative activity if rightly done (i.e. active listening)
 - 3. Important illustrations:
 - a. Homer’s poems (*Iliad; Odyssey*) repeated for centuries, basic to Greek culture
 - b. Socrates’ questions, insights evident in Plato’s *Dialogues*
 - c. Speaking prophets (e.g. Samuel & Nathan) as important as writing prophets (e.g. Isaiah & Jeremiah)
 - d. Jesus rarely wrote—message in sand the sole exception we know of
 - e. Primitive Church spread the Word without written texts in formative years (ca. 30-50 A.D.)
 - f. Apostolic and Ante-Nicene Fathers continually quote and refer to texts as authoritative
 - B. A Cautionary Note: oral discourse has serious limitations
 - 1. Dean Nelson’s *Talk To Me* stresses note-taking and immediate recording of interviews
 - 2. Notorious failures to rightly remember—current and historical
 - C. Trustworthy history necessarily requires documentation! Basic to research, analysis, preservation
- II. WRITING A GOSPEL** reveals distinctive human capacity
- A. Writing Requires:
 - 1. Hands
 - a. Amazing dexterity, sensitivity, strength (dense nerve-endings)
 - b. Capable of crafting symbols representing words—pictures (Chinese) or alphabets (Hebrew, Greek, Roman)
 - c. Current controversy: print vs. cursive—assets of both forms
 - d. Process of note-taking, writing down thoughts, basic to thinking (thus Augustine learned what he thought as he wrote!), and active listeners usually write while listening
 - 2. Eyes—wonderful capacity, miraculous formation (e.g. *Foresight*; Crick admission)
 - 3. Mind
 - a. Amazing ability to take perceptions and sensations and make conceptions
 - b. Mystery of the Mind—and its witness to *Imago Dei*
 - B. Writing’s history
 - 1. Sumerian (ca. 2000 B.C.)—cuneiform tablets, basically re business transactions
 - 2. Egyptian (ca. 2000 B.C.)—hieroglyphics (Rosetta Stone importance)
 - 3. Minoan (ca. 2000 B.C.)—Crete; recent deciphering Linear B script
 - 4. Hebrew (ca. 1500 B.C.)
 - 5. Chinese (ca. 1000 B.C.)
 - 6. Greek (ca. 1000 B.C.)
 - 7. Mayan (ca. 1000 B.C.) recently deciphered, with unexpected information
 - 8. Cherokee—Sequoah (1815 A.D.) develops syllabary—uniquely modern illustration
 - C. Writing’s Requisite for:
 - 1. Communicating at distance (both space and time)
 - 2. Keeping records, essential for social systems (thus Sumerian cuneiform mainly re business)
 - D. History’s (necessarily written) Importance:
 - 1. Civilization needs written history just as mind needs memory
 - 2. OT/NT crucial for Jewish & Christian communities; crucial Church responsibility

The Delights of Reading

“Employ your time in improving yourself by other men’s writing so that you shall come easily by what others have labored for.” —Socrates

“It is chiefly through books that we enjoy the intercourse with superior minds. . . . In the best books, great men talk to us, give us their most precious thoughts, and pour their souls into ours. God be thanked for books.” —William Ellery Channing

“Someone said, ‘The dead writers are remote from us because we know so much more than they did.’ Precisely, and they are that which we know.” —T.S. Eliot

“We have preserved the Book, and the Book has preserved us.” —David Ben-Gurion

“I walke manie times . . . into the pleasant fields of the Holye Scriptures, where I pluck up the goodie greene herbes of sentences, eate them by reading, chewe them up musing and laie them up at length in the state of memorie . . . so I may the less perceiue the bitterness of this miserable life.” —Queen Elizabeth I

“‘The things I want to know are in books. My best friend is the man who will get me a book I ain’t read’. . . Since early youth he [Lincoln] was possessed by a passion for books and borrowed any he could lay his hands on ‘in a radius of fifty miles.’ He kept with him even when working the field some books to read during periods of rest. . . . When he travelled over the circuit, he often carried with him a volume of Shakespeare to read during spare moments.” —M.L. Houser

“A room without books is a body without a soul.” —Cicero

“Instead of going to Paris to attend lectures, go to the public library, and you won’t come out for twenty years, if you really want to learn.” —Leo Tolstoy

“The faculty of attention has utterly vanished from the Anglo-Saxon mind, extinguished at its source by the big bayadere of journalism, of the newspaper and the picture magazine which keeps screaming, ‘Look at me.’ Illustrations, loud simplifications . . . bill poster advertising—only these stand a chance.” —Henry James

“But words are things, and a small drop of ink,
Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces
That which, makes thousands, perhaps millions, think.” —Lord Byron

“Some say that nothing is more vivid or memorable than a picture. We disagree. No visual image is as vivid as the image created by the mind in response to words. There is ore to life than meets the eye. The ability of words to throw a loop around human personality and penetrate the inner space of character is exceeded by nothing that can be given visual form.”

—Norman Cousins

“I conceive that a knowledge of books is the basis on which all other knowledge rests.”

—George Washington