

Revelation and Inspiration and the Bible

REVELATION is that act by which God discloses Himself or communicates truth to the mind.

We can talk about two kinds of revelation. First there is **general revelation** - the revelation of God in creation. Psalm 19:1-6 reflects this. Romans 1:19-20 teaches us that God's attributes, power and divine nature are clearly seen, being understood from what is made. Creation will always wear the "fingerprints" of the Creator. However, Psalm 19:7-14 refers to the form of revelation, whereby God reveals his will - which we call **special revelation** - nature cannot reveal moral and spiritual responsibilities - these are communicated verbally. Adam and Eve in the garden had both. Before the fall, they could see clearly God revealed in creation and had his spoken commandments (Gen. 1:28,2:16,17) . They were in personal communication with God.

Romans 1:18-25 teaches us that **general revelation** is sufficient to leave man inexcusable for disbelief, but insufficient for salvation. This is due in part to the fallenness of man, his heart and reason darkened so he cannot understand and he has "suppressed the truth in unrighteousness." Professing wisdom, they became fools, exchanging God for created things- worshipping creation rather than the Creator. (Rom 1:25) As a result they live lives controlled by lusts and passions and darkened minds. (vs. 38) Further there was no need to "build" revelation concerning God's redemption into the creation of a perfect unfallen world. Now that man is fallen, and needs redemption- he needs that **special revelation** that reveals God's redemptive activity (Rom 10:8-17.) We need **special revelation** (God's spoken self-disclosure) to correctly perceive Him in the creation and as redeemer and Lord.

God is a different being than man, infinite, eternal and unchangeable - Isa. 40, Psalm 139. Isa 55:8,9 teaches us that his thoughts are not our thoughts. I Cor. 2:6-16 makes it clear that only through the revelation of the Spirit can the things of God be made known to man. We must understand that the Creator has adapted "His thoughts" (which are infinite and perfect) to humanity and human language, and the revelation of scripture bridges the gap between the Infinite-personal God and his finite-personal creatures. God created man in His image with a rational mind and the capacity to communicate inter-personally. Exo 4:10-11, Isa 6:1-10, Jer 1:4-9, Isa 55:10,11 gives us the assurance God's spoken word will accomplish His purposes even as rain waters the earth and brings forth fruit. God's truth is adapted to his hearers - their cultural context, language context, language and capacity to understand and comprehend. Further, God's special revelation is primarily redemptive - not just abstract knowledge about God, but his compassion and pardon (Isa 55:6,7) are revealed in that spoken word. Isa 45:18-25 makes it clear that the Bible is God's spoken word.

God's **special revelation** has come in many forms: visions and dreams, theophanies, types and symbols, miracles, law and ceremony - (Hebr 1:1) but comes to us inscripturated form. It is that written form that makes it God's word to all men, and removes the uncertainty and subjectivity of individual encounters and experiences. God reveals Himself in words in all stages of redemptive history and these aren't isolated utterances, but form a unified and coherent and intelligible message which is the word of God. God intended His word to be written: He wrote the 10 commandments on stone (Exo 32:16), spoke His words to Jeremiah and that word was recorded in writing and did not pass away when burned. Jeremiah 36:4,28, cf. 18:2,5). Jesus quoted Psalms and referred to the scriptures as the word of God. (John 10:35) John 17:17 has the Lord declaring, "Thy word is truth" cf. Psalms 119.

God's revelation of Himself takes its final form in the revelation in Jesus Christ - God incarnate - The true bridge between God and man. Hebr 12:2, John 1:1-4,18. We must accept the Bible as God's spoken revelation to mankind, necessary for a correct understanding of God's revelation in nature, essential for the saving knowledge of God's redemption in Jesus Christ. Exo 4:10-11, Isa 6:1-10 Jer 1:4-9

INSPIRATION is that operation of the Spirit of God by which He bears (guides and supervises) men in the process of composing Scripture so that they write, not of themselves, but "from God."

To try and deny that the Bible declares itself to be the fully inspired Word of God in the face of all Scripture declares about itself is like trying to stand unscathed in a landslide. There are four passages we will focus on for the nature of inspiration:

2 Tim 3:16,17. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." It makes no exceptions, all of Scripture is inspired and therefore profitable. (The Scriptures here are the same Scriptures Timothy learned from childhood, which give wisdom for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.) All is God-Breathed, "expired" It is the written word, not the writers that are inspired.

2 Peter 1:15-21. We don't follow cleverly devised tales. Peter writes as an eyewitness to the transfiguration and speaks of the Word made more certain. Above all were to recognize that no prophecy of Scripture had its origin in a prophet's thoughts and interpretation, rather "they spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

We need to note that Scripture was not "dictated" to human typewriters. "We do not separate the divine and human elements, but insist the two are united in perfect harmony so that every word of Scripture is at one and the same time the word of God and the word of man.... God so prepared the various writers of Scripture that with the appropriate assistance of His directing and illuminating Spirit they freely and spontaneously wrote what He wished as He wished when He wished. Thus the prophet was fitted to the message and the message was suited to the prophet. Thus also the distinctive literary style of each writer was preserved and each writer did a work which no one else was equipped to do." Lorraine Boettner, *Studies in Theology*, pp. 23,24. Under God's providence, each writer was prepared from before birth and through his experiences for his particular contribution. Examples: Moses (Exo 2-4), David (Psa 139:13-16) whose life "produced" the Psalms. Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-10f), John (I Jn 1:1-5a), and Paul (Gal 1:11-24). Each writer was prepared, each composing in his own style and form, sometimes researching, sometimes progressing through several drafts before the final text, carried along by the Holy Spirit so that the finished product was God's inspired word.

Matt 5:17-19. Jesus proclaims he came not to abolish the Law or the Prophets (Scripture) but to fulfill them. Not one letter will pass away until all is accomplished. Inspiration extends not only to the content (the message), but even the words and letters of the original manuscripts are inspired. The Bible is verbally inspired- words, grammar and syntax are significant for interpretation and just as inspired as the whole.

1 Corinthians 2:7-13 "No mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him," says the Apostle, "but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. No one knows the thoughts of God except by the Spirit of God. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words." God's wisdom hidden from eternity has been revealed to him. And since he uses a present tense here, it applies to what he writes to the Corinthians. Cf Peter's judgment in 2 Peter 3:15f.

Taken together we must see that the Bible does not just "contain" the word of God, is more than merely a "witness to" the word of God, does not "become" the word of God as we "encounter" it, but regardless of whether or how we receive it, it is the Word of God written, fully and verbally inspired.

Ways the Bible is received by Various Christian Groups:

THE REFORMED AND EVANGELICAL POSITION

(Received as it is by faith)

Regardless of how it is received by men,
It remains God's inspired and inerrant Word,
complete and sufficient to give
true (though not exhaustive) revelation

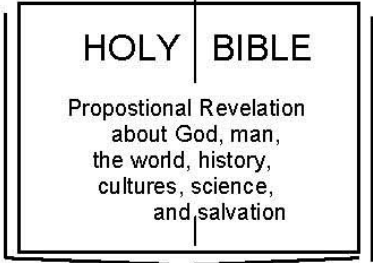
The Witness of the Spirit convinces the heart.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM, VARIOUS CULTS

(Adds to the Word)

It must be interpreted by a priest,
council, creed, teacher, etc
and supplemented with further
revelation or writings.

Authority rests upon the church,
or a particular teacher.



THE LIBERAL OR HIGHER CRITICAL

(Subtracts from the Word)

The errors, bias of the authors and
Inconsistencies must be sorted out
and resolved. The Bible is a mixture
truth and error.

Authority rests upon the subjective
decision and scholarship of the critic.

THE NEO-ORTHODOX, MODERNIST, EXISTENTIAL THEOLOGICAL POSITION

(Human writings become God's Word within the heart)

Behind the fallable writings, with their errors,
myths, superstitions and time-bound propositions,
(but not equated with them) lies spiritual meaning.

Authority rests upon how they are received in
the heart of a believer.