

DISPENSATIONAL DISCRETE VERSUS

CONTINUOUS/CONTINUAL REVELATION

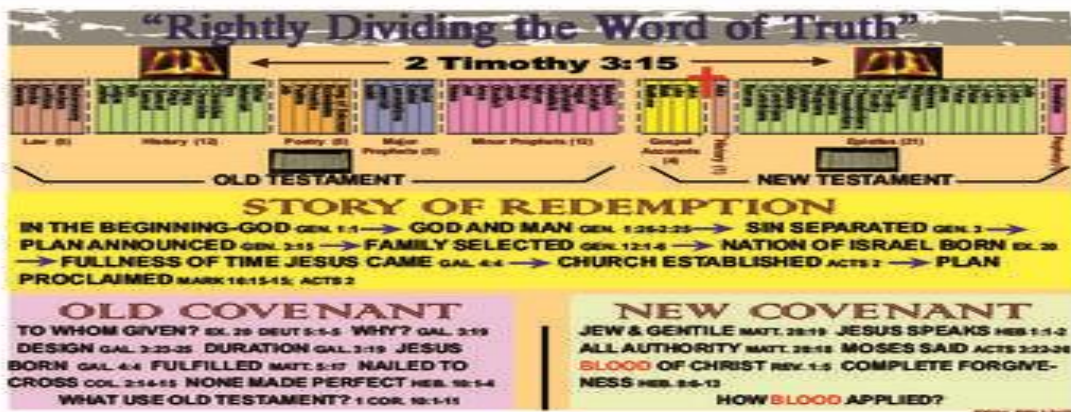
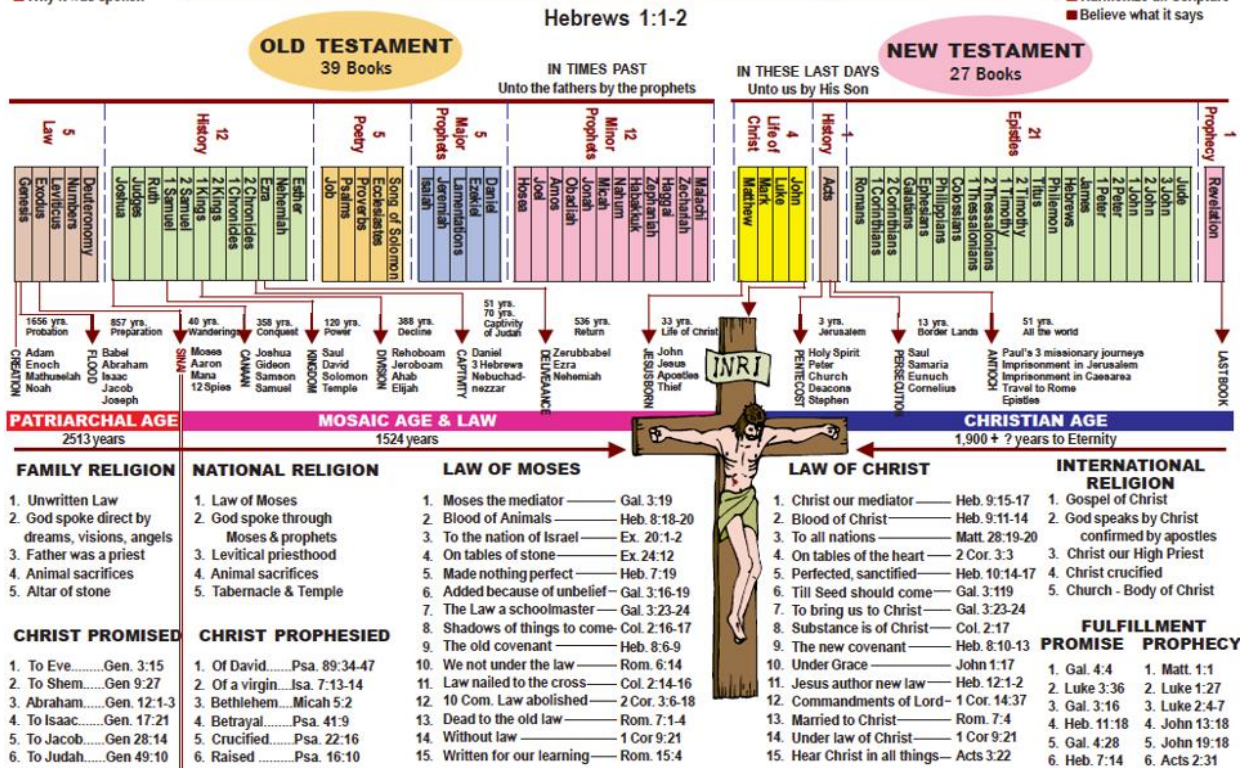
@THE RESTORATION PRINCIPLE

BY DAVID L. BURRIS

- HOW TO STUDY**
- Find out who spoke
 - To whom they spoke
 - In what age they spoke
 - Why it was spoken

The Bible - "God Has Spoken"

- HOW TO UNDERSTAND**
- Study for yourself
 - Read in context
 - Harmonize all Scripture
 - Believe what it says

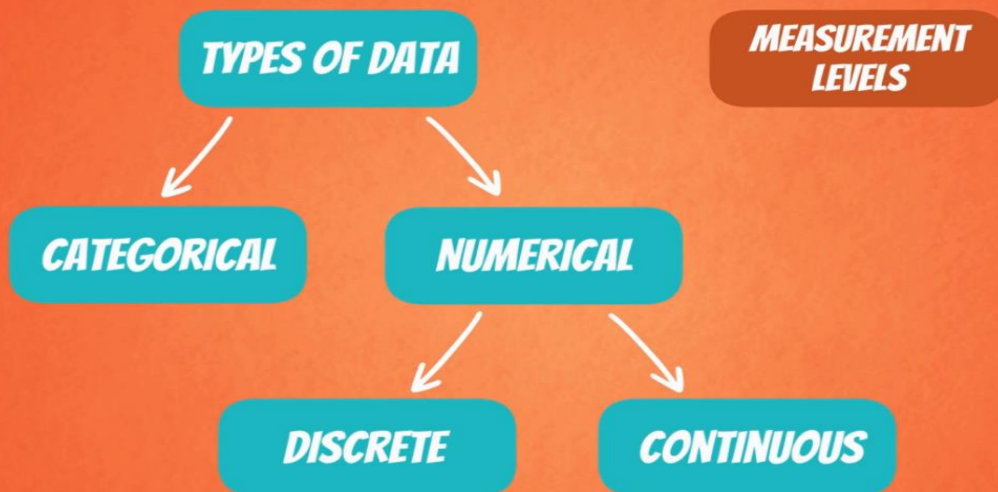


3 Dispensations of the Bible

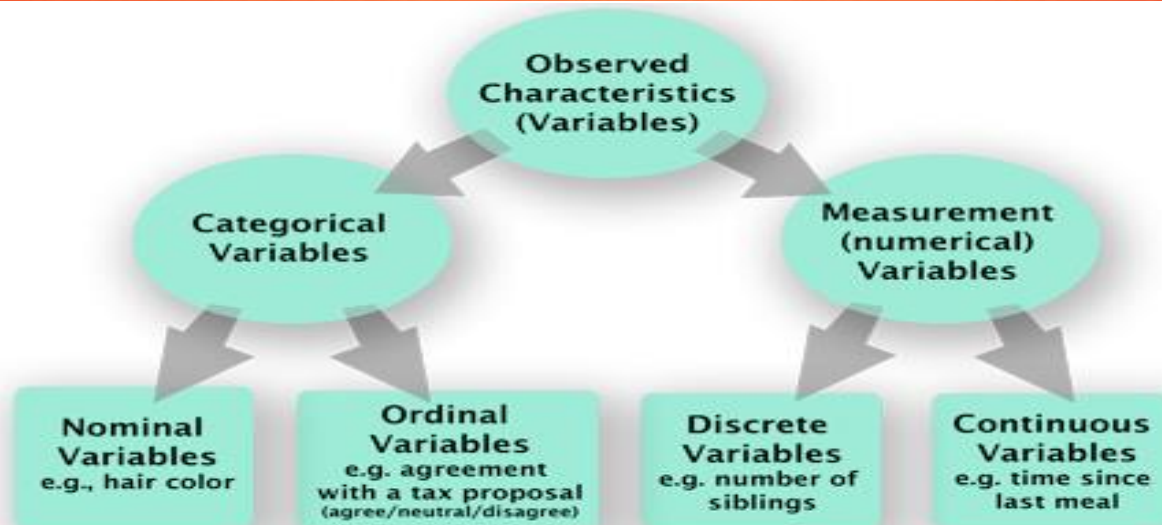
Different administrations, but the same Lord



- **Genesis Era - Pre-Law**
- **Old Covenant - Jews under the Law**
- **New Covenant - Gentiles by Grace**

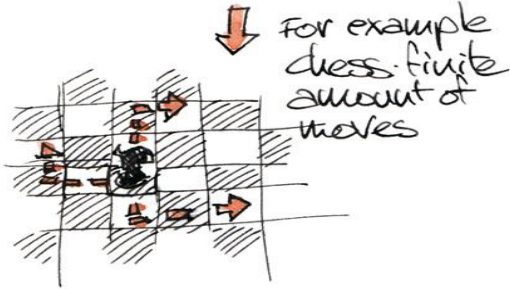


365 DataScience





FINALLY MANY CHOICES



SPACE OF POSSIBLE ACTIONS OR SENSOR DATA MAY BE INFINITE



Continual vs Continuous

The words Continual and Continuous are often confused words. Continual means start and stop, while continuous means never-ending.

CONTINUAL

- Continual is an adjective.
- It refers to the duration that continues over a long period of time, but with intervals of

CONTINUOUS

- Continuous is an adjective.
- It refers to the duration without interruption.

DISCREET



DISCRETE



discreet

- showing discernment or judgement in the guidance of one's own speech and action
- judicious, prudent, circumspect, cautious

example:

Sometimes, we need to be discreet when talking to a rape victim.

discrete

- separate, detached from others
- opposed to continuous
- individually distinct

example:

James believed that his car has a discrete value than his house.

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD

Sep 8, 2019 by [Troy Spradlin](#)

The Bible is not difficult to understand. Yet, there are many people who think that it is! Perhaps, one reason some have difficulty understanding the Bible is because it is not written like a novel. The books are not a single narrative arranged in chronological order. If one did not already know this, then it certainly could be confusing. Still, there is another point that seems to stand above others when it comes to misapprehension. It is the difference between the Old and New Testaments. Numerous Bible “scholars” have exhibited a deficiency in discerning the variances. It is this lack of knowledge that has been culprit to many misguided practices and false doctrines. Being able to distinguish the differences between the two testaments is absolute key to truly sound Bible knowledge.

The apostle Paul wrote, *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth,**”* ([2 Timothy 2:15](#) – KJV). The words, “rightly dividing” means, “to handle aright, or to teach the truth directly and correctly.” A diligent student of God’s Word should know that Scripture can be “divided” according to different methods. First of all, it is a library of discrete writings, totaling 66 books in two volumes – 39 in the first and 27 in the second. It has 1,189 chapters and 31,000 verses! Secondly, it has thematic divisions, such as, “books of law,” “history,” “poetry,” “prophecy,” and “letters.” Knowing such things helps one to handle the Scriptures more accurately by being able to locate specific teachings and properly identify the context of the writing.

By far, the most important division of Scripture is that of the two covenants, or agreements. That’s what the word “testament” means. For example, Jesus said, *“For this is my blood of the **new testament,** which is shed for many for the remission of sins,”* ([Matthew 26:28](#) – KJV). Here, Jesus is saying that He is instituting a “new agreement,” or covenant between God and man (compare the renderings of this verse in different versions such as the ESV, NKJV, and CEV to see the difference in words). It is because of this verse and others such as [2 Corinthians 3:6](#); [Colossians 2:14](#); and [Galatians 6:2](#) that the Bible is divided into two parts: the Old Testament, called “old” because it’s no longer in effect, and the New Testament, the current, binding agreement.

Agreements, or covenants, between God and His creation can be seen throughout the Scriptures. For example, read [Genesis 6:13-18](#). With whom did God establish a covenant? Later, in [Genesis 15:18](#), we read where God made another covenant with someone else. What was his name? A third covenant was made with whom in [Exodus 34:27](#)? Each of these agreements were leading up to and pointing toward the covenant that Jesus would make at the Last Supper, the night before He was crucified. We might explain testament as a “new contract,” much like a will that someone puts into effect.

In fact, the best explanation of what Jesus did is found in [Hebrews 9:14-20](#). Here we see what is involved in a testament – there’s a **mediator** and a **testator**. According to Thayer’s Dictionary, a mediator is, “one who intervenes between two [parties], either in order to make or restore peace and friendship, or form a compact, for ratifying a covenant.” A testator is the person who makes, or initiates the will. He is the one who decides who the beneficiaries shall be. The Bible teaches us that Jesus is our Mediator ([1 Timothy 2:5](#)), and since He is the One who gave us the new covenant ([1 Corinthians 11:25](#)), that makes Him also the Testator.

The conclusion can be summarized in this manner. There was an agreement, or covenant, that God made long ago with the Jews, through the father of their nation, Abraham. The Jews ratified and lived under this agreement through the Law of Moses ([Exodus 19:8](#)). When Christ came into the world, He established a new agreement. When He died, this new agreement, or testament, was put into effect. This prompted the cancellation, or annulment of the first covenant. We are not Hebrews, nor can we (or anyone) use it as our law! It is the old covenant; we now have a new one. This is why we are called “New Testament Christians.” And as Christians, we must learn and know the will of God if we want to be assured of eternal life. If we don’t know how to rightly handle the word, then we can put our souls in jeopardy!



The **HAMMOND**
church of Christ

Hammond, Indiana

Jesus said to him, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." – John 14:6



Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

We are told, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15 – NASB). The King James Bible renders 2 Timothy 2:15 this way, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." As we look at the two translations we get the message loud and clear from God. He expects us to give great diligence in the study of His Word. But more than that He expects us to use proper hermeneutics while doing so. The word "hermeneutics" is defined by The American Heritage Dictionary as the "science and methodology of interpretation, especially of the Scriptures". It is truly amazing that people read and study the Bible in an entirely different way than any other book. They throw out the rule of differentiating between literal and figurative language. They often take verses of Scripture out of their original context and twist them to substantiate some doctrine they want to believe and live by whether the Bible supports that doctrine or not.

The first thing one must keep in mind when "rightly dividing the Word" is that of the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament was the Law given by God especially for the Jews. No one but the Jews were ever under that Law unless converted from another religion. The Law was given for two specific purposes: (1) to define sin – Romans 7:13 and (2) it was a "tutor" or "teacher" to bring the Jewish people to faith in Christ as the Messiah – Gal. 3:24.

Please read these verses and see for yourself that was the purpose of the Law of Moses. While Jesus was here on earth He told the people of His day that He came to “fulfill the Law” (Matthew 5:17). When Jesus was crucified, the Law of Moses was “nailed to the cross” and taken out of the way. (Colossians 2:14) It was no longer the Law for the Jews or anyone else. The New Testament contains the Law of Christ (Galatians 6:1-2). The writings of the apostles contains the will of Jesus given through the apostles guided by the Holy Spirit. (See John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:13.) The apostle Paul wrote to New Testament Christians living in the region known as Galatia where several local churches of Christ were found warning them of falling from grace when appealing to another gospel rather than the one he had taught them. As you read the whole book of Galatians you learn what these Judazing teachers were doing was trying to bind some parts of the Law of Moses on New Testament Christians who were under the Law of Christ.

The New Testament Christians were guided by the writings of the Apostles who were given authority from Jesus to bind and loose laws governing the work, worship, and organization of New Testament churches of Christ. (Matthew 18:18)

Is it not foolish to think that God would give us the revelation of His mind (1 Corinthians 2:11-13) and not expect us to read it and live by it? But, we must be sure we use it correctly for we are warned of abusing God’s word in Revelation 22:18-19.



The doctrine of Inspiration is one that is verbal and plenary:

1. It concerns the original manuscripts
2. It extends to the actual words
3. It views God as superintending, not dictating
4. It includes inerrancy

The Word – The Character of the Bible

INSPIRATION

Where does inspiration lie?

1. Mind of God?
2. Mind of the Author?
3. Written Words?
4. Message Proclaimed?
5. Message Received?

Theories of Inspiration (Plummer)

- **Intuition theory** - the writers of the bible exhibit a *natural religious intuition*.
- **Illumination theory** - the Spirit of God impressed Himself upon the consciousness of the biblical writers in the same way that the Holy Spirit influences people today.
- **Dynamic theory** - God gave definite, specific impressions or concepts to the biblical authors but allowed them to communicate those concepts in their own words. The *phrasing* is by human choice, while the *content* is from God.



The Inspiration of the Bible

Posted by [Mark Mayberry](#) April 30, 2012

By Grant B. Caldwell

Having decided upon the basis of weighty evidences (both internal and external), that the Bible is the word of God, we must determine to what extent we believe it to be so. Modern religious liberals have advanced a somewhat deceiving statement upon those who would be taken by their tactics. It is said that the Bible is not the word of God, but that it contains the word of God. The criticism of this statement is in its interpretation. Surely, no one would say that God spoke every word in the Bible from His own mind. In Genesis three, the devil speaks. The words of the Pharisees as they confront Christ are recorded. This however, is not the usual meaning of this particular statement. The idea is that in the Bible, one will find Gods word; however, all of the Bible is not directed by God. This we deny.

The Bible makes no claims for the inspiration of any particular translation, copy, or reading. However, claims are made in regard to that which was originally written as the scriptures. It must be understood that we do not have the original manuscripts. But we are not left to doubt that what we have is indeed the same as the originals. "The amount of what can in any sense be called substantial variation, is but a fraction of the whole residuary variation, and can hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text" (Introduction to Greek New Testament, by Westcott and Hort).

Plenary inspiration

We would like to notice first the biblical proofs as to the complete or plenary inspiration of the Bible. The Bible is explicit concerning the amount of scripture which is inspired.

John 10:35: Christ said, “The scripture cannot be broken.” Is it not indeed breaking the .scripture to say that part of it is from the mouth of God and then say another part is not? Christ is merely pressing His point and insisting that they cannot accept the portions of the word which they desire and ignore the rest. All of the scripture is authoritative.

James 1: 25: James refers to the “law of liberty.” This is the same as “the engrafted word” (vs. 21), and “the word” (vs. 22, 23). He says that this “law of liberty” is “perfect.” It is easily understood that the imposition of the thoughts of men would only mar its perfection as an extra dash of salt or an additional spoonful of sugar would a perfect cake.

2 Timothy 3:16-17: In one of the most convincing passages on the subject of plenary inspiration, the Apostle Paul says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Any difference in translation cannot destroy the fact that Paul is saying that “all scripture”— “every scripture” is inspired of God. This is a forceful reference to the subject under discussion. The scripture he refers to is the “holy scriptures” of the preceding verse. In essence, Paul is saying that the scriptures given by inspiration of God and the Holy Scriptures are one and the same thing.

The phrase “inspired of God” comes from the same root source as our English words “pneumatic,” “pneumonia,” etc., and with the prefix “Theo” (meaning God), literally means “God breathed.” Paul is thus saying that the “holy scriptures” is a product of the breath of God.

2 Peter 1:20-21: Peter, in a passage of equal force, written in the negative, says, “Knowing this first that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: But holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” The negative “no” implies simply that none of the prophecies that are recorded came from a private source. Not one single one. The phrase “prophecy of scripture” is used to indicate those writings which constitute the will of God in all its parts. Some might think that there is a “scripture” that is not a 66 prophecy.” However, as Moses, David, and others are referred to as prophets, so their writings would be “prophecies.”

When Peter refers to “private interpretation,” he is contrasting human origin with divine. If this were not so, the next verse would mean very little. These men spake as the Holy Ghost directed them to speak and not as their own hearts dictated. These were the prophets of God and were not left to their own imaginations.

In exactly the same way, there are prophecies in the New Testament written by prophets. Listen to Peter in verse 19, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy.” If it is more sure and compares with that of old time prophecy, then it too must be a product of the Holy Ghost.

I Corinthians 14:37: Paul, “If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” Paul spoke only that which was commanded by the Lord.

Peter joins Paul's writings with "the other scriptures" in 2 Peter 3: 15-16. Thus, he shows that these writings are just as authoritative as any of the other writings of God.

If there is one of our readers who does not believe that all of the original writings of the Bible are inspired, will you not show us the evidence and — tell us which passage it might be that is not inspired? If you will but point to one contradiction, that will prove to us that the Bible is not fully inspired. If you will show us but one passage that says it is not all inspired, we will be satisfied. Until such is done, we will continue to believe in the plenary inspiration of the Bible.

Verbal Inspiration

The Bible makes claims not only in regard to the amount of inspiration, but to the way in which it has been inspired. We speak of what is commonly called "Verbal Inspiration." Modern liberalism has acted on this doctrine as well as that of plenary inspiration and has said that God gave the writers the thoughts and they in turn wrote according to their own words the thoughts which the Lord had given to them.

While we do not question that the thoughts are the Lord's, we do deny emphatically that the words are those of the men who penned them. Let us notice briefly why we believe in verbal inspiration; that is, why we believe that the Lord determined the words to be used in the Bible as well as the thoughts.

Reason: It would not seem reasonable, first of all, to suppose that the divine source would leave His divine thoughts regarding the eternal souls of men to be expressed by the inadequate words of unlearned and ignorant men. We will sometimes express just a small variation in meaning to that which we wish to express just by the use of a supposed synonym. Do you think that God could take a chance on this sort of thing?

Biblical Proofs: We are not left, however, to the reasoning of our own minds in this matter of verbal inspiration. Let us notice now the infallible proof of the Bible regarding the matter.

Old Testament: The proof in the Old Testament is so voluminous that even a casual reading ought to make anyone aware of the fact that it is indeed verbally inspired by God. We read such expressions as “Thus saith the Lord” about two thousand times. This, then, is followed by the claimed words of God. Verbal Inspiration.

In Deut. 18:18 a prophecy is made regarding Christ that underlies the whole thought of verbal inspiration. The Lord said that He would raise up a prophet like Moses, and that he would put His words in His mouth. If He was to be like Moses and the Lord's words would be in His mouth, then it should go without saying that Moses like the other prophet had the “words” of the Lord in His mouth. Verbal Inspiration.

Peter spoke of these prophets in 2 Peter 1: 21, saying that they were “moved by the Holy Ghost.” The expression “moved” suggests that these men were “borne along” (Vine) to express the thoughts of God in words which He provided. Maybe these prophets did not understand the entire situation (I Peter 1: 11), but they wrote at; the Lord gave them the words to write His thoughts. Verbal Inspiration.

New Testament: In Matthew 4:4 Christ said that man was to live not by bread-alone but by “every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” It says more than man must live by the thoughts of God. Man is required to live by the words which God has spoken. Verbal Inspiration.

“Ye should remember the words” (2 Peter 3:2); “For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast” (Hebrews 2:2); “Ye received from us the word of the menage, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God.” (I Thessalonians 2:13) All of these passages place a great emphasis on the idea of the “word.” Why would the “word” be emphasized if it was only the “thought” which had been given?

The most convincing proof in all the Bible regarding the matter of verbal inspiration is found in I Corinthians 2:4-13. Paul, in so many words, says that the gospel was not written in the words of mans wisdom. He says that it was a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit (vs. 4). His argument is that the mystery was revealed by the Holy Spirit (vs. 10) and that the Spirit wrote the gospel by giving it to the apostles (vs. 12). Finally, he says, “which things also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.” (vs. 13, NASV).

How can anyone say that the Bible was written in mens words, when the apostle Paul says that it was written in the Spirits words? There could be no more conclusive argument than this. One would simply have to deny the passage to deny the point of the teaching — Verbal Inspiration.

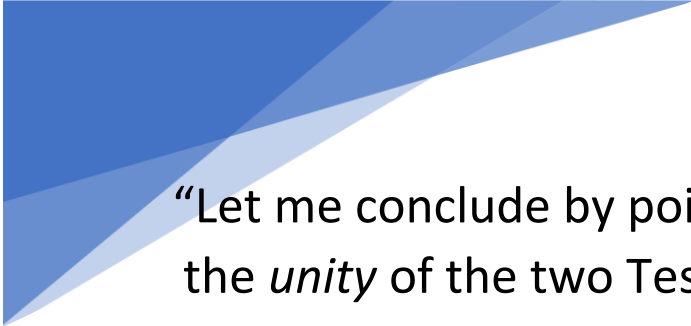
Style: The most often offered argument against the doctrine of verbal inspiration is that the style of writing in the Bible differs so much from writer to writer. Often fun has been made of the entire idea of verbal inspiration with the men doing the writing caricatured as mere machines. Surely, we should be able to realize that if God was able to make our entire body, then he should be able to use our entire being for His purposes.

If we could but understand the relationship which the Lord sustained with those who wrote the Bible, we would have no difficulty in understanding the way in which it was done. He did not run out and pick someone off the street on the day he wanted His words recorded. These men were the constant servants of the Lord. In living daily with Him, they blended their ways in His, and conformed their lives to His will. They learned of Him and He used them — all of them — to record His will for man. And, as the Lord said to Moses, “Who hath made mans mouth? Have not I, the Lord?”

Conclusion

Since the Bible is the word of God, and since all of it is from God, spoken in words which he has chosen, then it behooves me to do just exactly as it directs. This is why it is so valuable to us, and this is why it is necessary-yea, essential-for us to leave it as the God of heaven wrote it. Be not deceived, dear reader, by modern claims. You have not the privilege to tamper with the word of God. To do so will surely mean the damnation of your soul. (Gal. 1:7-9) Why not rather obey fully the gospel today?

TRUTH MAGAZINE, XVI: 33, pp. 9-11
June 22, 1972



“Let me conclude by pointing out that the *unity* of the two Testaments does not require the *uniformity* of the two Testaments. Unity does not preclude *diversity*.

The two Testaments may be unified just as certainly through discontinuity as through continuity. Both continuity and discontinuity are a part of the unity of the biblical revelation.”

Hermeneutics of Discontinuity

Inspiration, not Interpretation

by [Eric Lyons, M.Min.](#)

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21)

From time to time, certain religious leaders in the “Christian” world refer to the above passage in order to defend the idea that man cannot understand the Bible on his own. Because they believe the Bible is not to be interpreted privately, proponents of this idea teach that the Bible cannot be understood properly without the instruction of the “clergy.” Thus, they say, little good will come from private, personal study of the Scriptures.

A casual reading of 2 Peter 1:20—with little concern for the context in which the passage is found—might very well lead one to understand the verse in such a manner. However, a closer examination of this passage reveals that it has no reference at all to those who **read** the Scriptures, but refers instead to those who **wrote** the Scriptures. By studying the context of the passage, one learns that the passage is discussing how the Scriptures came into existence, not how they are to be “interpreted.”

Continuing the thought from verse 20 to verse 21, we read: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, **for** prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (emp. added). That little word “for” in verse 21 connects the two thoughts. The English word “for” derives from the Greek conjunction *gar*. *Strong’s Greek-Hebrew Dictionary* (1994) indicates that this word is a “primary particle” that assigns “a reason” and is used in argument for “explanation” or “intensification.” The reason that “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation” is **because** “prophecy never came by the will of man, but **holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit**” (emp. added). The word “for” connects the two thoughts. Peter is saying that the prophets did not invent what they wrote; rather, they were guided by the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17). No doubt this is why the NIV reads: “No prophecy of Scripture came about **by the prophet’s own interpretation**” (2 Peter 1:20, emp. added)—not the reader’s interpretation.

Furthermore, according to Mounce's *Analytical Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (1993), the Greek word *epilysis* (translated "interpretation" in 2 Peter 1:20) means primarily "a loosing" or "liberation." The stem (or "root" as we say in English class) of *epilysis* is *luo*, and means literally "to loosen, unbind, or unfasten." Therefore, "no prophecy of Scripture" ever was released, loosed, or given out by the prophets' own inventions. They did not put their own construction upon God's message; instead, the Holy Spirit guided them. Obviously, then, this passage has no reference to present-day interpreters of the text, but rather to those who wrote it—i.e., the prophets or apostles (cf. Ephesians 3:5).

Some religious groups maintain the position that "you can't understand the Bible on your own" in an attempt to deprive the average person from enjoying the blessings of privately reading, studying, and learning God's will. For several hundred years, the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church kept the Bible out of the "laity's" hands, because those who composed that hierarchy were concerned that the average person might read and study the Bible on their own and learn that the Catholic Church practices many things that the Bible does not teach. Even as late as 1816, Pope Pius VII (in *De Versionibus S. Scriptura*, September 3) said:

I declare that the associations formed in the major part of Europe to translate and diffuse the law of God into the common tongues, provoke horror within me and they tend to undercut the Christian faith down to its foundations. It is necessary to destroy this pest and reveal the evil designs of these manipulators.

Such comments reveal that the leaders of the Catholic Church were fearful that the "laity" would "come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4) and throw off the corrupt teachings of the Catholic Church.

Although some will continue to use 2 Peter 1:20-21 to teach that we must have a "priest" or "pastor" to interpret the Scriptures for us, an in-depth and logical examination of these verses reveals otherwise. The fact remains, God has given us a book that we can understand and obey (cf. Ephesians 3:4).

Five Models of Revelation

Revelation as Speech	Revelation as History	Revelation as Dialectical Presence	Revelation as Inner Experience	Revelation as New Awareness
<p>Avery Dulles prefers the term “revelation as doctrine” as more precise. We have chosen the broader term <i>speech</i>. Essentially this view sees revelation as the spoken word(s) of God to humanity. God has seen fit to use linguistic communication to provide salvific, historical, and ontological (nature of being) information about Himself, humanity’s sinful state, and the way He has determined to bring about the redemption of humanity and creation.</p> <p>This word can take place through a variety of means, depending on the</p>	<p>The <i>revelation as history</i> model arose in large part from the theological turn to biblical theology in the mid-twentieth-century, a focus on God’s redemptive acts in history rather than on God’s revelation through written word. The written word (Scripture) is the testimony to God’s actions. But, according to biblical theologians such as William Temple and G. Ernest Wright, the actions/events must be seen as having revelatory priority over the witness to the acts. God reveals Himself primarily through His great deeds done in the course of history, notably in biblical history. The Bible</p>	<p>Emil Brunner, with Karl Barth, reacted against both German higher criticism and Hegelian idealism. In German higher criticism the Bible became so historicized that it lost all transcendent meaning and significance. In German idealism, G. W. F. Hegel’s philosophizing of religion, the historical reality and present significance of a God-relationship with Christ was swallowed up into nothingness by human rationality. Brunner did not want to locate revelation as simply the outworking of the World-Spirit in human history and appropriated by</p>	<p>For Friedrich Schleiermacher, the ground of the Christian, ecclesial community is the shared experience of the <i>feeling of absolute dependence upon God</i>. The idea of revelation “signifies the <i>originality</i> of the fact which lies at the foundation of religious communion.” The “fact” of which he speaks is that inner experience, which is piety. Though viewing revelation as set into motion by divine governance for the purpose of furthering humanity’s salvation, he was unwilling to view revelation as operating “upon man as a cognitive being ... for that</p>	<p>Revelation as new awareness, as Avery Dulles presents it, is different from others in that revelation is not something operated upon as a passive subject from outside. Rather, revelation “is a transcendent fulfillment of the inner drive of the human spirit toward fuller consciousness.”</p> <p>In this view, revelation is wholly a subjective experience, shedding light not on an objective object (such as God) through a mediated knowledge (such as Scripture, history, or experience) but rather on the “self and on the world</p>

<p>particular perspective: either through the written words of Scripture, the spoken words of God in human history (which later became Scripture), a combination of both, or through the “oracles” of God spoken through the church (cf. Dulles).</p>	<p>and church teachings are witnesses to revelation, but revelation itself is not equated with that witness. Revelation is God’s self-manifestation through historical events as He interacts redemptively and creatively with humanity and the created order.</p>	<p>pure thought (so Hegel) or in a mere enlightening of the consciousness by the divine presence. Rather, taking sin, evil, and human finitude into account, Brunner located revelation in an encounter of God with humanity, which occurs in the historical Christ-event, but which is mediated in the present as a spiritual encounter of faith. He states, “The being of man as person depends not on his thought but on his responsibility, upon the fact that a supreme Self calls to him and communicates Himself to him. It depends on ... ‘responsive actuality,’ the claim of the Self who is Lord that is at the same time the assurance of the graciously creating and justifying Self, as it is perceived in faith.”</p>	<p>would make the revelation to be originally and essentially <i>doctrine.</i>” Schleiermacher does not believe that “a system of propositions,” which can be understood “from their connection with others,” can serve as the form and content of revelation. Such a system has no supernatural origin. Revelation, for Schleiermacher, can “only be apprehended ... as parts of another whole, as a moment of the life of a thinking being who works upon us directly as a distinctive existence by means of his total impression upon us,” which is to say upon the “self-consciousness.”</p>	<p>as they are experienced in the whole of life.” Whereas Schleiermacher’s view of revelation took a turn toward anthropology in its focus on inner experience, this view is completely anthropological. In it no objectively verifiable claim is made for knowledge of God or any objective metaphysical reality <i>through</i> subjectivity. Rather, God is only known through inward consciousness, a new awareness. The traditional Christian emphasis on the transcendence of God is replaced by a view of God—or of God as He makes Himself known—as utterly immanent. Dulles quotes Pierre Teilhard de Chardin saying, “God never reveals himself from outside, by intrusion, but <i>from within</i>, by stimulation and</p>
<p>Protestants traditionally have focused on the written and spoken words of God as found in the texts of canonical Scripture (commonly known as the “Scripture principle”). Many evangelical theologians in the modern period, Carl F. H. Henry for example, have defended the primarily propositional content of revelation, as given in Scripture. Propositions, as derived from the text, are statements of fact or truth that correspond to</p>	<p>Biblical theologians such as Wright and Oscar Cullmann posited two lines of history: ordinary history and sacred history. Sacred history, <i>heilsgeschichte</i>, is the heart of God’s revelation. Scholars such as Wolfhart Pannenberg and Ernst Troeltsch criticized this dichotomizing of the sacred and the ordinary for its withdrawal of the acts of God in history into the local sphere of faith, “unjustifiably removed from the probings of</p>	<p>Brunner says that man has being, not</p>	<p>numerous expressions of</p>	<p>stimulation and</p>

<p>reality, either present (as in the indicative), desired (as in the imperative), or future (as in prophetic literature)—to the extent that the propositions are clearly and truly expressed. So propositions are doctrines that state what is actually the case.</p> <p>Revelation in the evangelical sense, according to Henry, “takes propositional form and conveys universally shareable information.... The meaning of words is clear only in logical or propositional context, and not above, behind or under this.” Henry is a staunch adherent and apologist of the “plenary verbal” view of the inspiration of Scripture, that <i>all</i> the words of Scripture were directly inspired of God. Revelation is tied directly and</p>	<p>historical criticism.” John Baillie suggests that revelation involves not merely receiving “information by communication,” but that in revelation God actually gives Himself in communion. He wrote that “God reveals himself <i>in action</i>—in the gracious activity by which he invades the field of human experience and human history which is otherwise a vain show, empty and drained of meaning.” The Bible, Baillie notes, is “essentially the story of the acts of God”; it is not so much a collection of oracles or timeless propositions as it is “a record of what God has done.”¹³</p> <p>For Wright, “history is the chief medium of revelation,” and “biblical theology is the confessional recital of the</p>	<p>in his rationality, but in the outworking of his response to this encounter of God’s presence. His deepest nature consists in this “answer-ability,” i.e., in this existence in the Word of the Creator. To know God, Brunner says, is not only to <i>know</i> the truth, but to <i>be</i> and apprehended <i>in the truth</i>. Truth is founded in the historical event of the incarnation of God in Christ, which enables us to be <i>in the truth</i> as we apprehend that truth by faith. Truth is, further, a “communicative word.” “It is the self-communication of the true Thou without which we cannot be true selves.”</p> <p>The Bible, for Brunner, is an indispensable witness to the truth of God’s reality and inbreaking presence to humanity in the encounter of</p>	<p>inspiration have occurred wherever people have generated, within themselves, a “new and peculiar idea of God,” giving rise to a “distinctive worship.” He concludes that any number of religious communions may have experienced and apprehended partially the truth of God through a revelation, indeed, no one religious communion can claim to have complete revelation of God, because that would mean that “God made Himself known as He is in and for Himself.... But such a truth could not proceed outwardly from any fact.”</p> <p>The idea of revelation, Schleiermacher asserts, “is better to apply only to the region of the higher self-consciousness.” Schleiermacher does posit that revelation is found</p>	<p>enrichment of the human psychic current, the sound of his voice being made recognizable by the fullness and coherence it contributes to our individual and collective being.”</p> <p>Dulles includes, as proponents of this view, Karl Rahner, Paul Tillich, and Langdon Gilkey. For Tillich, revelation is not a Barthian crisis event of God breaking into humanity from the outside. Rather, the ultimate questions of humanity are correlated in the event of revelation. Dulles says Gilkey “tries to show that ultimate questions are present in ordinary secular experience, and that revelation, mediated through religious symbols, meaningfully answers those questions.... Religious discourse, he concludes, is not, directly, talk about</p>
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inseparably from redemptive acts of subject with in the highest, God but is talk
 the written form of God in a particular subject, I with most transcendent about the finite
 the Word of God in history." Wright Thou. The Word of degree in the with regard to its
 the Bible. Henry titled his book on God is the "appearance of the divine ground."
 saw in the modern the subject *God* personal being of Redeemer in
 (technological, *Who Acts*, in God as present in history," in Dulles writes of H.
 scientific, response to the Christ, speaking relation to which Richard Niebuhr as
 journalistic) then common love to the human all other forms of an example of an
 situation a "crisis term, "God Who heart and initiating revelation and theologian for his
 of truth and word" Speaks." Wright new life and inspiration become theologian for his
 in which God's was proclaiming authentic "nonexistence," work on revelation
 special revelation that the Bible is personhood in since they are in *The Meaning of*
 has been not just the those who are "destined to be Revelation. Dulles
 supplanted and "Word," but it is encountered by it. submerged again says that Niebuhr's
 superceded by a primarily an Revelation (the in Him." Christ mediation of
 society that has account of the truth) is not alone, liberalism and
 forgotten the God "Acts" of God in something we can Schleiermacher Barthianism with
 of the Bible. God history as possess; rather it asserts, "is question of
 has seen fit to interpreted by those who so Eschewing the revelation "in
 preserve His experienced God. possibility of a natural revelation, into higher life."³⁵ many ways
 special revelation For Wright, contemporary Barth, also a foreshadowed
 in the form of a Christians can "dialectical theologian," declared that 'new awareness'
 written text. Thus Christians can enter into the biblical story and model." We place
 Christians are, in a derive its meaning by an act of *recital*, of him in this
 very real sense, a biblical story and category because
 "people of the book" because of themselves, and in which the of his linking of
 their view of God, of redemption described in personal
 of themselves, and in which the redemption described in experience (the
 of their relation to biblical history subjective
 God is utterly described in dimension) with
 dependent on the biblical history historical account
 authority of this becomes a part of (the objective
 written one's dimension) in the
 communication. contemporary reception of
 This is not to experience through memory. revelation.
 suggest, however, Wright saw the locus of revelation
 that the *events* of Wright saw the locus of revelation
 God's redemption as occurring
 throughout history as occurring
 were not also primarily and first
 revelatory and in the objective,
 meaningful, nor historical events
 even that one recorded in

cannot speak of revelation occurring in history through God speaking to prophets, apostles, and Bible writers. But *what* is revelatory in these redemptive events is given in propositional form. Statements of words in the form of doctrine, or history, or poetry disclose God's nature, being, and reality. Revelation, in terms of directly inspired words from God to man, ceased with the closing of the canon. The deposit of God's revelation is the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Christians have the privilege of turning to this book to hear God's revelation and the responsibility to share the content of that revelation with those who have no access to it. As Henry states, "Before the modern era the Christian

Scripture. Derivatively, revelation may occur inwardly, "in the inner consciousness of man, ... yet the nature and content of this inner revelation is determined by the outward, objective happenings of history in which individuals are called to participate." Cullmann is well known for his use of the term "salvation history" (*heilsgeschichte*). He viewed God's revelation as the inbreaking of God in Christ uniquely in human history at a point in time, as if a vertical line became perpendicular to a horizontal line, but from which point the horizontal line (human history) became utterly transformed, both backward and forward. Events seen from a human standpoint, then, must be interpreted from the perspective of

Scripture. Christians today are called upon to respond to the witness of Scripture and to the encounter of God's revelation by the communal, ecclesiastical practice of *confession*. Rudolf Bultmann famously departed from Barth at various points regarding the issue of revelation and of the interpretation of that revelation. Both agreed that revelation is received in a dialectical encounter of man with the Word of God, in the various forms that that "Word" takes. In ways similar to the Barth-Brunner debate on the question of whether there is a natural "point of contact" for divine revelation in the person, Barth and Bultmann differed on the question of the locus of the authority of revelation in the

construct second-order, not first-order, theological concepts. The theological task, he says, has a "radically constructive character" in which "imaginative construction is the proper mode—indeed the only mode—through which we can become aware of God in his full autonomy and self-integrity."³⁸ Theology is a "self-conscious" and "self-critical" exercise of the believer to reflect seriously on the experience of faith. For Kaufmann, knowers do not have access to a "reality" or "truth" outside of the self's capacities to realize and conceptualize through the activities of mind: "We simply do not have, and cannot even conceive what it would be like to have, any direct experience or perception of

experience without Scripture is blind." Niebuhr noted that "there is no such thing as disinterestedness in theology."⁵¹ Value cannot be separated from fact when it comes to the questions of meaning and religious truth with which theology deals. Theology is done within historic, religious communities that have already received a revelation. He states, "This is the sum of the matter: Christian theology must begin today with revelation because it knows that men cannot think about God save as historic, communal beings and save as believers. It must ask what revelation means for Christians rather than what it ought to mean for all men, everywhere and at all times. And it can pursue its inquiry only by recalling the story

community would the Christ-event revelatory realities of this of Christian life
 unhesitatingly and God's encounter. As order of and by analyzing
 have answered the redemption of Donald Bloesch universality and what Christians
 query 'What has creation. points out, for comprehensiveness see from their
 God revealed?' by "Meanings" in Barth the basis of s. Hence, limited point of
 the response events are not self-revelation's theological issues view in history and
 'What the inspired authenticating or authority "is must be faith."
 writers teach.' " self-evident; rather outside us (*extra* adjudicated in
 The writers events become *nos*) in the ways other than Theology is
 themselves meaningful when objective self- those appropriate concerned with
 understood viewed from the revelation of God to the concepts of, the meaning of
 revelation that perspective of in Jesus Christ." and statements revelation as it is
 way, and so did faith and when For Bultmann, about, the objects received in
 Jesus Christ. Henry interpreted by the however, it is "the of experience." historical, social,
 and other biblical authors. experience of the new life, the realization of epistemologically
 propositionalists Ernst Troeltsch, forgiveness that is limited
 defend the difficult question of the relation between faith and history, argued that faith is
 cognitive and dependent on history. Faith does not relate only to a theology," in
 verbal elements of the relation between faith and history, argued that faith is
 revelation in the face of a trend toward Scripture as symbolic, mythological, and experiential.
 Some evangelical supernatural which the Christ of concept, in fact, In the valuing of
 theologians have history, such as faith is distinct which provides the this story, this
 advocated the that posited by from the Christ of ground for claims history, an
 inspired nature of Cullmann, Wright, history (Jesus). He that the alleged awareness is given
 the biblical text by and others. Faith is thus revelation must be which would
 focusing more on dependent on the "demythologized" regarded as otherwise not be
 the linguistic and interpreter's the New possible. The
 literary diversity in understanding of Testament to structure of the events of history
 the biblical text. the history that make room for imagination and to which Scripture
 On this view the bears religious faith in a modern, the ability to refers, says
 Bible is a divine significance personally and in Yet Christ still conceptualize Niebuhr, could be
 and human, the faith speaks, as the "God" gives the interpreted and
 completed speech- the faith Christ of faith, theologian "reason observed from a
 act that bears its community. The Christ of faith, to regard the merely objective
 message through a nature of faith, through that divine revelation point of view. This
 variety of Troeltsch argues, revelation to those as authoritative." would not be the
 communicative includes the who interpret it existentially. All perspective of
 mediums—not just necessity to existentially. All concept of divine faith; thus it would
 propositions connect the object interpretation of revelation is not be the

meant to teach cognitively doctrinal truths.	of one's faith and belief with history. This means, however, that Christianity should be studied as a historical phenomenon, "subject to the same principles of historical inquiry as any other discipline."	revelation, Bultmann asserts, is interpretation with presuppositions. Interpretation without presuppositions is not possible. The most objective interpretation of revelation, then, according to Bultmann, is done by those who are most <i>subjectively</i> and <i>existentially</i> interested in the religious significance of the revelation. "Only those who are stirred by the question of their own existence can hear the claim which the text makes."	necessary for "certain constructions of the concept of God, specifically those based on the model of the human person or agent."	reception of revelation.
Kevin J. Vanhoozer, for example, has been instrumental in bringing speech-act theory to the fore in theological hermeneutics with <i>Is There a Meaning in This Text?</i>	Admittedly this will open up very difficult problems for faith. How can Christianity, for instance, claim epistemic superiority over other religions when history is so vast and so all-encompassing? Nonetheless, Troeltsch says there is an "essential and inseparable connection of faith with history and the necessity of a religious view of history. From time to time, it may well be necessary to relax these connections and to make room for one's own religious creativity. But, basically,	Bultmann, is done by those who are most <i>subjectively</i> and <i>existentially</i> interested in the religious significance of the revelation. "Only those who are stirred by the question of their own existence can hear the claim which the text makes."	For these theological models, knowledge of God "depends upon his act of disclosure." But even this does not, Kaufmann points out, invalidate the fact that theology is a construct of the imagination: "It means, rather, that it is precisely through the constructive work of the human imagination that God—ultimate reality understood as active and beneficent, as 'gracious'—makes himself known." ⁴² For Kaufmann the concept of God <i>is</i> revelation. But the concept is derived through reflection on one's religious experience.	The sphere in which revelation happens, Niebuhr says, is in "internal history," as distinct from "external history." External history is the realm of universally observable cause and effect, of objective observation. Internal history is the realm of value, in which only members of communities who share a particular understanding and experience of faith can agree on the meanings of events—which is "memory."
Vanhoozer has supplemented the view of revelation as "speech" in its primarily propositional emphasis with a broader, genre-inclusive understanding of revelation. On this view, revelation is not simply understood as "cognitive" and "doctrinal," in which the divinely inspired words of Scripture must correspond exactly with the reality they signify. Rather, Vanhoozer takes into account the insights of literary theory and speech-act philosophy to show that words do not <i>simply</i> refer. Words also	Nonetheless, Troeltsch says there is an "essential and inseparable connection of faith with history and the necessity of a religious view of history. From time to time, it may well be necessary to relax these connections and to make room for one's own religious creativity. But, basically,	The "crisis" theologians Bultmann, Barth, and Brunner emphasized the dialectical encounter of revelation. God's freedom means that His revelatory acts are not tied to a written text or even to historical events. Rather, God encounters people in a variety	God—ultimate reality understood as active and beneficent, as 'gracious'—makes himself known." ⁴² For Kaufmann the concept of God <i>is</i> revelation. But the concept is derived through reflection on one's religious experience.	Revelation, Niebuhr writes, means that part of our inner history illuminates and makes intelligible the rest of inner history. Jesus Christ makes all other events understood. Revelation, then, is the illuminative event of Jesus Christ that gives meaning to

perform a variety of actions. Speech is the result of an *action* of a communicative agent who desires to achieve a result by his or her activity of speaking. "The category *speech act* acknowledges that saying too is a doing, and that persons can do many things by saying." Thus, through the Bible, God does more than just communicate propositional truths (though He does that). The form of the individual and various types of literature in the Bible are not incidental to their meaning. Rather, the forms contribute to their meanings because meaning cannot be divorced from authorial intent—or, better, from what the author was *attending to* in his writing. Not all of Scripture is limited to cognition, then, in

innovations will hardly be more than new positions regarding history and new fruitful applications of what was already given. To abandon history would be tantamount to faith's abandoning itself and settling for the fleeting and trivial religious stirrings produced by a subjectivity left to its own resources."

of ways to make His reality known. Barth emphasized the transcendent nature of God in this encounter, whereas Bultmann and Brunner emphasized God's immanence and the capability of humanity to receive His revelation existentially. Bloesch appropriates many of Barth's insights regarding the dual reality of the hidden and revelatory aspects of God in his evangelical dialectical theology. Bloesch's theology is an emphasis on the unity of "Word and Spirit" (or "Spirit and Word") because both are essential aspects of the work of theology and of the revelatory experience that theology is based upon. "To affirm a theology of Word and Spirit is to affirm that the experience of faith is correlative

existence. This meaning is the product of shared reflection on the significance of Christ within historically situated communities of believers. Revelation is not static. It "is a moving thing in so far as its meaning is realized only by being brought to bear upon the interpretation and reconstruction of ever new human situations in an enduring movement, a single drama of divine and human action. So the God who revealed himself continues to reveal himself—the one God of all times and places."

the sense Carl Henry would suggest with his emphasis on its propositional content.

with God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ." For Bloesch, theology has "to be understood as objective-subjective rather than fundamentally objective (as in evangelical rationalism) or predominantly subjective (as in existentialism and mysticism."²⁸

How Knowledge of God Is Acquired

Natural Theology Tells Us That God Is, Revealed Theology Tells Us Who God Is

God Is Revealed Generally, but Truly Known Only Specially

All Theology Is Revealed Theology

Revealed Theology Finds Its "Point of Contact" in Natural Theology

Thomas Aquinas

John Calvin

Karl Barth

Emil Brunner

Undoubtedly the church's greatest theologian (and certainly the most prolific) since Augustine, Thomas Aquinas (c. 1224–1274) in his *Summa Theologica*, worked often with the relationship between revelation and reason, or between natural theology and revealed theology. This is seen most explicitly in his Part 1, Question 12: "How God Is Known By Us."

How much, ponders Thomas, can the *created intellect* of humanity know about God? Can it know the divine essence? Must the divine essence be

Calvin began his Institutes with a discussion of "the Knowledge of God the Creator," giving place at the start to a kind of general revelation. He notes that this revelation of God has been given in two ways: (1) The knowledge of God has been "naturally implanted in the minds of men" (i.e., "by natural instinct," an "awareness of divinity," and "a certain understanding of his divine majesty"), and (2) The knowledge of God "shines forth in the fashioning of the Universe and the continuing governance of it." Nonetheless, though God has stamped His

According to the view that all theology is revealed theology, not only is salvation humanity apart from special revelation, but so is *any* knowledge of God. This view holds that human reason, with everything else, was utterly corrupted by the fall, rendering it incapable of acquiring *any* accurate knowledge of God and of divine things. This view was most prominently (and vigorously) propounded by Karl Barth, who reacted against the then-common tendency to theologize on the basis of Enlightenment principles of rationality,

In a famous theological dialogue, Emil Brunner countered Karl Barth's insistence that the knowledge of God *only* occurs by special revelation in the person and work of Christ. In "Nature and Grace," he posited the primacy of special revelation in Christ, while also finding room to say that general revelation provides a limited knowledge of God. For Brunner, the "creation of the world" is a "self-communication of God"; this he saw as a "fundamentally Christian" interpretation of the Scriptures. Taking his departure from Romans 2, Brunner said that the "consciousness of responsibility" brings

seen through a
"likeness of Him"?

In order to see the
likeness of God,
Aquinas asserts,
humanity must receive
a disposition in their
being (especially in
their intellect) that
would enable him to
see and know God in
His essence. He must
therefore receive "the
light of glory
strengthening the
intellect to see God."

To the question,
"whether any created
intellect by its natural
powers can see the
divine essence,"
Thomas replies with a
qualified no. By natural
powers alone, the
intellect cannot see
God in His essence.
However, because the
intellect remained
intact after the Fall, it is
possible to see and
know God when God's
grace adds to and
strengthens it. When
"God by His grace
unites Himself to the
created intellect," then
the creature can see
God as an "object made
intelligible to it." A
"supernatural
disposition" increases
the powers of the
created intellect so that

imprint on man's
consciousness and on
creation itself, it "does
not profit us," because
the radical sinfulness of
man's nature turns him
away from God,
rendering him wholly
unable, in his natural
state, to know God
through general
revelation. As he states,
"The manifestation of
God in nature speaks to
us in vain ..." "Although
they bathe us wholly in
their radiance, yet they
can of themselves in no
way lead us into the
right path."

What, then, is this
general revelation good
for if it does not
provide actual, true
knowledge of God to
those who encounter
it? One reason is to
render humanity
without excuse:
"Although we lack the
natural ability to mount
up into the pure and
clear knowledge of
God, all excuse is cut off
because the fault of
dullness is within us."

Thus special revelation,
which claims to be
as Scripture, is needed
as "Guide and Teacher"
in order to know God,
even as the Creator. So
Calvin: "God bestows
the actual knowledge of

rather than on the sole,
ultimate authority of
Scripture and the
revelation of God in
Christ.

In his "Angry
Introduction" to a
polemical piece against
Emil Brunner's *Nature
and Grace*, Barth states
his view of the task of
theology, in opposition
to how he viewed
Brunner's view of that
task: "We must learn
again to understand
revelation as grace and
grace as revelation and
therefore turn away
from ... *theologia
naturalis* (natural
theology) by ever
making new decisions
and being ever
controverted anew." In
this piece, Barth found
inappropriate Brunner's
"point of contact" as a
description of God's
revelation of Himself to
humanity as created in
the image of God.

For Barth, natural
theology is "every
(positive or negative)
formulation of a system

about the possibility of
sin. Thus, without
creation and without
conscience, humanity is
also without
responsibility before
God.

General revelation is
not sufficient, however,
to bring people to a
saving knowledge of
God. Apart from a
"subjective" revelation
in Christ, people will
only pervert the
knowledge of God in
creation, such that it is
limited to a pagan
knowledge of "gods"—
not of the true God.

Only the superior
revelation in Christ can
open the eyes of lost
humanity.

Thus, Brunner spoke of
the necessity of a
"double-revelation," of
which the first, general
revelation (such as in
creation or conscience),
can be truly seen and
understood only by the
one who has been
enlightened by the
second, the special
revelation in Christ.

For Brunner, the
possibility of revelation
is the possibility of
"address," from God to
humanity. Humans
(sinful though they be,
are able to receive

God can be known by himself upon us only in Jesus Christ and whose God's special it.⁵⁹ Humans cannot see the Scriptures." method therefore revelation, His God, except by what He differs equally from the "address," because does, just as an exposition of Holy they are created in the ultimate cause cannot Scripture." image of God, an image be seen except in its the knowledge of God: they have not effects. However, as God as Creator and God Barth also objects to completely lost because the divine light Brunner's claim that humanity possesses a illuminates the human order came that kind of there is in humanity a "capacity for words and intellect, those effects "capacity for revelation" and a responsibility." Thus can lead to a clear grasp who that God is "capacity (or possibility to hear the knowledge of God's who founded and receptivity) for words," Word of God, in a essence. governs the universe. apart from the reality of *formal* sense (i.e., they Can God be known by Then that other inner knowledge was added, by this, of course, what have ears, minds, and natural reason? which alone quickens is usually called *special* linguistic abilities), but Creatures know things dead souls." This latter revelation. He asks, they do not have the naturally by their knowledge is whereby a "What is the meaning possibility to *believe* the senses, he explained, person comes to know of 'receptivity for Word of God apart be known by effects God as Redeemer. The words' if man can do from faith. (which includes humansinner witness of the nothing of himself for It is necessary to hold themselves) that can be Spirit is necessary, his salvation, if it is the tightly, although seen in nature and in given by grace through Holy Spirit that gives paradoxically, to the rational thought. faith, to enable a him living knowledge of dialectic of the Nonetheless, "Because person even to come to the word of the Cross?" knowledge of one's sin they are His effects and a true (and salvific) and the knowledge of God. Which comes first, depend on their cause, knowledge of God in Brunner asks? One we can be led from the Scriptures. cannot really say, for them so far as to know "Nevertheless, all without the knowledge of God *whether He* things will tend to this of one's sin, there can exists, and to know of end, that God, the be no knowledge of Him what must Artificer of the universe, is made God (and thus grace). necessarily belong to manifest to us in But without the Him, as the first cause Scripture, and that knowledge of God, of all things, exceeding what we ought to think there."⁶⁶ there can be no knowledge of sin. This all things caused by of him is set forth dichotomy, Brunner asserts, "is itself the essence of the state of Him." theology. But this theology gives evidence of the existence of God,

Through natural reason, humans can develop a limited natural theology. But this theology gives evidence of the existence of God,

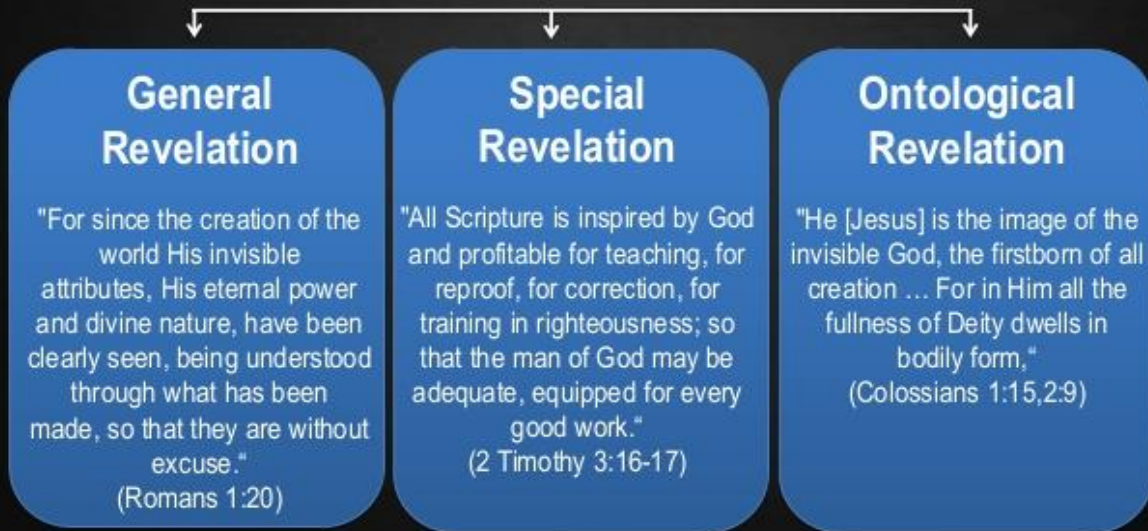
Barth wished to maintain the freedom and sovereignty of God, along with the absolute fallenness and sinfulness of man in his understanding of the revelation of God in Christ and the corresponding possibility of man to know the Creator. He wanted to bind "nature," the things of creation, including humanity and his various possibilities, inextricably with

not necessarily *what* God is or who He is in Himself. In fact, Thomas developed his five proofs for the existence of God on the basis of natural theology. However, what is revealed by nature is of lesser perfection than that which is revealed by grace, received by faith, which itself is a kind of knowledge.

“grace,” suggesting that only in grace can humanity know anything *truly* and, of course, salvifically, about God. Thus, it made no sense for Barth to speak of a general revelation in theological language. All revelation is special, all revelation is summed up in and derived from the incarnation, cross, and resurrection of Christ.¹

¹ House, H. W., & Roberts, K. (2006). [*Charts on Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*](#) (Vol. 1, pp. 52–65). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional.

Revelatory Authoritarianism Undergirds Christianity



The Essentials of Apologetics - Why Believe Anything at All?

Revelation

Differences in General and Special Revelation

General Revelation	Special Revelation
God as Creator	God as Redeemer
Norm for Society	Norm for Church
Means of Condemnation	Means of Salvation
In Nature	In Scripture

"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20)

"and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15)

Revelation in history

Beginning with Adam and Eve, God revealed something of Himself by making them in His image ([Gen. 1:27](#)). As they came to understand themselves, they learnt about God and His nature. Like God, they could love one another, were rational and creative, and were moral. As God rejoiced in them, they could rejoice in Him. Moreover, God had demonstrated a special affection and love for them by planting a beautiful garden for them to enjoy ([Gen. 2:8,9](#)) and would visit them during the cool of the day to share fellowship ([Gen. 3:8](#)). They inhabited a perfect world, characterised by peace and harmony. Everything was beautiful and good, and made plain the wise and holy nature of their Creator ([Gen. 1:31](#)).⁶

Despite all of this, and representing the whole of the human race, Adam and Eve rejected God and embraced evil. In their folly, they chose to believe the word of the serpent, who characterised God as deceitful and mean ([Gen. 3:6-7](#)). They were judged for their sin: Eve would give birth to children in pain and would be ruled over by her husband; Adam would procure food from the ground through toil and hard work; both of them would eventually die ([Gen. 3:16-20](#)). But alongside judgement came mercy and more revelation, this time concerning God's plan of salvation. In order to cover their shame, God killed one or more animals, no doubt with the shedding of blood, and clothed them with skins. He thus pointed forward to the shedding of the blood of His Son, who would be sacrificed for the forgiveness of sins, and whose righteousness would one day clothe those He would redeem. The need for the shedding of blood in order to sanctify offerings made to God⁷ was reinforced when God accepted Abel's offering of animal fat, but rejected Cain's offering of plants ([Gen. 4:3-6](#)).

Although God had not given Adam and Eve a list of commandments ([Rom. 5:12-14](#)), the concepts of sin and righteousness were clear to them ([Gen. 4:6-14](#)). Despite this, within ten generations, the world had become filled with wickedness. With the exception of just eight people, every inclination of the thoughts of men's hearts had become only evil all the time ([Gen. 6:5](#)). Again, God judged mankind and destroyed them in a great flood ([Gen. 6, 7](#)); but, again, He also revealed himself as a saviour, as he preserved Noah and his family in the Ark.

Despite Noah and his family's personal experience of salvation, few of his descendants saw fit to retain the knowledge of God. Within a short time, a national rebellion against God took place, when people rejected God's purposes for them and, instead, sought to exalt themselves by building a city and a tower ([Gen. 11:1-4](#)). Again God acted in judgement, confusing their language and scattering them over the face of the Earth ([Gen. 11:5-9](#)); but again, He also acted in mercy, calling Abraham, from whom He would produce a special people, through whom He would reveal more of Himself and His plan of salvation ([Gal. 3:6-14](#)), and through whom the Saviour would be born. From Abraham to Christ, God spoke in many ways: through the ceremonial law, which continually required blood sacrifices; through the annual Passover, where an unblemished lamb had to be slain; through the Psalms; and through the Prophets. Finally, God revealed himself in the person of His Son. Appearing as a man, Jesus perfectly represented God ([Heb. 1:3](#)). "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father," He declared ([John 14:9](#))...

Summary

Revelation, in Judeo-Christian theology, is God's communication to man of divine truth, particularly with respect to the manifestation of Himself, His nature and His will.

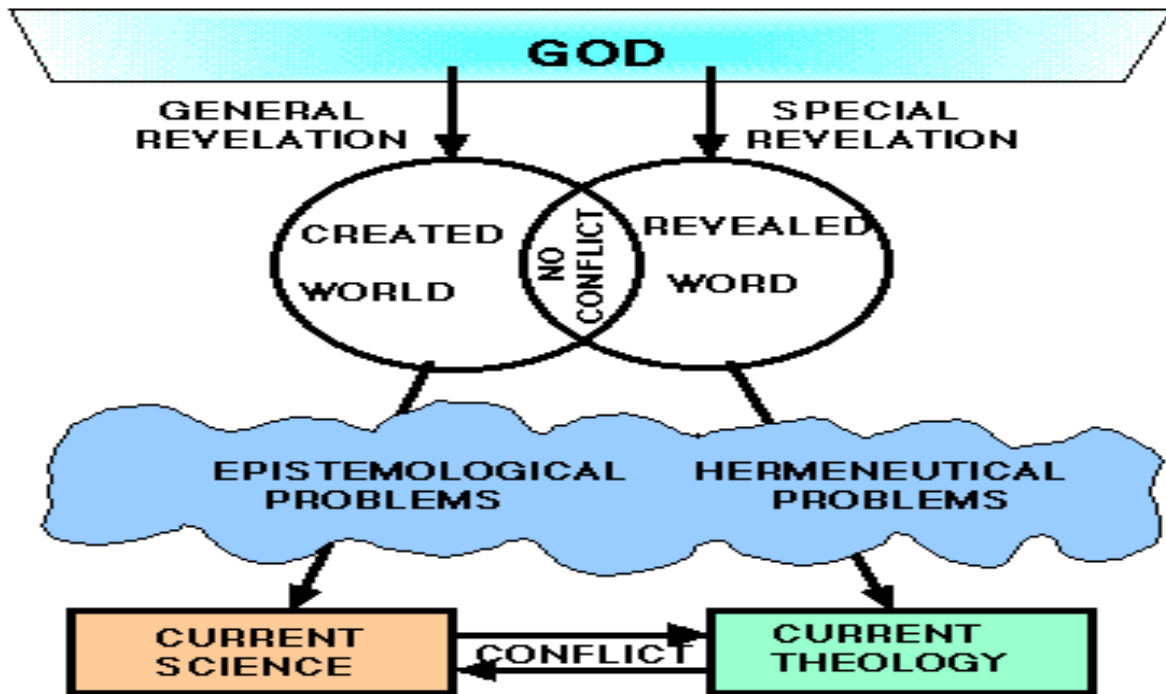
General Revelation should be subservient to Special Revelation. This is because General Revelation has been marred by sin and is clarified and only made complete by Special Revelation.

General Revelation leads to a universal sense of God, deep within the consciousness of our being. It makes clear that God exists, and produces in us an understanding of right and wrong. Along with this, we are also given a sense of eternity ([Eccl. 3:11](#)). General Revelation is possessed by all, including those who have never had access to the Scriptures and have no knowledge of God's plan of salvation. It is made known, for example, through creation ([Ps. 19:1-4](#)), providence ([Acts 14:17](#)) and conscience ([Rom. 2:14,15](#)). General Revelation is sometimes also referred to as **Natural Revelation**. See also [Rom 1:18-20](#).

Special Revelation leads to a fuller understanding of God, His nature, laws and purposes, and, particularly, His plan of salvation. It comes through hearing the Gospel, reading the Scriptures and, supremely, through knowledge of His Son, Jesus Christ. Special Revelation is sometimes also referred to as **Supernatural Revelation**. See also [Heb. 1:3](#), [John 1:17,18](#) and [John 14:6-21](#).

General Revelation should be subservient to Special Revelation. This is because General Revelation has been marred by sin and is clarified and only made complete by Special Revelation. While the world, as originally created, perfectly displayed the character of God, now, because of His judgement upon sin, suffering and death cloud our appreciation of His goodness and mercy. In contrast, God's Special Revelation, through the Bible, is perfect ([Ps. 19:7](#)) and inerrant ([John 10:35](#) and [Luke 16:17](#)). Man's thoughts about God and His creation, derived from observations of nature, are fallible and subject to distortion due to sin ([Jer. 17:9](#) and [Rom. 1:18](#)); the Bible is the Word of God and God-breathed ([2 Tim. 3:16](#)), and is therefore completely reliable.

– Creation Ministries



The Insufficiency of General Revelation

First, using Ps 19 as an example, I argue that general revelation reveals God's works and that, as a mode or instrument of God "speaking," works by themselves are hermeneutically ambiguous. They need further revelatory supplementation to make them clear. This is not to drive a wedge between general and special revelation or to denigrate God's general revelation but simply to note that God's purpose in general revelation has never been for it to function independently of his "worded" special revelation. **God's "words" are necessary to interpret and supplement his 'works'. General revelation lacks the specificity of special revelation. God's words have always been needed to interpret, supplement, and therefore complement God's works. These two modes of revelation were never meant to be separated from one another or to work independently of each other. To make such a separation as natural-law advocates do seems artificial and lacking biblical warrant.**

At this point I would note a similar unnatural decoupling that can be seen in attempts to separate 'moral' norms from 'religious' norms, for example in the claim that the second table of the Decalogue enshrines natural law and can be discovered and known *apart* from special revelation. This again is to misunderstand the unity of the Decalogue and its specially revealed and 'thick' religious exclusivism for Yahweh and against idolatry.

This is not all, though, for second, this objective epistemological insufficiency of general revelation becomes intensely more acute after the Fall. According to the seminal passage in Rom 1:18–32, the knowledge of God is hideously 'suppressed' and 'exchanged', hence the antithetical language of the Bible between regenerate and unregenerate at the level of both epistemology and ethics. However, it must always be noted that this 'natural' knowledge is not static information but dynamic, personal, and relational in character: man 'is a knower who does not know, a perceiver who does not perceive'.⁵⁵

3.1.2. Implications

What are the implications of this understanding of revelation for those who advocate natural law as being the prescriptive norm for public life?

First, anthropologically, Leithart notes a paradox in natural-law thinking at this point:

The problem with natural law is not that it claims too *much* for natural knowledge, but that it claims too *little*. Speaking Christianly to an unbeliever is not like speaking Swahili to a Swede; it is like speaking Swedish to an American of Swedish descent who has almost, but not quite, forgotten his native tongue. On the other hand, natural law claims too much for the ability of those who are outside Christ to embrace and put into practice what they know. The fact that men know the moral law does not, for Paul, lead to the conclusion that natural morality is sufficient as far as it goes. On the contrary, because the natural man suppresses and distorts the knowledge he cannot escape, natural morality is ultimately foolish and darkness.

Second, with regards the doctrine of Scripture itself, promoting natural law to the role of rule and standard in public life means relegating Scripture and so potentially jeopardizing its sufficiency and *sola Scriptura*. God's revelation of himself comes to us through various media (nature, history, word, person), all of which are authoritative and consistent, all of which are interdependent on the others. However, 'the Bible has a unique role in the organism of revelation' since both a verbal and written revelation are necessary for all 'faith and life' to correct our bleary vision.

Methodologically, we are called to interpret the world through the Word, for in God's light do we see light (Ps 36:10). Given Scriptures epistemological primacy, 'principles that cannot be established from Scripture cannot be established by natural-law argument either. When people try to add to God's word by natural-law arguments, they violate the sufficiency of Scripture'. Sufficiency does not mean that the Bible speaks with a uniform specificity in all matters of faith and life but that it contains the divine words necessary for all faith and life. Given the explicitly 'moral', 'ethical', and increasingly 'religious' questions generated by the public and civil sphere, Scripture has many divine words to say on these matters, both complimenting and supplementing the 'light of nature' and 'Christian prudence'.

Without acknowledging these divine words and their ultimate authority, we are left with simply more instability and confusion.

What of VanDrunen's claim that while there is a basic moral law that binds all people, Scripture itself is an inappropriate ethical source for the common kingdom since its ethics are characterized by an indicative-imperative structure and so appropriate only for those who have been redeemed? First, while this structure may ground Christian ethical motivation, it is not the only grounds for ethics. As Frame notes, the ultimate ground is the holy character of God, in whose image we are made. Then there are universal creation ordinances given to Adam and Eve. In terms of ethical motivation, God's commands in Scripture to do something should be grounds enough.

Second, there are numerous examples (the prophetic literature being a pointed example) of the nations outside Israel being condemned and called to repent not simply of moral natural-law sins but 'religious' sins especially idolatry. Idolatry, not simply immorality, can well be described at the universally applicable 'primal' sin, seen clearly in Adam's and Eve's 'false faith' in the Garden when they followed Satan in believing lies about God. Whether one calls it 'natural' or 'biblical', the worship of any god other than the transcendently unique Yahweh, is idolatrous and accountable.²

² Strange, D. (2011). [Not Ashamed! The Sufficiency of Scripture for Public Theology](#). *Themelios*, 36(2), 250–252.

The Spiritual Gifts: Cessation or Continuity?

INSTITUTIONAL ACCOMMODATION

Churches adopted a two-fold approach.

First, they distinguish between “public” and “private” revelations. Roman Catholicism, for example, teaches that public or “divine” revelation ended with the death of the last living disciple. However, “private” revelations continue. Thus, it accepts “apparitions” (visionary experiences) and “interior locutions” (inner voices) so long as they do not claim to “surpass, correct, improve, or complete public revelation.” Protestants are less comfortable with claims of private revelation and prefer to distinguish between Biblical revelation and later “inspiration.”

Second, the Church “manages” revelation by setting authorities over it. Early on, it entrusted bishops with the sacred deposit of faith. When they disagreed, councils of bishops gathered to refute heresy and set boundaries of Christian truth. Their collective wisdom, understood to be guided by the Holy Spirit, crystallized into creedal formulations. The papacy subsequently emerged as an “infallible” interpreter of divine revelation. Protestants reject this and regard Scripture alone as authoritative (“Sola Scripture”).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS), i.e., the Mormon Church, is a distinct case as it affirms continuing revelation but employs measures to control it.

LDS departs dramatically from mainstream Christianity in that it posits an “open” scriptural canon. At present, this includes the *Holy Bible* (King James Version), the *Book of Mormon*, the *Doctrine and Covenants*, and the *Pearl of Great Price*. Mormons regard apostolic revelation as “inspired” but not “infallible,” and later revelations take precedence over earlier ones as in the church’s repudiation of polygamy. Although LDS upholds personal revelation, it understands that “divine” or “church-wide” revelation comes only through those called by God as prophets, i.e., the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Mormons regard ongoing revelation to be essential in guiding them through changing conditions, keeping doctrine pure, revealing new doctrine and scripture in the time appointed by God, and in making policy or organizational changes as the church grows and evolves. – *Internet Search*

Continuous revelation explained

Continuous revelation or **continuing revelation** is a theological belief or position that [God](#) continues to [reveal](#) divine principles or commandments to humanity.

In Christian traditions, it is most commonly associated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church), the [Religious Society of Friends](#) (Quakers), and with [Pentecostal](#) and [Charismatic](#) Christianity, though it is found in some other denominations as well.

A notable factor of continuous or continuing revelation as a source of divine commandments and statements is the written recording of such statements in a more open [scriptural canon](#), as is the case with the Latter-Day Saints.

Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy

[Vatican II](#) states "no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord, Jesus Christ." The notion of progressive or continuing revelation is not held by the Roman Catholic Church or by Eastern Orthodoxy, who instead favor the idea of tradition and development of doctrine, while progressivist and continuationist approaches are specifically condemned in the declaration [Dominus Iesus](#).

Protestantism

Protestants generally teach that the modern age is not a period of continuing revelation.^[2]

Friends (Quakers)

The [Religious Society of Friends](#) (Quakers) affirm continuing revelation through the [Inner light](#) or the light within, which is the [presence of God](#) which provides illumination and guidance to the individual and through individuals to the group.^[3] Some Friends consider the Bible the ultimate authority, but others consider the Inner Light to be above the Bible. Both groups believe that the Inner Light speaks to people directly and not just through the text of the Bible. Because Friends believe that revelation is ongoing, they have no set creed or dogmas. However, as early Friends listened to the Inner light and endeavored to live accordingly, a common set of beliefs gradually emerged, which became known as testimonies. Although rooted in the immediate experience of the community of Friends, these Testimonies are based on what Friends believe are verified in the Bible, especially as described in the Gospels regarding the life and teachings of Jesus.

Pentecostal and Charismatic

[Pentecostal](#) and [Charismatic Christians](#) generally believe that Christians, especially "Spirit-filled" Christians can receive revelations from God in the form of dreams, visions, and audible or inaudible voices. They also believe that certain individuals are able to transmit revelations from God in the form of prophecy, words of knowledge, and [speaking in tongues](#) and interpretation of tongues.

While most Pentecostals and Charismatics believe the Bible to be the ultimate authority and would not say that any new revelation can ever contradict the Bible, they do believe that God continues to speak to people today on extra-biblical topics as well as to interpret and apply the text of the Bible.

Latter-day Saints

See main article: [Revelation \(Latter Day Saints\)](#). In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church), continuing revelation is the principle that God or his divine agents still continue to communicate to humankind. This communication can be manifest in many ways: influences of the [Holy Ghost](#); vision; visitation of divine beings; and others. By such means God guides his followers to [salvation](#) and without such His followers will eventually form their beliefs or practices after a god of their own making. Church founder [Joseph Smith, Jr.](#) used the example of the Lord's revelations to Moses in Deuteronomy to explain the importance and necessity of continuous revelation to guide "those who seek diligently to know [God's] precepts":

The LDS Church believes in continuing revelation, not continuous revelation, and differentiates between the two.

Personal versus church-wide revelation

Mormonism makes a distinction between personal revelation and revelation directed to all members of the church. They believe that personal revelation can come to any individual with a righteous desire, for example to direct someone in their search for truth. In contrast, revelation for the entire church only comes to those who have been called by God as prophets, which in the LDS Church includes the [First Presidency](#) and the [Quorum of the Twelve Apostles](#). Mormons regard revelation through prophets as an indispensable element of Christ's church, without which the church would be led by man, not God. Continued revelation is essential for matters affecting the church as a whole, including guiding the church through changing world conditions, keeping doctrine pure and unadulterated, revealing new doctrine and scripture in the times appointed by God, and making policy or organizational changes as the church grows and evolves. In contrast to the Mainstream Christian belief that God has "sealed up the heavens" in terms of church-wide revelation, Mormons believe God continues to follow the pattern that he adhered to throughout the entire span of the Bible, which was to reveal his will and doctrine through prophets.

Opposition to continued revelation

Mormons see the tendency to dismiss the possibility that God could call modern prophets as similar to the attitude of those in the Bible who rejected the prophets and/or apostles of their day. As demonstrated by the Jews in the time of Jesus, it is often much less challenging to accept prophets of prior ages, rather than a contemporary prophet. Granted, the work of a prophet has always been to dispel false beliefs and warn against behaviors that are contrary to God's will, which inevitably creates friction when viewed as a threat to firmly entrenched traditions and mindsets. The sense of change in the message of Christ and the apostles led many to regard them as false prophets. Christ himself warned against false prophets, teaching that the way to distinguish between a true and a false prophet was "by their fruits" (Matt 7:15-20); however, the perceived threat to tradition was often a strong enough deterrent to cause the witnesses of good fruits (such as powerful sermons or miraculous healings) to dismiss them as the work of the devil (Matt 12:24). After Christ ordained his apostles, he

warned them of the extreme opposition they would encounter for these reasons, telling them, "ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake" (Matt 10:16-23). Christ also said, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets," thus illustrating that opposition will naturally accompany a true prophet if they are doing their job correctly (Luke 6:22-26).

Apostasy

Sometimes the opposition against God's prophets escalated to the point of violence and martyrdom, which Jesus and the apostles frequently referenced while preaching to their detractors (Matt 23:31-37, Luke 11:47-51, Acts 7:52, Romans 11:3, 1 Thes 2:15). In this sense, Mormons acknowledge that revelation has not continued uninterrupted throughout history, being that the killing of God's prophets sometimes resulted in periods without church-wide revelation—which Mormons refer to as apostasies. Similar to prophets before them, Peter and the apostles also suffered martyrdom at the hands of their persecutors—with the exception of John who was banished to the Isle of Patmos. In contrast to the Mainstream Christian view that the apostolic era came to a close because revelation had reached its completion,^[4] Mormons see it not as God's will but as a tragic result of the overwhelming persecution that plagued the church in that era, which cut short the program of apostolic succession that had commenced when Judas was replaced by Matthias (Acts 1:23-26). The apostasy that followed is referred to as the Great Apostasy, because it lasted longer than prior periods without prophets.

Mormons believe that once the Christian church was no longer led by revelation, its doctrine began to be altered by theologians who took it upon themselves to continue developing doctrine, despite not being called or authorized to receive revelation for the church body. In the absence of revelation, these theologians often resorted to speculation,^[5] which coupled with their own interpretations and extrapolations of scripture, inevitably resulted in disagreement and division on many doctrinal points.^[6] Ecumenical councils were held in order to settle these differences, yet without prophets called and authorized to reveal God's will on the topics being debated, the attendees could only vote on the theories presented in order to decide which ones would become official doctrine^[7]—a practice that served to ostracize as heretics those who didn't go along with these decisions, and in some cases led to major [schisms](#) in the church. Mormons view this process of doctrinal development as completely foreign to God's established pattern of revealing doctrine through a prophet. They point to history as incontrovertible proof that humans are incapable of agreeing on how to interpret the Bible (2 Pet 1:20), which should act as a strong indicator that God's purpose for the Bible was not to derive doctrine, but rather to support it. When doctrine is not established and maintained through continued revelation, Mormons see the inevitable result as "philosophies of man, mingled with scripture".

Restoration

Mormons again point to the Bible to show that after every period of apostasy, God always eventually called another prophet when the time was right. It is in that same spirit that Mormons claim that once conditions were ready, God again resumed his pattern of revealing his will through prophets by calling Joseph Smith, through whom he restored the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, clearing up the error that had been introduced during the Great Apostasy. Mormons believe that since that time, revelation through prophets and apostles has continued unbroken until the present day, God having promised that revelation will not be taken again from the earth before the Second Coming of Christ. – *Internet Search*

Continuing Revelation Debate: Church of Christ Versus Mormon

First Negative

Posted by [Mark Mayberry](#) July 26, 2012

By Corbin T. Volluz

The Bible teaches that it is the complete and final revelation of God to mankind.

I am a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints. As such, I believe in continuing, extra-biblical revelation from God to man. Indeed, I have been the recipient of such revelation. What I have to say will no doubt receive an unwelcome response from most of the readers of this publication. Nevertheless, the truth must be championed. And the truth is that Mr. La Coste is wrong, dead wrong, in his assertion that “the Bible teaches that it is the complete and final revelation of God to mankind.”

If the Bible teaches anything, it teaches this: That throughout history, whenever God has had a people on the earth he recognized as his, he has always revealed his will directly to them through living prophets. At no time did God require them to rely solely on the words of dead prophets. This pattern is clear and uncontroverted from Genesis to John to Patmos. Ongoing revelation is the rule. With this in mind,

consider the following statement by a latter-day apostle of the Lord: “A doctrine which rejects new revelation is a new doctrine, invented by the devil and his agents during the second century after Christ; it is a doctrine in direct opposition to the one believed in and enjoyed by the saints in all ages. As the doctrine, then, of continuing revelation is one that was always believed by the saints, it ought not to be required of any man to prove the necessity of the continuation of such a doctrine. It would be the great presumption to call it in question at this late date. Instead of being required to prove the necessity of its continuance, all people have the right to call upon the new-revelation deniers of the last eighteen centuries to bring forward their strong reasoning and testimonies for breaking in upon the long-established order of heaven, and introducing a new doctrine so entirely different from the old. If they wish their new doctrine to be believed, let them demonstrate it to be of divine origin, or else all people will be justified in rejecting it and clinging to the old” (Orson Pratt, *Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon*).

In his preceding article, Mr. La Coste has attempted to demonstrate the divine origin of his doctrine that revelation has been done away, that the heavens are sealed, and that the Bible is the complete and final revelation of God to mankind. In this attempt, Mr. La Coste has failed miserably. My worthy opponent has cited no less than twenty-two Scriptures, not one of which supports his contention. Instead of presenting “strong reasonings” for his doctrine, he has given us three arguments, all of which are non sequiturs. A non sequitur is an argument in which the evidence does not support the conclusion, or in other words, it is an argument in which the conclusion does not follow from the premise. If an argument is a non sequitur, it is not valid. All three of Mr. La Coste’s arguments that he advances to support his cause are non sequiturs, and are therefore not valid. I will treat each of Mr. La Coste’s non sequitur arguments individually.

1. Mr. La Coste quotes a number of Scriptures to show that the first-century Christians possessed a fulness of the gospel. On this point we are in agreement. I, too, believe the first-century Christians possessed a fulness of the gospel. But that is not the issue. The issue is whether the Bible is the complete and final revelation of God to man. To argue that since first-century Christians possessed a fulness of the gospel, the Bible is therefore final and complete is to promote an argument that is a non sequitur. The conclusion does not follow from the premise. The Scriptures cited are therefore immaterial to the issues under consideration.

For the Scriptures cited to be material, Mr. La Coste must first establish a number of intermediate steps, or premises, to get from there to his conclusion that the Bible is final and complete. These intermediate steps that he must establish are: (1) that the first-century Christians, who possessed the fulness of the gospel, actually wrote it all down; (2) that all their writings were collected and put in the Bible; and (3) that God suddenly changed his mind and decided that reading the written word was superior to hearing his own voice from the heavens, the pattern which God had followed religiously since the creation of man.

Only if these three additional premises can be established can Mr. La Coste cogently argue that the Bible is final and complete. Mr. La Coste has not established these three additional premises, neither can he. Therefore his first argument fails.

2. Mr. La Coste's second argument is based upon the third verse of the epistle of Jude. Mr. La Coste asserts that "once" as used in Jude 3 means "one time for all time." It is ironic that Mr. La Coste should state at the beginning of his article that the Bible is complete, meaning "lacking nothing," and then only six paragraphs later, we find him under the necessity of adding words to the third verse of Jude in order to get it to say what he wants it to say.

I will not, however, waste valuable space refuting Mr. La Coste's interpretation of Jude 3, though it is a temptation. The reason? Even if I were to concede to Mr. La Coste's interpretation of this verse – that the gospel was once and for all delivered to the saints – his argument amounts to nothing more than another non sequitur. The conclusion does not follow from the premise. The three intermediary steps, or premises, that would need to be established in Mr. La Coste's first argument to make it valid would similarly need to be established here to make his second argument valid. Without those intermediary premises, Mr. La Coste's assertion that the gospel was "one time for all time" delivered to first-century Christians is logically distinct and rationally unconnected from his conclusion that the Bible is final and complete.

Further, to adopt Mr. La Coste's interpretation of Jude 3 creates an internal inconsistency within that Scripture. Mr. La Coste argues that once the gospel was delivered, no more revelation was necessary. The Bible was then complete and final. Now, Jude 3 says the gospel was once "delivered. Note that the past tense of the word is used: "Delivered. It is clear from this that the epistle of Jude was written sometime after the faith was delivered. So, what is the inconsistency? Simply this: If Mr. La Coste's interpretation of Jude 3 is correct, that once the faith was delivered there was no more need of revelation and the Bible was final and complete, then the epistle of Jude could not be revelation, since it was written after the faith was delivered, and therefore could not be in the Bible! But such is not the case. The epistle of Jude is in the Bible. The fact that Jude's epistle was written after the faith was once delivered to the saints and is yet still found within the Bible completely refutes Mr. La Coste's interpretation of Jude 3.

3. The final non sequitur argument advanced by Mr. La Coste is based on Matthew 24:35 and 1 Peter 1:22-25. Mr. La Coste argues that if the word of God "lives and abides forever," the Bible is the complete and

final revelation of God. Once again, the conclusion does not follow from the premise. To demonstrate this, let us apply Mr. La Coste's reasoning to the book of Genesis. Is the Book of Genesis the word of God? Yes, surely. Does it therefore, "live and abide forever"? Yes, it does. Then, according to Mr. La Coste's argument, the Book of Genesis is the final and complete revelation of God! Everything else from Exodus to Revelation is not really revelation at all, but merely a gross imposture! When viewed in this light, the speciousness of Mr. LaCoste's third argument becomes self-evident.

In conclusion, Mr. La Coste has presented three arguments to support his theory. None of his arguments, however, are able to withstand scrutiny. Mr. La Coste has in reality not advanced one scintilla of evidence that supports his position. In the words of Orson Pratt, since Mr. La Coste has not been able to demonstrate his new doctrine of no-revelation to be of divine origin, all people are justified in rejecting it and clinging to the old, biblical doctrine of continuing revelation.

To claim that the Bible is the complete and final revelation of God to mankind is to claim something for the Bible which the Bible does not claim for itself. No, Mr. La Coste, try as you might to prove otherwise, the fact is that your proposition is wrong. The Bible does not teach that it is the complete and final revelation of God to mankind.

It might be well at this point to briefly examine why Mr. La Coste, as a Church of Christ minister, maintains that the Bible is the complete and final revelation of God, in spite of the Bible's silence on the matter. The answer is that the Bible is all he has. He receives no revelation from God. This is the true reason Mr. La Coste asserts that the Bible is complete and final. If it is not, and if he himself receives no revelation, it is because he is not a true minister of Jesus Christ.

As a minister of the Church of Christ, Mr. La Coste has a difficult position to defend. We might ask Mr. La Coste, “Do you claim to be the same church as that established by Christ two-thousand years ago?” “Why, yes, of course I do.” “Do we not read in the Bible that the church Christ established received ongoing revelation?” “Yes, that is true.” “Does the Church of Christ receive ongoing revelation too, then?” “No.” “Why doesn’t it?” “Because all revelation was done away with. The Bible is now the complete and final revelation of God.” “Oh. Does the Bible say that?” “Well, no, it doesn’t. But you must believe it anyway. “

We, as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints, believe that the Bible is not the complete and final revelation of God. We do not worship the Bible, but rather the God who gave it. We believe that God is loving enough to want to continue to speak to us today, that he is powerful enough to continue to speak to us today in the same manner he has always spoken to his people throughout the ages: By direct revelation through living prophets and apostles. For surely, “The Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

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Second Negative

Posted by [Mark Mayberry](#) July 26, 2012

By Corbin T. Volluz

The Bible teaches that it is the complete and final revelation of God to mankind.

In his attempt to present more an affirmative paper instead of a negative, as he should have done, Mr. Volluz's demise rests in his own pen. We remind him that it is the duty of the negative to answer the affirmative's contentions. First, I would encourage each reader to go back through my first affirmative, look at the arguments presented, the many passages used (as even Mr. Volluz confesses) and then look again at how many passages Mr. Volluz used and how he used them. We are destined, it appears, to have as Mr. Volluz's "authority" for his convictions and his writings, so called latter-day prophets such as Orson Pratt and Mr. Volluz's own personal revelation. But, who is Orson Pratt that I should hear his voice and what makes the personal revelation of Corbin Volluz any more credible than that of Oral Roberts or Jimmy Swaggert? No thanks, I reject them all and stand on the exalted standard "once and for all delivered" (Jude 3).

Mr. Volluz loves the term non-sequitur. He says that my arguments concerning the Bible being complete and final aren't valid because, although the early Christians had a full gospel, which Mr. Volluz confesses, "that doesn't mean it was the final word of God to man, because if that were true, God would be contradicting his principle of speaking through living prophets as he always has."

Mr. Volluz has made this his “sugar-stick” in his first negative. You the reader saw where he said more than once that God has spoken through living prophets from “the garden of Eden to the present.”

But now, hold everything. Stop the presses! Let’s see who is offering non-sequitur arguments! We challenge Mr. Volluz to produce from the Bible where God ever spoke to those in the garden through prophets! Furthermore, we challenge Mr. Volluz to show where God spoke to men like Abraham through prophets! It is true, God used prophets at different times through the Old Testament era and no one is denying that, but Mr. Volluz’s argument is, that God has “always used living prophets.” Wholly incorrect! Simply because he used them at different times, doesn’t mean he has always used them. Mr. Volluz’s major foundation has cracks in it! God has not always spoken through prophets and therefore it is non-sequitur to say he does today. Let the Hebrew writer tell us if God speaks through living prophets today: “God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past (emphasis mine, RWL) unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (Heb. 1:1-2). The Bible says “time past” and “through his Son.” Corbin Volluz says that today he speaks through living men who are prophets. It’s Volluz vs. Hebrews. But how does Jesus speak to men today? Paul says the “gospel is the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16) and Peter declares, “This is the truth . . . which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Pet. 1:25).

Those first two “intermediate steps” that Mr. Volluz referred to, I did establish. I did it with Scripture that he “observed the passover” on. As he did not accept them, will he accept these? The Bible is the complete and final revelation of God to man today and was written:

“That men might believe in Christ and have life” (Jn. 20:30-31); that men might know the things which Jesus did and taught (Acts 1:1); that men might be assured of the certainty of that which they were orally taught (Lk. 1:3-4); that men might know the commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37); that men might understand the mystery of Christ which was revealed to the apostles and prophets (Eph. 3:3-5); that men might know what the apostle has seen and heard and might have fellowship with God, Christ and the Apostles and that joy might be full and complete (1 Jn. 1:34); that men might not sin (1 Jn. 2:1); that men might remember the teaching of the apostles after their death (2 Pet. 1:12-21); that the revelation of the mystery (the gospel) might be manifested unto all nations unto the obedience of faith (Rom. 16:25-26). Yet, in spite of all these truths, Mr. Volluz still thinks we need living prophets. Does he not see that though the prophets and apostles of the Bible are dead, yet “they still speak” (Heb. 11:4). In that regard they are very much alive, for “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Matt. 22:32). How weak a God our Mormon friends must think God is, that he could not give a standard “one time for all time,” keep it pure and use it to lead men to salvation. That’s not the God that Bob La Coste serves!

It’s ironic indeed that one like Mr. Volluz who believes in continuing revelation should accuse me of adding words to Jude 3. All that I did was define from the original language the word “once.” I told you in my first affirmative that this Scripture would stand when this debate was over and Mr. Volluz surely proved that it does stand by not answering what I had to say about it. What did he say about the word hapax (“one time for all time”) and how it is used in other passages such as Hebrews 9:27-28? Nothing. I’m not surprised. This verse is devastating to the modern who believes in continuing revelations and they know it. However, it was somewhat amusing to read what he had to say about the verse in general. To Mr. Volluz, since Jude used the past tense word “delivered” and since the gospel was already given, then Jude 3 cannot be used to show there is no more revelation in the future.

Maybe we better look again! Jude writes of the “common salvation.” Though the gospel had been orally preached in its fulness, inspired men (as Jude) were still writing it down. Jude was not writing anything that had not been preached orally. He, as Peter, was simply “stirring up their remembrance” (2 Pet. 1:13). He was certainly not writing anything different, unlike the so-called modern revelations. Jude was saying that the common salvation is here, it has been delivered, and it will not have to be delivered again . . . and again . . . and again. The word had been confirmed (Mk. 16:20) and prophecy has ceased just as Paul predicted it would when the perfect revelation was come (1Cor. 13:8-10).

Mr. Volluz totally missed my point from Matthew 24:35 and 1 Peter 1:22-25. It was not the purpose of these passages to show incorruptibility. The word of God by its very nature is incorruptible. It lives and it abides forever. The cry of the modernist is that the reason we need continuing revelation and the reason the Bible can not be trusted to be the final and complete revelation, is because some of the truth of God has been lost, or to listen to Mr. Volluz, it was not all written down. Mormons believe both. The Bible totally rejects this. Again, Jesus promised all truth to his disciples (Jn. 16:13) and Peter affirmed that he preached that same incorruptible truth (1 Pet. 1:22-25). Yes, the gospel is “all I have,” because I trust God to have given me, “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). We would that Mr. Volluz would have such confidence toward God. Confidence in God’s word doesn’t mean one worships a book. I’m sure along those lines that many Mormons have been accused of worshiping the book Mormon, but I’m sure they would deny it. Mr. Volluz: Was the gospel Peter and the others preached sufficient enough to make them Christians in the first century and lead them to eternal life? If so, why will not the same gospel do the same today? If it will not, why won’t it?

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What's Wrong with Continuing Revelation?

“Proclamations of Continuing Revelation are no longer just segregated to certain denominations and sects within Christianity. The spiritual gifts of prophecy and tongues are practiced even in mainstream (socially) conservative churches. With many of the most popular worship music lyrics filled with emotionalism and descriptions of the supernatural, many believers wouldn't bat an eye at a member saying that they had a “word from the Lord” or “God told me...” But does the Bible actually support this rising trend?

Many believers claim that God speaks to them, either with an audible voice or with an internal impression. Some even claim that God speaks to them through visions or in the utterance of a prophecy. A large amount of *professing* Christians believe in the gift of tongues – whether it is an angelic language to be used in church, or a private prayer language. These are all examples of Continuing Revelation.

One of the major problems with Continuing Revelation is that it undermines the sufficiency of Scripture. It is a proclamation that the Bible is not our sole source of God's revelation. If the Bible is a closed canon – if it is complete – with no new revelation or prophets, then using the Bible as only a “model of revelation,” as many of the leading Continuationists proclaim, is not only erroneous but dangerous. We know from Scripture that the Bible is indeed a closed system of truth. It is completely sufficient as it is. Further, we are commanded to not add anything to it.

You cannot hold to *Sola Scriptura*, the Biblical principle that says God's Word is the only divine authority, if you hold to Continuing Revelation, because it is directly opposed to the sufficiency of Scripture. We can see the sufficiency of Scripture and the closed canon discussed in [Jude 3](#)^L:

“Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.” [Jude 3](#)^L.

- In Greek, it is even more clear. The definite article before the word “faith” identifies it as the one and only faith.
- Then in the same passage, we can see the Greek word *hapax*, which is translated “once for all.” This word is said in such a way that it signifies once for all time, with lasting results.
- Here also, the word “delivered” in Greek is an aorist passive participle. This indicates an act that had been completed at some point in the past and does not continue, it was fully completed. We can see here that the faith was given to men by God. The revelation given by God to men has been completed. There is no need for prophets or other means of divine revelation.” – M. Ashley Evans

Is Revelation Continuous or Completed?

Posted by [Mark Mayberry](#) September 3, 2012

By Ron Halbrook

There are two views of divine revelation today. One view holds that God has continued to provide new revelations of his will throughout history, that he is still doing so today, and that he will continue doing so in the future. The other view is that God has completed revelation in its final form; therefore, there are no new revelations today and there will be none in the future. Which view does the Bible teach?

During Old Testament times, revelation was continuous as God raised up one prophet after another. “God who at sundry times and divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” (Heb. 1:1). The Old Testament writings were summarized as the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms, all written by the inspiration of God through the Holy Spirit over a period of 1,400 years (Luke 24:44; 2 Pet. 1:21). During the centuries when these revelations were being given, God taught his people to look forward to a new age of revelation.

In Joel 2:28-32, God promised that in the future age of revelation he would speak through “all flesh,” i.e., both Jews and Gentiles, rather than through Jews alone. The purpose of this new dispensation of God’s grace was that all men might have the hope of salvation through “the name of the Lord.” In Jeremiah 31:31-34, God said, “Behold, the days come . . . that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . . I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” Israel and Judas were separated when this prophecy was spoken, but God was teaching them both that the new covenant to be revealed in the future would provide the same salvation to all men.

Christ came to reveal the fullness of God's "grace and truth" (John 1:14-18). This work was begun during his personal ministry on earth and completed through his Apostles. He promised to send the Holy Spirit to provide the Apostles with a complete and final revelation: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). All truth would be revealed during the lifetime of the Apostles. That means no new truth would be revealed after the last Apostle died about A.D. 96.

New Revelations Today?

The miraculous gifts necessary in the age of new revelation included prophecies, speaking foreign languages without previous study, and special knowledge given by inspiration. When the new revelation was completed, those gifts would "cease" and "vanish away." As Paul was receiving these new revelations, he explained that they would end when the whole body of new truth was delivered: "For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Cor. 13:8-10). Thus, whereas the Old Testament pointed forward to a new age of revelation, the New Testament taught that revelation was to come in perfection, completion, and finality through the Apostles. By promising the completion of this work during the life span of the Apostles, the Lord taught that all revelation would be given by the end of the first century.

God's final revelation is "the perfect law of liberty" — it needs no addition (Jas. 1:25). The revelation given to us by Christ through his Apostles provides us with "all things which pertain unto life and godliness," and we are warned not to add to or subtract from that revelation (2 Pet. 1:3; Rev. 22:18-19). Instead of seeking new revelations, we must teach only what is already revealed in God's word:

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). We are to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” which means we must reject all claims of newly revealed truth as false (Jude 3; Gal. 1:8-9).

All claims that spiritual life and godliness may be found in doctrines and theories not clearly revealed in the New Testament are utterly false. Many false teachers have gone out into the world claiming continuous and progressive revelation today. The Roman Catholic Church claims that when the Pope speaks “ex cathedra” (from his chair), he speaks infallibly by divine inspiration. Both Roman Catholic and Protestant councils often profess to speak their unique doctrines and peculiar dogmas under the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Mary Baker Patterson Glover Eddy pawned herself off as the prophetess of a new Christian Science. Ellen G. White is the fraudulent prophetess of the Seventh Day Adventist movement. Joseph Smith and the twelve modern Apostles of Mormonism offer “another testament of Jesus Christ” in the Book of Mormon and other professed prophetic pronouncements. The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of the Jehovah’s Witnesses claims to be God’s faithful and wise servant as a channel of revealing new light on the Scriptures, and that no one can understand the truth of God’s word without this additional light. Many claims to new prophecies, “speaking in tongues,” and other forms of inspired knowledge are made by various Pentecostal and charismatic people today.

God warned us that Satan would try to advance his cause with a fraudulent display of “power and signs and lying wonders” in order to deceive those who do not love or believe the truth (2 Thess. 2:9-12). God commended Christians who tested “them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars” (Rev. 2:2). In the same way today, all claims of new revelations are proven to be false when tested by the word of God.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). When it comes to matters pertaining to the salvation of the soul, the Bible contains the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. We need no new prophecies or other new revelations of any kind today. The Bible alone is complete and perfect, and equips us fully to serve God and save our souls.

A CONTINUING SPECIAL REVELATION NULLIFIES THE ANCIENT ORDER BENCHMARK & THE RESTORATION PRINCIPLE

JAMES BALES\RESTORATION, REFORMATION OR REVELATION?\RESTORATION &
CONTINUOUS REVELATION\CONTINUOUS REVELATION DESTROYS RESTORATION?

“If the doctrine of continuous revelation is true, the Bible is not the full and final revelation of God to man, and the revelations of today become the authority which override the Bible when the modern revelations and the Bible conflict. What other position can one take, if the Holy Spirit miraculously guides and inspires someone today? If any of the gifts are available today all of them are; and these would include the gift of inspiration and the revelation of truths which modern revelators would confirm by miracles.” (pg. 264)

Continuous Revelation Destroys Restoration. “Does the doctrine of continuous revelation actually destroy the restoration principle? Although I would certainly change my position on certain matters, it would not destroy the restoration principle. (pgs. 269ff)

First, it would be an **affirmation** of the restoration principle. Without the Bible, no one today would even so much as know whether there was any such Being as the Holy Spirit and whether or not He had given, at Christ’s directions, revelations in the first century and signs whereby these revelations were confirmed.

Even those today who claim that they have the direct guidance of the Spirit did not get their knowledge of the existence of the Spirit, and of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, by a direct revelation. They either learned about these things, and about the Spirit from the Bible or they learned about them from someone who had been reading the Bible. The truth of this statement is demonstrated by the fact that where people have never heard of the Bible they do not know of the Holy Spirit and of the miraculous gifts.

There are people in various religions, who had not heard of the Bible, who believe that there are spirits all around them, and that their witch doctors (or their equivalent) can do wonders, but they do not teach anything about the Holy Spirit who is revealed in the New Testament and they do not confirm, with their so-called signs, Biblical truth but pagan error.

Second, the claim of the restoration of miraculous gifts and inspiration of the Spirit would not be a denial of the restoration principle but an affirmation that the restoration principle is right and that the scriptural application of it means that we must restore today the miraculous baptism of the Spirit, the miraculous gifts, and inspired men such as the apostles and prophets. We [churches of Christ] believe they [miracles] were the means whereby the whole truth was revealed and confirmed in the first century. If we are wrong in this, it would mean that we should be more consistent in our applications of the restoration principle. Therefore, we should accept today the existence in the churches of modern apostles, prophets, other inspired teachers, and the miraculous gifts. This would mean not that the restoration principle was wrong but that we had not realized that it embraced the restoration of the inspired men and of revelations in addition to those found in the Bible.

One must not only go back to the New Testament to learn these things, but if they are for us today one is saying that the restoration principle involves the restoration of inspired men and miraculous gifts.

Anyone among us today who claims any of the miraculous gifts should claim that all these gifts are available today, including the inspired men such as the apostles of Jesus Christ. I ask them: **Where are their apostles of Jesus Christ?** What are their qualifications? What signs do they work – both as to the characteristics of the healing miracles, and of the wide range of miracles in the Bible? How does their teaching compare with that of the New Testament? Where are the modern revelations which we should include along with the revelations in the Bible? If they exist, they are just as authoritative as the New Testament. This matter of miraculous gifts and revelations is not just a matter of **argumentation** but also of **demonstration**.

Third, if there were apostles, prophets, modern revelations, and miraculous gifts today, the modern revelations would **not contradict** the New Testament revelations, since the New Covenant is God's final dispensation for man on earth. (Hebrews 9: 15 – 17; 13: 20). **However, sooner or later the so-called modern revelations contradict the New Testament.** The spirit cannot be speaking through the New Testament and through these so-called modern revelations. Then, too, the miracle workers today would have among them those who, taken all together, would have all the gifts found in the New Testament. As far as I can discern from the New Testament the apostles had all the gifts, but others had only one or more. Furthermore, they would do the wide variety of miracles found in the Bible, and they would have the characteristics of the healing miracles which are found in the New Testament.”