

“That the book currently known as the Bible ... is the only source of knowledge concerning God and His purposes at present extant or available in the earth, and that **the same were wholly given by inspiration of God** in the writers, and are consequently without error in all parts of them, except such as may be due to error of transcription or translation”

Christadelphian Statement of Faith - Foundation Clause

Verbal inspiration always under challenge

“The denial of verbal inspiration may facilitate the Rationalist in evading all that he is not inclined to believe, and may free him from certain trammels which are felt to be irksome and oppressive; but founded as it is on the assumption of *inaccuracy in word and opinion*, it can only lead to an utter denial of the whole book itself, if not to a denial of Him whose revelation it professes to be ...”

Dr J Thomas, 1858, Herald of the Kingdom of the Age to Come, p 215.

2 Timothy 3:16

2 Timothy 3:16

16 **All scripture** is **given by inspiration of God**, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

- g2315. **θεόπνευστος**
- **theo_pneustos** = God + breath/spirit

{God's spoken words written down}

Inclusion of secular writing within scripture

Royal edicts and correspondence

- Ezra 1:2-4 Cyrus' edict
- Ezra 4:7-16 Letter to Artaxerxes from local rulers
- Ezra 4:17-22 Letter from Artaxerxes to local rulers
- Ezra 5:6-17 Letter to Darius from local rulers
- Ezra 6:3-12 Letter from Darius containing
 - Ezra 6:3-5 Decree of Cyrus
- Ezra 7:12-26 Letter from King Artaxerxes
- Neh 6:6-7 Letter from Sanballat

- “Ezra-Nehemiah advocates the primacy of the written word showing **the power of documents to generate events and shape history** ... Ezra-Nehemiah’s presentation of the events is **unique in the Bible and in antiquity** in the extent to which it employs reproduced documents to narrate the history of the period. Some 85% of the book is an overt amalgamation of documents”.

Oxford Encyclopaedia of books of the Bible, 2011

- Distinguish between the event and the record of the event.
- 1 Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things **happened** unto them for ensamples: and they are **written** for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.
- Inclusion of error? - rather inclusion of record of error

Proverbs 30:5

Every word of God is pure:

he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

Matthew 4:4

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word** that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Deuteronomy 18:18

I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put **my words** in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them **all** that I shall command him.

How to understand the Scriptures?

Luke 24:27

And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded <1329> unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

1329 diermhneuw diermeneuo *dee-er-main-yoo'-o*
from 1223 and 2059; TDNT-2:661,256; v

AV-interpret 4, by interpretation 1, expound 1; 6

1) to unfold the meaning of what is said, explain,
expound

2) to translate into one's native language

In the beginning <07225> God created

07225 **re'shiyth**

from the same as 07218 **(ro'sh)**

AV-beginning 18, firstfruits 11, first 9, chief 8, misc
5; 51

1) first, beginning, best, chief

1a) beginning

1b) first

1c) chief

1d) choice part

Reshiyth = first - time, generation/harvest, importance

Colossians 1

17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

18. And he is the **head** <2776> of the body, the church: who is **the beginning** <746>, **the firstborn** <4416> from the dead; that in all things he might have **the pre-eminence** <4409>.

746 αρχη arche

from 756; TDNT-1:479,81; n f

AV-beginning 40, principality 8, corner 2, first 2, misc 6;

4416 ~πρωτοτοκος~ prototokos

from 4413 and the alternate of 5088; TDNT-6:871,965; adj

AV-firstborn 7, first begotten 2;

4409 πρωτευω proteuo

from 4413; TDNT-6:881,965; v

AV-have the preeminence 1;

The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Psalm 110:1

Words emphasised

Acts 2:33-35 -----

Of God ... My ...

Matt 22:44 -----

my lord

Heb 1:13 -----

Said

Heb 10:12 -----

Sit

Eph 1:20 -----

His

Heb 8:1, 12:2,3-

Right hand

Heb 10:13 -----

Until ...

1 Cor 15:25 -----

Until ... Enemies

Heb 13:13 -----

Thine... thy

Implications of verbal inspiration for Bible Study

- **discovery** not invention
 - inspiration of **words** not just ideas
 - **every word** matters
 - the Bible is inspired **literature**
 - **structure** is inspired
-
- meaning of scripture is what God intended not what readers can make of it.
 - new meanings not added retrospectively
 - scripture should interpret scripture
 - meaning defined by use not etymology
 - not limited by culture, audience or penman

Were the human writers also authors?

“From the time of the Apostolic Fathers until the sixteenth century it was the conviction of the doctors of the Church that Holy Scripture is plenarily and verbally inspired. The human writers were merely the instruments through whom God spoke. With the controversy sparked by Baruch **Spinoza's** denial of biblical inspiration in his Tractatus Theologico-politicus (1670) there came a deeper appreciation of the humanity of Scripture. ***The human writers were seen to be not mere secretaries, but genuine authors, whose humanity and distinctive peculiarities are reflected in their compositions***”.

William Lane Craig

Robert Roberts 1884

- “...how the Spirit of God could so guide men in their utterance that whilst the things said were the *ipsissima verba of inspiration*, they were at the same time **free utterances** of the men made use of, and characterised by **idiosyncrasies of speech** natural to their particular organisations”.
- “... His Spirit controlling and supervising their performance in a manner that secured the exhibition of His mind, **and His mind alone ...**”
 - *But in what sense could they be “free utterances”?*
 - *What evidence is there that the “idiosyncracies” were of the prophet rather than the nature of the message - we have no uninspired writings to compare?*

“Of” or “For”

“A Psalm **of David**, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.”

1 Samuel 17:17

HEB: וַיֹּאמֶר יֵשׁׁׁי לְדָוִד בְּנוֹ קָח־

NAS: said *to David* his son,

KJV: said *unto David* his son,

INT: said Jesse *to David* his son

1 Cor 14:2

For he that speaketh in an
unknown tongue speaketh not
unto men, but unto God:

“WHAT SHALL BE SAID then about **the individuality of the writers** being preserved in their work? . . . Because God was the ‘Inspirer of the ancient seers’, must it be concluded that all would use the same idiom, and all express themselves the same way? . . . The fact is, God so used the writer that in the resulting prophecy or epistle as the case may be, ***the personality of the writer is not obliterated***, and yet the words are claimed by God as His. If it be pressed, How was this done?—it has to be answered that this is confessedly a miracle.”

J Carter 1928

“The power of God so operated that that while the message was in **the style and idiom of David**, it yet expressed God’s words. **Inspiration is not dictation**; yet the movements of the mind are determined by something extraneous to the writer, a power outside the prophet so guiding and directing the conscious thoughts, but not superseding the personal characteristics, that the utterances have a divine inerrancy”

Bro John Carter 1949 (Christadelphian Office pamphlet)

The Gospel of Luke?

“ ... We feel in his Gospel his intense concern for fallen humanity, in such graphic accounts as the parable of the Good Samaritan, the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son; in the record of the woman who ventured into the house of Simon the Pharisee, who sought and found the Lord's compassion; in the description of the thief on the cross who was given hope in his dying moments. The man whose heart and mind was touched by the life and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, was a man who wanted to play his part in proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God”.

“Luke is the only gospel writer to introduce himself, but tells us nothing about himself. So, immediately we know that we walk with a modest man ...”

“ ... We feel in his Gospel his intense concern for fallen humanity, in such graphic accounts as the parable of the Good Samaritan, the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son ...”

“It is unfortunate that the idea of verbal inspiration is identified in many minds ... with the idea that the writers reproduced, in semi-automatic fashion, words which were **dictated** to them by God ... Indeed it is difficult to reconcile any kind of inspiration with “**dictation**” unless we pre-suppose trance conditions ... **If not by dictation, then by what process did the Holy Spirit work upon the minds of men to ensure that they uttered God words? We do not know. How should we know?** It is clear that whatever the means, it in no way neutralised their own literary or oratorical style ... God gave his message in a way that **allowed their own genius to shine through**”

Bro Arthur Dagg 1949 (Christadelphian Office pamphlet)

The issue grappled with!

“Much emphasis has been laid in recent years upon **the style of the individual writers**, to the exclusion of the recognition of higher features involved. it is granted that the style of John is not the style of Matthew; that Paul does not write like James. But we must put beside this point of view another aspect obtained from the word itself. The Bible claims that its very words are the words of God.’

Bro John Carter 1928

Wrong understanding of “the human element” can lead to **disastrous mistakes!**

“The Bible does claim to be inspired in the sense that ‘holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21) – but they were still human and spoke as men (mainly), using human language, influenced by human culture, even though they were motivated by God to convey what was in His mind, **as far as they understood it.**” *(The Endeavour Magazine)*

... The breadth and **the limits of Biblical inspiration** are particularly illustrated in the Psalms, which look at every aspect of life as lived by humans and as perceived by God. True ideas are brought face to face with untrue ones in the Psalms to create a dialogue in which the two sides – God’s and man’s - are represented, often in conflict with each other.” *(The Endeavour Magazine)*

Wrong understanding of “the human element” can lead to **disastrous mistakes!**

“Indeed, I encounter in the Bible rather clear evidence that its authors were human. We would all recognize that we can see something of who Paul was from his epistles – we see something of his temperament, his priorities, his preferences for words, and his style of thinking and writing. We see him deal with contemporaneous and local issues as well as eternal truths. This is of course an expected outcome of God’s choice to use human witnesses to get His message to us. ***It turns out God was also willing to allow these human witnesses to make mistakes of fact and mistakes of understanding in order to get His message to us through them***”. *(The Endeavour Magazine)*

Wrong understanding of “the human element” can lead to **disastrous mistakes!**

“So the Bible is not the direct words of God. ***It is not our sole authority.*** The Bible itself is not the revelation of God, it is the human witness to the revelation of God. It is a human report on the Word of God, as spoken by prophets and Jesus. It is a human report of the Word of God, as revealed in the person of Jesus and in all the mighty deeds God did throughout the history of Israel and in the life of Jesus. It is the God-inspired human record of God’s revelation of Himself. In that sense, we encounter in the Bible the Word of God, and can even call the Bible the Word of God. ***It is the Word of God filtered through and expressed by humans. Sometimes, it seems it does not manage to go beyond what the human authors understood in their time and place ...***” (The Endeavour Magazine)

Hebrews 1:1

Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι ὁ θεὸς
λαλήσας τοῖς **πατράσιν** ἐν τοῖς **προφήταις**,

polymerōs

μέρος **meros**; from an obsolete but more primary form of μείρομαι meiromai (to get as a section or allotment); a division or share (literally or figuratively, in a wide application): — behalf, course, coast, craft, particular (+ -ly), part (+ -ly), piece, portion, respect, side, some sort(-what). AV (43) - **part 24**, portion 3, coast 3, behalf 2, respect 2, misc 9;

polytropōs

τρόπος **tropos**; from the same as 5157; a turn, i.e. (by implication) **mode or style** (especially with preposition or relative prefix as adverb, like); figuratively, deportment or character: — (even) as, conversation, (+ like) manner, (+ by any) means, way. AV (13) - as + g3739 3, even as + g2596 + g3739 2, **way 2, means 2**, even as + g3739 1, in like manner as + g3639 1, manner 1, conversation 1;

1 Peter 1:10-12

- Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched **and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating** when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that **they were serving not themselves but you**, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

2 Peter 1:21

- (KJV) 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 [Spirit].
 - g5342. φέρω **pherō**; to “bear” or carry (in a very wide application, literally and figuratively, as follows): — be, bear, bring (forth), carry, come, + let her drive, be driven, endure, go on, lay, lead, move, reach, rushing, uphold.
- (EBR) *For not, by will of man, was prophecy **brought in**, at any time, but, as, by Holy Spirit, they were **borne along**, spake, men, from God.*
- (YLT) *for not by will of man did ever prophecy **come**, but by the Holy Spirit **borne** on holy men of God spake.*
- (NIV) *For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were **carried along** by the Holy Spirit.*

“1 David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, 2 The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue”. (2 Samuel 23:1-2)

Matt 22:43	David in Spirit...
Mark 12:36	himself by the Holy Spirit ..
Luke 20:42	David himself saith ...
Acts 1:16	Holy Spirit by the mouth of David ...
Acts 2:25	David speaketh ...
Acts 2:30	... being a prophet ...
Acts 4:25	by the mouth of Thy servant David hath said ...
Heb 3:7	as the Holy Spirit saith ...
Heb 4:7	saying in David ...

Ezekiel

- Ezekiel 3:10-11 10 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, **all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart**, and **hear with thine ears**. 11 And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, **and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God**; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

Deuteronomy 18:15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; 16 According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. 17 And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. 18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, **and will put my words in his mouth;** and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. 19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto **my words which he shall speak** in my name, I will require it of him.

A very different and better perspective!

“Luke had been given a perfect understanding of all things, and acknowledgement of this makes us pause to consider divine inspiration. God had chosen Luke as a human vessel, and God chose the words which Luke was to write: all of them. After the manner of Baruch, the scribe of the Lord so many years before, “He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in a book” (Jeremiah 36:18). “Every word of God is pure” (Proverbs 30:5), and although Luke is not among those who were eyewitnesses of the passion of Christ, the words of his Gospel record are the precise and exact words of the Father, who had seen all things”

A summary of principles

1. **Prophets** spoke the words of God - willingly or unwillingly, agreeing or not agreeing, understanding or not understanding - through the Holy Spirit coming upon them.
2. **Scribes** recorded these words and the context narrative by direction of God and these documents were recognised and preserved as scripture by the Jewish nation and by the apostles.
3. The resulting **literature** - a selection and collation of material, sometimes including summaries, sometimes including uninspired text, sometimes including the record of erroneous thinking - set out in a variety of different literary forms as God has required it.

Thoughts on the so-called “human element” of scripture.

1. ‘literary style’ is an elusive concept, and few attempt to define it.
2. The view that literary style betrays the mind of the human writer can divert attention away from the message revealed towards speculations about the writer of little value and which can never be proved.
3. Scripture asserts that the prophets spoke what God wanted them to say.
4. Speaking God’s words did not diminish their role. They experience revelation and had to deliver the burden.
5. Their lives, personalities and characters if they come through the text are an integral part of God’s revelation.
6. When a prophet spoke in the first person this does not mean he was giving his view as opposed to speaking God’s words.
7. Prophets were prepared by God for their work so they could be in harmony with their message.
8. Prophets needed to study their own prophecies.
9. Spirit-gifted disciples speaking in tongues needed their own words to be translated before they could understand them.

A better view of the “human element”

- And so it was not any man that God chose to be the vehicle of His Word, but only **specially selected and prepared men, in whom the “human element” was itself formed by Him to be fit for His purpose, not distorting His Word but conforming to it.** How can it be maintained that God cannot give a perfectly true revelation of Himself through the agents He has chosen!

F T Pearce