

BASIC BIBLE PRINCIPLES

THE VERBAL INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

A belief in a wholly-inspired Bible is the very foundation principle of the Christadelphian faith. The verbal inspiration of Scripture is a doctrine of fundamental importance; for if the writing of the Bible was not Divinely (and therefore infallibly) guided, then the source of what we know of God and His dealings with men would be unreliable. If we could not, with absolute confidence as to its Divine origin and production, turn to the Bible as the authoritative Word of God in all its parts, then we would be quite unable to make any certain progress towards true enlightenment in spiritual things and in matters related to salvation.

This is why the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith begins with the Foundation Clause: “That the book currently known as the Bible, consisting of the Scriptures of Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, 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 errors of transcription or translation (2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:13; Heb. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 14:37; Neh. 9:30; John 10:35)”.

The key aspects of Biblical inspiration are as follows:

- 1 The Bible was produced by the ‘outbreathing’ of God through His Spirit:**
2 Timothy 3:16—“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (where the italicised words are a single Greek word, *theopneustos*, meaning, literally, ‘God-breathed [out]’). (There are no really sound linguistic grounds for weakening the sense of Paul’s words, as the NEB and the RV do, by translating it as “Every Scripture inspired of God is also . . .”; the RV margin, the NIV, the Jerusalem Bible and many other modern translations give the proper sense required by the Greek sentence construction.)
- 2 The Spirit of God ‘carried men along’ to write His Word:**
2 Peter 1:20,21—“. . . no prophecy of the 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 [Gk. *pherō*, ‘to be carried (along)’] by the Holy Spirit”.
- 3 The inspired writers of the Bible wrote with the Divine authority of God Himself, and their words are binding on God’s people:**
1 Corinthians 2:12,13—“Now we have received . . . the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth”.
1 Corinthians 14:37—“. . . the things that I [the Apostle Paul] write unto you are the commandments of the Lord”.
John 10:35—According to Jesus, “the scripture cannot be broken”.

4 The inspiration of the Bible involved the Divine control or superintendence of the very words used:

Numbers 22:38; 23:3,5—“And Balaam said . . . the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak . . . and whatsoever He sheweth me I will tell . . . And the Lord put a word in Balaam’s mouth”.

2 Samuel 23:1-3—“Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said . . . The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said . . .”.

Jeremiah 1:7,9—“But the Lord said unto me [Jeremiah] . . . whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak . . . Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth”.

John 14:10,24—“. . . the words that I [Jesus] speak unto you I speak not of myself . . . the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s Which sent me”.

5 Because the words themselves were Divinely inspired (as well as the writers), the possibility of the original Scriptures containing errors is excluded:

Psalms 12:6—“The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times”.

“We do not insist on any particular theory as to the modus operandi of inspiration. What we contend for is that by whatever process the result is, the Scriptures are the product of inspiration, and that inspiration does not err” (Robert Roberts, *The Christadelphian*, Feb. 1887).

6 The power of God’s Spirit to enlighten, to convert, and to save is in the Scriptures themselves, and the benefit of their Divine origin is conveyed to us in their words, which do not require the additional operation of the Holy Spirit to make them intelligible:

2 Timothy 3:15—“. . . the holy scriptures . . . are able [Gk. *dunamai*, ‘have power’] to make thee wise unto salvation”.

John 6:63—“. . . the words that I [Jesus] speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”.

Acts 20:32—“I [Paul] commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified”.

Romans 10:17—“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”.

Isaiah 55:11—“My word . . . that goeth forth out of My [God’s] mouth . . . shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it”.

“The Bible is our light and life as much today as when fresh from the hands of its Author . . . As we value our life, let us stand with indomitable resolution against all doctrines that would . . . detract from the authority or importance of the Scriptures” (Robert Roberts).

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