

Continuous or Progressive Revelation?

Seventh Day Adventism, Islam, Catholicism, Mormonism, and Modern “Pentecostalism,” though exceedingly different in doctrinal matters, all have at least one thing in common. Their founders all believed in continuous or progressive divine revelation. For example, **Ellen G. White**, 1827-1915, founded the Seventh Day Adventist Church, whose members claim she was a “prophetess.” Please note these words: “The visions of Mrs. Ellen G. White are revelations from God.” Of her own words she said, “It is God, and not an erring mortal, that has spoken,” **Testimonies**, Vol. III, p. 257. On the other hand, consider the religion of Islam. It was founded by **Mohammed**, 570-630 A.D. Muslims claim that Mohammed was as great a prophet as Moses and Jesus Christ, that he was “the last great prophet,” that his revelation replaced that of Jesus Christ, and were revealed to him by the angel Gabriel. Note these words from the **Koran**: “*Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel –for he brings down the (revelation) to your heart by Allah’s will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe,*” Surah 2:97. In many respects Roman Catholicism is an evolving religion, in part evidenced by the fact that the Vatican Council in 1876 defined the doctrine of papal infallibility in these words: “*We teach and define it to be a dogma divinely revealed that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks ex cathedra, that is, when acting in his office of pastor and teacher of all Christians, by his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole church, through the divine assistance promised him in Blessed Peter, he enjoys that infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his church to be endowed in defining doctrine concerning faith and morals; and therefore such definitions of the said Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the church*” (**The Teaching of the Catholic Church**, vol. II, p. 719). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormonism) was founded by **Joseph Smith**, who claimed that the angel Moroni visited him in September of 1823 and informed him of some plates of gold that were buried in the hill Cummorah, that he was to wait four years and then translate those plates — plates which contained “*the fullness of the everlasting Gospel,*” and which, Mormons believe were translated by Joseph Smith, whom they regard as a “prophet.” There are several branches of modern day so-called “**Pent-ecostalism**,” but one thing they seem to have in common is the belief that they have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit which enables them to work miracles, speak in tongues, and to declare modern days revelations from God. One of the well known Pentecostals writer, Donald Gee, wrote, saying, “*What is the unique thing that makes the Pentecostal movement a definitely separate entity? It is the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives us utterance, And on this point the Pentecostal movement speaks with impressive unanimity,*” Pentecost, No. 34. Dec. 1955, p. 10. Add to the above the countless individuals who often refer to incidents in their lives, and they say “God spoke to me,” and then they cite what “God” allegedly said to them — it often being something totally different from anything one can read in the Bible!

In essence, one thing which all the preceding examples hold in common is the belief that God’s revelation, as is set forth in the Bible, is incomplete and that God is continuing to make known additional divine revelation — even though the “revelation” He allegedly reveals to one group is contradictory to the “revelation” He reveals to another group, or to other individuals. Of course, if this is indeed true, then *God is* what the Bible says He is **not**; namely, He is “**not the author of confusion, but of peace...**” I Cor. 14:33.

Having noted a few example among many of those who claim to be receiving, or have received, divine revelation apart from, and in addition to, the Bible, we now consider the question “is the Bible a complete and final revelation from God,” or “is God continuing to reveal new

truths to man in addition to what has already been revealed in the Bible?"

Before giving a direct answer to the preceding question, let us note a few things about the Bible. In one sense, the Bible is not one book, but many books in one. There are 66 books in the Bible, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. The Bible deals with three dispensations or time periods — the Patriarchal Age (Genesis 1-Exodus 19), the Mosaic Age (Exodus 20-Acts 1), and the Gospel Age (Acts 2-Revelaton). The Old Testament looks forward to the coming of the Messiah (Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Deut. 18:15-18; Isa. 7:14; Daniel 9:24-27); The New Testament virtually begins with an announcement of the birth of Christ (the Messiah), Matt. 1:1-2:1; it informs us of His sacrificial Death, burial, and resurrection (Matt. 27-28; Mark 15-16; Luke 23-24; John 19-20; it informs us of His return to the Father in heaven (Acts 1:9-11), and it closes with the promise that Jesus will come again (Rev. 22:20-21). In a real sense Jesus is the hub of the Bible — the Old testament points to His coming, the New Testament announces His arrival, and it informs us that Jesus will return to judge all mankind.

Jesus came *“to seek and to save the lost, Luke 19:10. He **“finished the work”** which God sent Him to do, John 17:4. Jesus **“fulfilled”** all that was written of Him **“in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms,”** Luke 24:44. He provided the one sacrificial offering (His own blood!) that would be sufficient to atone for sin, Heb. 9:9-28. Indeed, **“with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place **once for all**, having obtained eternal redemption,”** Heb. 9:12.*

During His earthly ministry Jesus selected 12 apostles who would serve as His ambassadors to make known His gospel plan of salvation to all the world, Matt. 10:1; 28:18-20. Later Saul of Tarsus, who became the apostle Paul, was added to the list of the apostles, Paul being sent primarily to the Gentiles, Gal. 2:7-9. Inasmuch as one of the qualifications for an apostle was the fact that he had to be an eyewitness of Jesus, I Cor. 9:1, and inasmuch as the Lord appeared to Saul (or Paul) *“last of all,”* I Cor. 15:8, then Saul was the **last** of the apostles.

However, prior to the Lord’s departure from the world, He began to prepare His apostles to continue the work He had begun. He announced that He would send *“the Helper, the Holy Spirit”* Who would teach them *“all things”* and bring to their *“remembrance all things”* Jesus had said to them, John 14:26; 15:26. Now let us note John 16:12-13: *“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot hear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you **into all truth**: for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”* Please observe: Jesus said the Holy Spirit would guide them into **“all truth.”** **If** they were guided into **“all truth,”** **then** how much **“truth”** was left to be revealed after all the apostles had died? You know the answer. Zero! Zilch!

The Holy Spirit was to guide the apostles into **“all truth.”** They were instructed to *“tarry in the city of Jerusalem”* until they were *“endued with power from on high,”* Luke 24:49; *“power”* they would receive when the Holy Spirit came *“upon them,”* Acts 1:8; they then watched as Jesus was *“taken up”* into heaven, Acts 1:9-11; they then returned to Jerusalem to *“tarry”* until they would be endued with power from on High, and this took place upon the day of Pentecost when they received the promised *“baptism of the Holy Spirit,”* Acts 1:5; 2:1-4, at which time they proclaimed the first gospel sermon resulting in 3,000 being saved, whom God *“added”* to the church, Acts 2:41-47.

Let us now summarize what we have said. Jesus Christ is the *“Messiah”* of Old Testament prophecy. The many miracles He performed provided conclusively that He is *“the Christ the Son of God,”* John 20:30-31. He was *“offered once to bear the sins of many,”* Heb. 9:27. His apostle were guided *“into all truth,”* John 16:13, which they received and which is set forth in the New Testament. *“The faith...was **once for all** delivered to the saints,”* Jude 3. We

will be judged by the word of the Lord when Jesus returns, John 12:48. He has given us *“all things that pertain to life and godliness,”* 2 Peter 1:3. That being the case, *“all truth”* of a spiritual nature has been revealed, by it we shall be judged, and we must not pervert it, go beyond what is written, add to or take from the word of God, Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11; Rev. 22:18-19. God’s word was *“given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,”* and by it *“the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work,”* 2 Tim. 3:16-17. In view of these facts, God’s word is complete; it contains *“all truth”* of a spiritual nature; therefore the claim that God is revealing **new** truth to people living in these days is false. Friend, mark it down: if it is new it is not true; if it is true it is not new. Let us stick with the Bible. By it we shall be judged.

—Bobby Witherington