

CONTINUOUS REVELATION

(by George Battey)

A major difference between the church of Christ and man-made denominations is that we believe the Bible contains God's final and complete revelation.

When I say "final" – I mean everything implied by that word. I do not say "final" and mean "mostly."

Some say they believe the 66 books of the Bible contain God's complete revelation to man, but after saying this, they contradict themselves:

- **By arguing for miraculous power.** If miraculous gifts, such as speaking in tongues, are still possible today, then prophecy is still possible today – for it is one of the spiritual gifts listed in 1 Cor. 12. If prophecy still occurs, then the Bible does not contain God's complete and final revelation to man.
- **By arguing God "reveals" things to them.** If God reveals to men anything in addition to the 66 books of the Bible, then the Bible is not God's complete and final revelation to man.

I believe the Bible is God's final and complete revelation. God is not going to reveal anything to anyone besides what has been revealed in the 66 books of the Bible.

- *He will not reveal to you whether you should enter the ministry or not.*
- *He will not reveal to you whether you should homeschool your children or not.*
- *He will not reveal which person you should marry.*

God is not in the "revealing business" any more. He has revealed His entire will in the pages of the Bible.

NOTE: I am discussing "special revelation." I am not discussing "general revelation."

For example:

Psalms 19:1-3 (NKJV)

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.

2 Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge.

3 There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard.

The creation “reveals” certain things about God:

- *That He exists.*
- *That He is infinitely wise.*
- *That He is good.*

But there are certain things about God we cannot know without “special revelation”:

- *Exactly what is He like?*
- *What does He want people to do?*
- *How should He be worshipped?*

These things can only be known by “special revelation” – i.e. He must tell us.

I am going to present to you **six reasons** why God no longer gives “special revelation” to anyone any more – six reasons why the Bible should be considered the complete and final revelation of God’s will to man.

REASON #1

1) Jesus specifically taught that the apostles would be led into “all truth.”

John 14:26 (NKJV)

*26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you **all things**, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

John 16:12-13 (NKJV)

*12 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.
13 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.*

Here we actually learn two things:

FIRST: We learn that revelation was incomplete at this time.

SECOND: Revelation was going to become complete during the lifetime of the apostles.

REASON #2

2) The apostles specifically said that “all truth” was delivered to them.

2 Peter 1:3 (NKJV)

*3 as His divine power has given to us **all things that pertain to life and godliness**, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,*

Everything necessary to live a faithful godly life pleasing to God has been revealed to the apostles. No more revelation is necessary.

Acts 20:26-27 (NKJV)

26 *Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.*

27 *For I have not shunned to declare to you **the whole counsel of God.***

In previous generations men could not say this.

- ▶ **Moses** knew he had not revealed the “*whole counsel of God*” for he said a “*prophet like himself*” would come speaking the words of God (Dt. 18:15-18).
- ▶ **Isaiah** knew the “*whole counsel of God*” had not been revealed in his day for he said the “*coastlands would wait for the law*” of the Messiah (Isa. 42:1-4).
- ▶ **Malachi** knew the “*whole counsel of God*” had not been revealed for he prophesied of John coming to prepare the way for the Lord and the Lord Himself would bring a new covenant (Mal. 3:1).

The OT was:

- ▶ Temporary
- ▶ Preparatory
- ▶ Incomplete revelation

But the NT is final and complete. The “*whole counsel of God*” has been revealed.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)

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

17 *that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

The scripture revealed to the apostles and written down by inspiration are sufficient:

- *To make the man of God **complete.***
- *To **thoroughly equip** the man of God with **every good work.***

The scriptures of the Bible are not lacking. They supply every need man has to live a faithful, godly life pleasing to God.

REASON #3

3) **The Bible specifically states the revelation of God’s will was done “once for all.”**

Jude 3 (NKJV)

*3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for **the faith which was once for all delivered** to the saints.*

“once for all” (ὄναξ) – “a single time” (Strong); “once, one time” (Thayer).

Hebrews 9:26-28 (NKJV)

*26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, **once** at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*

*27 And as it is appointed for men to die **once**, but after this the judgment,
28 so Christ was offered **once** to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.*

Only one time did Jesus come to sacrifice Himself. It will never happen again.

Only one time will men have to die physically. It will never happen again.

(See also: 2 Cor. 11:25; Phil. 4:16; 1 Th. 2:18; Heb. 6:4; 9:7; 10:2; 12:26, 27; 1 Pet. 3:18, 20; Jude 1:5)

Jude used this same word (ὄναξ) to describe the revelation of God’s will. It was delivered “once for all.”

Listen again:

Jude 3 (NKJV)

*3 ... I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for **the faith** which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

“the faith” – the doctrine of Jesus and the apostles.

Galatians 1:23 (NKJV)

*23 But they were hearing only, “He who formerly persecuted us now preaches **the faith** which he once tried to destroy.”*

1 Timothy 4:1 (NKJV)

*1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from **the faith**, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,*

So “the faith” (teachings of Jesus and the apostles) was delivered “once for all time.” It will never have to be done again.

REMEMBER: The same word “once” describes Jesus’ death on the cross. He did it “once for all” time. It will never have to be done again.

SUMMARY:

- Jesus promised “all truth” would be revealed to the apostles.
- Peter and Paul wrote that “all truth” was revealed.
- Jude said the teachings of Jesus and the apostles was delivered to the saints “once for all” time. It will never happen again.

This brings me to my next point:

REASON #4

4) The written revelation of God's will was divinely protected from loss.

Psalms 119:152 (NKJV)

152 Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever.

Matthew 24:35 (NKJV)

*35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but **My words will by no means pass away.***

It is true that from time to time men have tried destroy the scriptures.

- Bibles have been piled up and burned publicly.
- Bibles were chained to the pulpit and common men were forbidden by law to have their own copies of the Bible.
- Men were put to death for translating the Bible and distributing the Bible.

Yet it is also true that the Bible has never been destroyed. Jesus has kept His promise to watch over his word and protect it from perishing.

REASON #5

5) The written revelation of God's will was divinely protected from corruption.

1 Peter 1:23-25 (NKJV)

23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,

24 because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away,

25 But the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

“incorruptible” (v23) – divinely protected from corruption.

“the word of God which lives and abides forever” (v23) – alive; perpetually relevant (cf. Heb. 4:12); not susceptible to death.

“the word of the Lord endures forever” (v25) – the scriptures are placed in contrast with things that perish (grass and flowers). The scriptures are not susceptible to perishing.

“Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you” (v25) – the very words of the apostles, which had been preached (past tense) are the scriptures under consideration.

SUMMARY:

- Jesus promised “all truth” would be revealed to the apostles.
- Peter and Paul wrote that “all truth” was revealed.
- Jude said the teachings of Jesus and the apostles was delivered to the saints “once for all” time. It will never happen again.
- Jesus promised the revealed word would be protected from loss.
- Jesus promised the revealed word would be protected from corruption.

REASON #6

6) The apostles specifically taught that “prophecies would fail.”

1 Corinthians 13:8-13 (NKJV)

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

10 *But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.*

11 *When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

12 *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.*

13 *And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

Let's look carefully at each verse in this passage:

VERSE 8

Three spiritual gifts are mentioned:

- *Prophecies*
- *Tongues*
- *Knowledge*

A complete list of all miraculous powers is given in 1 Cor. 12:8-10. These three gifts are a sample and represent all the gifts.

Prophecy – refers to the revelation of new truths. This ability would “fail.”

Tongues – refers to human languages as Acts 2 makes plain:

Acts 2:11 (NKJV)

11 ... we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.”

Acts 2:8 (NKJV)

8 And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?

“our own tongues” (v11) = “our own language” (v8)

The miracle was the fact that the apostles could speak in these human languages fluently without having to study. This ability would “cease.”

Knowledge – refers to miraculous knowledge – the ability to know things without studying.

Matthew 10:19-20 (NKJV)

19 *But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak;*

20 *for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.*

This miraculous knowledge would “vanish away.”

Look carefully at these three expressions:

- “Fail”
- “Cease”
- “Vanish away”

The words “fail” and “vanish away” are translated from the same Greek word; the word “cease” is translated from a different word.

One word describes what is going to happen to prophecies and knowledge; another word describes what will happen to tongues. Let’s make a chart:

Prophecies will “ <i>fail</i> ” Knowledge will “ <i>vanish away</i> ”	Tongues will “ <i>cease</i> ”
καταργηθήσονται	παύσονται
future, passive, indicative of καταργέω	future, middle, indicative of παύω

“tongues will cease” (παύω) – middle voice – to simply “stop” themselves *because the goal has been achieved and they are no longer needed.*

ILL: When an Olympic runner crosses the finish line, he stops running because he has reached his goal.

Tongues were destined to stop themselves because they reached their goal.

Notice how this word is used in other passages:

Hebrews 10:1-2 (NKJV)

1 For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.

*2 For then would they not have **ceased** (παύω) to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.*

Animal sacrifices did not “cease” of themselves because they never achieved their goal (forgiveness).

Tongues, however, would stop themselves – because they would reach their goal.

“prophecies will FAIL ... knowledge will VANISH AWAY” (καταργέω) – passive voice – *rendered inactive because replaced with something else.*

Since animal sacrifices never reached their goal, they could not “cease” (παύω) – i.e. they could not stop themselves. Therefore, they had to be rendered inactive by being replaced with something else – the sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 10:12).

SUMMARY

Two words are used to describe the stoppage of:

- *Tongues on the one hand, and*
- *Prophecies and knowledge on the other hand.*

1) **Tongues will simply stop themselves.**

They will not be replaced with anything. They will stop because they reached their goal.

Tongues were a “sign” (Mk. 16:17) to unbelievers (1 Cor. 14:22). They served to convince unbelievers that the apostles and prophets of the NT were genuine spokesmen for God.

They accomplished this purpose and then stopped. Nothing replaced them.

2) **Prophecies and knowledge will be replaced.**

Just like tongues, they will stop, but they will be rendered inactive because something else replaced them.

Let’s keep reading to see what is going to replace prophecies and knowledge:

VERSE 9

1 Corinthians 13:9 (NKJV)

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

Paul knew only part of God’s will. He prophesied only part of God’s will.

- Matthew knew part
- Mark
- Luke
- John
- Peter
- James
- Jude

The part of God’s will which each man received was being put together with what others received. It was all progressing toward the complete revelation of God’s will.

VERSE 10

1 Corinthians 13:10 (NKJV)

10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

“that which is perfect” (τὸ τέλειον) – This word “perfect” is never used in reference to the second coming of Christ. It means **“complete, mature.”**

Matthew 5:48 (NKJV)

*48 “Therefore you shall be **perfect**, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*

Matthew 19:21 (NKJV)

*21 Jesus said to him, “If you want to be **perfect**, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”*

1 Corinthians 14:20 (NKJV)

*20 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be **mature**.*

James 1:25 (NKJV)

*25 But he who looks into the **perfect** law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

(See also: Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 2:6; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15; Col. 1:28; 4:12; Heb. 5:14; 9:11; Ja. 1:4, 17; 3:2; 1 Jn. 4:18)

“that which is perfect” (v10) – refers to that which is “complete.”

- ▶ *This is used in direct contrast to the partial prophesying and knowledge of v9.*
- ▶ *In this context, it can mean nothing except the completed revelation of God’s will.*

When all the parts have been revealed and made known, when the revelation of God's will has been "*completed*" or "*perfected*," then miracles will end.

REMEMBER: In 1 Cor. 12:31 Paul was going to show the Corinthians a "*more excellent way*" – not a more excellent person. "That which is perfect" does not refer to:

- A person (like Jesus)
 - But rather to a "way" – a "*more excellent way*."
-

Q: What is the "*more excellent way*" besides spiritual gifts which brought jealousy and fussing?

R: Complete revelation with faith, hope and love!

VERSE 11

1 Corinthians 13:11 (NKJV)

*11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I **put away** (καταργέω) childish things.*

Miracles are being compared to "*childish things*" that are "*put away*." They would not continue forever.

Miracles were for the "*infant*" stage of the church. When the church matured and possessed God's entire, revealed will, these "*childish things*" would be put away (replaced) with something better.

VERSE 12

1 Corinthians 13:12 (NKJV)

12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

Mirrors in those days were simply polished metal.

Exodus 38:8 (NKJV)

*8 He made the laver of bronze and its base of bronze, from the **bronze mirrors** of the serving women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.*

As the mirror was being made, people could begin to see their reflection. The more the mirror was polished, the better the image became. When the mirror was completed, men could see themselves clearly – they could see themselves as others saw them.

God's revealed will is compared to a mirror:

James 1:22-25 (NKJV)

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

*25 But **he who looks into the perfect law of liberty** and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

At the time Paul wrote, the “mirror” was in the process of being made. Each time another book of the NT was written, things were becoming clearer and clearer.

“Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known” – Paul himself was polishing the mirror – i.e. he was contributing his part to the NT scriptures. When the mirror was completed, men could look into the scriptures and see themselves clearly – just as others saw them.

VERSE 13

1 Corinthians 13:13 (NKJV)

13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

While miracles would end, faith, hope and love would continue.

The “more excellent way” (12:31) than miraculous powers with envy and strife, is living a loving life with the completed revelation of God’s will.

SUMMARY

- 1) Jesus promised “all truth” would be revealed to the apostles.
- 2) Peter and Paul wrote that “all truth” was revealed.
- 3) Jude said the teachings of Jesus and the apostles was delivered to the saints “once for all” time. It will never happen again.
- 4) Jesus promised the revealed word would be protected from loss.
- 5) Jesus promised the revealed word would be protected from corruption.
- 6) The apostles specifically taught that “prophecies would fail.”

CONCLUSION

FIRST: Since God has revealed His entire will in the 66 books of the Bible, every other book which claims to have come from Him is a fabricated lie.

- *The “revelations” of Ellen G. White (founder of the Seventh-Day Adventists) are lies.*

- *The “revelations” of **Mary Baker Eddie** (founder of the Church of Christ Scientist) are lies.*
- *The “revelations” of **Joseph Smith** are lies.*
- *The “revelations” of **Muhammad** are lies.*

Galatians 1:8-9 (NKJV)

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

The apostle could write this only if he knew “**all truth**” had been delivered to him and the other apostles.

SECOND: Since all truth has been revealed, God is not going to reveal trivial, mundane matters to anyone.

God is not in the revealing business any more. He will not reveal to anyone:

- ▶ *Whether they should be a baseball coach.*
- ▶ *Whether they should homeschool their kids.*
- ▶ *Whether they should marry one person over another.*

God has revealed everything we need to know and it is our obligation to read His revelation and pray for wisdom to apply His instructions in a wise way.

- ▶ *When we decide to start a baseball team, don’t blame God for the decision.*
- ▶ *When we decide to marry someone, don’t blame God for the decision.*

God is getting “*credit*” (blame) for a lot of things He doesn’t deserve.

ILL: A baseball coach said God “*led*” him to begin a homeschool baseball team.

Q: How does this coach know God “led” him?

R: The truth is – he does not know. This coach is claiming to know more than Mordecai knew.

Observe:

Esther 4:14 (NKJV)

*14 For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet **who knows** whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”*

“Who knows” – Mordecai did not know for sure whether Esther was queen “*for such a time as this.*” He suspected it was possible, but without a prophet giving direct revelation, Mordecai had to say, “*Who knows?*”

Again:

Philemon 15 (NKJV)

*15 For **perhaps** he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever,*

“Perhaps” – Why did Paul use this word? After all, if a baseball coach knows for certain that God “led” him to begin a homeschool team, Paul (an apostle) would know for certain that Onesimus left his master “*for a while ... that you might receive him forever.*”

The point is: *Without direct revelation from God, men do not know whether God is providentially manipulating the course of events.*

- **Yes**, *it is possible God is behind an event.*
- **Yes**, *it is possible God is manipulating events.*
- **NO**, *men do not know for certain unless God reveals this thru a prophet or apostle.*

Amos 3:7-8 (NKJV)

7 Surely the Lord GOD does nothing,

*Unless **He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.***

8 A lion has roared!

Who will not fear?

The Lord GOD has spoken!

Who can but prophesy?

Mormons use this passage to “*prove*” revelation has not ceased – that God continues to have prophets and continues to reveal things beyond what is written in scripture. This is a misuse of the passage.

What does it mean?

This and the following verse apply the foregoing parables. All the evils announced come from the Lord; but he brings none of them on the people without first warning by his prophets (comp. Jn 13:19; 14:29). His secret (sod); unrevealed till then. (Pulpit Commentary, XIV:40).

In other words, God is not the One doing the things mentioned in Amos 3:1-6 unless He Himself reveals such to His servants the prophets.

Hence, when a lion roars, though having no prey (v4), Israel knows God was the One manipulating the lion’s roar only if and when a prophet reveals such information. No one can know what God is thinking or doing unless God reveals such (see 1 Cor 2:11). \

CONCLUSION: A baseball coach can know God manipulated the course of events to start a homeschool team only if a prophet revealed such! However, there are no prophets to reveal such today. Prophecy has ceased (1 Cor 13:8-13) because God’s revelation is complete.

God leads men and speaks to men today **only** thru the written scriptures!

Psalms 119:105 (NKJV)

*105 Your word is **a lamp to my feet** And **a light to my path.***

This is how God leads men today!

CONTINUOUS REVELATION

QUESTIONS:

- 1) How many times will Jesus have to be crucified and what does this have to do with continuous revelation?
- 2) First Tim. 4:1 says, "Some will depart from the faith." What is meant by "the faith"?
- 3) Did Jesus ever promise to protect His word from loss?
- 4) Did Jesus ever promise to protect His word from corruption?
- 5) What can you say about the Greek words for "fail," "vanish away," and "cease"?
- 6) What does an Olympic runner do when he crosses the finish line?
- 7) What does 1 Cor. 14:20 have in common with 1 Cor. 13:10?
- 8) What were mirrors made out of before there was glass?