

The Treasure in the Earthen Vessel: The Revelation



**The treasure:
The divine thought**

The message

**The earthen vessel:
Human language**

The imperfect, limited, human language is the vessel for the perfect, infinite thought of God. If we look only to the imperfect language used without seeing the divine thought behind it we will not be able to understand what revelation is.

divine origin and therefore it is perfect and glorious, but the language in which it is given to humanity, and passed on to others, is weak and imperfect. This applies to the original language which the Bible was written in as well as to the various translations. The thoughts contained in the Bible were inspired by the Spirit of God, but the words were not.

Critics of the Bible often refer to the mistakes in grammar and style, as well as errors in copying the texts, as proof that it cannot be inspired. But anyone who presents such arguments only shows that they do not understand the mystery of God.

Of course, by human logic alone we cannot grasp the fact that imperfect language can express a perfect thought. This is indeed a miracle of God's working. God is a Master Artist, and He is capable of per-

forming a perfect work with an inferior instrument. He chooses His instrument Himself, and uses it in such a way that the divine thought reaches us reliably. Whoever desires to do so can understand the divine thoughts behind the words. But if we concentrate only on the vessel we will soon lose sight of the treasure.

As in many other areas, there are two extremes in regard to the question of the inspiration of the Bible. One extreme is that every single word of the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit. In this view the writer is understood to be a kind of secretary who literally copies down what the Spirit of God dictates.

It is easy to show the error in this approach. In the Bible we find several styles of writing, depending on the characteristics of the individual writers. For example, Peter writes that Paul's letters are, in part, difficult to understand. "As also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures." *2 Peter* 3:15, 16. Anyone who knows Greek and has attempted to translate the apostle Paul's letters will concur with this statement. It is also easy to see that John has a very different style. The better we understand the nuances of language, the more clearly we see the differences in the styles of the various authors. But if the Holy Ghost had dictated every book of the Bible, there would be only one style throughout the whole volume.

The belief in a word-by-word inspiration of the Bible actually leads to a darkening of the biblical message. The treasure is lost sight of because only the vessel is considered. The same results can be seen when someone believes that Jesus had the perfect nature of Adam before he fell.

The other extreme is seen in those who do not believe in inspiration at all. As already described, they see only the imperfection of the vessel—the human element. They reject the divine origin of the Bible because this treasure is hidden in the weakness and imperfection of human language. In the same way many people have rejected Christ as the Son of God because He was a man who bore the weaknesses of fallen human nature.

The exponents of both extremes agree on one point—they think that inspiration depends on the language in which the Bible was written. In other words, they concentrate on the vessel. But in doing so, they lose sight of the treasure.

"The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the