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The 16 Foundational Truths Series  
**Those are really God's Words in the Bible**  
By Jim Railey

*Editor's note: This is the first in a series of eight monthly articles on the 16 Foundational Truths of the Assemblies of God, written by faculty of Assemblies of God Theological Seminary.*

*"The Scriptures Inspired: The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are verbally inspired of God and are the revelation of God to man, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct."*

One of the choruses I sang as a child in Sunday school is indelibly impressed on my mind: "The B-I-B-L-E." This little chorus asserted that the Bible was the book for me, the Word of God upon which I could stand. In the years that have passed since childhood, I have found that the sentiment of that chorus is true — God has spoken to us, that speech is recorded infallibly for us in the Bible, and we can stand on that Word alone.

We use several designations to define what we mean by "the Scriptures." For instance, we call them sacred writings, and in so doing we are in agreement with the view of the ancient Hebrews and early Christians. When Paul assured Timothy that the Scriptures were invaluable for life and service, he referred to them as the Scriptures, or the "writings," the same way in which the nation of Israel referred to those sacred writings by which they lived (2 Timothy 3:14-17, NIV). These writings are sacred because of their divine source; they are the product of Almighty God through human authors. They are sacred also because of their value to humans; they provide for us the knowledge of God that is necessary for our salvation.

The Bible provides authoritative guidance to humans, not only for salvation but also for the direction needed for living this life. Other authoritative sources, such as the church, tradition and reason, are valued in their respective places, but the Bible is the ultimate authority by which Christians live their lives. The Word of God is life itself. The life that is provided by the Word of God is not merely adequate, it is abundant and full. The riches of the kingdom of God in the present are found and experienced in the Word of God, providing preparation for the future complete expression of the kingdom of God.

The Bible is one book, divided into the Old and New Testaments. Several factors clearly set forth the unity of the two Testaments. There is a common theme to be found in both the Old and New Testaments — the plan of God to redeem fallen humanity, focused on the sending of His Son to be the Redeemer. There is evidence of a common author, God himself, speaking through chosen human authors to make known His will. The prophetic utterances and their subsequent fulfillment also link the two Testaments. The story of Jesus, especially as told by Matthew, is replete with examples of fulfilled prophecies, including the miraculous nature of and place of His birth and the flight into Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod (Matthew 1:22,23; 2:5,6,14,15).

God has chosen to reveal, to disclose, himself to humans, without which we could not know Him. Indeed, we have not found God; He has found us, and that is the exciting truth

of Christianity. He has revealed himself in the world that He created, in the constitution of human beings, and in the flow of human history. These aspects of His revelation, however, pale in the light of the disclosure of himself made in Jesus Christ. Before His death Jesus made sure the disciples knew that in seeing Him they had seen the Father (John 14:9-11), and the writer of Hebrews called Jesus the “radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (1:3 NIV). To make sure that we would not miss Him, God took upon himself human flesh and lived among us.

Though we do not now see Jesus in the flesh, as did the disciples, we have the revelation of God in human words. God chose to inspire humans to write about Him to ensure that we could encounter Him. While we do not know what verbal symbols God uses in heaven, for us He has chosen to use the language of this earth. We may not have been able to understand the communication system of heaven, but we can know the manner in which He has chosen to communicate with us — our language. In this way His revelation can be transmitted and preserved through time.

The process by which God has allowed His revelation to be encapsulated in human language can be described as plenary-verbal inspiration. Paul declared to Timothy that “all Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16 NIV), which aptly shows what is meant by the concept of inspiration. The Bible is the very product of the breathing out of God through human vessels. Peter described the origin of Scripture and identified the same two elements: “Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21 NIV).

Both Paul and Peter point to the successful work of God the Holy Spirit to inspire the writing of the Scriptures so that in their entirety they fully declare the Word of God to us. God chose to employ human authors for the activity of writing His revelation in human language. In using them to write Holy Scripture He did not violate their humanity, but engaged them fully in the process. Making use of their vocabularies and writing styles, God moved upon the biblical writers so that they wrote His will for succeeding generations to read.

The work of the Holy Spirit upon those human authors was so mysterious and powerful that, without dictating what they were to write, they did write what He wanted written. The words they chose to use in actuality were the precise words that best conveyed the will of God. Thus, God worked to ensure that the message was not lost in the process of flowing through human authors.

With such an involvement of God in the writing of Scripture it is not surprising that we describe God’s Word as infallible. The Word of God contains such force that it will accomplish its intended purpose. The prophet Isaiah noted, “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever” (40:8 NIV). The infallible Word of God is totally correct. There is no possibility that the Bible will ever mislead us because it tells the truth in every assertion that it makes.

The Assemblies of God maintains that the Bible is “the authoritative rule of faith and conduct.” This is very similar to Paul’s assertion that the Bible is “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16 NIV). The Scriptures tell us what we are to believe and we must be careful to allow the Bible to judge our beliefs. Our manner of living is not decided upon by a comparison with that of the world. Rather, the Bible speaks to us about the way we conduct ourselves as ambassadors of God in this dark and dying world. When confronted with situations that bring distress and sorrow into

our lives, we turn to the Bible and in it hear the Word of God bringing comfort and strength.

We may no longer sing the children's chorus "The B-I-B-L-E," but the truth that it declared is still to be considered. The Bible is the Word of God and it does provide that upon which we can stand no matter what happens in the world around us. In the Bible, God still speaks to us, and we hear Him as we worshipfully read it.

Jim Railey is Professor of Theology and Chairperson of the Bible and Theology Department at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary.

*The second article in the series will appear in our March 24 issue.*