

VV STUDY NOTES: 13th January 2024

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INSPIRATION: Wk-2

Last week Steve asked important questions, that deserve careful considerations. Too many of the current concepts of Inspiration have long since lost all credibility, and there needs to be an open and honest reassessment of the whole topic.

I believe the Holy Spirit still speaks and moves within the family of believers, and that we need to be open to that and accommodate it, without necessarily expanding the Canon of Scripture. We need a reassessment of our understanding of the OT & NT that has enough flexibility and reality to make it easier for us to identify their strengths and weakness.

I will provide an assessment of Aulden Thompsons book (Revised Edition) and the review by Normal R Gulley posted by Jim with a link to the Ministry Magazine. Aulden's Revised Edition has a more developed understanding of his thinking, and Norman's review is addressing that reality.

My purpose today is to provide a refence framework which addresses the broad spectrum of our topic that hopefully will help us all in pursuing our goal of understanding the topic more completely and productively.

VERBAL INSPIRATION

I believe the human theory of Verbal Inspiration is a grave crime against the Scripture.

The bible is replete with examples of contradictory evidence in both Testaments.

If the Spirit dictated the bible, this could only have happened if the Spirit has a FAULTY MEMORY!

I admit that bad memory is an issue that afflicts myself, and I expect all of us experience the same limitation.

If any of you don't suffer from same problem, please let us all know, for we must treat you with great reverence.(Laugh here!)

Verbal Inspiration is an idea that implies that the Holy Spirit suffers from onset-dementia.

Aulden Thompson takes the view that we should never impose on scripture anything that is incompatible with the documentary evidence of Scripture itself.

I can imagine some brave soul suggesting the Book of Life is to ensure that God gets it right on day of Judgment. In my mind that is compatible with the idea that God created dinosaurs to test our faith.

Is the teaching of Verbal Inspiration an act of Blasphemy?

There are a few passages of Scripture where we know God Wrote!

The 10 Commandments were written by God.

God wrote on the wall in Babylon to tell the King he was under Judgment. (Dan 5)

Do you believe there are other parts that could be clearly identified?

APOSTOLIC VIEWS ON INSPIRATION

I believe that it's important to let the bible speak for itself, rather than superimposing our own ideas on the biblical content before we attempt to understand it. There are many references to Scripture in the New Testament, but the two most important ones were given by Peter (Apostle to the Jews) and Paul (Apostle to Jews, but primarily to the Gentiles).

2 Timothy 3: 14-4: 4

2 Peter 1: 12-2: 3

Both these passages assert the following:

- Holy Spirit inspired and guided the Prophet's.
- They emphasize the humanity of the Prophet's.
- They were driven by the Spirit who sustained and emboldened them to faithfully bear testimony to what God had revealed to them.
- They never say the Spirit directed the words they wrote.
- There were always those who for personal power, greed or pure ego opposed the purposes of God. Both the above passages specifically identify that this would be constant, and in time would be stronger than when the passages were written.

It doesn't take too much searching in the OLD TESTAMENT to realize that **False Prophets** were always in abundance, only too willing to provide soothing encouragement to those who were the powerbrokers in the land. **When there's money and influence to be earned by "words", the words will always be readily provided.** TRUTH and EVIL have always been at war. "The Great Controversy" has dominated reality since ***the beginning***.

If you have read the passages above do you think the above assessment is a fair one?

UNDERSTANDING THE MOSAIC COVENANT

1 Cor 10: 1-10 tells us that Christ was the presence of God that led Israel out of Egypt.

Exodus 20 Tells us that GOD **SPOKE** the 10 Commandment from the mountain.

Exodus 21:1-24:8 is the record of the Book of the Law (Covenant). This was confirmed twice by the people. The Ten Commandment seem to be the foundation of the Covenant which would explain why they were in the Ark of the Covenant. The Laws are a practical application of the 10 commandments, with promises of blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.

1. (v.3-4) Moses **spoke** it to the people, and they gave their first acceptance. Only then did he **write** it down.
2. (v.4-8) The following day, young men selected by Moses offered the first burnt offering on an altar they had made. There **was no priesthood** at this point.
Half the blood was sprinkled against the altar.
Then Moses **read** the Book of the Covenant. The congregation repeated their acceptance: "We will do everything the Lord has said, we will obey". The rest of the blood was sprinkled on the people as a sign of the ratification of the Covenant.

This appears to be the TOTALITY OF THE MOSAIC COVENANT!

The Pentateuch doesn't exist at this point.

Only then would God **WRITE** the 10 Commandments on the tablets that would be put in the Ark of the Covenant.

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN ISRAEL STOPPED LISTENING TO GOD?

The incident of the GOLDEN CALF and the events that followed demonstrates a pattern that unfortunately reasserted itself on a recurring basis.

To what extent the OT writings were developed through into the period of David & Solomon is somewhat opaque. We know that genealogical records of the Tribes and the Rulers were kept. Who did so, where these records were kept is also opaque.

There is a significant probability that a lot was carried forward in the form of Oral Traditions, which probably explains many of the inconsistencies when the records were finally collated and documented.

A. THE 10 TRIBE DISASTER (Northern Kingdom)

David's kingship was saved by the support of the 10 Tribes.

The alliance was weakened by Solomon's greed and destroyed by Solomon's son.

Despite of the witness of prophet to these kingdoms (Elijah & Elisha, etc) They fell into idolatry, and the KINGDOM WAS DESTROYED BY ASSYRIA. Much of the population were sent into slavery, and other Assyrian captives transplanted into those land.

The remaining amalgam were the SAMARITANS.

B. The Disaster in Judea (Judah and Benjamin)

2 Kings 21:1- 26 describes to decent into pure paganism during the reigns of Manasseh and his son Amon.

2 Kings 22:1-23:30 covers the life of Josiah.

In 640BC king Josiah (means "Yahweh will give.) comes to the throne at 8yrs old. There is a regency because of his age. Until 622BC the only advancement was a program of building repairs on the Temple. **(21:8) 622BC** Hilkiah the high priest finds a the "Book of the Law", and for the first time in long time it is set free.

Josiah is shocked to the core because he realizes that the nation deserves the CURSE OF BANISHMENT as had the 10 tribes.

He decides to boldly recommit the nation to the Covenant but seeks a word from the Lord. The prophet HULDA (a woman) tells him God still implement the banishment, but not in his lifetime.

(23:1-2) it clarifies that the book was in fact the **Book of the Covenant**.

Josiah reads the Covenant to the people, and they recommit to obey it.

I expect if there had been a secret ballot there would have been a split vote. The events of the next few years attest to that reality.

Joshua begins to implement reforms.

609BC Josiah dies

605BC The Babylonians invade Jerusalem and Judea for the first of three times and by 587BC the Temple and City are destroyed, and the people mostly in exile.

NOTE: The parallel account in 2 Chronicles 34:29 -36:1 tells the story with significantly different timelines for the events. *This is another example of the human touch in the records.*

C. A RENEWAL IN BABYLON

How many manuscripts and records went with the exiles we don't know. However, the above realities suggest it was limited.

But God did not abandon them: JEREMIAH and others were witnessing in Judea.

Ezekial, Daniel and other were witnessing in Exile. There has always been a REMNANT among god's people, wherever they may be-Jew or Gentile.

By the waters of Babylon, they remembered Zion.

In a spirit of repentance, the remnant rescued an honest record of all the dealings they had with God. THE GOOD, THE BAD , EVEN THE CONFLICTING RECORDS.

The OLD TESTAMENT they began to pull together, is the ONLY ANCIENT DOCUMENT that shrieks out a spirit of TOTAL HONESTY.

But in its honesty (it tears to shreds the idea of VERBAL INSPIRATION)

PAUL'S INSIGHTS TO THE PAST AND THE FUTURE?

1 Corinthians 12,13,14

We have already looked at Paul's observations on the inspiration of Scripture and the witnesses chosen by Christ.

Paul is now looking at the future of Spiritual Gifts in the ongoing experience of the god's people.

Why would he encourage people to aspire to the greater gifts if he thought they were not intended to continue?

12:1-11 focuses on the role of Spiritual Gifts in the church.

- Each member of the body of Christ should have a spiritual calling and be equipped to fulfil it.
- The gifts are intended to be a blessing to the whole church.
- The Spirit **chooses** which gift each believer should have.

12:12-31

- The gifts can only accomplish their task when all the gifts are allowed to function as intended.
- (v 29-30) There is a hierarchy of gifts. (Apostles, prophets, teachers....) and it is rare for anyone to have all the gifts.
- (v 31) Some Gifts are greater than others, and it is not wrong for someone to ask the Spirit to empower them with one of those gifts.

Some in the modern church believe the gift of apostleship ended with the death of the Apostles chosen by Christ himself.

Paul suggests that is not so, and Romans 16 indicated that there were other Apostles.

John Stott suggest that the Church can recognize and commission Apostles when they display the Spiritual Leadership qualities this entails.

12:31-13:13 If any revelation or activity is incompatible with the **principles of Love**, it stands condemned in the sight of God.

14:1 *"Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy".*

What do you think of this advice?

14:2-25 & 14:34-35

One problem that Verbal Inspiration exacerbates is that in some of his letters, Paul addresses problems that have been reported to him by believers in the churches he is writing to. Those churches were aware of the exact nature of the questions, but we don't know what they were. The two passages above are examples of this.

- *There are churches today where speaking tongues is considered an identifier of a true believer.* It's a gift that has throughout history has been elevated out all proportion to the extent of being destructive of the unity of the church. Paul is facing this issue head on, honouring the gift but imposing a policy strict containment at the same time.
- *(v:35) In some manuscripts this is at the end of the chapter.* *The comment about women speaking in the church is related to woman who are somehow being disruptive. We don't know the details.*
This is used to silence the voice of women, while ignoring the fact that Paul in other letters considers the ministry of women to be extremely valuable. (Romans 16)

14:26-34: 35-40

We must be careful that we don't think this is the only type of worship within the church. Paul has already identified the gifts of Apostle & Teacher which clearly come with an additional form of church gathering. We clearly see this within the ministry of Paul himself.

Would Paul be horrified if we treated the details as being more important than the principles?

The value of the passage is the discipline it imposes. Someone with the Gift of Prophecy does not have the freedom to dominate others. **They must be open to the moving of the Spirit in others.**

Does this counsel make space for an EXCLUSIVE gift of prophecy to one person?

ALDEN THOMPSON (INSPIRATION: Second Revised Edition)

The original edition of Alden's book was published by the Review and Herald, at their request. It soon garnered both praise and hostility. The hostility came primarily from the conservative wing of the church, and the GC.

Alden wanted to expand his thinking, but there was no possibility of this being published or approved by the church. Eventually he published the Revised Edition through Energion Publications.

Norman Gulley's review in Ministry Magazine is of this edition.

I have no intention of doing an extensive review of the book, although it deserves that level of attention. In general, I admire Alden for his honest attempt to address this subject within the context of working in an Adventist University. He has a burden to bear that is not my burden.

Both Alden and Norman both approach their analysis of INSPIRATION through the filter of EGW. It's an acknowledgement of the stranglehold that the writings of EGW have on the SDA church.

Alden has found multiple quotations from EGW asserting that it's the person who is inspired, not the words. The words are human words, but God's words, even though God inspired the writers. This of course causes consternation in the church circles where Verba Inspiration still has a strong foothold.

Alden developed a concept in his first book of **CODEBOOK & CASEBOOK** but did not fully develop the idea. In the second book he spells it out with much greater clarity.

He also classifies INSPIRATION into "3 Categories for which he supplies multiple examples by way of explanation.

1. REVELATION: "A VISION"

By vision, or dream God communicated to a prophet who writes what they are shown in their own human words. It could also be as an outcome of a Direct Encounter with God through a range of divine like encounters.

2. INSPIRATION: "A FIRE IN THE BONES"

God inspiring individuals with a compulsive need to bear witness to the things they had seen and know. The gospel writers being examples of this, as would be the case with most of the NT, and large parts of the OT.

3. ILLUMINATION: "A GREAT IDEA"

Enlightenment given by the Holy Spirit to ordinary people.

The **CODEBOOK** and **CASEBOOK** concept is a tool Alden sees as a solution to the multiple contradictions that exist in the Scriptures.

The **CODEBOOK** is the legal framework which acts as the guiding principles for understanding all inspiration.

This is based on the law pyramid:

- **THE ONE:** Romans 13:10 **"Love is the fulfilling of the law"**
- **THE TWO:** Jesus' two great commands.
Matt 22:37(Deuteronomy 6:5)
"Love the Lord your 'god with all your heart".
Matt 22:39 (Leviticus 18:18)
"Love your neighbour as yourself".
- **THE TEN:** The commandments spoke by God from Sinai and then written on the stone tablets.
Deuteronomy 4;13, Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5

He displays this as a PYRAMID in the book and explains why he did that.

In essence he is saying that ALL THE OTHER PARTS OF SCRIPTURE must be understood within the context of this FILTER.

THE **CASEBOOK** is a concept akin to the development of the good human legal construct.

The understanding of any event must be within the context of the culture and knowledge base within which the events being recorded occur. In other words, God can change his guidance over time in relationship to the maturity of the people, cultural setting of the events, and in the framework of salvation history.

If I have not fully captured that essence, I hope Alden will forgive me.

This fits the pattern of Casebook Law ruling within most good modern Justice Systems. Judges consider the accumulated rulings over time that accommodate the multiple facets of the circumstance in which the events occur. This is more important than the actual words used in the biblical records.

It is this Codebook and Casebook concept that Norman Gully demeans in his review.

- His assessment is that EGW has a **Christocentric** focus, but Alden has a **LEGAL** focus. To me Alden's Codebook is totally **Christocentric**. I'm not an Adventist, and it makes sense to me, because it puts Christ at the centre of the Law. What better filter could you get for the OT?
- He also argues that Alden must be wrong because EGW never uses this sort of construct in her deliberations, and quotes extensively from EGW to support his position, which means he is even more wedded to the traditional SDA view of EGW than Alden is.
- He accuses Alden of undermining the concept of the Bible being its own interpreter.
- He ends with a quote from JOHN STOTT to support his overall stance.
- Unfortunately, he clearly states that he agrees with much of what Alden has written but chooses not to identify those areas of agreement.

I found Norman's review to be disingenuous. *It's as if he wrote a review to give himself a level of acceptability in the denomination, while indulging in his own disenchantments with some of the church's positions.*

Alden repeatedly asserts that the bible must be its own interpreter. It's one of the arguments he uses to undermine the concept verbal inspiration. He believes that we should not overlay the Bible with theories clearly incompatible with the content of the Biblical Text. He also takes the view that each author in Scripture should be allowed to speak for themselves.

Norman Gulley essentially accused Alden of discrediting the testimony of Paul.

If we impose our own understandings on Paul's witness, rather than on what he really believed from a comprehensive study of his teachings and actions we can hardly complain if someone disagrees with us. Who is discrediting Paul in those circumstances?

He quotes from John Stott to affirm that Jesus submitted to the authority of the OT Canon, but John Stott clearly knew that Jesus was reinterpreting some of the OT understandings of his day. I found his reference to John Stott rather amusing since I would classify John Stott as a modern-day Apostle. *If John Stotts books had been in print 100yrs earlier, I expect EGW would have borrowed from his writings without crediting him as the source, as she did countless other.*

I believe that Alden realizes that the SDA leadership has used EGW to bolster their own authoritative approach to the interpretation of Scripture and the governance of the church.

He has been a brave soul to challenge that status quo and for that reason I applaud his candour and integrity.

What concerns me the most, is that Alden's book and Norman Gully's response are wholly dependent on the affirmative support of Quotations from EGW to even be heard within the church at all.

Why is that?

Was EGW partially responsible for that?

Would the church ever be able to listen to another Prophet?

Has the inability of the church to embrace a broader level of thinking been destructive?