

# REVELATION — GOSPEL

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## Revelation

### *Greek usage*

*Apokalupsis* as a theological or religious word does not occur outside the Bible and Christian literature. Classical Greek has other expressions such as *epideixis* or *sêmeinein*. This shows that the concept of the hiddenness of God which is given through revelation is not found among Greek writers.

The literal meaning of *apokalupsis* is 'the act of uncovering'. Philodemus Philosophus (1st Cent. B.C.) uses it for "the uncovering of the body"; Plutarch (A.D. 50-120) for 'the uncovering of wells'. The word was also used by them metaphorically for 'the uncovering of mistakes'. Astrological texts use it as a technical term. But none of these writers uses *apokalupsis* in the Biblical sense of a revelation from God. St. Jerome has aptly said, "This is a proper word of the Scriptures . . . It has never been used by any wise man of the world among the Greeks."

### *Indian usage*

The Sanskrit word to express the idea of revelation from God is *Sruti*, 'the thing heard'. It is believed that when God spoke, the Rishis (inspired bards) heard and communicated what they heard to their disciples. This communication was the hymn of the Vedas (Scriptures).

Even books other than the Vedas sometimes claim to be the revelation of the Brahman (the Godhead). Thus Manu, the law-giver, asserts that "Brahman composed these institutes, he taught them to me and I to others." <sup>1</sup>

However the word *Sruti* is "audio" rather than visual and as such does not express adequately the idea contained in *apokalupsis*.

### *Biblical usage*

Following B./A.G. <sup>2</sup> we may classify the New Testament usage under three heads:

1. *General*. Reveal, disclose, bring to light:  
"A light for revelation to the Gentiles", Lk. 2:32.  
"A sword will pierce through your soul also, that thoughts out of many hearts *may be revealed (apokaluphthōsin)*," Lk 2:35. See also Mt. 10:26/Lk. 12:2, Rom. 16:25, Eph. 1:17.

2. *Divine revelation of something to someone*:  
"Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and revealed (*apekalupsas*) them to babes," Mt. 11:25/Lk 10:21. See also Mt. 16:17, Phil. 3:15.

<sup>1</sup> G. Buhler: *Manava Dharma Shastra* (S.B.E. vol. XXV p. 19).

<sup>2</sup> Bauer/Arndt and Gingrich: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

3. *Eschatological*. Here revelation turns to the future and reveals secrets (of persons and circumstances) belonging to the last days: "Insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice," 1 Pet. 4:13.

It is used of Christ's coming, Lk. 17:30, of Anti-Christ's coming, 2 Thess. 2:4, 6, 8; of Judgement day, 1 Cor. 3:13.

#### *Translation in Indian languages*

We have not yet been able to evolve a satisfactory word in noun form to cover all these meanings: Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, Oriya use *prakash* and *prakashita vakya*. *Prakash* means 'light' (Gk. *phôs*). *Prakashit vakya* is 'revealed sentence', but *apokalupsis* may be a sentence, or a vision, or certain events or interpretation of events. Gujarati and Marathi have done better by using *prakatikaran*, 'illuminate'.<sup>3</sup>

### **Gospel**

#### *Classical Greek and Papyri*

The Bible is the first book to use the word *euangelion* in a religious context. In classical Greek and Papyri *euangelion* is secular. It means (a) wages for a messenger (b) good news. It is often used as a technical term for the message that victory has been gained. This word has also been used to proclaim the birth, the coming of age and accession of an emperor to the throne.

#### *Biblical usage*

The LXX gives a few glimpses of the usage to be found later in the New Testament. (Is. 40:9; 52:7).

The New Testament contrasts the many *euangelia* with one *euangelion*, the many proclamations with one proclamation of the *basileia tou theou*.<sup>4</sup>

The distribution of the word over the New Testament is significant: Mk. 7 occurrences, Mt. 4, Lk. nil, Jn. nil, Acts 2, 1 Pet. 1, Rev. 1 and Paul 58.

Can we draw some inference from the frequency? Burton (*Galatians*, I.C.C., p. 422) says that the word was used predominantly by Paul to describe the Christian message and was probably adopted by other writers under his influence.

Be that as it may, it has become a tremendous word in the New Testament. It summarizes the whole Christian message. The *euangelion* is no human discovery. It comes from God and is of God. It is brought by Jesus Christ and belongs to him. St. Paul calls it "my gospel" or "our gospel". And yet it is for all men.

<sup>3</sup> Hooper: *Indian Word List*, p. 22-23.

<sup>4</sup> G. Kittel: *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Vol. 2, p. 718 by Friedrich. I am indebted to Dr. Roth of the Leonard College for supplying excerpts from this book.

*Renderings in Indian languages*

We have to watch our translation of this word. It may be queried whether *khubhobarta*, 'good word' (Assamese), *susamachar*, 'good matter' (Bengali, Hindi, Oriya), *suvartha*, 'good word' (Gujarati, Kanarese, Marathi, Telugu), *mangal-samachar*, 'auspicious matter' (Sindhi), *suwishesham*, 'good narrative' (Malayalam, Tamil) give the impression that it is ordinary good news given by Matthew, Mark, etc., or whether they really do give the impression that it is good news from God.

(In the discussion it was generally agreed that the conventional translation of the titles of the Gospels is not satisfactory. Some such title as the one used for the new Hindustani Gospels, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ, written by Mark" is recommended for use on the cover of portions.)

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## BIBLICAL NAMES IN HINDI

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*This article contains in an abridged form the substance of a paper read at the Conference.*

When proper names are carried over from one language to another, a certain amount of change is to be expected, for the pattern of sounds varies. Closely related languages may have little or no problem in this matter, but dissimilar languages have difficulties in proportion to the degree of their dissimilarity. In either case it is possible to define the principles and procedures by which proper names are to be taken over from one language to another. The aim should be to represent the original as nearly as possible within the structure and genius of the receiving language. To attain this ideal there appear to be three distinct procedures involved.

(1) There should be a uniform system of transliteration. We would begin by agreeing as far as possible on the common phonetic ground of language A, the original, and language B, the receiving language. Then we would try to represent the peculiar ground of language A by the nearest approximations in language B. For scholarly exactness diacritical marks should be used with such approximations, to indicate distinctions which cannot readily be made in the receiving language, though they are to be omitted in the final form. The result would be a table of alphabetical equivalents which would serve to transliterate words from language A to language B with relative exactness.

(2) The second stage may be called accommodation. Languages are somewhat like the people who speak them. Each has its own peculiar genius or personality. Words and patterns of sounds are