

Summary of Fundamental Belief -- The Word of God

From the Constitution of the Church of God, a Worldwide Association

Scripture, both the Old and the New Testaments of the Holy Bible, is the word of God and contains God's complete revelation of His will and plan for humanity. Directly inspired by God in thought and word, it is perfect and infallible as originally written. Scripture is the supreme and final authority for faith and life. It is the source for doctrine and the foundation for all truth.

Scriptural support: 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; John 10:35; 17:17.

Summary:

The entire Bible reveals the acts of God's merciful intervention to save mankind for eternal life in His family. In writing the various books of the Bible, the authors' own personality, style and vocabulary were reflected in what they wrote. When writing, they did so as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (*II Peter 1:21*). Thus God influenced and directed the minds of His servants, yet allowing them free expression, as they wrote the books known as the Word of God.

The Holy Bible is the only foundation of knowledge and truth which Jesus and the apostles used as a basic text for teaching God's way to salvation. First and foremost, Jesus Christ set the example of following the scriptures as the ultimate authoritative text in a Christian's life. Christ successfully combated temptation from Satan by stating, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word** that proceeds from the mouth of God" (*Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4, NKJV*, emphasis added, *Deuteronomy 8:3*). Christ proceeded to quote scriptures during His battle against the ultimate enemy, the devil (*Matthew 4:7, 10*). Christ then began His earthly ministry by reading the scriptures and declaring, "Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (*Luke 4:16-21*). In John 10:35, Christ proclaimed that "the scripture cannot be broken" as He referenced scripture as an active, authoritative source in His life (*John 7:38, 42*). Nothing distracted Christ from His focus on the scriptures, neither betrayal, nor being crucified (*John 13:18; 17:12; 19:28; Matthew 27:46; Psalms 22:1; Luke 23:46; Psalms 31:5*).

Secondarily, the apostles followed the example of Christ. The core of Christian faith, doctrine and behavior continued to be defined through the scriptures. The resurrected Jesus Christ resumed His personal instruction to His disciples as He "opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (*Luke 24:32, 44*). It was through the scriptures that disciples were made of all nations, for instance, the Ethiopian eunuch (*Acts 8:26-35*). Paul, the apostle to the nations, appealed to the authority of the scriptures by asking questions, such as "What does the scripture say?" (*Romans 4:3; 11:2; Galatians 4:30*). Other times, Paul confirmed his position by declaring "For the scripture says. . ." or similar statements (*Romans 10:11; Galatians 3:8, 22; I Timothy 5:18*). Clearly, the Old Testament and New Testament were written both for Jewish and Gentile Christians. There is a continuity between the OT and the NT (*Matthew 4:4 and 2 Timothy 3:15-16*). The NT builds on and amplifies the OT (*Matthew 5, 6, and 7*). Of course, the only scriptures that existed during the ministry of Christ and the apostles were the OT scriptures.

Summary of Fundamental Belief -- The Word of God

From the Constitution of the Church of God, a Worldwide Association

Reading, hearing and doing God's Word are key characteristics of God's people (*Luke 8:21; 11:28*). The Word of God builds faith in a person's life (*Romans 10:17; Colossians 3:16*). God expects His people to diligently study His Word regularly for understanding, personal edification, and to guard himself in an ungodly society (*Acts 17:11; Ephesians 6:17; I John 2:14; Psalms 119:9*). Internalizing God's Word enables one to defend his faith (*I Peter 3:15*). The Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (*II Timothy 3:15*).

The Bible is alive with timeless application in our daily life (*Hebrews 4:12*). Paul, while imprisoned, reminded Timothy that though man can be restrained, the word of God cannot." (*II Timothy 2:8-9 NKJV*).

The Church maintains the biblical mandate to rely upon God's word in its quest for the truth. As stated in *II Timothy 3:16*, doctrine is established, error is refuted, correction is administered and instruction is given according to God's inspired word. The truth of the Bible not only teaches and guides His people, but it sanctifies or sets apart His Church (*John 17:17*). The Bible serves as an essential tool in God's relationship with His Church "that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of the water by the word" (*Ephesians 5:26*).

THE BIBLE

The Bible was written by about 40 men in about 1600 years dating from 1500 BCE to about 100 CE. These men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). They wrote not in words of human wisdom but in words taught by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13).

ENGLISH BIBLE

- The first translation of the English Bible was initiated by John Wycliffe and completed by John Purvey in 1388 CE.
- The first American edition of the Bible was perhaps published some time before 1752 CE.
- The Bible was divided into chapters by Stephen Langton about 1228 CE.
- The Old Testament was divided into verses by R. Nathan in 1448 CE and the New Testament by Robert Stephanus in 1551 CE.
- There are 66 books in the Bible, 39 in the O.T. and 27 in the New Testament.
- The O.T. has 23,214 verses. The N.T. has 7,959 verses.
- The word “God” occurs 4,379 times. The word “Lord” occurs 7,738 times.

OLD TESTAMENT (39 BOOKS TOTAL)

Pentateuch—5 books

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

Historical Books—12 books

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First Samuel, Second Samuel, First Kings, Second Kings, First Chronicles, Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

Poetical—5 books

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

Prophetical—17 books

Major Prophets – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel

Minor Prophets – Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

HEBREW SCRIPTURES (22 BOOKS TOTAL)

The Law—5 books

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

The Prophets—6 books

Former Prophets – Joshua/Judges, Samuel (1 & 2)/Kings (1 & 2))

Latter Prophets – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Twelve

The Writings—11 books

Former Poetic Books – Psalms, Proverbs, Job

The Megilot or Festival Scroll – Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations,
Ecclesiastes, Esther

The Latter Restoration Books – Daniel, Ezra/Nehemiah, Chronicles

NEW TESTAMENT (27 BOOKS TOTAL)

Historical Books (Gospels and Acts)—5 books

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts

Pauline Epistles—14 books

Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians,
Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy,
Titus, Philemon

General Epistles—7 books

James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude

Prophetic—1 book

Revelation

THE PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE

An Analysis of the Canon and Modern Translations

Modern Translations

Each of the modern translations is based on a particular philosophy of translation. For example, the Revised Standard Version and the *New American Standard Bible*, which share a common purpose (i.e., to revise and revive the American Standard Version), are more literal than most versions. The translators often adhered to a word-for-word methodology instead of a thought-for-thought. The New Revised Standard Version is a little more "free"; in fact, the guiding concept for this revision was "as literal as possible, as free as necessary." The New International Version is even more free than The New Revised Standard Version because the translators employed a thought-for-thought approach to translation. And yet the New International Version is not as free as Today's English Version, the *New Jerusalem Bible*, and the *Revised English Bible* because these versions were created to be as contemporary as possible. Of course, these are generalized observations; such exact distinctions between the translations cannot always be so clearly delineated. At times, the translations will cross over these boundaries. Nonetheless, it is possible to classify several of the modern translations as follows:

Strictly literal:

New American Standard Bible

Literal:

New King James Version
Revised Standard Version
New American Bible

Literal with freedom to be idiomatic:

New Revised Standard Version

Thought-for-thought:

New International Version
New Jerusalem Bible
Revised English Bible
New Jewish Version

Dynamic equivalent (modern speech):

Today's English Version

Paraphrastic:

The Living Bible

Finally, it must always be remembered that translations are nothing more than translations; they are not the same as the Bible in the original languages. Not one translation has been "inspired"

THE PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE

An Analysis of the Canon and Modern Translations

by God in the same way the original text was. For those who want to read the Bible as it is in the original, inspired languages, they should learn Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Those who do not learn these languages have to depend on translations. I can read the New Testament in Greek, but I cannot read the Old Testament in Hebrew. I have to rely on various translations of the Old Testament. Notice I used the plural, "translations," not the singular, because I believe it is imperative for modern English readers to use several of the available English versions. By using different translations the reader can acquire a fuller understanding of the meaning of the original text.

Some of the critics of the Bible have come up with some sophisticated arguments in their attempts to disprove its authenticity and reliability. One of these attempts is known as the Documentary Hypothesis, or the JEPD theory. In short, this theory states that the first five books of the Bible, called the Pentateuch consisting of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, were not written completely by Moses. It is alleged that these authors are detectable through the variations of usage of different words within those books. These authors are known as the Jehovist, the Elohist, the Priestly, and the Deuteronomist.

According to Oswald T. Allis¹ there were four main areas considered by these critics when supporting the Documentary Hypothesis:

1. The Variations in the Divine Names in Genesis
2. The Secondary Variations in Diction and Style
3. The Parallel or Duplicate Accounts
4. The Continuity of the Various Sources

ANSWERING THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS

1. PRESUPPOSITIONS

By far, the majority of those holding to the JEDP theory presuppose that the miraculous cannot happen. Therefore, they must conclude beforehand that the Pentateuch is not inspired and Moses could not have written it. They must find another explanation for the Mosaic authorship of the first five books of the Bible. Such a presupposition does not allow a proper examination of the documents and will result in inaccurate conclusions.

2. THE CRITICS ARE CLAIMING A GREAT DEAL

The Pentateuch was written centuries ago in a different language, in a different culture, and a different land. The critics are claiming that “they are able to decide exactly what a writer could or could not say, and on this basis to determine what part of the document belongs or does not belong to him.”² In other words, the critics are basing their argument on their own ability to read a document that is 3000 years old, divide it up into word usage groups, and assert hidden divisions, and separate authors. And not only this, but they are claiming they can do it on a consistent basis. This is hardly an exact science and is open to a wide range of error depending upon the presupposition and purposes of the critic.

¹Allis, Oswald T., *The Five Books of Moses*, (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Co.), 1949.

²*Ibid.* Page 70.

3. WRITING STYLES CHANGE WITHIN WRITERS

What writer writes with a consistent style? Yes, there are styles to writers, but the subject matter affects content. A technical work is different from a narrative or historical piece. The Pentateuch has components of all of these. Therefore, different styles are expected. Additionally, what the writer has in mind can easily cause him to use a different concentration of words. Should the intention change, so would the word usage. Did Moses sit down at one sitting and write everything out? Of course not. Upon reflection, reading, prayer, etc., his focus and purpose within sections of Scripture can change as he moves to a new subject.

4. ONE WRITER CAN PRODUCE DIFFERENT ANALYSIS RESULTS

Modern computer programs can be used to analyze the style and writing of a paper. If a person wrote two papers and used one of these programs for analysis, he will discover that his writing will reflect different styles at different portions of the papers based on the purpose and intent of the paper. We would discover that there are similarities, but also differences. To conclude that there were two different authors would be a mistake, yet this is the same mistake made with the Pentateuch. Moses wrote these books over a forty-year period of time. Those who favor the Documentary Hypothesis actually stop in mid-sentences and attribute one portion to one author and the other to a separate author.

5. JESUS ATTRIBUTED THE 5 BOOKS TO MOSES

Whether or not a biblical critic wants to take Jesus' word for anything is up to the individual. But no less than Jesus authenticated the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Jesus divided the Old Testament into three sections in Luke 24:44: Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms. Also, he attributed all the individual JEDP defined sections of the Pentateuch to Moses.

In Mark 10:4-8, Jesus quoted Genesis 2:24, which would be J according to the critics, as coming from Moses. In Mark 7:10, Jesus quoted the Ten Commandments, which fall into the E category, as coming from Moses. In Mark 10:3, Jesus refers to Deuteronomy 24:1f, which would be D, as being from Moses. In Matthew 8:4, Jesus quoted Leviticus 14, which would be equivalent to P, as coming from Moses.