

Chapter 2 — The Holy Scriptures

Q7. Who did God choose to write them?¹

A. The Old Testament was written by the Prophets, and the New Testament by the Evangelists and Apostles (Ex. 17:14; Rev. 1:19).

The teacher begins with “who,” and not “what.” This means that God did not write His Word on paper or stone by Himself. But what means did God use? The “who” shows that human beings were involved. Is that not interesting?

In the answer, the catechism makes a difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. What is the Old Testament? It is the first part of our Bible. From Genesis till Malachi. How many books has the Old Testament? That is 39 books in total. Now, our teacher says that these books are written by the prophets. What is a prophet? Simply said, it is a spokesman that speaks in the name of another. He receives his authority from the other person. Think about this example. Let’s say that the current president sends a messenger to another country. What is this messenger allowed to say? Is that his own opinion? No. He needs to tell what the president asks him to say. The same is true for prophets. They spoke in the name of God. Maybe a challenging question, was Moses a prophet? And if so, where do we read that? We find this in Deuteronomy, “And there arose not a *prophet* since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face” (Deut. 34:10). Indeed, Moses is called a prophet in the Bible. Was David then a prophet? Where do we read that? This we find in the New Testament. Peter said, “the patriarch David, he is both dead and buried...Therefore, being a *prophet*” (Acts 2:29-30). Thus, David was a prophet as well.

What about the New Testament? Who wrote it? Before we think about that question, we need to know what the New Testament is. What is it? It is the last part of our Bible. From Matthew until Revelation. Simply said, the New Testament is the fulfillment of prophecies that were spoken in the Old Testament. But what is a testament? It is a last will. You need the death for the testator before someone can receive the inheritance. When it comes to the Old and New Testament, we can say that Jesus died to give an inheritance to His people. Now, our catechism answer says that the New Testament is written by two groups of people. The first is evangelists. What is an evangelist? Literally, someone who brings good news. We read that one evangelist was Philip (Acts 21:8). The second group are apostles. What is an apostle? That comes from the verb “to send away from.” They received the Holy Spirit. Someone needed to have certain qualifications to be an apostle. What are they?

- 1. He is a witness of the resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 9:1).
- 2. He is chosen by Christ or the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:15).
- 3. He has the ability to perform signs and wonders (Acts 2:43).

How many apostles do we have? No, not twelve but thirteen. Indeed, it is the twelve disciples that followed Jesus. Matthias replaced Judas. But who is the thirteenth? That is Paul. So, now it is clear who the human authors of the Bible were. But who inspired them? That is our next question.

¹ Literally: Q. By whom hath He caused them to be written?

Q8. Who inspired their writing of Holy Scriptures?²

A. The Holy Ghost. “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:21). The question is about inspiration. What is that? We find an answer in the Bible. Those men were moved by the Holy Spirit. They were carried. But how were they moved? Did the Holy Spirit hold their hand? No. But He guided their minds in such a way that the Bible writers wrote what He wanted. Think for a moment of a father that want to teach his child to drive a tractor. Most of the time, he lets the young boy drive and steer. But the father keeps an eye on the situation. As long as it goes well, he lets the child steer the wheel, speed up and decelerate. But when it goes wrong, the father guides him back on track.

Another question, did the Holy Spirit inspire only ideas or also word for word? The latter is true. This is what we call plenary inspiration. Plenary stands for complete inspiration. But notice that this inspiration is not mechanical as if the Bible writers were a typing-machine. It is not that the Holy Spirit “typed the right key” in the mind of the Bible writer to pen down the words. Do you know some examples of *mechanical inspiration*? Yes, we find it in Islam. Mohammed had to write exactly what ‘angel Gabriel’ told him to write. The same is true for Mormonism. Joseph Smith received the golden plates. He translated them into human language. But this is not the case for the Bible. That is why we have different styles between various books. How is it possible that each writer has a different style? Were they not inspired by the same Holy Spirit? Yes, but the whole human being of the Bible writer was involved. This includes his character, personality, education, and society. We call this *organic inspiration*. Let us look at some examples. Paul received university training under Gamaliel. He was highly educated. We can see this back in his letters. Another Bible writer is Peter. He is a simple fisherman. A rough person. This is also visible in his letters. They are not as nicely written as Paul’s. Again another is David. We know that he loved music. This is what we see back in the Psalms. So, every Bible writer has his own style of writing.

At the same time, we say that the Holy Ghost inspired the Bible writers. What are some other names for the Holy Ghost? Indeed, Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Christ. But who is the Holy Spirit? He is the third person of the trinity. Is He on the same level as the Father and Son? Maybe you think not, but He is. He has the same authority and worthiness as the Father and the Son. Think about the government. All senators have the same authority. Yes, they are different persons, belong to a different party, and have their own background. If we think about the Holy Spirit, what are some of His tasks? Yes, He regenerates, points to Jesus Christ, and helps preachers in proclaiming the Word. But who did the Holy Spirit inspire?

Our answer says that “holy men” were inspired. Why is that? Were they perfect? No. That is not the meaning of holy here. But they were converted. They knew God in their heart. But can there be unconverted prophets, apostles or evangelists? Yes. Think of Caiaphas. He prophesied that it was better that one man would die than the whole nation. He did while he was in the office of high-priest. Another is Balaam. He prophesied that a star would rise out of Bethlehem. This happened. But we know that Balaam was unconverted. But if the Bible writers, who were inspired, were not perfect, did they then make mistakes when they wrote the Bible? Let’s look at the answer in our next question.

2 Literally: Q. By whom were they inspired in writing?

Q9. Could these men err in their writing?

A. No: the Holy Spirit led them into all truth. John 16:13.

The question is if the men have made mistakes when they wrote the Bible. Why is that such an important question? If they made mistakes, then the Bible is no longer trustworthy. On the other hand, if the Bible is written without errors it is an extra reason that God will preserve it. And the answer says that they did not make any mistakes. So, the Bible that we have has no errors. How is that possible when the Bible writers were sinful men? For this it is good to think for a moment about the growth of Jesus in the womb of Mary. She was a sinful person of herself. But the Holy Spirit overshadowed her. In that way Jesus developed and was born as a sinless child. The same we can say about the Bible writing. The Holy Spirit guided them that they could not make any mistakes.

But in what did these men not err? The question says “in their writing.” It means, this is only applicable when they wrote the books of the Bible. No, they were not always led in such a way by the Holy Spirit. They have made mistakes in their live. Think about Peter with the Galatians. Before, he ate with gentiles. But then some Jews came. And Peter separated himself from the gentiles. This was incorrect. That is why Paul rebukes him openly for what he does. So, Peter was not without mistakes. And what is the answer? Could the Bible writers make errors in their writing?

The answer says, “no.” That means all what they wrote down was without error. We call this infallible or inerrant. So, we can say that this proves that the whole Bible is from God. Each book, each chapter and each verse. For us, it means that we should read it with all reverence. We should see it as God directly speaking to us. A letter from God. Imagine that you receive a letter from the governor. It is signed. How would you read it? Not very careful? Especially when the letter contains things that are to your advantage. But why could these men not make any mistakes? They were led.

Our answer says, the “Holy Spirit led them into *all* truth.” What is one of the properties of the Holy Spirit? He is perfect. Let me give an example. Let’s say that your neighbor is an expert in repairing trucks. If he instructs you how to do it, will he make mistakes? No. He knows what he is doing. The same is true for the Holy Spirit. But we have to read careful. He led in *all* the truth, not just in parts of it. Yes, all these truths are necessary for salvation. So, we can say that all what we need to know for salvation is found in the Bible. No, this does not mean that the Bible contains all the history of the world. How many children had Adam and Eve? How long had they been in paradise before the fall? The Bible does not tell us. It is even the case that not all of Jesus’ life on earth is in Scripture. We hardly know anything of the first 30 years of His life on earth. What does this show? That we do not need tradition for salvation. We are not like the Roman Catholics. They would say that tradition reveals hidden things that we need to know for life and salvation. But as protestants we believe that the Bible is sufficient. Therefore, we need to study the Bible time and again. We can say that even with that we have enough work to do. Of course, we may use external trustworthy sources. But ultimately they are under the authority of the Scriptures. So, as answer on our question, we can say that the Bible is trustworthy and without error.