

A The prophetic writings:

❖ Where and why were they written?

- Moses was the first person inspired by God to write the Bible. In the desert of Midian, he wrote Job and Genesis. During the Exodus, he received the express command to record the events in writing (Exodus 17:14).
- Other prophets who received the express command to write a book were Isaiah (Isaiah 30:8); Jeremiah (Jeremiah 36:2); Habakkuk (Habakkuk 2:2); and John (Revelation 1:11).
- The biblical authors wrote under various circumstances:
 - ☐ Persecuted like David
 - ☐ In a palace like Solomon
 - ☐ Abroad as Daniel
 - ☐ In jail like Pablo
 - ☐ In exile as John
- God chose both the people and the message they were to record with the intention that nothing would be lost of what He wanted to reveal to us for our salvation (2 Tim. 3:15).

❖ In what styles were they written?

- Written over 1,500 years by more than 40 different authors, the Bible contains a wide variety of styles. Among others: historical accounts (Gen. 37:2); genealogies (Gen. 5:1); prophecies (Isa. 13:1); apocalyptic visions (Rev. 12:1); poetry (much of Isaiah); songs (Song of Songs 1:1); parallelisms (Isa. 17:7); parables (Luke 18:1); and letters (2 Thess. 3:17).
- The Bible makes no distinction regarding the authority of different styles. All of them are useful for conveying divine thought, since each person perceives the message better in one style than another.
- Peter also makes it clear that the writings of the New Testament have the same authority as those of the Old Testament (2P. 3:15-16).

B Use of secretaries and external material:

❖ Why were literary assistants used?

- Jeremiah was a priest and, as such, knew how to read and write. However, he used an assistant—Baruch—to write the messages God asked him to write (Jer. 36:1-4). Although sanctioned by God, this was misinterpreted in his own time (Jer. 43:2-3).
- Paul, who was fluent in Greek, used assistants to write his letters (Rom. 16:22). To prevent others from writing forged letters in his name, he had to sign the ones he dictated in his own handwriting (2 Thess. 3:17).
- Peter wrote his letters in a beautiful Greek style, something difficult to attribute to this Aramaic-speaking fisherman. The use of assistants helped him to convey his message accurately in a language he did not master. But the fact that the assistants chose the words that best expressed Peter's ideas does not in any way diminish the divine inspiration of his epistles.

❖ What external material did the prophets use?

- Ezra used historical records and copied decrees and correspondence from Persian kings when writing the books of Chronicles and Ezra. Nehemiah, for his part, included in his book a genealogical record copied from another existing one.
- Since Luke was not a witness to the events he recounts, he wrote his gospel and part of the book of Acts based on historical records and interviews with eyewitnesses (Lk. 1:3).
- Paul quotes from Epimenides and Aratus, classical Greek authors (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12). Jude, for his part, draws quotations from a non-canonical book containing prophecies of Enoch (Jude 1:14).
- They were all guided by the Holy Spirit in using this external material. They recognized that they were describing the truth and, therefore, conveying what God wanted to express.

C Humanity mixed with the message:

❖ Imperfections in the Bible?

- God chose to use imperfect people—“earthen vessels”—to deliver His message (2 Corinthians 4:7). How did this imperfection affect the message? Is the Bible 100% reliable?
- Archaic words. Words in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek whose meaning we do not know, or were used with a different meaning in the time of the prophet.
 - *Examples*: Gopher (גֹּפֶר) (Gen. 6:14); Sélah (סֵלָה) (used in several psalms)
- Errors made by copyists. When copying texts, or when writing them from dictation, the copyist may make errors (more common in the New Testament).
 - *Example*: the “Johannine Comma” (1 John 5:7-8). It is a comment by a copyist that was later incorporated into the text by another copyist.
- Errors made by the writers themselves. When quoting a text from memory, or recounting an event they did not witness, the biblical authors could have made minor, insignificant errors.
 - *Example*: Matthew's quote in which he calls Zechariah, murdered by Joash, “son of Berechiah” (who is the author of the book of Zechariah) (Mt. 23:35; see Lk. 11:51; 2Ch. 24:22)
- Errors of translators. Bible translators, especially those working in modern language, can be influenced by the translator's own ideas.
 - *Example*: Some modern versions (MSG, NMB) translate the text referring to the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10) as “Sunday”, even though this expression began to be used after the apostle's death.

APPENDIX: INFALLIBILITY OF THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

When God commanded Ellen to write her messages, she responded, “I can’t write.” But God strengthened her, and she began to write. Over time, she used writing assistants who corrected her spelling mistakes and improved the phrasing of some sentences.

They never altered the meaning of the message, nor did they add anything of their own. The final texts were always reviewed by Ellen.

Regarding her infallibility as a prophet, Ellen declared: “Concerning infallibility, I never claimed to have it. Only God is infallible” (Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 42).

Regarding the infallibility of her writings, she herself wrote: “There are times when common things must be stated, common thoughts must occupy the mind, common letters must be written, and information that has been passed from one worker to another must be given. Such words, such information, are not given under the special inspiration of the Spirit of God” (Selected Messages, vol. 3, p. 64).