

Title: The Reliability of Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15-17)

By Rev. Francis Williams

Scarborough Baptist Church's Article of Faith makes the following confession about the Bible: "We believe in the whole Bible as the inerrant Word of God, and the sole and absolute authority in all matters of Faith and practice, and in the Divine inspiration of the original writings of the Old and New Testaments as set forth in Scriptures."

The Bible contains 66 Books. It is important to note that the Books of the Old Testament are originally the Scriptures of the Jewish Faith. Jesus read the Old Testament. Also, we refer to these Books as the Old Testament not because they are archaic and outdated, but because they are related to the Old Covenant based on the Law. Similarly, the New Testament Books are called by that name because they are related to the New Covenant in Christ (see Jer. 31:31; Mk. 14:24; 1 Cor. 11:25).

The Old Testament contains thirty-nine Books and the New Testament twenty-seven. The first five Books of the Old Testament are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. They are known by various titles: the Torah, Law, Teaching, the Books of Moses, the Pentateuch. The twelve Books which follow the Torah in our English (Protestant) Bibles are historical Books (Joshua to Esther). These are followed by the six poetic Books: (Job to Ecclesiastes and Lamentations). The final Books of the Old Testament are the sixteen prophetic Books from Isaiah to Malachi). These prophetic Books are further divided in the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel) and the Minor Prophets (Hosea to Malachi). Jewish tradition divides the Old Testament into three sections: The Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms or Writings (see Lk. 24:44).

The first five Books of the New Testament are historical Books (Matthew to Acts). These are followed by the twenty-one Epistles or what we may call today, Letters. The final Book of the Bible is Apocalyptic.

Now, the 66 Books of the Bible are the *Word of God* (1 Pet. 1:23). The title, *Word of God*, emphasizes the verbal communication of God's thoughts, that which was *spoken*. The most common title used by the authors of the Bible to define God's Word is "Scripture." The word Scripture is a translation of the Greek term *graphé* which means "to write." It can also mean an inscription or sacred writing" (Matt. 21:42; Jn. 5:39).

The term scripture emphasizes the fact that the Word of God is written, that is, it has been inscribed in writing and therefore it is permanent. It cannot be changed. Centuries ago the Psalmist declared, "Thy word O LORD, is settled in heaven" (Psa. 119:89). Someone rightly said the following about the Word of God: "God says it, I believe it, that settles it." We ought to confess, however, that God says it and that settles it, period. Our responsibility is to believe it.