

# Response of the Pontifical Biblical Commission

## III

### On the Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch June 27, 1906

Latin: ASS 39 (1906), pp. 377-8 / DS 3394-7 / EB 181-4

English: D 1997-2000 / RSS pp. 118-9 / OCTBI 371-8, pp. 229-31 / TSD pp. 188-9

*The Biblical Commission answers the following questions:*

1. *Authenticity* — Whether the arguments amassed by critics to impugn the Mosaic authenticity of the sacred books designated by the name Pentateuch are of sufficient weight, notwithstanding the very many evidences to the contrary contained in both Testaments, taken collectively, the persistent agreement of the Jewish people, the constant tradition of the Church, and internal arguments derived from the text itself, to justify the statement that these books have not Moses for their author but have been compiled from sources for the most part posterior to the time of Moses.

*Answer:* In the negative.

2. *Writer* — Whether the Mosaic authenticity of the Pentateuch necessarily postulates such a redaction of the whole work as to render it absolutely imperative to maintain that Moses wrote with his own hand or dictated to amanuenses all and everything contained in it; or whether it is possible to admit the hypothesis of those who think that he entrusted the composition of the work itself, conceived by himself under the influence of divine inspiration, to some other person or persons, but in such a manner that they render faithfully his own thoughts, wrote nothing contrary to his will, and omitted nothing; and that the work thus produced, approved by Moses as the principal and inspired author, was made public under his name.

*Answer:* In the negative to the first part, in the affirmative to the second part.

3. *Sources* — Whether it may be granted, without prejudice to the Mosaic authenticity of the Pentateuch, that Moses employed sources in the production of his work, i.e., written documents or oral traditions, from which, to suit his special purpose and under the influence of divine inspiration, he selected some things and inserted them in his work, either literally or in substance, summarized or amplified.

*Answer:* In the affirmative.

4. *Changes and Textual Corruptions* — Whether, granted the substantial Mosaic authenticity and the integrity of the Pentateuch, it may be admitted that in the long course of centuries some modifications have been introduced into the work, such as additions after the death of Moses, either appended by an inspired author or inserted into the text as glosses and explanations; certain words and forms translated from the ancient language to a more recent language, and finally, faulty readings to be ascribed to the error of amanuenses, concerning which it is lawful to investigate and judge according to the laws of criticism.

*Answer:* In the affirmative, subject to the judgment of the Church.