

**“Surely the people are grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the word of our God stands forever.”
(Isa 40:7-8)**

Question #1 – How reliable is the Bible we have today compared to the original?

Question #2- Is the King James Version the only legitimate version we have?

Works studied and cited to research these questions:

1. *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell
2. *The Volume of the Book* by C.H. Welch
3. *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*
4. *New Unger's Bible Dictionary*
5. *Nelson's Bible Dictionary*
6. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
7. *Faussett's Bible Dictionary*
8. *The Companion Bible*
9. *The Comparative Study Bible*

Much duplication of information was found using all these sources which should confirm the validity of these findings. Though that is the case, I'll just quote one source at a time even though the same data may be found in other sources as well. Also, keep in mind that each of these sources cited dozens of scholars themselves. Currently, *Volume of the Book* is not available in PDF format on the website but can be ordered from a link on our website to www.tftmin.org for \$8.00.

Original Languages of the Bible

The Old Testament was given in Hebrew except for Ezra 4:8-7:18, 7:12-26, Jer. 10:11, Dan. 2: 4-7:28- These exceptions were written in Aramaic, a related dialect that developed during Israel's captivity in Babylon.

The New Testament was composed entirely in Greek except for a few words and sentences. There are some differences from New Testament Greek and classical Greek and even Septuagint Greek. According to Zondervan, in the 1890's, thousands of papyri were discovered in the sands of Egypt, which showed that N.T. Greek is identical to the spoken Mediterranean Greek of that time period. So the Bible was given in the common language of the people of that day.

Old Testament

The Old Testament Hebrew manuscripts were meticulously protected in their copying by the Massorites and the Sopherim. The Massorah name means “to pass from the hand of one to another” and they provided what they called a “fence to the Scriptures” which were unbelievably detailed calculations about every page of every book they copied. The Sopherim were equally committed to the true transmission of the Word as it was

originally given. Attached are three more detailed accounts of their faithfulness to this task.: *Volume of the Book* pp. 40-41, *Companion Bible* Appx. 30, *Evidence...*p. 54-55 .

Most of the Hebrew manuscripts we have today are not as ancient as you might expect, because the Hebrews had a habit of destroying worn out copies to avoid becoming prone to error from unreadability. Also, old copies were often destroyed when new copies were made.

The Old Testament validity is also greatly supported by the fact that it is quoted so often by both the Lord Himself and all the New Testament writers. The LXX is in substantial agreement with the Old Testament text as well, providing validity to both. Finally, the Dead Sea scrolls are a valuable witness to the authenticity of our present Old Testament. They were discovered by a shepherd boy in 1947, but they are estimated to have been written in 125 B.C. They are in almost perfect agreement with the modern Old Testament books to which they correspond. Enclosed is excerpt on this topic from *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, page 58.

Finally there is the valuable witness of the Septuagint, which is directly quoted more often than the original Hebrew Massorite text by both the Lord Himself and other New Testament writers. It is also in close agreement with the Massorite Text. The Septuagint itself may not be perfect, because it is a translation and it underwent about six revisions, but it is still very valuable and was the common man's O.T. Scriptures for 250 years prior to Christ and during the New Testament times. Interestingly, it actually lost most of its popularity with the Orthodox Jews of the 1st Century because it was such a valuable witness for Christianity. Attached is page 46 from the *Volume of the Book*.

New Testament:

According to *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, there are more than 5,300 Greek manuscripts available of the New Testament. If you add in 10,000 Latin Vulgate manuscripts and 9,300 other early versions, you have more than 24,000 manuscripts of the New Testament today. So how do these available Greek manuscripts agree? The answer is staggering. The vast majority of errors or variations are mechanical, like incorrect spelling and are totally inconsequential in nature. Dr. Hort, a scholar cited by *Evidence...* and *Volume of the Book* and others is quoted as saying "the amount of what can in any sense be called substantial variation...can hardly form more than 1/1000 part of the entire text." Geister and Nix who are quoted in *Evidence...* say that only 1/80 of the variations are anything more than mechanical making the text 98.33% pure. The conclusion of this matter is that there is abundant proof of the reliability of the New Testament that we possess today based on extensive consistency of a huge number of transcripts available. See pages 49 and 53 of *Volume of the Book* attached.

Moreover, there are abundant translations as early as 150 AD of the entire Bible in other languages, such as the Syriac, Coptic and Latin Vulgate versions that confirm the accuracy of the originals. Abundant writings from early church fathers, like Jerome also quote Scripture so much that the Bible could almost be reconstructed by their quotes alone. See the attached pages 38-40 of *Volume of the Book* for this.

History of the English Bible

The history of the development of the English Bible was often penned with the martyred blood of its developers. The full details of the story are available in all of the cited works studied here. Here is just the briefest timeline:

Wycliff Bible- (1380-1382) 1st complete English Bible translated largely from Latin Vulgate. He died quietly, but to show their displeasure, the ruling church in England had his body exhumed and his bones burned and scattered over the river.

Tyndale's Bible (1525) He wanted the ordinary plough boy to have the Scriptures- translated from original Greek. He was burned at the stake for his efforts. His final words were, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." By 1534, the English government began to see the necessity for a common man's Bible.

Coverdale's Bible- (1535)-slight revision of Tyndale's work. This version which was a complete Bible was translated, printed and distributed throughout England with royal approval within 1 year of Tyndale's death.

Matthew's Bible- (1537) based all of New and half of Old Testament on Tyndale's Bible and the rest on Coverdale's. He was burned at the stake in 1555 by Queen Mary.

The Great Bible-(1539)- a huge Bible based largely on the Matthew's Bible and was done by Coverdale. It was made to read publicly in churches. Under Henry the VIII, this was the only state allowed Bible and large quantities of Tyndales and Coverdale's were burned

Genevan Bible-(1533)- extremely popular Bible with 160 editions, 60 of which were during Queen Elizabeth's reign. The King James Bible took almost 50 years to replace this popular edition.

Bishop's Bible-(1568)- The Genevan Bible made deficiencies in the Great Bible clear and Queen Elizabeth appointed 8 bishops to come up with this replacement for the Great Bible. It was widely circulated but never was as popular as the Genevan Bible.

Rheims and Douai Version- (1582) This was a Catholic version warning everyone in the preface against "profane" translations and blaming the Protestants for casting what is holy to dogs. It was made from the Latin not Greek and Hebrew.

King James Version- (1611) -47 scholars took 2 years to complete this version made from the original Greek and Hebrew. According to *Zondervan*, "it was actually a revision of the Bishop's Bible on the basis of the Hebrew and Greek." It is however an excellent translation, attested by the fact that it is still used in preference to any other English Bible 350 years later.

English Revised Version-(1885)- 54 scholars (27 for the O.T. and 27 for the N.T). developed this revision under very controlled circumstances. It used a number of superior manuscripts that were not yet discovered at the time of the King James translation. This

translation will be given a fuller hearing in the next section because it is the basis for the American Version called the *American Standard Version*(1901) and now revised slightly is called the *New American Standard* which many hold as the “most accurate word for word translation now available.”

Revised Version

The Revised Version was a very careful word for word translation that attempted to retain the King James as much as possible. In fact, changes to the King James required a 2/3 majority vote on the part of the scholars because they sought to revise the KJV not retranslate it. It is an excellent work. It was revised slightly by the American contingent of the translating team and from it; we get the New American Standard Version. Though even I personally prefer the familiarity and beauty of the Old English in the KJV, after learning more about the background and seeing examples of the changes made, I plan to consult the NASB much more frequently in my own study. I have included the whole article in the *Volume of the Book* on it because it shows by example the value in other solidly done translations. Also, I used the Comparative study Bible to look up each and every reference listed in this article and was very pleased to find not only did the current NASB agree almost universally with the quotes in this article on the *Revised Version*, but so did the *Amplified Bible* and in many cases the NIV. See attached pp. 88-107 of the *Volume of the Book*.

The New English Bible- (1961)

While this is not a popular translation in America today, Welch makes a good point in his article about the New English Bible that should be heeded by all Bible students today. Whereas the writers of the New English Bible made some good changes, they also make some horrific, indefensible changes to the text that can't be attributed to anything but personal bias on the part of the translators. I have included a few examples on this version on pp. 120-121 of *Volume of the Book*. I wish I could say that personal bias and agendas don't show up much in modern translations, but they do and frequently, such as the gender-neutral Bible that perilously treads the path of plain blasphemy. Also, there is the growing problem of paraphrase Bibles, like the popular *Message*, which totally distorts the meaning of the text in so many cases.

Conclusion:

What about our opening questions?

Question #1 – How reliable is the Bible we have today compared to the original? The plain and simple answer is VERY RELIABLE!

Question #2- Is the King James Version the only legitimate version we have? Here the plain and simple answer is NO!

As Welch says in his closing remarks in the *Volume of the Book*, “No teacher of the Word should depend on any translation old or new. He is responsible to follow the Apostle's example:

“Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual with spiritual.” (1 Cor. 2:13).

How can we follow that dictate, if none of us has the actual “original” words? We can confidently use a Strong’s or Young’s Concordance and search things out for ourselves. It is an important point that of all of the references I consulted, not one mentioned any problem with Strong’s or any concordance tool as an aid to the original language used. That makes sense because of the great agreement between thousands of manuscripts except in the most trivial circumstances. This is an important tool in study and should not be discarded on hearsay and rumor. Before I ever attempted this research, I knew from years of Greek and Hebrew word searches using a concordance that you nearly always find divine handiwork in the way a single word is consistently used for the same meaning across many passages, written by many different authors, over thousands of years. This can only be God at work in His word.

Is the KJV the only true Bible today? Absolutely not! Like any other translation, it is not infallible, and there are other excellent word for word translations like the NASB and the Amplified Bible. The original Bibles were given in the common language of the day; and there is merit in that, seeing that language and word usages change over time. Because there are some very bad translations and paraphrases out there, do we throw out the baby with the bath water and cling to our KJV and say that there are no other tools available to us to discern difficult passages? NONSENSE!

People can come up with so called experts and books to prove anything, but we are sternly warned in Scripture to beware of false doctrines and vain babblings. The preponderance of evidence is fully in favor of almost universal agreement between manuscripts. Again, I did not find one suggestion of two or more “lines of manuscripts, one true and the others counterfeit.” The fact is that very apt scholars have used these thousands of manuscripts to give us some very valuable translations. Some of the early translators paid for their work with their own lives. God watches over His word to protect it. Let us use every legitimate tool, including concordances and other reputable translations to better understand His word.

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