

Is the Bible you have today true to the original writings, or to the Spirit's Intent?

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Is the Bible you have today an exact copy of the original writings, or more so, is it true to the Spirit's Intent? Perhaps a good answer is while not a flawless reproduction, it is by God's Volition, sufficient towards Salvation and edification.

There are scholars not satisfied with that answer who hold that the Scripture (specifically the New Testament), to be quickening and effective (even unto Salvation), must be the exact same words delivered by the Holy Spirit to the human author without addition, omission, or error. I expect if they are right, everyone once or more removed from the original NT author's script is in danger.

Every New Testament available today is a translation from a Hebrew, Greek or Latin manuscript that is a copy of the original report by the human author as he was "...carried along by the Holy Spirit." ([2 Pet 1:21](#)) The truth is we don't realistically have any of the "original" documents that comprise the Canon of the Bible. The oldest duplicates of the New Testament we have were compiled 300 years after the originals were written. A second major group of manuscripts used by Bible translators dates from compilations of the ninth century.

All native language Bible translations are derived from these base manuscripts. Further, there are demonstrable clerical errors in their reproduction when compared to each other, yet not errors of substance. So, scholars insisting that God's inspiration of an inerrant Bible requires His preservation of its text lack a square foundation to rest upon. The original manuscripts simply do not exist.

Translators render the words and meaning of the base manuscripts into the destination language of the reader. The nature of translation doesn't mean every translator arrives at the same exact word and sentence structure conclusions. They work to bring across the base manuscripts' intended ideas, but the existence of so

many English translations demonstrate how many ways the ideas can be presented. Translations run a spectrum of function and outcome – A literal translation like the Legacy Standard Bible (LSB) strives to present the manuscript words with as little variation from the words’ meaning as possible, while an amplified or conversational translation like The Message (MSG) seeks more to convey the meaning of the sentences.

These two approaches show the fundamentally different intents of the translators. A Literalist seeks to give the words as written, leaving the understanding of their meaning to the teacher or reader, while an Amplifier seeks to provide the meaning to the reader. In between these two extents fall the other translations to one degree or another. For example, consider [Gal 4:4-7](#):

*⁴ But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under ^[d]the Law, ⁵ so that He might redeem those who were under ^[e]the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir ^[f]through God. **[Gal 4:4-7 \(LSB\)](#)***

*⁴ But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. ^[b] ⁶ Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, ^[c] Father.” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. **[Gal 4:4-7 \(NIV\)](#)***

⁴⁻⁷ But when the time arrived that was set by God the Father, God sent his Son, born among us of a woman, born under the conditions of the law so that he might redeem those of us who have been kidnapped by the law. Thus we have been set free to experience our rightful heritage. You can tell for sure that you are now

fully adopted as his own children because God sent the Spirit of his Son into our lives crying out, "Papa! Father!" Doesn't that privilege of intimate conversation with God make it plain that you are not a slave, but a child? And if you are a child, you're also an heir, with complete access to the inheritance. [Gal 4:4-7 \(MSG\)](#)

Any translation, be it into English or Kenyan Swahili, requires a translational bridge from the original writings to the base manuscripts to the destination language. Even if the originals were available, would not the translators need be inspired by the Spirit as well to maintain this inspired cohesion? It seems clear another factor must be in play to explain a verse like [Isaiah 40:8](#) that says God's Word will be preserved – “⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.”.

[Isaiah 55:10-11](#) says that Scriptural quickening and effectiveness is God's Work, not the human messenger's who is 'given the seed' and 'given the bread':

*¹⁰ For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth
And making it bear and sprout,
And giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,*

*¹¹ So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It will not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what pleases Me,
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.*

Also consider the event of Peter addressing the crowd gathered at Pentecost. The Apostles and Peter were overcome with the Holy Spirit and spoke “the mighty deeds of God” ([Acts 2:11](#)) in several languages represented by people present who were from 15 geographic locations. This was clearly beyond their abilities and the was the work of the Holy Spirit through them.

¹ And when the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind,

and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ And there appeared to them tongues like fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

⁵ Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ So they were astounded and marveling, saying, “Behold, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?

⁸ And how is it that we each hear them in our own language in which we were born? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the district of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.” - [Acts 2:1-11](#)

Also, as Jesus is credited as performing miracles through His Apostles ([Mark 16:20](#)), so too it seems apparent that the Holy Spirit be credited with quickening through the words spoken by those who belong to God through Jesus. In both cases, it is not the volition of the person through whom God’s Acts come, but the Acts are of the God Who delivers them through the person cooperating with Him.

If the original words of Scripture’s human authors were the requirement for a quickening and effective outcome, or if translators of the base manuscripts (or even those translators at work today) are not inspired as the original authors, we would be Lost. On the contrary it must be the volition of God Who authors His Word’s effectiveness, as always, through fallen Humanity.

All of this said, the accuracy and truth of God’s Word continues to be beyond question. These Words of God are essential in understanding and knowing Him, in

seeing ourselves as He does, and opening the mind's path to receiving the Holy Spirit's quickening even unto Salvation. Clerical alterations cannot equate to the loss of Scripture's efficacy because the real efficacy resides with the One Who is the Author and Protector of faith ([Heb 12:2](#)).

There is also the Reformer's central principle of *Analogia Scriptura*, or the Analogy of Faith. The Westminster Confession states: "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly." As Scripture is the Word of One Author, of one mind as well as Divine, His Scripture cannot contradict itself and so is qualified for proof and clarification of the rest of Scripture.

My conclusion: God HAS providentially preserved His infallible Word, not only on paper, but more importantly in His Volition. The protected Word rests in God Himself and it continues to effectively be provided to us through faith in the written Word we read today. Choose a translation as close and literal to the original manuscripts as possible, as free of any outlook that would color the translation away from the Character and Intent of God. In study, consider the surrounding context, root word meanings, and their use elsewhere in Scripture to discern the intent of the writer. And if anyone were to say to you their Bible is translated from the very original texts of God's inspired writers, perhaps you can help them understand otherwise. For a more thorough examination of the topic, see <https://bible.org/article/inspiration-preservation-and-new-testament-textual-criticism>