

The Holy Bible – The Sequel

Rewriting, translating and interpreting the Bible are nothing new. It would seem that each decade produces yet another revision of the revised versions by learned theologians, linguists, and other scholars. And with each new revision comes a round of critics and arguments. In 1982 Reader's Digest published their version, Reader's Digest Bible. The intended market for the edition was the average person approaching the Bible for the first time, who may be overwhelmed at the size and terminology of the original Scripture. In the Reader's Digest version of the Bible, the Old Testament was cut by 55% and the New Testament by only 25%. With the exceptions of the epistles of Philemon, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude, every book of the Bible was condensed to some degree.



Although the Reader's Digest effort resulted in a flurry of protest, it was not the first attempt at condensing the Bible. In 1909 J. M. Dent and Sons published *The Shorter Bible*, an abridgement of the KJV. The same title was given to an effort published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1921. In 1928 *The Living Bible* was printed in New York by Alfred Knopf. Edgar Johnson Goodspeed released a condensed Bible, entitled *An American Translation*, in 1933. In 1936 Simon and Schuster published an arrangement and editing of the KJV known as *The Bible Designed to be Read as Living Literature*, leaving out the whole of Chronicles, the minor Epistles, genealogies, repetitions, and passages regarded as unimportant. *The Dartmouth Bible*, published in 1950, cut the length of the Bible in half eliminating material thought to be repetition and material of interest only to technical students. A Shortened Version of the Modern Readers Bible, edited by Robert Ballou, was published as the *Living Bible* in 1952 by Viking Press. In 1952 the *Olive Pell Bible*, a shortened version of the KJV, was published by Exposition Press. In 1955 another abridged version known as the *Compact Bible* was published by Hawthorne Books.¹

But did you ever wonder what it would be like if *God* decided to use all of *us* to re-write the Scriptures today? What if He decided to start from scratch and have *us* write a Bible that tells the same story, but from modern perspectives? How would we address the historical, scientific and geological aspects?

First, we need "players". Who among us would He commission to be inspired to write the messages He wants us to hear? The process of elimination would be exhausting!

Who would be the modern day Paul – arguably the most influential early Christian missionary who spread the gospel throughout the Roman Empire? Or, perhaps, John, who authored several New Testament works and had the nickname, "Son of Thunder"? After Christ's ascension, John (along with Peter) played a prominent role in the founding and guidance of the early church.

¹ http://kenanderson.net/bible/html/readers_digest.html

And how would our modern society be depicted, including our prominent world leaders, the various peoples of all the lands, the wars and battles, generational statistics, and the religious practices of our day? What would inspire and give hope? How would we define sin? How would we address morals, standards and convictions based on our current society?

How long would it take us? Although it is not certain, it is estimated that it took about 1600-1800 years and more than 40 authors to write the entire Bible. That doesn't count the 400-some years of silence between the death of the last Old Testament Prophet and John the Baptist.

What about the logistics? Would we need a committee of religious scholars, linguists, and historians to validate our contributions and put them in the proper order and text? After all, we have to appeal to the intellectual understanding of a wide-range of readers to make the message understandable to all.

Recently, someone posed a question on the Internet: "Could I write my own Bible and have a full religion going in about 2000 years?" Only eight people responded to the question, and of those, seven used mockery, or examples of people like Ron Hubbard to urge him on. One lone responder simply said, "No – you would have to be led by God to do this."

If you know your Bible, the folly in all of this is obvious to you. That's because, as old as the Bible is, it is new each time we study it. The message becomes fresh and personal to each person in each generation.

In the Bible, God leaves nothing to chance. Every type of human behavior, emotion, intellect, psychological and physical condition can be found. Real people and real places reveal the timeless truth about who God is. Just as God never changes, neither does human nature. We were all born with the same ability to sin. We were also born with a hunger to know the reason and purpose for our existence. All of the manifestations of man's sinful nature and heart are played out in the pages of the Bible. But most important, so is the nature of God. Just as in the past, His plan and provision for us in this sinful, confusing, world are also there.

It is highly unlikely God would contact us today about "updating" His Word. He does everything perfectly the first time. The Bible stands.

Psalms 12:6: *"the words of the LORD are flawless"*

Psalms 119:89: *"Your word, O LORD, is eternal, it stands firm"*

Proverbs 30:5-6: *"Every word of God is flawless"*