

## Chapter Five

# ANCIENT VERSIONS

A version is a translation made directly from the original Hebrew or Greek (i.e. Hebrew to English). A translation is merely a translation of another translation (i.e. Latin into English).

In the book “**Answers to Tough Questions**”, Josh McDowell writes:

*Translation of a document into another language was rare in the ancient world, so this is an added plus for the New Testament. The number of copies of the versions is in excess of 18,000, with possibly as many as 25,000. This is further evidence that helps us establish the New Testament text. Even if we did not possess the 5,500 Greek manuscripts or the 18,000 copies of the versions, the text of the New Testament could still be reproduced within 250 years from its composition. How? By the writings of the early Christians. In commentaries, letters, etc., these ancient writers quote biblical text, thus giving us another witness to the text of the New Testament. (pp. 16-17)*

### JOHN BURGON

*John Burgon has catalogued more than 86,000 citations of the New Testament in the writings of the early church fathers who lived before A.D. 325. Thus we observe that there is so much more evidence for the reliability of the New Testament text than any other comparable writings in the ancient world. (“**Answers to Tough Questions**”, by Josh McDowell and Don Stuart; Scripture Press, Amersham-on-the-Hill, Bucks HP6 6JQ, England; ISBN 0-946515-51-4; pp. 16-17)*

William P. Grady states in his book “**Final Authority**”, quoting John Burgon, the reliability of a version over a manuscript:

*I suppose it may be laid down that **an ancient Version outweighs any single Codex**, ancient or modern, which can be named: the reason being, that it is scarcely credible that a Version – the Peshitto, for example, and Egyptian or the Gothic – can have been executed from a single exemplar [copy].*

*A second reason for the value of ancient versions is in their ability to exhibit a text which antedates [time prior] the oldest manuscripts. Readings which are called in the Authorized Version for their non-existence in the ‘two most ancient authorities’ (Codex Sinaiticus or A; and Codex Vaticanus, or B, fourth century) are frequently discovered in the Syrian and Latin translations of the second century. (“**Final Authority**”; by William P Grady; Grady Publications; PO Box 506, Schererville, Indiana 46375, USA; pp. 33-34)*

In the course of time, many versions (translations from the original languages) of Scripture were written. The following is a small representative sample of the many versions produced.

### ANCIENT VERSIONS

**The Peshitta Version** (150 AD) was the first Syrian translation from the original languages or the first Syrian version. Today, there are approximately **350 copies** of the Peshitta (Peshitto) version in existence. David O Fuller in his book “**Which Bible**” writes of the Peshitto:

*It was at Antioch, capital of Syria, that the believers were first called Christians. And as time rolled on, the Syrian-speaking Christians could be numbered by the thousands. It is generally admitted that the Bible was translated from the original languages into Syrian about 150 AD. This version is known as the Peshitto (the correct or simple). This Bible even today generally follows the Received Text. One authority tells us this – ‘The Peshitto in our days is found in use amongst the Nestorians, who have always kept it, by the Monophysites on the plains of Syria, the Christians of St. Thomas in Malabar, and by the Maronites on the mountain terraces of Lebanon’.* (“**Final Authority**”; by William P Grady; Grady Publications: PO Box 506, Schererville, Indiana 46375, USA; pages 197-198)

**The Old Latin Vulgate** (157 AD) is also a version used by the early believers in Europe when Latin was in popular use (a living language). The word *vulgate* in Latin means *vulgar* or *common*, because it was a bible used by the common people. Another name for the Old Latin Vulgate was the **Itala Version**. This version is NOT to be confused with Jerome’s Vulgate, which was produced over 220 years later in 380 AD [4<sup>th</sup> Century]. Jerome’s 4<sup>th</sup> century Vulgate was also written in Latin for the Roman Catholic Church, which was rejected by the early Christians for almost a millennium [1,000 years]. The churches of the Waldenses, Gauls, Celts, Albigenses and other groups used the **Old Latin Vulgate** and rejected the papal book of Jerome. In his book “**An Understandable History of the Bible**”, by Rev. Samuel Gipp, Th.D. He clearly states:

*The Old Latin Vulgate [2<sup>nd</sup> century] was used by the Christians in the churches of the Waldenses, Gauls, Albigenes and other fundamental groups throughout Europe.*

*This Latin version became so used and beloved by orthodox Christians and was in such common use by the common people that it assumed the term ‘Vulgate’ as a name. Vulgate comes from ‘vulgar’ which is the Latin word for ‘common’. It was so esteemed for its faithfulness to the deity of Christ and its accurate reproductions of the originals, that these early Christians let Jerome’s Roman Catholic translation ‘sit on the shelf’. Jerome’s translation was not used by the true Biblical Christians for almost a millennium after it was translated from corrupted manuscripts by Jerome in 380 A.D. [4<sup>th</sup> century] Even then it only came into usage due to the death of Latin as a common language, and the violent, wicked persecutions waged against true believers by Pope Gregory IX during his reign from 1227 to 1242 A.D. (“**And Understandable History of the Bible**”; by Rev. Samuel C Gipp; Bible Believers Baptist Bookstore; 1252 East Aurora Road, Macedonia, Ohio 44056 USA; pp. 67-68).*

David Fuller confirms the fact the Latin Bible of early Christianity was not the Latin Vulgate. *It is clearly evident that the Latin Bible of early British Christianity was NOT the Latin Bible (Vulgate) of the papacy.* (“**Which Bible**”; by David Otis Fuller, D.D; published by The Institute for Biblical Textual Studies; Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503, USA; p.201)

The **Italic Bible** (157 AD) was first used by the Waldenses in northern Italy. *Italy, France, and Great Britain were once provinces of the old Roman Empire. Latin was then the language of the common people. So the first translations of the Bible in these countries were made from the Greek Vulgate into Latin. One of the first of these Latin Bibles was for the Waldenses in northern Italy, translated not later than 157 AD and was known as the Italic Version.*

*The renowned scholar Beza states that the Italic Church dates from 120 AD. Allix, an outstanding scholar, testifies that enemies had corrupted many manuscripts, while the Italic Church handed them down in their apostolic purity. (“God Wrote Only One Bible”;* by Jasper J Ray; Eye Opener Publications: PO Box 7944, Eugene, Oregon, 97401 USA; p. 98)

**The Waldensian** (120 AD & onwards) were the first peoples of Europe to receive a translation of the Oracles of God. *The Waldenses were among the first of the peoples of Europe to obtain a translation of the Holy Scriptures. Hundreds of years before the Reformation, they possessed a Bible in manuscript in their native [vulgar] tongue. They had the truth unadulterated, and this rendered them the special objects of hatred and persecution...Here for a thousand years, witnesses for the truth maintained the ancient faith...In a most wonderful manner it [the Word of God] was **preserved uncorrupted through all the ages of darkness.** (“Which Bible”;* by David Otis Fuller, D.D; published by The Institute for Biblical Textual Studies; Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503, USA; p.215)

The succession of Bibles that followed and the vast majority (over 90%) of the **5200 extant** (existing) **New Testament manuscripts** are all in agreement with the text now known as the Text Receptus or Text Received. This text forms the foundation of the King James Bible. The following Bibles are in agreement with the Text Receptus:

1. **The Peshitta Version** (150 AD)
2. **The Old Latin Vulgate** (157 AD)
3. **The Italic Bible** (157 AD)
4. **The Gallic Bible** (southern France: 177 AD)
5. **The Gothic Bible** (330-350 AD)

6. **The Old Syriac Bible** (400 AD)
7. **The Armenian Bible** (1244 copies still in existence: 400 AD)
8. **The Palestinian Syriac** (450 AD)
9. **The French Bible** of Oliveton (1535 AD)
10. **The Czech Bible** (1602 AD)
11. **The Italian Bible** of Diodati (1606 AD)
12. **The Greek Orthodox Bible:** *used from Apostolic times to the present day by the Greek Orthodox Church.*