

The Bible and the Bible Alone, the Rule of Faith and Duty

When the editor of the [Advent Review and Sabbath Herald](#) placed this phrase on the masthead of the paper in August 1854 as the first principle of doctrine taught by the paper, he certainly did not realize how popular the Bible would be 150 years later. Today no book approaches it in sales. It is translated into 438 languages (the New Testament into an incredible 1,168) and the numbers are already outdated before they are written down. The work of [translating and distributing the Bible](#) is one of the largest concerted human efforts of all time.

Professional specialization in the study and propagation of the Bible is the largest and essentially the oldest educated profession. In the present sceptical age it still ranks first. No other area of scholarship can compete with [Bible-related studies](#), and churches multiply through every city in the world.

The Bible is the only religious classic that is and has long been accessible to nearly the entire population of the globe. That fact alone is a powerful argument in its favour. If there is a God who has revealed his will to humankind in a book, it stands to reason that book would be widely available. No other religious book even begins to compete with the Bible in accessibility.

While other religious books are of long-standing influence, they fail in such accessibility. The Chinese classics are largely known only in China. The same can be said for the Vedic literature, which is mostly known only by the priestly caste of India. Furthermore, such books, especially the Vedas, are practically impossible to translate, since they depend so heavily on puns and word-play. Even the Qur'an loses most of its charm and much of its meaning in translation. Only the Bible is susceptible to clear and effective translation to other languages, making it accessible to all.

Historical criticism of the [Bible](#) text has produced a mass of research detail that has given ammunition to those who wish to attack the Bible and claim that it is corrupted. But the fact is that the mass of research proves just one thing. No book of antiquity has been preserved so well as the Bible, which exists in thousands of ancient manuscripts and manuscript fragments. Those who criticize the details are failing to see the forest for the trees, the miracle of the preservation of the Bible. It is unique in history.



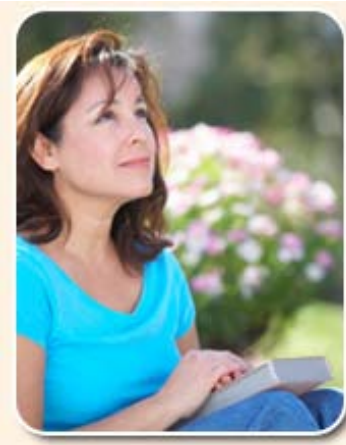
A number of arguments can be made for the validity of the Bible. Archaeology has proven it correct time and again. The Ebla, Nuzi, and Mari tablets have silenced critics of the Bible in regard to the patriarchal period. Advances in history consistently show the Bible correct. The Assyrian king Sargon was unknown, except in the Bible, until the discovery of his palace in Khorsabad, Iraq, which even confirmed his conquest of Ashdod as reported in [Isaiah 20](#). Fulfilment of [Bible prophecies](#) adds to the believer's assurance. The prophecy upon which most others is founded is the prediction of the return from Babylonian captivity at the end of seventy years in Jeremiah 29:9-12. The book of Daniel is based on that prophecy and is remarkable in its prediction of the course of events from that time to the very days we live in.

But archaeology, history and prophecy are neither unique to the Bible nor central to its

message. What is most important is that the Bible is a book that contains the revelation of the will of God for humankind. It tells us what we need to know to live as God wants us to.

Catholic, Orthodox and Oriental Christian churches make the Bible, along with tradition, a source of doctrine and practice. They claim that the Bible can be interpreted only by the church, and require people to conform to the church's reading of the Bible. Historically, they have relied heavily on allegorical readings, which of course no one could come up with unless the church guided them. But anyone reading the Bible can see that it is a straight-forward book that can be understood for the most part by anyone with a grade-school education.

A central principle of [Protestantism](#) has been to reject [tradition](#) and accept the Bible only as the source of doctrine and practice. But Protestantism stopped at merely reforming a few of the most obvious excesses of Christianity. It still contains many non-Biblical teachings based on human traditions, such as Sunday worship and the annual festivals of the church, the belief in the [Trinity](#), and the belief in the Atonement finished on the cross. All of these beliefs have remarkable parallels in ancient paganism and can be proven from the Bible only by forcing the texts. The Protestant failure to use the Bible only, and to reject the pagan elements in the church, has resulted in the confusion that is Christianity today.



Many people have despaired of ever making sense of the confusion. But the confusion can be dispelled by a systematic and careful reading of the Bible. By using rational, [literalist](#), and systematic rules of interpretation, the central issues of the Bible message become clear. However, it is not something that can be accomplished by one individual alone. A simple, logical and systematic system of Biblical beliefs was achieved by a group of Bible students in 1848 and the following years by applying a special list of rules of interpretation coupled with fervent prayer and fasting, and confirmed by the testimony of Ellen White, whose visions guided and comforted believers after the Great Disappointment of 1844. [The fourteen rules](#) of interpretation used by [William Miller](#) and applied in the Sabbath Conferences and later. These principles for reading the Bible are just as valuable today as ever. They are reasonable and understandable. Those who agree to apply them will find that all significant disagreement about the Bible and what it means will disappear.

But the unique feature of the Bible is the fact that it alone claims that God has spoken to humankind audibly, directly, and publicly. While the Bible is filled with appearances of angels, dreams and visions, as well as prophets and leaders claiming to speak on behalf of God, we do not need to take such things on trust. No other religious classic claims to contain the very words of God spoken directly and publicly to millions of people so that each one could hear and know the message for himself. [Yahushua](#) (Jesus) is proclaimed to be the beloved son, in whom God is well pleased, on at least three occasions. But the witnesses were few at those events. Nothing compares to the giving of [the ten commandments](#) on Mount Sinai, when millions of people from the major center of civilization of that day, Egypt, heard and understood the voice of God directly and audibly.

Since the Bible contains the ten commandments, it is a unique book. No other classical book of religion makes such claims at all, claims to direct and public revelation. So there are no competitors. On the basis of the most objective criteria to be found, it is only reasonable to take the Bible into consideration in what we believe and do.