

SESSION TWO

*RELIABILITY OF
THE BIBLE*

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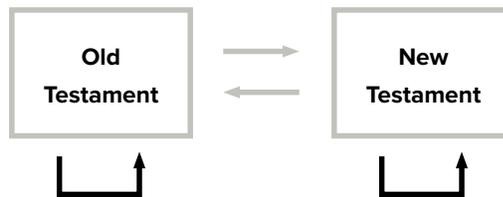
RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLE

I. RELIABILITY DEFINED

- A. The quality of being trustworthy
- B. Consistently good in its quality
- C. Rational pattern of predictability
- D. Multi-faceted reasoning

II. REASONS THE BIBLE IS RELIABLE

A. The Bible *Itself* Says It



1. Old Testament affirms itself ^{55 56}
2. Old Testament affirms New Testament
 - a. Messianic prophesies
 - b. Foreshadowing
 - c. Christophanies
3. New Testament affirms Old Testament ^{57 58 59}
 - a. Jesus describes the Scriptures ^{60 61 62 63 64}
 - b. Jesus pre-authenticates the New Testament ^{65 66}
4. New Testament affirms itself ^{67 68 69 70}

⁵⁴ Robert Cupp, "Bibliology" in *We Believe*, Fellowship Bible Church, 2013.

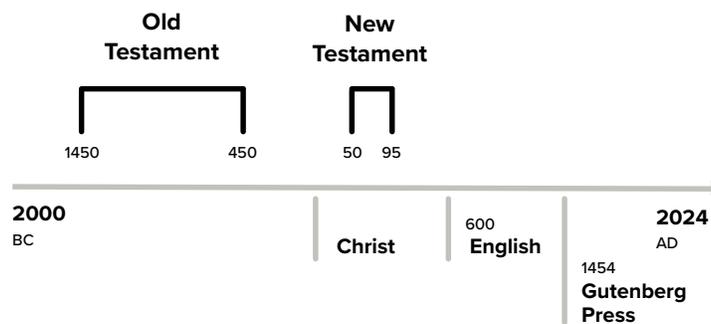
⁵⁵ "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever." (Isaiah 40:8, NIV)

⁵⁶ "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalms 119:105, ESV)

B. Cohesiveness of the Biblical content

1. Written over a 1500-year time period
2. More than 40 authors
3. Sixty-six books
4. Three languages (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic)
5. Three continents (Europe, Asia, Africa)
6. A single message

C. Subject to Consistent Belief over the Last 2000 Years



TIMELINE

Timeline demonstrating the writings of the Old and New Testament.

Note the comparative time of the origin of the English language and the invention of the Gutenberg Press.

⁵⁷ "For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, so that the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation'" (Luke 11:49-51, NASB).

⁵⁸ "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:27, NIV).

⁵⁹ " This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (TANAKH – Torah, Prophet & Writings) (Luke 24:44, NIV).

⁶⁰ "The scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35, ESV).

⁶¹ "The command of God" (Matthew 15:3, NIV).

⁶² "Word of God" (Mark 7:13, NIV).

⁶³ Described as indestructible in Matthew 5:18.

⁶⁴ "Have you not read what God said to you?" (Matthew 22:31, NIV).

⁶⁵ "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26, NIV).

⁶⁶ "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you" (John 16:12-14, NIV).

⁶⁷ "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16, NIV)

⁶⁸ "But men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21, ESV).

⁶⁹ "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Mark 13:31, NIV).

⁷⁰ "The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the Word of the Lord endures forever" (1 Peter 1:24-25, NKJV).

1. 1st Clement of Rome (100)
2. Augustine (412)
3. Thomas Aquinas (1270)
4. John Calvin (1536)
5. J.P. Moreland, D.A. Carson (2025)

D. Embarrassing Details add Credibility to its Content

1. *Principle of Embarrassment* defined: A criterion that looks at ancient writings to see if there are hard, embarrassing, or unfavorable details about the author(s) or with the story's purpose. If such details exist, positive conclusions can be made about the integrity of the author(s).
2. Examples
 - a. Rahab the prostitute (Joshua 2)
 - b. The disciples not understanding the teachings of Jesus (Mark 4:1-12)
 - c. The three disciples falling asleep at Gethsemane (Matt 26:36-46)
 - d. The crucifixion of Jesus as a criminal (Mark 15:21-41)
 - e. Women discovering the empty tomb (John 20)

E. Surviving Manuscripts

1. Manuscripts
 - a. Manuscript Defined – handwritten copy generally dated prior to the invention of the printing press.
 - b. Autographa (Originals, Autographs, Exit text, Ausgang Text, Urtext, Autographic text form) – Document that left the author's hands as it was dispatched to its primary reader and is no longer under the author's control
2. Important Old Testament Manuscripts
 - a. Kettef Hinnom ⁷¹
 1. Earliest extant fragment of biblical text in existence (late seventh or early sixth century BC)

⁷¹ Armstrong Institute Staff, *Kettef Hinnom Scrolls*, June 24, 2018, <https://armstronginstitute.org/45-kettef-hinnom-scrolls>.

2. Benediction ^{72 73}
 - a. Numbers 6:24-26
 - b. Deuteronomy 7:9
 3. Two small silver scrolls—about one inch wide, with an inscription
 4. Exact wording contained in the Hebrew Bible
 5. Discovered in 1979 in a Jerusalem family tomb dated to the time of Jeremiah
 6. On display at The Israel Museum in Jerusalem ⁷⁴
- b. Dead Sea Scrolls (200BC-100AD)
1. Ancient manuscripts discovered between 1947 -1956 in eleven caves near Khirbet Qumran, on the shores of the Dead Sea
 2. Contains fragments from every OT book except Esther
 3. Contains the entire book of Isaiah (Great Isaiah Scroll), ⁷⁵—oldest OT book in existence
 4. On display at The Israel Museum in Jerusalem ⁷⁶
- c. Aleppo Codex ⁷⁷ (930AD)
1. Oldest known manuscript of the Hebrew Bible (OT)
 2. Seventy-five percent remains—missing entire Torah except 11 pages of Deuteronomy
 3. Smuggled out of Syria in 1947 following the Arab-Israeli war
 4. Work of scribes (Masoretes) in Tiberias, Israel, on the Sea of Galilee in about 930 AD
 5. On display at The Israel Museum in Jerusalem ⁷⁸
- d. Leningrad Codex (1010 AD)
1. Oldest *complete* manuscript of the Hebrew Bible (OT)

⁷² “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.” (Num 6:24-26, NIV).

⁷³ “Who keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments” (Deuteronomy 7:9, KJV).

⁷⁴ “Priestly Benediction” on amulets, *The Israel Museum*, Accessed on 5/19/2025, <https://www.imj.org.il/en/collections/198069-0>.

⁷⁵ The Digital Dead Sea Scrolls, *The Israel Museum*, Accessed on 5/19/25, <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/isaiah>.

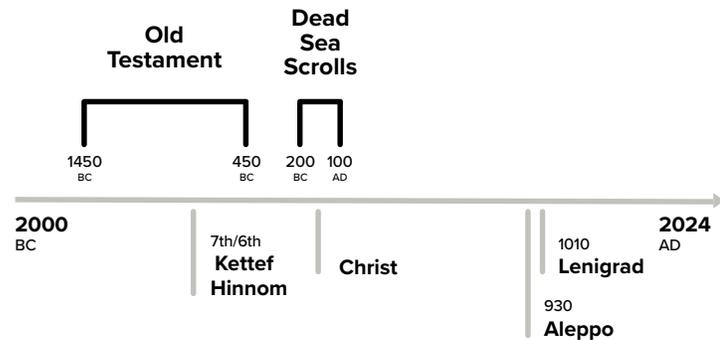
⁷⁶ “The Dead Seas Scrolls,” *The Israel Museum*, Accessed on 5/19/25, <https://www.imj.org.il/en/wings/shrine-book/dead-sea-scrolls#>.

⁷⁷ Aleppo codex online, <https://barhama.com/ajaxzoom/viewer/viewer.php?zoomDir=/pic/AleppoWM/&example=viewer5>.

⁷⁸ “The Aleppo Codex,” *The Israel Museum*, Accessed on 5/19/25, <https://www.imj.org.il/en/collections/226966-0>.

TIMELINE

Timeline demonstrating the surviving Old Testament manuscripts in relationship to the original.



2. Alternatively known as the Cairo codex as its place of Origin was Cairo, Egypt
3. Compare book of Isaiah in the Leningrad (and Aleppo) to the Dead Sea Scrolls—Isaiah is unchanged in 1000 years.
4. On display at The National Library of Russia at St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) ⁷⁹

3. Reason for limited Old Testament manuscripts

a. Jewish Scribes (Supreme Guardians)

1. Soferim (500BC-100BC)
2. Tannaim (100BC-100AD)
3. Amoraim (100AD-500AD)
4. Masorettes (500-900 AD)

- Masters of Tradition
- Hebrew text became known as “Masoretic” text.

b. Text was “unalterable.”

c. Newer copies preferred—same or better than previous copy

d. Jewish scribes gave older copies a ceremonial burial.

e. Scribes’ motive was to prevent improper use.

f. Many manuscripts have decayed, been destroyed, or are undiscovered.

4. Important New Testament surviving Greek manuscripts ^{80 81}

a. Major Manuscripts

⁷⁹ The National Library of Russia, <https://nlr.ru/eng>.

⁸⁰ Daniel Wallace, The Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts, <https://www.csntm.org/about-us/>.

⁸¹ Official list of New Testament manuscripts is maintained at The Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung (INTF, Münster, Germany) in an authoritative catalog, the Kurzgefasste Liste. <https://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/liste>.

1. Codex Vaticanus ⁸² (B or 03) (350 AD)
 - a. The most important manuscript of the Bible and thus the most important document in the world ⁸³
 - b. Contains 759 of 820 leaves—almost all of both the Septuagint (OT in Greek) and NT in Greek. (nearly complete)
 - c. OT (617 sheets) lacks first twenty leaves of Genesis; also lacks two books of Maccabees
 - d. NT (142 sheets) lacks 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Revelation (stops at Hebrews 9:13)
 - e. Compare to P75 (200 AD) – text almost exact
 - f. Crucial source for textual criticism—assists scholars in evaluating the early Greek NT and Septuagint
 - g. Used as a base text in the 1881 Westcott and Hort Greek NT edition and many modern day Greek New Testaments
 - h. Written in uncial (or magistral) script (rounded, capital letters) on parchment in a three-column format without word division, punctuation, or pages, by two or three different scribes
 - i. Alexandrian text type
 - j. On display in The Vatican Library in Rome ⁸⁴

2. Codex Sinaiticus ⁸⁵ (01) (350-400 AD)
 - a. Contains 400 of 730 total leaves—all of the Greek NT and about half of the Septuagint (Greek OT)
 - b. OT: lacks Genesis 1:1-46:28; Ex 1:1-24:7, Lev 20:27-22:30, Numbers 5:26-7:20, 1 Chron. 9:27-19:17, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther
 - c. Lacks 1 and 2 Maccabees (apocryphal books)
 - d. Also contains *The Epistle of Barnabas* and portions of *The Shepherd of Hermas*
 - e. NT: Oldest complete manuscript of the Greek NT that predates the 9th century ⁸⁶
 - f. Highly valued by Bible scholars in their efforts to reconstruct the original biblical text

⁸² Codex Vaticanus, Vatican Digital Library, https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1209.

⁸³ Daniel Wallace, "Majuscules," *Textual Criticism Course*, Credo House, Accessed on 5/29/25, 2013, 9:13.

⁸⁴ Codex Vaticanus online, [https://biblicalstudiesonline.wordpress.com/2015/02/17/codex-vaticanus-online/#:~:text=Codex%20Vaticanus%20\(B\)%2C%20containing,available%20by%20the%20Vatican%20Library.](https://biblicalstudiesonline.wordpress.com/2015/02/17/codex-vaticanus-online/#:~:text=Codex%20Vaticanus%20(B)%2C%20containing,available%20by%20the%20Vatican%20Library.)

⁸⁵ Codex Sinaiticus, <https://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/>

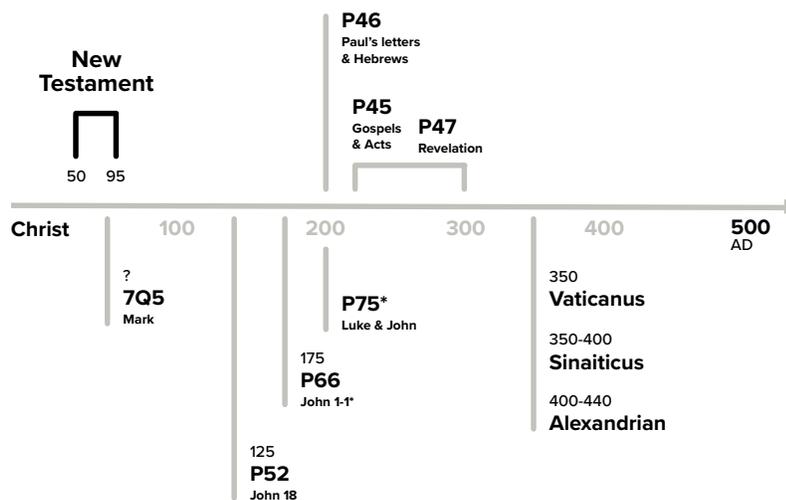
⁸⁶ "See the Manuscript" Codex Sinaiticus, <https://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx>

- g. On display in four places: 347 leaves in The British Library; 43 leaves in the Library of the University of Leipzig; parts of three leaves in the National Library of Russia; 12+ leaves remain in the Saint Catherine's Monastery
3. Codex Alexandrinus (A) (400AD)
 - a. Contains 773 of 822 leaves of the Greek OT (Septuagint) and NT
 - b. OT: 630 leaves; lacks Gen 1:1 – 46:28, 1 Sam 12:17-14:9, Ps 49:20-79:11
 - c. NT: 143 leaves; lacks Matt 1:1-25:6, John 6:50-8:52, 2 Cor. 4:13-12:6; also includes John 7:53-8:11 (adulterer story)
 - d. Also contains 1 Clement and portions of 2 Clement
 - e. On display in The British Library
- b. Important New Testament Fragments
 1. Papyri (127)
 2. Collectively accounts for about 43% of the NT
 3. Some within 100 years of the original writings
 4. Earliest witness to the NT text
 5. P52 (John Rylands)
 - a. John 18:31-33, 37-38
 - b. Dating 100-150 AD (125 AD)
 - c. "When P52 was written the ink of John's Gospel was barely dry" (written within decades of the original)
 - d. Purchased in 1920 in Egypt
 - e. John – written about 90 AD
 - f. Located in The John Rylands Library (Manchester, England)

6. P45, 46, 47 (Chester Beatty) ⁸⁷
 - a. P45 (3rd C AD): Gospels and Acts
 - b. P45 – Oldest Mark’s Gospel
 - c. P46 (200 AD): Paul’s letters and Hebrews
 - d. P46 – Oldest of Paul’s letters; 86/104 leaves remaining
 - e. P47 (3rd C AD); Revelation (oldest in existence)
 - f. Located in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ireland ⁸⁸

7. P66, P75 (Bodmer Papyri)
 - a. P66 (175 AD): John’s Gospel (1st 14 chapters + fragments)
 - b. P66: Geneva, Switzerland
 - c. P75 (200 AD): Luke and John
 - d. P75 – 3rd most important manuscript in the world
 - e. Text almost exact with Vaticanus (350 AD)
 - f. Located in Rome, Italy

8. 7Q5 (Dead Sea Scrolls)
 - a. Mark 6:52-53
 - b. Date – under intense debate (50-68 AD?)



TIMELINE

Timeline demonstrating the surviving fragments and early manuscripts of the New Testament in relationship to the original.

⁸⁷ Neil R. Lightfoot, *How We Got the Bible*, Third Edition, (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 2003), 117-118.

- c. Reasons for the limited number of New Testament manuscripts
 - 1. Papyrus decay ⁸⁹
 - 2. Persecution
 - 3. Undiscovered

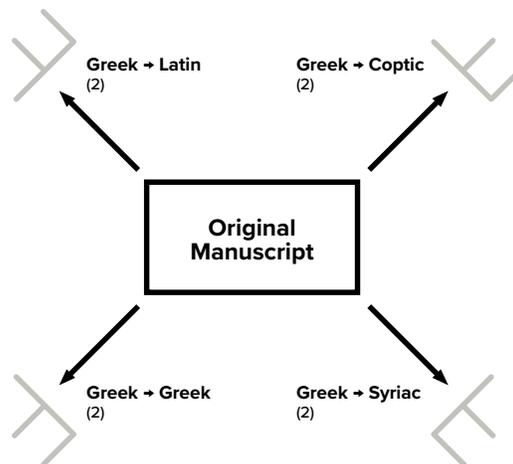
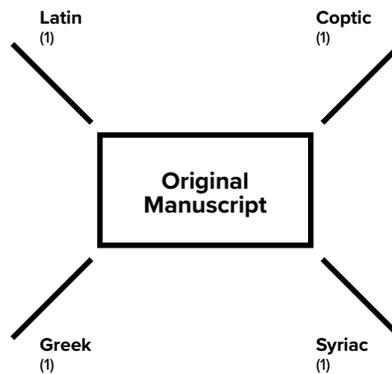
5. Concept of Multiplicity of Manuscripts

- a. Reconstructs the original work
- b. Preserves the original text
- c. The more manuscripts available – the greater chance to reconstruct the original
- d. As time goes on (and more manuscripts become available we get closer to the original)

DIAGRAM

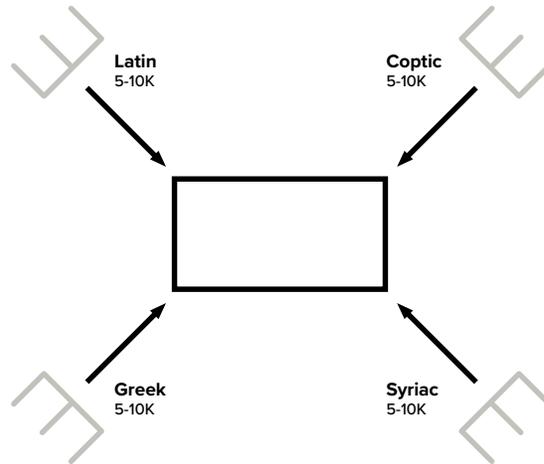
Diagrammatic example of the concept of multiplicity of manuscripts.

Note how when the originals disappear, there are extensive copies that can be used to restore the originals.

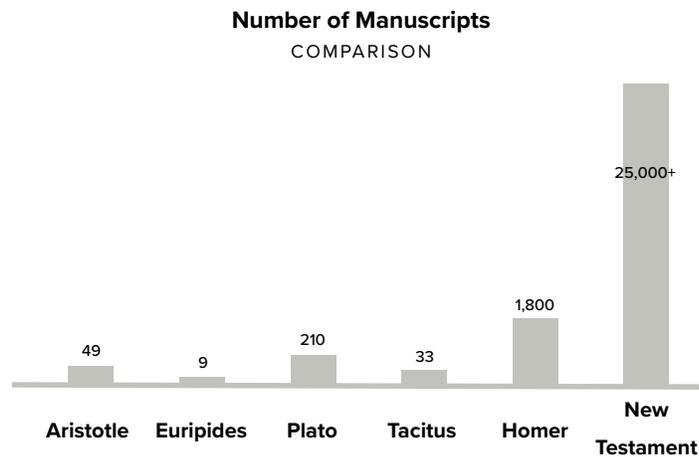


⁸⁸ Chester Beatty Library, <https://chesterbeatty.ie>.

⁸⁹ Daniel Wallace, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, Textual Criticism Credo Courses, 2013, <https://www.credocourses.com/product/textual-criticism/>



- e. The number of New Testament manuscripts in existence ⁹⁰
1. Greater than 25,000 ^{91 92}
 - a. Greek ^{93 94} (5800)
 - b. Latin (More than 10K) ⁹⁵
 - c. Coptic, Syriac, GeorGIN, Gothic, Arabic, Hebrew, Slavic (5-10K)
- f. Comparison of NT manuscripts to ancient literature



QUESTION

How tall would stacks of existing New Testament manuscripts compare to existing classic ancient literature? ⁹⁶

New Testament
1 Mile High

Classic Literature
4 Feet High

⁹⁰ Daniel B. Wallace, "How Tall Would a Stack of New Testament Manuscripts Be?" Blog, January 1, 2023. https://danielbwallace.com/2023/01/01/how-tall-would-a-stack-of-new-testament-manuscripts-be/?fbclid=IwAR1GAmDiPgo6CKzrbImEE1Ai0d8JY9pzy7L2_c3Eh9LtsRh1YuSrnNTZcSU

⁹¹ Norman Geisler, *The Big Book of Christian Apologetics*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 2012), 398.

⁹² The Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung (INTF, Münster, Germany) maintains the authoritative catalog, the Kurzgefasste Liste, <https://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/liste>.

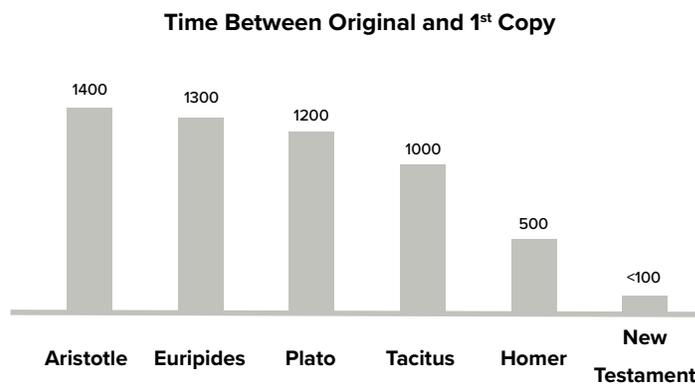
⁹³ Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, Fourth Edition, (New York, Oxford University Press, 2005), 50.

⁹⁴ Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible*, (Chicago, Moody, 2012), 247.

⁹⁵ Daniel Wallace, "The Number of Variants, Textual Criticism Credo Courses," 2013, <https://www.credocourses.com/product/textual-criticism/>

⁹⁶ Ibid.

1. Greater than 43% of all verses in the NT have been found in the papyri within 125 years of its completion.
 2. 0% of any writings in the classical texts have been found within 125 years of its original.
 3. 3x more NT manuscripts in 200 years compared to average classical author has in 2000 years
- g. Comparison of time between originals and the first manuscript



INSIGHT

“The reason we have a lot of variances is because we have a lot of manuscripts.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Daniel Wallace, *The Number of Variants*, Textual Criticism Credo Courses, 2013, <https://www.credocourses.com/product/textual-criticism/>

⁹⁸ Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus* (New York: Harper, 2005), 252-3.

⁹⁹ Geisler, *The Big Book of Christian Apologetics*, 481.

¹⁰⁰ Geisler and Nix, *From God to Us*, 248.

¹⁰¹ Daniel Wallace, *The Number of Variants*, Textual Criticism Credo Courses, 2013, <https://www.credocourses.com/product/textual-criticism/>

6. Variances in the New Testament
 - a. 400K textual variants; > 99.75% make no difference at all (70% of these are spelling differences)⁹⁷
 - b. Less than 1/4th of 1% (0.25%) of all variants are both meaningful and viable.
 - c. Variations of only 12 of a page (out of 500) in the NT among all discovered manuscripts
 - d. No cardinal doctrines are jeopardized.
 - e. “Essential Christian beliefs are not effected by textual variances in the manuscript tradition of the New Testament.”⁹⁸
 - f. “Most changes have to do with form, not content. They are grammatical, not theological.”⁹⁹
 - g. Our New Testament is >99% textually pure.¹⁰⁰ In the entire text of 20,000 lines, only 40 lines are in doubt (about 400 words), and none affect any significant doctrine.

F. Patristic Citations

1. “As I possessed all the existing works of the Fathers of the second and third centuries, I commenced to search and up to this time I have found the entire New Testament, except eleven verses.” (Sir David Dalrymple, 1726-1792).
2. Church Fathers do quote most of the New Testament (1 Clement, Tertullian, Origen).
3. Greater than one million quotations ¹⁰²
4. Problems: They don’t introduce the quote as Scripture, but just say it (often hard to recognize).
5. No chapters until Langton 1227 AD
6. Geneva translation 1557 (verses and chapters)
7. Irenaeus (Against Heresies) 180 AD
8. From the non-canonical works of Ignatius and Polycarp (students of John) and the non-canonical work of Clement (student of Paul) we can determine the following:
 - a. Jesus was predicted by the Old Testament as described in the New Testament.
 - b. Jesus is divine as described in the New Testament.
 - c. Jesus taught His disciples as described in the New Testament.
 - d. Jesus worked miracles as described in the New Testament.
 - e. Jesus was born of a virgin as described in the New Testament.
 - f. Jesus lived, ministered, was crucified and died as described in the New Testament.
 - g. Jesus rose from the dead and demonstrated His deity as described in the New Testament.

◆ **INSIGHT**

“Indeed, so extensive are these citations that if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament”¹⁰³

¹⁰² Wallace.

¹⁰³ Metzger and Ehrman, 126.

III. MORE REASONS THE BIBLE IS RELIABLE

- A. Archeological evidence.
- B. Extra Biblical or ancient literature.
- C. Fulfillment of prophecy.

IV. SUMMARY

- A. The Old and New Testament affirms itself and the other.
- B. Consistent belief in the Bible over 2,000 years adds to belief in its reliability.
- C. The integrity of the author is affirmed when embarrassing details exist in the writing.
- E. The Leningrad Codex is the oldest complete Old Testament manuscript in existence (dated 1010 AD).
- F. The Sinaiticus Codex is the oldest complete New Testament manuscript in existence (dated 350 AD).
- G. The majority of the Bible can be reproduced by using only patristic citations—some say all, but eleven verses.

V. STUDY QUESTIONS

- A. How would you explain to a non-believer the reliability of the Bible? Select 3-4 of the reasons listed above and expand upon their rationale in your own words.
- B. Why are the Dead Sea Scrolls so important to our understanding of the Old Testament? How do these manuscripts add credibility to the trustworthiness of the Bible?

- C. Explain the similarities and differences between the Vaticanus, Alexandrinus and the Sinaiticus Codices. Why are these manuscripts so important to the reliability of the Bible?

- D. How many New Testament manuscripts are in existence? Explain how this number relates to our understanding of the autographa.

