

CHAPTER 1

INTEGRITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

The Meaning of Integrity

Integrity has the idea of trustworthiness, incorruptibility or wholeness. The integrity of a book has been preserved when it has been transmitted without a change that would affect its meaning. If we stated that our New Testament text had integrity, it would mean that the present Greek text, from which we get our English translations, would yield the same meaning as the autographs, written by the apostles or the various authors.

Textual criticism is the science that deals with this particular area of Bible study. The textual critic attempts to restore the original text from the materials which he has at hand, such as manuscripts, versions or quotations (see the chart "Materials and Sources From Which We Get Our New Testament").

I. The Need for Textual Criticism

If we had the autographs, written by the apostles or the other authors, there would be no need for textual criticism. The problem is: we do not possess, as nearly as we know, any of the autographs. Perhaps they are not in existence or, if they are, they have not been brought to our attention.

Though the fact is true as stated above about the autographs, we possess many copies of the autographs, in one form or another, as we

shall presently see. The *work* of the textual critic is, then, to *bridge the gap* between the autographs and the Greek text of our day, so that we may know that our English translations are representative of what God wanted us to know.

A. HOW THE PROBLEM AROSE

1. THE AUTOGRAPHS ARE LOST. The question might be asked, why did God allow the autographs to be lost? In fact, it has often been asked and discussed. The answer to the question is basically the same every time: we do not know why God allowed the autographs to be lost. There are reasons why it might be an improbability that they could have been saved except by divine care. For instance,

- a. They were probably written on papyrus, which is hard to preserve, since it is much like our paper. (Greenlee states that all manuscripts we possess which are earlier than the fourth century are on papyrus, page 26.)
- b. Perhaps the writers did not know that they would need to be preserved for 2,000 years or so.
- c. Perhaps the fact is that we can with considerable assurance recover the original text from the materials which we possess — thus the autographs would not need to be preserved.

2. THE COPIES OF THE AUTOGRAPHS DIFFER. As the textual critic begins his work of recovering the original text, he will immediately discover, though he has many means of restoring the text, the various sources differ among themselves. The question will be asked, why do they differ? The answer is: because those who copied them did not copy accurately.

Without doubt, various congregations wanted copies of the Gospels and the other New Testament books when they learned of their existence and value. But if the copy was made, it had to be made by hand. Until the invention of printing about 1450, every copy of anything had to be made by hand. It is difficult, if not impossible, to copy extensively without making errors.

The printing press for all practical purposes brought an end to the making of errors in copies. When Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press with its ability to reproduce many copies all alike, he brought into existence the means to reproduce accurately any autograph. While we are thankful for such progress, we need to span

the distance between the invention and the writing of the autographs, approximately 1400 years.

B. VARIATIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

1. THE AMOUNT OF VARIATION. Considering the whole New Testament text and the various copies that we have, it is estimated that there are some 150,000 to 200,000 variations among the various manuscripts. At first reading, this seems a tremendous amount of differences. Further, every additional copy we find adds to the number of mistakes, since few if any copies are made without an error in them (we shall discuss the nature of how errors are made below). It is also true to say that every additional copy we find provides additional material for correcting mistakes and thus aiding in the restoration of the original text.

In consideration of the total number of "errors", we surely want to ask: 1) how the errors are counted as well as 2) what the errors are. As an illustration of how the errors are counted, if the first copy of the autograph contained one error and the copy had six copies made of it, each copy containing the original error, there would be seven errors counted. As a matter of fact, most of the total mentioned above is composed of just such errors.

- a. Many of the errors consist in various ways of spelling words (Jerusalem is spelled different ways, just to mention one).
- b. Some errors involve the insertion or omission of words not essential to the sense.
- c. The use of synonyms is often noted.
- d. The transposition of words — these and others constitute the great majority of the variations previously noted.

Hence, the amount of variation is large — the variation that affects meaning is very small. It will be well to quote the statement by F.J.A. Hort from "The Introduction to the Greek New Testament" by Westcott and Hort. The statement of Dr. Hort is made with reference to the integrity of the New Testament text. He writes as follows:

"With regard to the bulk of the words of the New Testament, as of most other ancient writings, there is no variation, or other ground of doubt, and therefore no room for textual criticism; and here, therefore, an editor is only a transcriber. The same may be said in truth with respect to those various readings which have never been received, and in all probability never will be received, into any printed text. The proportion of words virtually accepted on all hands as

raised above doubt is very great, not less, on a rough computation, than seven-eighths of the whole. The remaining eighth, therefore, formed in great part by changes of order and other trivialities, constitutes the whole area of criticism . . . Setting aside differences in orthography, the words in our opinion still subject to doubt only make up about one-sixtieth of the New Testament. In this second estimate, the proportion of comparatively trivial variations is beyond measure larger than in the former, so that the amount of what can in any sense be called substantial variation is but a small fraction of the whole residuary variation, and can hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text."

The statement just quoted was made ca. 1881 after the two men had spent some thirty years intensively studying the textual problems of the New Testament. Westcott and Hort had only about 1500 manuscripts from which to work, not including some considered today to be among the best we have.

Much more recently, after considerably more evidence concerning the New Testament has been found, Sir Frederic Kenyon (who spent his lifetime in the same general field), wrote, "The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true Word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries," page 55, *Our Bible* . . . Within the last decade, utilizing over one hundred years of intensive critical studies, the American Bible Society published a Greek New Testament, setting forth the best New Testament text possible today. It can be used by the student or translator with confidence that he has, for all practical purposes, the accurate representation of what God had the apostles and other writers pen for us some 2,000 years ago.

Our present day Greek text is without doubt almost 100 percent like the original autograph(s). We actually have a New Testament text which is over 99 percent trustworthy and whole. Furthermore, we actually know the various words and/or verses that make up the one percent of doubtful text. Wikgren and Irwin state that only 400 or so variants affect the sense in any great degree, and only about 50 are of real significance (pg. 222). Thus, we may with assurance read our New Testament, whether in Greek or a translation from Greek (like English) and feel that we are reading what God had written some 2,000 years ago. There is certainly no book written at or about the time of the Bible that has as good or greater evidence for its integrity as does the Bible. Both the kind of evidence and the amount of evidence helps to make that conclusion true. (The *kind* of evidence

such as the various manuscripts, quotations, etc., and the *amount* of evidence will be discussed below.)

2. THE NEW TESTAMENT COMPARED TO OTHER TEXTS. In consideration of the statements above, perhaps the student would like to consider the manuscripts from which we get other ancient works and the various facts about those manuscripts which are parallel to those facts about our New Testament text. We have before stated that the New Testament is about 99 percent uncorrupted, leaving only one percent of textual corruption. Giesler and Nix point out, pages 366-367, that the *Iliad* is somewhat comparable to the New Testament, both as to extant manuscripts and length of composition. In comparison to the New Testament, the *Iliad* has at least five percent corruption. We have, according to Giesler and Nix (who quote Metzger), some 643 manuscripts of the *Iliad*. Compare that total with the totals for the New Testament! Yet no one questions the general integrity of the *Iliad*. The companion text to the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, which was written probably in the eighth century B.C., has papyri attesting to its text dating from about the third century B.C., a 500 year gap. Compare that to the fact that we have papyri of the New Testament text dating to the years A.D. 100 to 150. Tacitus, a Roman historian of ca. 56 to ca. 120, wrote a Greek anthology and his *Annals*. We have one manuscript each of these two works, and they are copies far removed from the autographs. Other writers such as Euripides, Cicero, Ovid and Virgil, while they wrote much, we only have manuscripts of all their works which would number in the hundreds. The works of Virgil, for instance, are obtained from manuscripts that are at least three centuries later than the originals. In spite of these facts, which can be multiplied at length about the ancient writers and their works, modern scholarship accepts as generally trustworthy such ancient classics as we have mentioned.

It is worth mentioning in this regard that we actually possess some autographs which are more ancient than the New Testament text, or at least as old as the New Testament texts. Many libraries in the ancient world have been unearthed such as at Ur or Mari. We have writings from the Qumran community. The Lachish letters and Amarna letters, the Moabite Stone, the Rosetta Stone and others like these give evidence that we possess the originals of some works comparable in time to the New Testament. Hence, the preservation of some ancient autographs, more ancient than the New Testament

autographs, is a fact. However, these are the exceptions rather than the rule. The integrity of our New Testament text is as good as almost any ancient writing, and much better than most.

C. HOW THE VARIATIONS CAME TO BE

It does not seem that the New Testament Christians were acceptable, by and large, nor their works, until about the year A.D. 300. When we read that the early church was often persecuted for its faith, we can understand that some copies of their books (i.e., the New Testament) were made under great stress. The person doing the copy might be doing it in the late night hours, with poor light and in a hurry. It is also true to state that the New Testament writings were not considered among "the literature" of the first three centuries — hence, they were not copied in scriptoriums or by people who were accomplished in such activity. Then, as we shall suggest, some of the variations arose because those who made copies attempted to correct them. Sometimes the correction was an effort to restore what was thought to be the correct reading in a given place, or the correction was made to substantiate a certain teaching or doctrine. Let us now consider in some detail how the variations came to be.

1. ACCIDENTAL VARIATIONS. There are a number of different ways that accidental variations came to be. Perhaps the greater amount of variations in our manuscripts are because of accidental changes.

a. *Momentary Inattention.* If you have ever tried to copy anything exactly and have tried to do it over an extended period of time, you will know from experience that it is very easy to lose your attention, even if only for a moment. Such loss of attention produces many different kinds of variations, such as repeating words or letters, substituting words, transposing words and various other errors. The person copying may even become so absorbed in the subject of the text which he is copying, that it diverts his attention from the words to the subject matter. If this happens, he may paraphrase what he is copying or otherwise change it in some way. Some of the other problems of the text we shall mention are rather interwoven with momentary inattention.

b. *Writing from Dictation.* Probably most of the early manuscripts were not copied in a scriptorium, though many later manuscripts were. Some of the early manuscripts may have been copied by one person while another person read the text to him. In either case, the

problems of *unclear pronunciation* and *inaccurate hearing* doubtless produced some variations in the text. Many words sound the same but are spelled differently. (Such words are called homophones.) Consider our English words *to*, *too* and *two* as examples. If the person reading did not correctly read the text, then the person copying could not correctly copy the text. Sometimes the persons copying were not as attentive or as competent as they might be. There are examples in manuscripts which show that scribes in a scriptorium wrote notes to one another while the copying was going on. All these things make for variations in the text.

c. *Change of Pronunciation*. Any living language changes — and this includes the spelling of words. As the centuries passed, the Greek language changed, and so did those who spoke it. Sometimes, doubtless, people were copying the Greek text who did not know the Greek language. All of these combined for variations of different kinds. As an illustration, if you have learned a foreign language (such as Spanish or French), try out your pronunciation on a native speaker of the language. You will probably discover that pronunciation of the same word or words differs.

d. *Memory Lapse*. If you attempted to copy the whole New Testament by hand, you would become wearied at the task — and you might try to carry more words in your memory which you are attempting to copy, so that you would not have to look back to the exemplar so often. If you did that, you would doubtless discover that your memory played tricks on you. You might paraphrase the text, forget a particle or other like word, or use a synonym. You might even conflate the text by bringing a familiar text from another book. This would especially be so in the Gospels where there are numerous parallel passages.

e. *The Nature of the Exemplar*. The exemplar (the copy from which you are working) would not necessarily aid you in accurate copying. It may have been written by someone who had poor handwriting. It may have been corrected as many manuscripts were, either by the corrector (the *διορθωτής*) of the scriptorium, or by someone else. It may not be easy to read because of age or the fact that it is a palimpsest or other problems.

The manuscript which you are copying will not necessarily aid you in the copying process. Punctuation, spelling and other aids to the accurate reading of the text were very scarce in the early

manuscripts, and so for the first 800 years or more of the Christian era. Sometimes the paragraph breaks were indicated by spaces or by an enlarged letter or by use of a new line, but not always and certainly not in the same way in every manuscript. Apparently all manuscripts for the first eight centuries were copied in the uncial script. Cursive manuscripts did not begin to appear until about the middle of the ninth century (see Greenlee's Figure 4). An uncial manuscript looked as follows:

IPAULMYSELFENTREATYOUBYTHEMEEKNESSANDGENTLENESSOFCHRISTIWH
OAMHUMBLEWHENFACETOFACEWITHYOUBUTBOLDTOYOUWHENIAMAW
AYIBEGOFYOUTHATWHENIAMPRESENTIMAYNOTHAVETOSHOWBOLDNESS
WITHSUCHCONFIDENCEASICOUNTONSHOWINGAGAINSTSOMEWHOSUS
PECTUSOFACINGINWORLDLYFASHIONFORTHOUGHWELIVEINTHEWORLD
DWEARENOTCARRYINGONAWORLDLYWARORTHEWEAPONSOFOURWAR
FAREARENOTWORLDLYBUTHAVEDIVINEPOWERTODESTROYSTRONGHOL
DSWEDESTROYARGUMENTSANDEVERYPROUDOBSTACLEOFTHEKNOWLE
DGE OF GOD AND TAKE EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE TO OB EY CHRIST

Such is the nature of the manuscript you might be copying. If you attempt to copy the above quotation exactly, see if you can do it right the first time. Consider the fact that you are probably using a quill pen and something like our ink which is not easy to erase. If you dictate it to someone else to copy, you will soon discover the problems that lie therein.

2. NOMENCLATURE. There are a number of words that are associated with various kinds of errors. The following list will help in this regard and will be involved in one or more of the items cited above or that follow. These are often involved in what is often designated as errors of the hand or eye, or errors of the mind.

- a. *Haplography* is the word which means single writing. It means a failure to write a letter or word which should be repeated. For instance, a sentence with two "thats", the one following the other or a word with two "t's" or "l's" in it, such as ditto or lilly, written as dito or lily.
- b. *Dittography* is the opposite of the above word. It means to duplicate a letter or word. For instance, in Acts 19:34, the cry of the mob about Artemis is given twice in Codex B.
- c. *Homoeoteleuton* means a similar ending. Many phrases or sentences end the same way. It is very easy to skip a line

when copying and pick up the wrong ending or the wrong series of letters. For instance, the omission of the phrase in I John 2:23, "He who confesses the Son has the Father also," probably was omitted because of the repetition of like phrases.

- d. *Itacism* has to do with the fact that various letters sound alike. The variation between *o* and *ω* in *ἔχομεν* and *ἔχωμεν* in Romans 5:1 probably arose because *o* and *ω* sounded alike. Many other letters or combinations of letters sounded alike, such as *ε* and *αι*, *ο* and *ω*, *α*, *ει*, *οι*, *υι*, *ι*, *η* and *η*. Not only did the preceding letters make problems for reading and copying as far as pronunciation went, they also made problems in the fact that they changed words into different words or different forms of the word. Another illustration would be the fact that the personal pronouns which mean "we" or "you", though spelled differently (*ημεῖς* and *υμεῖς*) sounded alike.
- e. *Abbreviation*. Several words came to be abbreviated (see Greenlee, page 30 for a list). Sometimes the first and last letters of the word were used, or the end was dropped off or a symbol was used, or otherwise the word was abbreviated. This made for problems in copying, since the abbreviation might not be well done and hard to read, or the copyist might misunderstand the abbreviation as being for another word.

D. INTENTIONAL VARIATIONS

Many texts were changed because the one copying them wanted to change them. However, it is fair to say that in all probability most of the intentional changes were made for good reasons. Doubtless, some were made in a self-serving way, but most were otherwise. Considering the fact that the scribe might have only one exemplar from which to copy, he might be prone to make certain changes in the text he was making, depending upon his theology or other information available to him. Consider then the following suggestion as to why changes might have been made intentionally:

1. **DOCTRINAL CHANGES.** Many of the early Church Fathers, such as Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origen mention that people classed as "heretics" were making changes in the New Testament to support

their particular views. This apparently was the basis for the work of Marcion about A.D. 140. For instance, if a scribe decided to change a text because of doctrinal considerations, he would probably strengthen the text if the text before him did not say all that he wanted. Some additions such as "and fasting" in Mark 8:29, the expression "and the Holy Spirit" in Luke 1:3 were probably added to strengthen the statements. The text concerning the Heavenly Witnesses in I John 5:7, 8 is an illustration of an intentional variation in support of a doctrine. Contrariwise, the deletion of certain things or a change in the word or words might have been made to "tone down" what the text said. The change of "God" to "Son" in John 1:18 would be an illustration of this. The change from "God" to "Lord" in Acts 20:28 was probably made for the same reason. The omission of the phrase "neither the Son" in Matt. 24:36, which seemed to be inconsistent with the divinity of Jesus, thus was omitted by some scribes. Some ancient manuscripts give the name of Barabbas, who was the substitute for Jesus, as Jesus Barabbas. Doubtless, early scribes would not like the idea of the name Jesus being applied to Barabbas, so it is eliminated in most of the manuscripts, though it may well have been his name (since Jesus or Joshua was not an uncommon name in New Testament times).

2. CONFLATION OF TEXTS. Suppose that you have two exemplars before you which read differently in a given passage. What would you do? You have several choices: 1) Use the text of one as opposed to the other; 2) Leave both out for fear of putting in the wrong one; 3) Conflate the readings, thus incorporating both of the variations into the text. This way would assure you of having the right reading, if you consider either that one or the other was the correct reading. Or, 4) You could put one in the text and the other one in the margin of your text. Probably some or all of these methods were used by scribes copying texts. For instance, in the text of Acts 6:8, the description of Philip varies among the manuscripts with some reading "full of grace and power," some "full of faith and power" and some "full of grace and faith and power." If you were faced with exemplars which read as the above, which text would you make a part of your text?

3. FULNESS OF EXPRESSION. Many variations in the manuscripts arise from the scribe bringing a parallel thought or word into the given text which he is copying. For instance the words "to

repentance" in Matt. 9:13 or Mk. 2:7 were probably written there by a scribe who remembered them from Lk. 5:32. The three accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts 9, 22, 26 are often found this way, with phrases being brought from one account to the other account. Sometimes if the scribe were copying a text of the New Testament which was quoting an Old Testament text, he would supplement the New Testament version with a longer or different "version" of the Old Testament text. Many scribes apparently tried to harmonize the two accounts of the prayer of Jesus in Matthew 6 and Luke 11. Doubtless, efforts at harmonizing passages were many. A characteristic of the text designated as Byzantine is that it is "full" as well as being smooth. It is the textual family which characterizes most of the later manuscripts and the type text from which the King James Version was translated.

4. GRAMMATICAL CORRECTIONS. Sometimes the scribe attempted to "correct" the grammar of the exemplar before him, especially in the book of Revelation, but in every book to some extent. Remember — fourteen centuries passed in the transmission of the New Testament text before printing caused the copying by hand to cease. As before stated, language changes with use. Greek was not excluded from change. Thus, the scribe might want to change the text because the Greek language which he spoke was not the same as the text from which he was copying. Sometimes the scribe attempted to correct a supposed grammatical mistake in the text before him. Such might have been the change in Rom. 4:11 where the same forms of the Greek word *περιτομή* are interchanged, each one giving a certain sense to the passage.

5. MANUSCRIPT CORRECTIONS. Many manuscripts have marginal notes. If a scribe were uncertain about the nature of the marginal gloss, he might incorporate it into his text thinking the previous scribe had mistakenly left it out. But not all were to be so copied. The text about the troubling of the water in John 5:3b-4 probably got into the text in such fashion, as well as the text of Acts 8:37. Such inclusion into the text is called *interpolation*. Sometimes the manuscript which a scribe was copying would have textual difficulties about which he knew. He might copy the text as it stood but designate the fact that the text which he copied was in error in some way. Thus many manuscripts testify to the problem passage of Mark 16:9-20 as well as the passage of John 7:53-8:11.

Summary

In summarizing the above comments, the following observations can be made:

The present extant Greek manuscripts of the New Testament testify there are many variations in the text. However, the extant manuscripts also provide the means for correcting those supposed mistakes.

Variations came about in many ways. Some were accidentally done, others intentionally done. In correcting the various mistakes, we have to consider how the mistake arose.

Though there are a number of texts involved in the problem, there is not even one Bible doctrine that is affected by such variations. No Bible doctrine is based upon one single text — thus, the variations do not affect what God wants us to do or to know.

Considering the various ways a text could be changed, whether accidentally or purposely, it is little short of miraculous that we have so much assurance concerning the present state of the Greek text of the New Testament.

II. Restoring the Text

How shall we restore the integrity to the New Testament text? This question is answered in the following discussion, which concerns the materials which we use in the work as well as labors of those who have worked in the area of textual criticism of the New Testament. The charts at the end of this chapter will be helpful in a study of this particular area, as well as the information in the index of persons at the back of the book.

A. MATERIALS USED IN RESTORATION OF THE TEXT

As the chart at the end of the chapter shows, there are three basic sources, outside of the text itself, which are used to restore the text. These are manuscripts (in Greek), versions and quotations. As far as the text of the various manuscripts, the textual critic considers both what the author would have written (called intrinsic probability) and what the scribe might have written (called transcriptional probability). We shall discuss some of the various people who have helped play a part in the restoration of the text.

1. GREEK MANUSCRIPTS. We shall give a description of some Greek manuscripts in an appendix. The student may want to peruse

those discussions for additional help regarding the manuscripts. See the collateral reading list also.

Greek manuscripts come to us in various forms. We list the following tabulation to show this information:

Papyri	81
Uncials	266
Minuscules	2,754
Lectionaries	2,135
Ostraca	<u>25</u>
Total	5,261

We would mention that the above statistics are gleaned from Metzger's "The Text of the New Testament," pages 31-33, as he quotes Kurt Aland who is the person presently in charge of numbering Greek manuscripts.

The above sources form a major part of the material used in ascertaining the correct text. They are the "direct" witnesses to the autographs of our New Testament. In addition to the above sources, Metzger mentions (page 33) that a number of talismans (good luck charms) have been found dating from the fourth to the thirteenth centuries written on vellum, papyri, ostraca and wood. Apparently some Christians wore such. Four of those which have been catalogued (that is, numbered) contain the Lord's Prayer, and others have different verses from the Old and New Testaments.

2. POPYRI. Popyri are the earliest witnesses to the New Testament text which we have. The fragment designated P⁵² which contains John 18:31-33, 37-38 is dated between A.D. 100 to 150. It is written on both sides, which shows that though popyri were normally in rolls, some were in codex form. (Many of the popyri of the New Testament are in codex form.) Most which we possess are in the early centuries (as before stated), between the second and fourth. Almost all of them have been collated since the time of Westcott and Hort. Many popyri give obvious testimony to the fact that the New Testament was copied early and in various places by different people. Interestingly enough, the popyri give evidence, along with the Church Fathers, that the Byzantine text (which is the text used by the King James translators, etc., known as the Textus Receptus) is a later form of the text, since the popyri do not show, as a rule, evidence of the Byzantine type text until they are later than the fourth century.

Thus the evidential value of the papyri is basically for the type text which was produced by Westcott and Hort in 1881 and is represented today in Greek texts like Nestle's and that of the American Bible Society. They also give evidence that the principles used by the textual critics (see below) are sound.

The papyri vary in their contents. Some contain various parts of books or complete books, such as Luke or John or sections of the epistles by Paul, etc. The papyri, like the uncial manuscripts, were written in uncial letters.

One interesting facet of the papyri is that they bear witness to the fact that the New Testament was written in the language of the street or the marketplace. Recent discoveries in Egypt of papyri (which were buried in the sand) containing letters, documents, etc. from all walks of life give evidence to the fact that the New Testament was in the language of the people. The student can consult Adolf Deissmann's *Light From the Ancient East* for plenty of evidence that the papyri give for the above conclusion. Certainly the style of writing, such as syntax and expressions in the New Testament text that seem peculiar when compared to Classical Greek, were all in common use in the first century. Giesler and Nix well conclude that the papyri give evidence of the fact that the New Testament was written in the first century (see page 292).

Some of the more important papyri are as listed below. The student can consult the complete list in the back for further information.

P ¹	Third Century	Matt. 1:1-9,12,13,14-20
P ²	Fourth Century	Luke 1:74-80, 5:3-8, 5:30-6:4
P ⁸	Fourth Century	Acts 4:31-37, 5:2-9, 6:1-6, 8-15
P ¹²	Late Third Century	Heb. 1:1-2
P ¹⁶	Fourth Century	Phil. 3:9-4:1
P ²⁴	Fourth Century	Rev. 5:5-8, 6:5-8
P ³³	Fourth Century	John 8:14-22
P ⁴⁵	Third Century	Sections of the Gospels & Acts
P ⁴⁶	Ca. 200	Sections of Paul's epistles
P ⁴⁷	Third Century	Parts of Revelation
P ⁵²	Second Century	John 18:31-33, 37-38
P ⁶⁶	Ca. 200	Some of John
P ⁷²	Third Century	Some of Jude
P ⁷⁵	Ca. 200	Sections of Luke and John

3. **UNCIALS.** Uncial manuscripts are those which have the "printed" style of handwriting rather than the cursive style. The papyri were written in uncial handwriting, but are normally not included in the designation uncial manuscripts, since they are designated by the type of writing material (papyrus). Uncial manuscripts date from the fourth to the ninth centuries. Many of the uncials are very simple in appearance, especially the earlier ones. Some are in rather decorative handwriting, though others are not so. Only one of the uncials (the Sinaitic) contains all of the New Testament, though others perhaps originally did (such as A, B, C, **c**). The uncials give testimony to the various text types (see the appendix which concerns the manuscripts). Generally speaking, the most important witnesses to the text of the New Testament are considered to be the uncial manuscripts. This is so because they contain all or almost all of the New Testament, and are much earlier than the next class of manuscripts, the minuscules.

A few of the uncials, their date and contents, can be listed. The more complete list can be referenced in the appendix.

01(X)	Fourth Century	Complete New Testament
02(A)	Fifth Century	Most of the New Testament
03(B)	Fourth Century	Most of the New Testament
04(C)	Fifth Century	Most of the New Testament
05(D)	Sixth Century	Most of Gospels & Acts
012(G)	Ninth Century	Pauline Epistles
013(H)	Ninth Century	Most of Acts
021(M)	Ninth Century	Gospels
028(S)	A.D. 949	Gospels
032(W)	Fifth Century	Gospels
038(Θ)	Ninth Century	Gospels
042(Σ)	Sixth Century	Matthew and Mark

4. **MINUSCULES.** The minuscule manuscripts date from approximately the ninth to the fifteenth centuries. Though they are not as early as the uncial manuscripts, thus perhaps not generally as important, yet they possess evidence that is important to the recovery of the text. Generally speaking, they contain the later text type known as Byzantine though other text types are witnessed by the minuscules also. They are also important because many of them are perhaps

copies of good early texts. Many of the minuscules indicate that they are copies of the same exemplar. For instance, family 1 includes manuscripts 1, 118, 131 and 209 and seems to be related to the codex 038. Family 13 includes manuscripts 13, 69, 124, 230, 346, 543, 788, 826, 828, 983, 1689, 1709. Other manuscripts bear testimony to like relationships. Thus when the textual critic begins to evaluate the worth of the minuscule, he must consider both the probable date of the composition and also the possibility that it is but one of a family. If it is but one of a family, then the testimony of the family is considered rather than the testimony of each individual manuscript in the family.

The following minuscules give evidence for sections of the New Testament as follows:

1	Twelfth Century	All but Revelation
13	Thirteenth Century	Gospels
28	Eleventh Century	Gospels
33	Ninth Century	All but Revelation
61	Late Fifteenth Century	Entire New Testament
69	Fifteenth Century	Entire New Testament
81	A.D. 1044	Acts & Paul's Epistles
157	Twelfth Century	Gospels
565	Ninth Century	Gospels
579	Thirteenth Century	Gospels
1071	Twelfth Century	Gospels
1424	Late Ninth Century	Entire New Testament
1739	Tenth Century	Acts & Paul's Epistles
2053	Thirteenth Century	Revelation

(Greenlee estimates that approximately nine-tenths of the Greek manuscripts which are known are from the minuscule period, page 29.)

5. **LECTIONARIES.** As a class, lectionaries are grouped with the minuscules, since they have the same general dating. The lectionaries were readings for individual days or for public reading in worship services. Most of the lectionaries have readings from the Gospels with some readings taken from Acts and/or the Epistles. Like the minuscules, they are the text type Byzantine as a whole though some of the earlier ones show other textual affinities. The lectionaries

date from about the fifth through the seventeenth centuries. The character of the lectionaries is of interest since they bear witness to the various textual changes down through the centuries or they give evidence of having been copied in certain areas where certain readings predominated.

6. OSTRACA. Ostraca are actually pieces of pottery that were used as a writing material. They are also known as potsherds. If the person writing did not possess any other writing material, these were sometimes used for that purpose. Metzger notes, page 33, that about 25 have been catalogued. These 25 contain portions of six different New Testament books.

This completes the list of principle sources of Greek manuscripts, with the exception of good luck charms mentioned above. *These sources form the first and most important witness to our Greek text.* They probably contain the original New Testament, word for word. We may with careful study and use of additional materials use these sources to ascertain what God had written through the apostles or the other writers.

B. ANCIENT VERSIONS

New Testaments in languages other than the original Greek are valuable as a means to help restore the integrity of the text. There are a considerable number of versions of the New Testament which are available to us to so use. We will give a description of these versions in the appendix concerning Ancient Versions. Suffice it to say that they are helpful in the following ways:

- a. They give witness to the state of the text at a certain point in time.
- b. They give evidence concerning the spread of the Gospel and the need of, and the value of, a translation of the New Testament.
- c. They show in some detail the acceptance or rejection of the New Testament canon as we have it.
- d. The early dates of some of the translations show that the New Testament was obviously in existence at that point in time. This is helpful because the Greek manuscripts from the time of writing to about the year A.D. 350, though in existence, are rather scarce and incomplete.

- e. The versions are valuable in that they help bridge the gap between the years around A.D. 350 (the approximate dates of our oldest Greek manuscripts A and B) and the time of writing, which probably ends at around A.D. 95. For instance, the Old Latin version and the Old Syriac are dated ca. 150, thus moving the evidence for our New Testament back 200 years from A and B.
- f. They bear testimony to the different types of text in the various localities, such as at Rome, Antioch, Carthage, etc.

These are the major reasons why the versions are valuable for the efforts to restore the text. Certainly their witness, both as to time of translation and place of translation, is important.

There are problems with the versions that need to be recognized by the textual critic who uses them. They are in that respect somewhat like the Greek manuscripts, that is, they have problems that must be solved about them as well. Some of the items to consider about the version(s) would be as follows:

- a. We do not have the original autographs, and the manuscripts are corrupted which were made from the autographs.
- b. The fact must be recognized that some of them were made with a doctrinal bias, or were copied from an exemplar with a doctrinal bias.
- c. It is to be remembered that we cannot date the versions exactly, nor can we pinpoint always the place and circumstances of the translation.
- d. The version might have been made by someone who did not know Greek, or know it well. It is also possible he knew Greek well but did not know the language into which he was translating well.
- e. No two languages are alike. Thus, some features of the Greek language cannot be conveyed in another language.

While the above problems are to be considered in the use of versions, *they are still the second best authority for the restoration of our Greek text.* Accordingly, we can be thankful for them and use them wisely. Versions and their approximate dates that are of use in textual criticism include the following:

1. SYRIAC VERSIONS. There are five different versions in Syriac of our New Testament.

The Old Syriac	Middle Second Century
Peshitta	Middle Fifth Century
Philoxenian	A.D. 508 (Sixth Century)
Harclean	A.D. 616 (Seventh Century)
Palestinian-Syriac	Fifth Century

It is easy to see that the New Testament Christians who lived in Syria would quickly want a version of their own language, when one considers the part that Antioch of Syria played in New Testament times. Note Acts 6:5, 11:26, 13:1ff, etc. It may be well to state that the Syriac language was probably the spoken language in Palestine, which we know as Aramaic, though there are dialectical differences between the Syriac spoken in Palestine and that spoken in Antioch.

We did not mention the fact that Tatian's Diatessaron (a harmony of the four Gospels), which was produced about A.D. 170, may have been originally written in Syriac. Some suggest that it was written in Greek and then translated into Syriac. In either case, this is also an early witness to the importance of and presence of the four Gospels being placed into another language other than Greek at a very early date.

2. COPTIC VERSIONS. Christianity soon spread to Egypt and surrounding areas as evidenced by the account in Acts 8. Obviously the New Testament in the various languages was also soon a necessity. Thus, in Egypt at least two important versions came into existence during the third century.

The Coptic language was the latest form of writing used in Egypt. It was comprised of the Greek letters with the addition of seven characters taken from the Demotic script, an older script used in Egypt.

There were several dialects in Egypt which used the Coptic script. The two important ones were the Boharic and the Sahidic and three less important ones (for textual criticism work) classified by Greenlee, page 51, as Achmimic, Sub-Achmimic and Fayumic. These dialects, all of which had the Bible translated into them, are dated as follows:

Boharic	Third Century
Sahidic	Beginning of the Third Century
Achmimic, Sub-Achmimic, Fayumic	Fourth or Fifth Centuries

3. **LATIN VERSIONS.** Latin was the official language of the Roman Empire although Greek was the commonly used language. Hence, it is quite understandable that the New Testament was very early translated into Latin. Because Latin was spoken so widely throughout the Empire, and after the third century Greek began to be less widely used, there were several Latin versions (differing from one another in some ways) and a great mass of Latin manuscripts circulating. It has been estimated that there are over 8,000 manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate alone, not to mention the manuscripts of the other types of Latin texts.

Like Syriac and Coptic versions, the Latin versions give evidence of the widespread nature of Christianity and the importance attached to having the New Testament in the "official" language of the Roman Empire. Though there is some disagreement over the number of different Latin versions there are, it is generally agreed that there were at least three different Latin versions (classified under the heading Old Latin) with the Latin Vulgate by Jerome replacing them, at least generally speaking. Hence, we list the following different versions and their approximate dates.

The Old Latin	Middle Second Century
Latin Vulgate	A.D. 382

4. **OTHER VERSIONS.** Many peoples wanted the Bible and especially the New Testament, in their own languages. We list several versions that are helpful in textual criticism.

Arabic Version	Eighth Century
Armenian Version	Early Fifth Century
Ethiopic Version	Fourth Century
Georgian Version	Middle of the Fifth Century
Gothic Version	Fourth Century
Nestorian Version	Middle of the Fifth Century
Slavonic Version	Ninth Century

There are many other versions of the Bible which were made in the early centuries which, though of not so much use to the textual critic

as others, do testify to the spread of Christianity and the character of the New Testament, both as to text and accepted books, then in existence.

C. PATRISTIC QUOTATIONS

These various men who quoted the New Testament are important to our study because they, like the manuscripts and versions, give evidence, through their quotations, commentaries and references, to the text of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. As has often been pointed out, these men quoted extensively the New Testament. It has been suggested that the New Testament could be reproduced from their quotations alone.

The quotations are important for the following reasons:

1. They help determine the state of the text at a given point in time.
2. They also show what the text is at a particular place, such as Rome, Lyons, Alexandria, etc.
3. They very often provide information about textual matters (especially Origen and Jerome in this area), because they were aware of variants among the extant exemplars available to them.
4. As the "chain chart" at the end of Ch. 2 shows, the patristic quotations actually span the remaining years between the versions and the actual writing of the New Testament autographs.

The quotations by these men have, like the Greek manuscripts and versions, suffered in the ravages of time. A list of problems related to them would include the following:

1. Some of their writings are preserved only in the works of other men.
2. Some are found only in late manuscripts, centuries removed from the autographs.
3. Scribes have sometimes changed what they said, or what they quoted, or have miscopied.
4. At times, the men quoted loosely, or by memory, and/or inaccurately.
5. If the person quoted the same text more than once, as was the case at times, he might not quote identically with the preceding time.

However, in spite of such divergent problems, the Church Fathers play an important part in the search of the actual New Testament text.

Some of the more important Church Fathers will be described in the collateral reading as well as other men who figured in the transmission of the Bible. Perhaps it will be helpful here to give a list of some important men in the early centuries. Included in the list will be various works whose authors are unknown, but which contain references to a text or texts in the New Testament.

First Century to A.D. 100

Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians

Pseudo-Barnabas

Second Century, A.D. 100 to 200

Basilides

Marcion

Celsus

Melito

Cerenthus

Montanus

Clement of Alexandria

Muratorian Fragment

Clementine Homilies

Papias

Dionysius

Polycarp

Epistle of Barnabas

Ptolemaeus

Epistle of Ignatius

Second Epistle of Clement

Epistle of Polycarp

(Philippians)

Shepherd of Hermas

Hegesippus

Tatian

Irenaeus

Teaching of Twelve (didache)

Justin Martyr

Theophilus

Letter to Diognetus

Valentinus

Third Century, A.D. 200 to 300

Cyprian

Methodius

Dionysius Alexandrinus

Origen

Gregory Thaumaturgus

Paul of Samosata

Hippolytus

Tertullian

Fourth Century, A.D. 300 to 400

Ambrose of Milan

Gregory of Nazianzus

Aphraates

Gregory of Nyssa

Athanasius

Hilary

Augustine

Jerome

Basil of Caesarea

John Chrysostom

Cyril of Jerusalem	Lactantius
Epiphanius	Lucifer
Ephraem	Priscillian
Eusebius	Theodore of Mopsuestia
Euthalius	Tyconius

These sources, and others like them, form the third major witness to the text of the New Testament. Though these quotations are sometimes fragmentary, loose, mixed or doubtful, yet the vast amount and variety, as the following chart shows, give substantial boost to the text of our New Testament.

EARLY PATRISTIC QUOTATIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Writer	Gospels	Acts	Pauline Epistles	General Epistles	Revelation	Totals
Justin Martyr	268	10	43	6	3	330
					(266 allusions)	
Irenaeus	1,038	194	499	23	65	1,819
Clement Alex.	1,017	44	1,127	207	11	2,406
Origen	9,231	349	7,778	399	165	17,922
Tertullian	3,822	502	2,609	120	205	7,258
Hippolytus	734	42	387	27	188	1,378
Eusebius	3,258	211	1,592	88	27	5,176
Grand Totals	19,368	1,352	14,035	870	664	36,289

(Courtesy Moody Press. From the book, *A General Introduction to the Bible* by Geisler and Nix)

Summary

It is worth repeating: no book of ancient times has anything comparable for the restoration of the text as does the New Testament. God has richly provided ample evidence for His revelation in words to man.

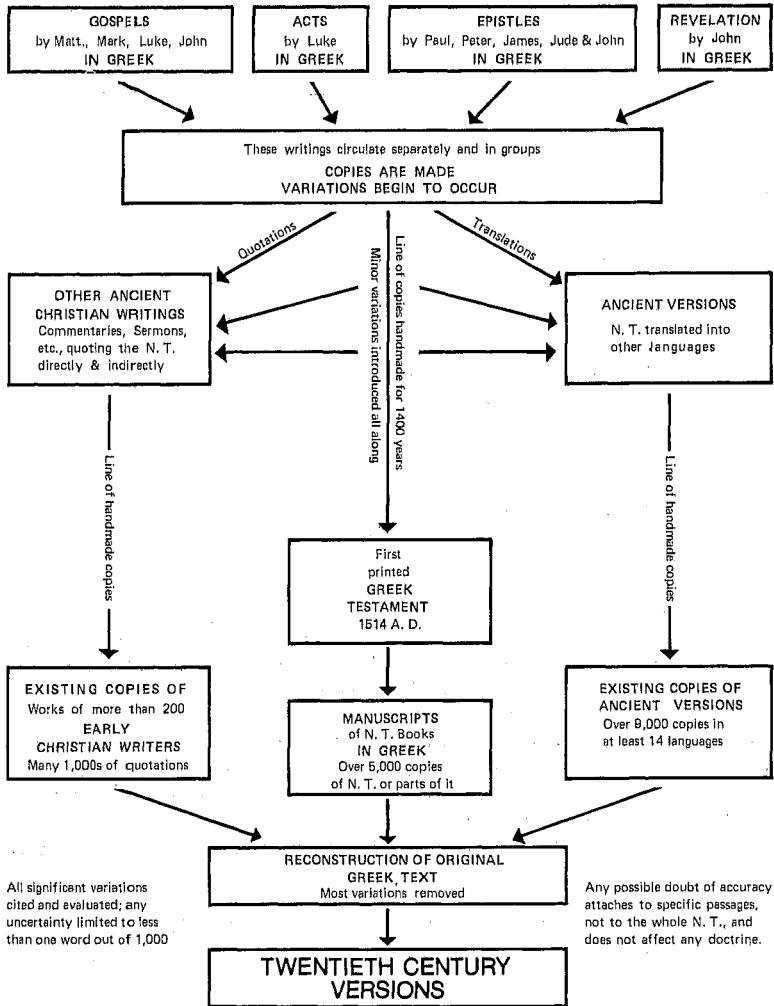
The integrity of the New Testament text is made more sure by each of these groups of witnesses: 1) the Greek manuscripts, 5,000 plus; 2) over 9,000 manuscripts in other languages; and 3) the 36,000 plus patristic quotations. We can confidently use our text of today, knowing that it is more than adequately substantiated through the

various witnesses. We can even know which section of text is in some doubt. More than that, we could eliminate every doubtful text and lose no doctrine or teaching of consequence to the believer.

With this study thus completed, we take up the inquiry as to the authorship of the individual books of the New Testament, which is the subject of Ch. 2, Genuineness.

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	GOSPELS	ACTS	CATHOLIC EPISTLES	PAUL, HEBREWS	REVELATION
Alexandrian	P ¹ P ² P ³ P ⁴ P ⁵ P ⁶ P ⁷ P ⁸ P ⁹ P ¹⁰ (P ¹⁰⁵) P ¹¹⁵ N B C L Q T (W-Luke 1— John 8:12) Z Δ Ξ ψ 054 059 060 0182 220 33 164 215 376 579 718 850 892 1241 (1342 Mark)	P ^a (P ³⁰) N A B C Ψ 048 076 096 6 33 81 104 326 1175	P ²⁰ P ²¹ P ²² N A B C P Ψ 048 056 0142 0156 33 81 104 323 326 424 ^c 1175 1739 2298	P ¹¹⁰ P ¹¹¹ P ¹¹² P ¹¹³ P ²³⁷ P ²³⁸ P ²⁴⁰ P ²⁴⁵ N A B C H I M P Psi 048 081 088 0220 6 33 81 104 326 424 ^c 1175 1739 1908	P ¹¹⁶ P ¹ P ¹⁷ N A C P 0207 0169 61 59 94 241 254 1006 1175 1611 1841 1852 2040 2053 2344 2351
Caesarean	P ²¹⁷ P ²¹⁸ Θ (W-Mark 5 ff.) N O Ξ Φ Fam 1 Fam 13 28 565 700 7071 1604 Geo Arm Pal-Syr Eus Cyr-Jer (Or)	P ^{40?} I? I? (Text type not determined in the remainder of the New Testament) Cyr-Jer?			
Western	P ²² D (W-Mark 1—5?) 0171 It, especially k e Sin-Syr Cur-Syr Tert Ir Clem-Alex Cyp (Aug)	P ²² P ¹¹ P ¹² D E 066 257 440 614 913 1108 1245 1518 1611 1739 2138 2298 It Hark-Syr mg	P ²⁸ D E It Hark-Syr mg Ir Tert Cyp Aug Eph	D E F G 88 181 915 917 1836 1898 1912 It	F? It?
Byzantine	A E F G H K M S U V (W-Matt., Luke 8:12 ff.) Y Γ Δ Λ Π Most minuscules Goth Later versions Later Fathers	H L S P Most minuscules Goth Later versions Later Fathers	H K L S 42 398 Most other minus- cules Goth Later ver- sions Later Fathers	K L Most other minus- cules Goth Later ver- sions Later Fathers	046 82 93 429 469 608 920 2048 Most other mi- nuscules Goth Later ver- sions Later Fathers

(Courtesy of Moody Press, from *A General Introduction to the Bible*, by Geisler and Nix)