

## **The Historical Transmission of the Greek NT Manuscripts**

Doug Helmer – December 2000

### **Introduction**

Since we do not have the original Greek manuscripts as penned by the inspired authors of the New Testament (NT), how do we know whether the Greek text that we have today is an accurate representation of the original writings? It is the purpose of this paper to discuss the historical transmission of the Greek NT and thus help to answer this question. The confined length of this paper does not allow for a detailed analysis of the many aspects of the history of the transmission of the Greek NT. Therefore, the majority of this paper will focus upon selected events within the first few centuries up to Constantine that are significant to the transmission of the Greek NT.<sup>1</sup>

It was during the 1<sup>st</sup> century that God used various men, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, to write the very words of God. The inspired writings were then forwarded and read by their intended audience. These “God-breathed” writings (2 Timothy 3:16) would then soon begin their long and exciting journey of transmission to the very ends of the world.

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<sup>1</sup> I will not be focusing upon textual issues such as textual criticism, defense of the various Bible versions, etc. as they are not the focus of this paper. The first few centuries up to the time of Constantine were very critical years to the gathering and transmission of the whole of the Greek NT text.

## **Manuscript Materials**

To thoroughly understand the transmission of these ancient texts we must have some understanding of the materials that were used in the writing of ancient manuscripts. The original writings were written on papyrus with ink and a stylus reed (refer to Appendix A). They were not typed with a typewriter or saved on a computer floppy disk. All manuscripts, until the time of the printing press, were hand written by professional and non-professional scribes. The later manuscript copies would have been written on parchment or vellum codex with ink and a quill. Early Greek NT manuscripts, up through the 11<sup>th</sup> century, were written in a Greek “uncial” style of lettering (refer to Appendix B). Beginning in the 9<sup>th</sup> century there was a movement away from the uncial handwriting to the “minuscule” handwriting.

## **Four Categories of Manuscripts**

There are four general categories of ancient writings that are important to the Greek NT. It has been through these various ancient manuscripts that God has secured the accurate transmission of His inspired words. These four categories of ancient manuscripts are: 1) Manuscripts from the Church Fathers, 2) Lectionary Manuscripts, 3) Manuscripts from Ancient Translations, and 4) Copies of the Original Manuscripts (refer to Appendix 3). I will briefly discuss the first three categories of ancient manuscripts<sup>2</sup> and then focus the remainder of this paper upon the historical transmission of the Greek manuscript copies.

## Manuscripts from Early Church Writers

The early Church writers wrote chiefly between the years 90-160AD. In these ancient manuscripts we find evidence for their acquaintance with most of the books of the Greek NT.<sup>3</sup> The writings of the Church Fathers included commentaries, sermons, and other treatises. These writings contained numerous scriptural quotations that have become invaluable to us as a resource for validating the original text of the NT.<sup>4</sup>

These patristic manuscripts are also important to us in that they serve to help localize and date the readings and types of text that were used in Greek manuscripts and translations.<sup>5</sup> The manuscripts that have been obtained from these Church Fathers are so extensive that the NT could virtually be reconstructed from them without the use of any other NT manuscripts.<sup>6</sup>

Josephus is one example of an early Church writer whose writings provide us with invaluable insight into the Greek NT background. Josephus settled down into a comfortable lifestyle in Rome as a client and pensioner of the Emperor. Although he was not popular with his fellow Jewish countrymen, who called him a traitor, Josephus employed his years of leisure in Rome by writing the history of their nation.<sup>7</sup> F.F. Bruce notes,

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<sup>2</sup> This is in no way to reduce the importance of these historical manuscripts, as they are very significant to the strengthening of the validity and accuracy of the Greek NT. However, I am choosing to narrow my topic due to the length requirements of this paper.

<sup>3</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The NT Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 18.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Manning Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 86.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> J. Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 54.

<sup>7</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The NT Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 104.

“Here, in the pages of Josephus, we meet many figures who are well known to us from the NT: the colorful family of the Herods; the Roman emperors Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero; Quirinius, the governor of Syria; Pilate, Felix, and Festus, the procurators of Judea; the high-priestly families – Annas, Caiaphas, Ananias, and the rest; the Pharisees and Sadducees; and so on. Against the background which Josephus provides we can read the NT with greater understanding and interest.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Lectionary Manuscripts**

This second category of ancient manuscripts, though large in number, have often gone unnoticed. These are manuscripts in which the Scriptures were written, not in ordinary sequence, but in sections arranged in units for reading in church services. In ancient times certain Scripture passages were designated as the reading for each day of the year and for special services and days. The lectionary manuscripts were then written to follow the sequence of the readings, with the day and the week generally indicated at the beginning of each lection. The earliest lectionaries found to date are from the 8<sup>th</sup> century and later.<sup>9</sup> More than 2,400 of these lectionaries have been cataloged.<sup>10</sup>

### **Manuscripts from Ancient Translations**

As was in the first centuries and continues until the return of our Lord, the Christian faith is in its very nature a missionary religion whose objective is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to every tribe and tongue. To do so the gospel of Jesus Christ must be communicated to every tongue. It was around the time of 180AD that the expanding Church first experienced the need of a translated NT.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> J. Harold Greenlee, 44.

<sup>10</sup> Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 63.

Regional languages began to assert themselves, and since the spread of the Church was largely among the common people, the number of Christians who could not read and understand Greek soon became so great that regional languages became the necessary medium for preaching the gospel.<sup>11</sup>

Translations of the whole NT were made in several different languages – Coptic for the Egyptians (beginning in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century<sup>12</sup>), Syriac for those whose language was Aramaic, Gothic for the Germanic people, and later in Latin for the Romans (by 200AD Latin had begun replacing Greek in the Roman Empire<sup>13</sup>) and Carthaginians<sup>14</sup>. Lee Strobel, in his personal interview with Bruce Metzger, quotes him as saying:

“In addition to Greek manuscripts, we also have translations of the gospels into other languages at a relatively early time – into Latin, Syriac, and Coptic. And beyond that, we have what may be called secondary translations made a little later, like Armenian and Gothic. And a lot of others – Georgian, Ethiopic, a great variety...Even if we had no Greek manuscripts today, by piecing together the information from these translations from a relatively early date, we could actually reproduce the contents of the NT. In addition to that, even if we lost all the Greek manuscripts and the early translations, we could still reproduce the contents of the NT from the multiplicity of quotations in commentaries, sermons, letters, and so forth of the early church fathers.”<sup>15</sup>

In 382AD Pope Damasus commissioned Jerome, his advisor, to undertake the task of revising the already translated Latin Bible. Jerome accepted with reluctance and published the Gospels in 384AD; apparently making changes in the text only where he felt it was absolutely necessary. The entire NT was

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<sup>11</sup> Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 52.

<sup>12</sup> J. Harold Greenlee, 50

<sup>13</sup> Arthur G. Patzia, *The Making of the New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 129.

<sup>14</sup> Philip Comfort, *The Origin of the Bible* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 261.

<sup>15</sup> Lee Strobel, 59.

eventually translated into Latin – the famous Latin Vulgate. This version became the official Bible of the Latin Church and remains today the Roman Catholic Bible.<sup>16</sup>

### **Copies of the Original Manuscripts**

At the same time that the above three categories of manuscripts were being written, the original writings of the Bible were being copied and preserved for all future generations. The eternal truths that Christ had proclaimed during His lifetime had become commissioned to His apostles who were now responsible for their transmission (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). The apostles, through the power of the Holy Spirit, saw people responding to the gospel message and the Church grew by leaps and bounds. The expansion meant that they could not be at all of these locations teaching, so it was out of this exciting growth that the written words of God took shape through the inspired writers in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

It was during this time of the early Church that the oral communication of God came to exist side-by-side, having equal status with, the written word of God - the NT was a “living text” in that it was developing freely during this time.<sup>17</sup> Yet as the years progressed and the Church expanded in numbers and geography, the oral tradition soon gave way to the permanent written word of God (refer to Appendix 4).

Each of the churches that possessed one or more of the inspired writings not only saw to preserving the writings, but also sought to exchange copies with

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<sup>16</sup> J. Harold Greenlee, 46-47.

<sup>17</sup> Arthur Patzia, 135.

neighboring churches.<sup>18</sup> There were no professional copying centers before 200AD so in these early ages of the Church, biblical manuscripts were produced by devoted Christians, not trained scribes. Due to the high demand for the various inspired writings by individuals and local churches, the speed of producing manuscripts was often of greater importance than the accuracy of execution.<sup>19</sup> The primary issue was the message of the gospel itself; matters such as word order that would not affect the meaning of the texts were often of secondary importance to the production of copies.<sup>20</sup> The manuscript copies were made from whatever copies were available to the copyist at that time. The result of this was that in a very short time there were many copies, and many copies of copies of copies, in circulation.<sup>21</sup>

Collections of the inspired writings soon began to be gathered together and copied as a group - it had become possible to produce papyri books that could accommodate these larger amounts of text.<sup>22</sup> Unlike the gospels, the letters of Paul were apparently preserved from the first as a collection. At first there were small collections in individual churches; these grew by a process of exchange until finally about the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century the Pastoral letters were added and the collection of the fourteen Pauline letters was considered complete.<sup>23</sup> In 180AD a collection

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<sup>18</sup> Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, 48.

<sup>19</sup> Bruce Manning Metzger, 14.

<sup>20</sup> J. Harold Greenlee, 60.

<sup>21</sup> Arthur Patzia, 135.

<sup>22</sup> F.F. Bruce, 34.

<sup>23</sup> "The church in Rome sent a formal letter to the church in Corinth about 95AD (1 Clement) that included references to Paul's letter to the Romans and citations from 1 Corinthians and Hebrews. This must reflect the existence in Rome at this time of a collection of Paul's letters, although its extent cannot be determined precisely. In Marcion about 140AD we find definite quotations from Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Romans, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. The Muratorian Canon adds to these the Pastoral letters about 190AD. It is

of the four gospels, regarded as equally authoritative accounts of the gospel story, were grouped together.<sup>24</sup>

Trained scribes, after 200 AD, then began copying the various manuscripts. A number of the manuscripts began to develop their own “local text” in the great centers of Christianity surrounding the Mediterranean Sea: Rome and Carthage in the West, Alexandria in Egypt, and Caesarea/Antioch/Byzantium in the East. These manuscripts that were being circulated within a specific geographic area would take on similar characteristics and thus develop a “text-type” all their own which differed somewhat from text-types in other areas.<sup>25</sup>

The process of transmission became more complicated when local texts in one area began to mix with local texts from other areas. A scribe from Alexandria, for example, would obtain a manuscript from Rome and compare it with the one that he was using. A different scribe from Constantinople (Byzantium) might do the same with a manuscript from Carthage, and soon, each in turn editing, revising, and producing would develop what is called a “mixed text.” By the 4<sup>th</sup> century the Christian church had a myriad of mixed texts (refer to Appendix 5), some closely resembling each other but others containing significant differences and characteristics.<sup>26</sup> Aland and Aland illustrate the situation as follows:

“Meanwhile every copy made from another copy repeated the same pattern of expansion, like another pebble cast into the pond making a new

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generally understood that Acts and Revelation first circulated as independent writings. This is also true of the seven letters included in the Catholic letters. The Catholic letters plus Acts became called the Apostolos (4<sup>th</sup> century). It is probable that by the 3<sup>rd</sup> century the Gospels were circulating as a single corpus rather than separately, and the Pauline corpus even earlier.” Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, 48-49.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>25</sup> “It has become common to refer to the various text-types such as the Alexandrian, the Byzantine, the Caesarean and the Western” (Arthur Patzia, 132).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 134.

series of ripples. These rippling circles would intersect. Two manuscripts in a single place – each with its own range of textual peculiarities, depending upon its distance from the original text – would influence each other, producing a textual mixture and starting a new pattern of ripples. Finally, the pool becomes so filled with overlapping circles that it is practically impossible to distinguish their source and their mutual relationships. This is precisely the situation the textual critic finds when attempting to analyze the history of the NT text.”<sup>27</sup>

The text of the early period prior to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries was in effect a text not yet channeled into types, because until the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century the churches still lacked the institutional organization required to produce a single collection of the inspired writings.<sup>28</sup>

### **Recovery of the Ancient NT Text**

By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and into the 3<sup>rd</sup> many of the significant variant readings entered into the textual stream. The first to attempt a recovery of the original text were scribes in Alexandria and/or scribes familiar with Alexandrian scriptural practices. The Alexandrian scribes were associated with or employed by the scriptorium of the Alexandrian library and/or members of the scriptorium associated with the catechetical school at Alexandria (*Didaskelion*) who were trained philologists, grammarians, and textual critics. They followed the kind of textual criticism begun by Aristotle, who classified manuscripts as to their date and value.<sup>29</sup>

The Alexandrians were concerned with preserving the original text of many various important works of literature. They would make text critical decisions from among many different manuscripts and then produce an archetype - we can

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<sup>27</sup> Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, 55.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>29</sup> Philip Comfort, 185.

presume that Christian scribes in Alexandria were applying the same kind of textual criticism to the NT text. From the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Alexandrian scribes worked to purify the text from textual corruption.<sup>30</sup> And so Egypt, where the most varied texts had been in circulation, saw the development of what we know as the Alexandrian text, which was to develop further and in the course of centuries become the Egyptian text. The Church in Egypt from the 4<sup>th</sup> century had a well-defined text because the administration of the Alexandrian patriarchs was effectively centralized.<sup>31</sup>

At the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, another kind of Greek text came into being and then grew in popularity until it became the dominant text type through Christendom<sup>32</sup> – originally called the Koine text, later to become the Byzantine Imperial text.<sup>33</sup> This is the text type first instigated by Lucian of Antioch. Lucian's text was characterized by smoothness of language,<sup>34</sup> as it was “polished stylistically, edited ecclesiastically, and expanded devotionally.”<sup>35</sup> This smoothing of the text resulted in substantial editing of the text, whereas the Alexandrian text contained limited editing. Lucian's text was produced prior to the Diocletian persecution (c. 303), during which time many copies of the NT were confiscated and destroyed.<sup>36</sup>

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century the evolving of the original manuscripts into varied local and mixed texts became stalled at various stages during the intense persecutions

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 186.

<sup>31</sup> Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, 70.

<sup>32</sup> Philip Comfort, 187.

<sup>33</sup> Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, 56.

<sup>34</sup> Philip Comfort, 187.

<sup>35</sup> Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, 64.

<sup>36</sup> Philip Comfort, 187.

of the church under the Roman Emperors Decius (249-251AD), Valerian (253-260AD), and Diocletian (284-305AD). During this time Christians were persecuted, and many of the church buildings, offices, and manuscripts were also destroyed.<sup>37</sup> Yet the hand of God stopped the persecutions in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and brought about four very important decades of peace. This period of peace was critical for the accurate expansion and transmission of the NT text.<sup>38</sup>

Christianity, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, was introduced as the official state religion under Emperor Constantine and new churches were established throughout the Empire. After Constantinople became the religious center of the Eastern (Greek-speaking) Church, manuscripts from other areas made their way to this religious center and were compared with the ones there. It was at this time that Lucian's text began to be propagated by bishops going out to the churches throughout the East and this text soon became the "standardized text" of the Eastern Church.<sup>39</sup> The Lord used Constantine to then commission the writing of fifty new copies of the Bible to be made for the churches.<sup>40</sup>

While these selected advancements in the copying, collecting, and recovering of the original writings of the Greek NT that have just been discussed were taking place, others were continuing to do the same throughout the entire ancient world. The word of God was continuing in its ripples of expansion and transmission through the various text types (refer to Appendix 6).

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<sup>37</sup> Arthur Patzia, 134.

<sup>38</sup> Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, 64.

<sup>39</sup> This was a very significant development in textual studies because by the 8<sup>th</sup> century the Byzantine text became the prevailing form of the NT throughout the Greek-speaking world, and eventually constituted the basis of the Textus Receptus. Arthur Patzia, 134.

<sup>40</sup> Arthur Patzia, 134.

Though the various ancient text types had their own unique histories, the unity of the original writings was being providentially preserved – their unique histories did not mean that they had significant differences. Though they had their own unique histories, they were amazingly similar. Bruce Metzger states,

“The more often you have copies that agree with each other, especially if they emerge from different geographical areas, the more you can cross-check them to figure out what the original document was like. The only way they’d agree would be where they went back genealogically in a family tree that represents the descent of the manuscripts.”<sup>41</sup>

### **The Printed New Testament**

Our discussion of the transmission of the Greek NT now takes a giant leap forward into the 16<sup>th</sup> century. We cannot leave this topic without mentioning the monumental impact that the invention of the printing press had upon the transmission of the Greek NT. The invention of the printing press torpedoed the future expansion and consistency of the printed Bible. For the first time in history the NT text could be reproduced in large scale with the same textual consistency with each printing. There was no longer a need for the slow and inconsistent hands of man to manually pen each word of a text. When the first Greek NT was printed in 1525, it was based on a Greek text that Erasmus had compiled, using a few late Byzantine manuscripts. This printed text, with minor revisions, became the Textus Receptus.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Cited in Lee Strobel, 59.

<sup>42</sup> Philip Comfort, 188.

### **Modern-Day Manuscript Discoveries**

The centuries following the printing press would lead to astronomical growth in the discovery of the ancient manuscripts, especially within the last two centuries (refer to Appendix 7). As various manuscripts were discovered and made public, certain scholars labored to compile a Greek text that would more closely represent the original writings.

When the King James Version was being compiled in the early 1600's (refer to Appendix 8) the translators had access to only a few of the ancient manuscripts, and thus based their translation on the Textus Receptus. Yet shortly thereafter, earlier manuscripts began to be discovered – manuscripts that differed from that found in the Textus Receptus. Around 1700 John Mill produced an improved Textus Receptus, and in the 1730's Johnnes Albert Bengel published a text that deviated from the Textus Receptus according to the evidence of earlier manuscripts.<sup>43</sup>

In the 1800's certain scholars began to abandon the Textus Receptus. Karl Lachman produced a fresh text (1831) that represented the 4<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts. Samuel Teggles concentrated all of his efforts in publishing one Greek text (which came out in six parts, from 1857-1872). Henry Alford also compiled a Greek text based upon the best and earliest manuscripts. During this same era, Tischendorf was devoting a lifetime of labor to discovering manuscripts and producing accurate editions of the Greek NT.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 190.

Aided by the work of these prior scholars, Brooke Westcott and Fenton Hort worked together for 28 years to produce a volume entitled *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (1881) that, at that time, most closely replicated the original writing. They based their volume mostly on the Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, which they called the “Neutral Text” and considered the most like the original writings.<sup>45</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century such discoveries as the Codex Vaticanus (325AD) and Codex Sinaiticus (350AD) revolutionized NT criticism and were the impetus for the compilation of new critical editions of the Greek NT.<sup>46</sup> Philip Comfort says, “The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a fruitful era for the recovery of the Greek NT; the 20<sup>th</sup> century, no less. Those living in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have witnessed the discovery of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri, the Chester Beatty Papyri, and the Bodmer Papyri. To date, there are nearly 100 papyri containing portions of the NT.”<sup>47</sup>

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Everhard Nestle used the best editions of the Greek NT produced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to compile a text that represented the majority consensus. The work of making new editions was carried on by his son for several years, and is now under the care of Kurt Aland. The latest editions of this work are produced in the Nestle-Aland’s *Novum Testamentum Graece*; the same Greek text appears in the Greek New Testament that is produced by the United Bible Society.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

The transmission of the Greek NT is a clear testimony to a living God who has desired that His words be preserved for all mankind. The age of the biblical manuscripts that have been discovered testifies to this.<sup>49</sup> Sir Frederic Kenyon said,

“In no other case is the interval of time between the composition of the book and the date of the earliest manuscripts so short as in that of the NT...The last foundation for any doubt that the scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed.”<sup>50</sup>

The number of cataloged manuscripts is light years beyond any other ancient text known to man.<sup>51</sup> The accuracy of its transmission<sup>52</sup>, even through the generations of text types, leaves the mind of the individual to be convinced that there must be a living God behind the transmission of these amazing writings. I conclude with the wonderful words of Arthur G. Patzia:

What God did was to subject His written Word to the same historical process as He did with His incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. The Bible is both a divine and human entity: divine in its inspiration and preservation, human in the sense of God’s subjecting it to the historical process and entrusting it to the church. In this way, writes George E. Ladd, “The Bible

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<sup>49</sup> “‘Quite so,’ he replied [Bruce Metzger], ‘We have copies commencing within a couple of generations from the writing of the originals, whereas in the case of other ancient texts, maybe five, eight, or ten centuries elapsed between the original and the earliest surviving copy.’” Lee Strobel, 60.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>51</sup> Compared to other ancient writings from about the time of Jesus we have the following number of manuscripts: Tacitus (116AD) - one copy from 850AD and one from the 11<sup>th</sup> century; Josephus - nine copies from 10-12<sup>th</sup> century and Latin from 4<sup>th</sup>; Homer’s Iliad (800BC) – 650 manuscripts, 2-3<sup>rd</sup> century; NT Greek – more than 5,600 cataloged. In addition to the Greek documents there are thousands of other ancient NT manuscripts in other languages: 8,000 - 10,000 Latin Vulgate manuscripts, plus a total of 8,000 in Ethiopic, Slavic, and Armenian. In all, there are about 24,000 manuscripts in existence. Lee Strobel, 60-63.

<sup>52</sup> “All kinds of minor variations distinguish the manuscripts from one another, but the vast majority of these variations have to do with changes in spelling, grammar, and style, or accidental omissions or duplications of words or phrases. But overall, 97-99% of the NT can be reconstructed beyond any reasonable doubt, and no Christian doctrine is founded solely or even primarily on textually disputed passages.” William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994), 193.

is the Word of God given in the words of men and in history.” The marvel – or should one say miracle – in all of this is that after 20 centuries of textual studies we possess a text that has to be amazingly close in working to the original manuscripts.<sup>53</sup>

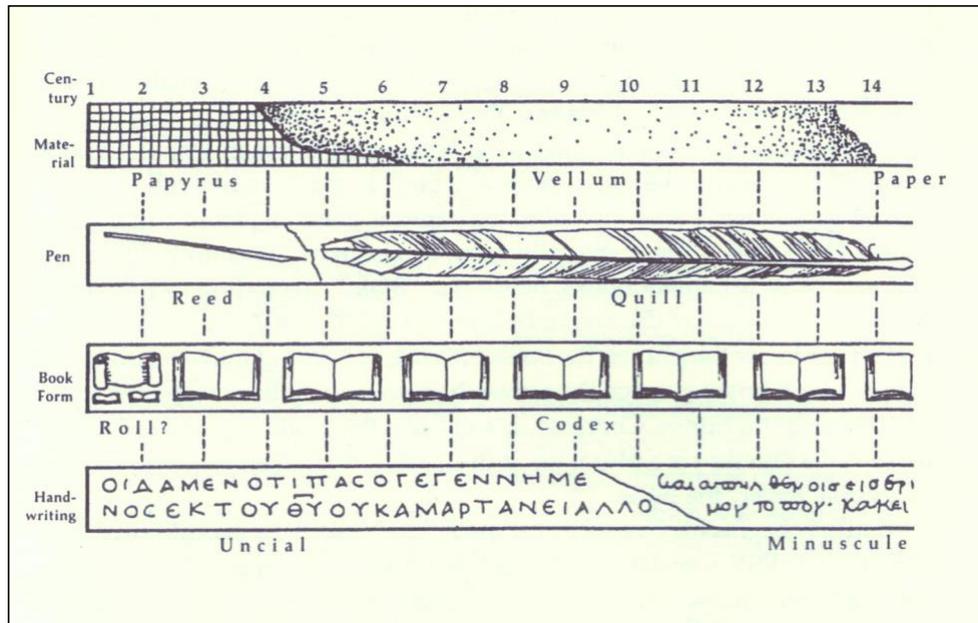
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<sup>53</sup> Arthur Patzia, 137.

## Appendix A

**Writing Materials and Styles**

Taken from:

Arthur G. Patzia, *The Making of the New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 115-118.

**Papyrus** - Made from the papyrus plant that grew in the marshes of the Nile Delta in Egypt. The original writings and manuscript copies were written on papyrus. Papyrus codex consisted of sheets of papyrus folded and sewn together, sometimes with a cover.

**Parchment and Vellum** - Scholars estimate that parchment was used from the 4<sup>th</sup> century to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when paper became common in the West. Parchment was fine sheets of leather made from sheep or goats. Vellum was made from the skins of calves or antelope and was a higher quality material normally used for special projects and deluxe volumes. Today it is common to refer to both parchment and vellum simply as "parchment." Parchment became the material of choice over papyrus because it was more universally available, had much better durability, could write easily on both sides, and corrections were much easier to make.

**Ink** - The ink used to write with was carbon-based and made from soot, gum, and water.

**Codex** - A leaf-form of a book, as opposed to a roll. Sheets of papyrus or parchment were stacked on top of each other and folded down the middle in a manner resembling our modern books. Some studies in early book production and publication have shown that Christians may have been the first to use the codex form for writing and transmitting their literature. A codex could actually contain more written documentation than a roll, plus it was easier handling.

## Appendix B

# Writing Styles

Taken from:

Bruce Manning Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 8-13.

### **Uncial**

Ancient literary works going back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and ceasing in the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD were written in a more formal style of handwriting, called uncials. Characterized by more deliberate and carefully executed letters, each one separate from the others, somewhat like our capital letters. Generally speaking, the uncial manuscripts, especially the earlier ones, are the most dependable group of witnesses to the NT text. In the course of time the style of the book-hand began to deteriorate and uncials became thick and clumsy.

### **Minuscule**

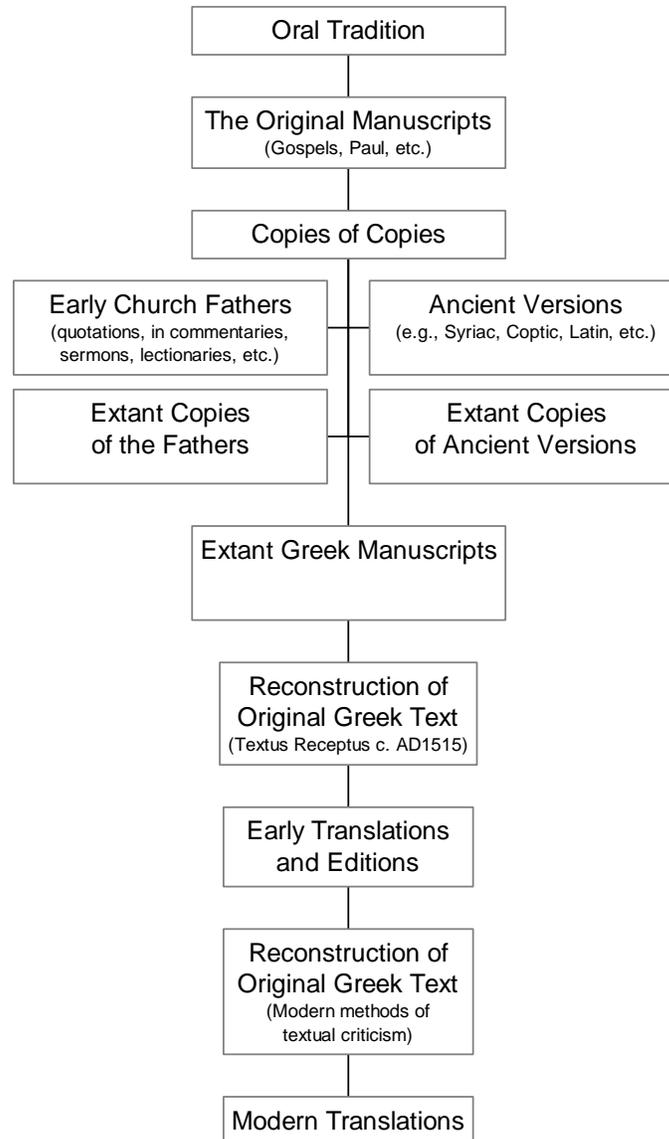
About the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century a reform in handwriting was initiated – minuscule. Minuscule was comprised of a script having smaller letters in a running hand that was mostly scribed on parchment. It was faster and more compact, thus saving time and materials that provided for increased production capabilities. This change in the style of the script had a profound effect upon the textual tradition of the Greek Bible as it allowed for the possession of copies of the Scriptures to be placed within reach of persons having more limited means. Yet the down side was that the copyists were obliged to get along without many books and served as a sign of the dissemination of the culture in general and of the Scriptures in particular. However there are some minuscule manuscripts that are more reliable than uncials due their ancestral source. For example, a 12<sup>th</sup> century minuscule might be only ½ as many copies removed from the autograph as an 8<sup>th</sup> century uncial, and might also have an ancestry of more accurate copying.

The minuscule manuscripts of the NT outnumber the uncial manuscripts by more than 10 to 1, and although one must make allowance for the greater antiquity of the uncial style, very much of the disparity in the number of the survivors must be due to the increased ease with which the minuscule copies could be produced.

## Appendix C

## Transmission of the New Testament

- Arthur G. Patzia, *The Making of the New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 128.



## Appendix D

### Summary of the Most Important NT Manuscripts Discoveries

Taken and Condensed from:  
Philip Comfort, *The Origin of the Bible*  
(Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 179-182.

#### THE OXYRHYNCHUS PAPYRI

Beginning in 1898 Grenfell and Hunt discovered thousands of papyrus fragments in the ancient rubbish heaps of Oxyrhynchus, Egypt. This site yielded volumes of papyrus fragments containing all sorts of written material (literature, business and legal contracts, letters, etc.) as well as over thirty-five manuscripts containing portions of the NT.

#### THE CHESTER BEATTY PAPYRI

These manuscripts were purchased from a dealer in Egypt during the 1930's by Chester Beatty and by the University of Michigan. The three manuscripts in this collection are very early and contain a large portion of the NT text. P45 (2<sup>nd</sup> century) contains portions of all four Gospels and Acts; P46 (late 1<sup>st</sup> century to early 2<sup>nd</sup> century) has almost all of Paul's epistles and Hebrews; and P47 (3<sup>rd</sup> century) contains Revelation 9-17.

#### THE BODMER PAPYRI

These manuscripts were purchased from a dealer in Egypt during the 1950's and 1960's. The three important papyri in this collection are P66 (c. 175, containing almost all of John), P72 (3<sup>rd</sup> century, having all of 1 and 2 Peter and Jude), and P75 (c. 200, containing large parts of Luke 3 – John 15).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, nearly 100 papyrus manuscripts containing portions of the NT were discovered. In previous centuries, especially the 19<sup>th</sup>, other manuscripts were discovered – several of which date in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century. The most noteworthy are as follows:

#### CODEX SINAITICUS

This manuscript was discovered by Constantin von Tischendorf in St. Catherine's Monastery situated at the foot of Mount Sinai. It dates around AD 350, contains the entire NT, and provides an early and fairly reliable witness to the NT autographs.

#### CODEX VATICANUS

This manuscript had been in the Vatican's library since at least 1481, but it was not made available to scholars until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This codex, dated slightly earlier than Sinaiticus, has both the OT and NT in Greek, excluding the last part of the NT (from Hebrews 9:15-Revelation) and the Pastoral Epistles. For the most part, scholars have commended Codex Vaticanus for being one of the most trustworthy witnesses to the NT text.

#### CODEX ALEXANDRINUS

This is a 5<sup>th</sup> century manuscript, displaying nearly all of the NT. IT is known to be a very reliable witness to the General Epistles and Revelation.

#### CODEX EPHRAEMI RESCRIPTUS

This is a 5<sup>th</sup> century document called a palimpsest. (A palimpsest is a manuscript in which the original writing has been erased and then written over.) Through the use of chemicals

and painstaking effort, a scholar can read the original writing underneath the overprinted text. Tischendorf did this with this manuscript, which had the sermons of Ephraemi written over a NT text.

#### CODEX BEZAE

This is a 5<sup>th</sup> century manuscript named after Theodore Beza, its discoverer, containing the Gospels and Acts and displaying a text quite different from the manuscripts mentioned above.

#### CODEX WASHINGTONIANUS

This is a 5<sup>th</sup> century manuscript containing all four Gospels housed in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.

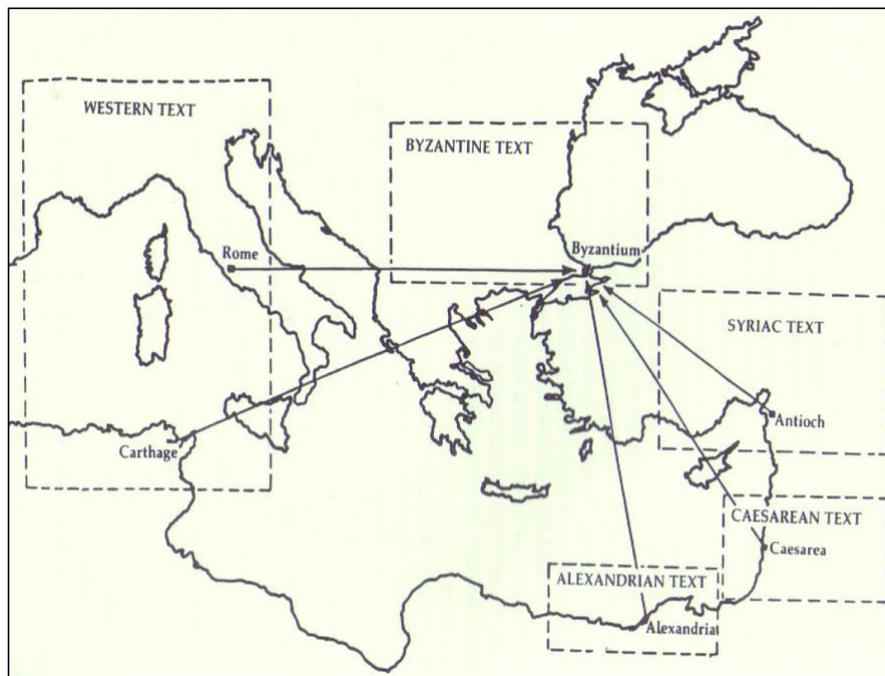


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## Appendix F

**Ancient Text Types**

Taken from:

Arthur G. Patzia, *The Making of the New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 133.



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## Appendix H

### English Translations Up to the KJV

Taken and Condensed from:  
Philip Comfort, *The Origin of the Bible*  
(Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 263-269.

All translations of the English Bible prior to the work of Tyndale were done from the Latin text. Ongoing translations included: Lindisfarne Gospels (950), Aelfric (955-1020), William of Shoreham and Richard Rolle (both in the 1300's). John Wycliffe and his associates were the first to translate the entire Bible from Latin into English. Wycliffe believed that the way to prevail in his struggle with the church's abusive authority was to make the Bible available to the people in their own language. Then they could read for themselves about how each one of them could have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ – apart from any ecclesiastical authority.

William Tyndale, priest and Oxford scholar, translated the NT from Greek (1525) but cannot get approval to publish it in England so he prints the Bibles while exiled in Germany and smuggles them into England in sacks of corn and flour.

The Coverdale Bible, translated by Miles Coverdale (1537), is the first complete Bible to be printed in English. Base upon Tyndale's translated.

The Matthew's Bible– (1537) translated by John Rogers under the pen name "Thomas Matthew" is the first Bible published with the king's permission. A friend of Tyndale and printed just one year after Tyndale's death, relies heavily on Tyndale's version and also on Coverdale's translation.

The Great Bible – A revision of The Matthew's Bible in 1538 and printed for distribution in the churches throughout England. Called "The Great Bible" because of its size and cost. In 1543, as a result of a new law by the English Parliament, the use of any English translation became restricted – it became a crime for any unlicensed person to read or explain the Scriptures in public.

The Geneva Bible – (1560) English exiles in Geneva chose William Whittingham to make an English translation of the NT for them. Used Theodore Beza's (friend and successor of John Calvin) Latin translation and consulted the Greek text. Became very popular because it was small and moderately priced. Was not acceptable to many leaders in the Church of England because of its Calvinistic notes.

The Bishops Bible – the leaders in the Church of England viewed The Great Bible as inferior in style and scholarship to the Geneva Bible so they initiated a revision of the Great Bible. This revision resulted in the Bishops' Bible (1568) and continued in use until it was superseded by the KJV in 1611.

King James Version – After James VI of Scotland became the king of England (known as James I), he invited several clergymen from Puritan and Anglican factions to meet together with the hope that differences could be reconciled. The meeting did not achieve this. However, during the meeting one of the Puritan leaders, John Reynolds, asked the king to authorize a new translation because he wanted to see a translation that was more accurate than previous translations. King James liked the idea because the Bishops' Bible had not

been successful and because he considered the notes in the Geneva Bible to be seditious. The king initiated the work and took an active part in planning the new translation. More than 50 Hebrew and Greek scholars began the work in 1607. They were instructed to follow the Bishops' Bible as the basic version, as long as it adhered to the original text, and to consult the translations of Tyndale, Matthew, Great, Geneva, and Coverdale Translations. Was the most popular English translation in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.