God’s preservation of

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

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Four Categories

Autographs ➔ Manuscripts
Manuscripts (MSS)

- Papyrus
- Majuscule
- Minuscule
- Lectionaries
Making Papyri
Papyrus Groups - Overview

- Oxyrhynchus Papyri
- Chester Beatty Papyri
- Bodmer Papyri
- Other papyri

More than fragments!
Oxyrhynchus Papyri

B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt
Oxyrhynchus Papyri

Oxyrhynchus (Al Bahnasa)
Chester Beatty Papyri

Statue at Chester Beatty Library in Dublin
Bodmer Papyri
Bodmer Papyri - p75
Audience Exercise – Can you read these?

Ἐν Ἀρχῇ ἦν λόγος καὶ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν καὶ θεὸς ἦν λόγος. Σὰ ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν ἦν, καὶ ἦν πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ. Καὶ τὸ πᾶσα ἡ ζωὴ ἦν ἐν αὐτῷ. καὶ τὸ μὴ ζωή ἦν ἐν τοῖς νυκτίς μικράς ἐν τοῖς νυκτίς μικράς

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.
Other Papyri – P⁵²

Rylands Library Papyrus P52

Discovered in 1934 by C.H. Roberts in the John Rylands Library Manchester - UK

Originally it was a part of a papyrus codex

the jews
no one so that
prediction
decease
xxx the x
and said
xx

Oμηδαιοιμη
ουδεναιμαλ
πενσημαλω
θησκελν
ωριωνοπ
καλεπτ
lω
Manuscripts

- Papyrus
- Majuscule
- Minuscule
- Lectionaries

Parchment or paper
Making Parchment
Majuscule Manuscripts

- Usually in form of a “codex”
- Important codices
  - Codex Sinaiticus
  - Codex Vaticanus
Codex Siniaticus (ℵ)
Codex \textit{Siniaticus} - Tischendorf

Constantin von Tischendorf
Codex *Siniaticus*

St. Catherine’s Monastery, Mt. Sinai
Codex Vaticanus (B)
Manuscripts

- Papyrus
- Majuscule
- Minuscule
- Lectionaries
Manuscripts by 4 Categories

Major MSS Text Types/Lines

- Byzantine
- Alexandrian
- Western
Four Categories

- **Autographs**
- **Manuscripts**
- **Critical Editions**

**Textual Criticism**

"collation"
Critical Editions – Textus Receptus 1516, 1519, 1522

Desiderius Erasmus
Critical Editions – Westcott & Hort 1881

B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort
Critical Editions – Nestle-Aland & United Bible Society
21 Then the chief priests and the scribes and the elders of the people gathered together to Peter and John and said, "What is this that you are doing? For we clearly know that it is through the name of your disciple Jesus, whom you crucified, that this man is standing here healed.

Jesus Foretells His Betrayal
(Mt 26:26-25; Mk 14:17-21; Lk 22:21-23)

22 "But now, why are you testing me, too? Tell me, who is it who healed him?" Then they brought to them the man who had been healed, saying to them, "Sir, it is he who had the disease.

VARIANT

David's Death
(2 Sam 18:1-18)

27 "Now you are all requesting to see the kingdom of God." "Tell us, then, what it will look like when it comes," they said. "The secret is not given to you to know," said Jesus, "but to the disciples, who are seated in my kingdom, to give sight to my father's house."
Four Categories

- Autographs
- Manuscripts
- Critical Editions
- Translations

Textual Criticism
"collation"
Key English Translations

- John Wycliffe
  - 1382 Latin to English

- William Tyndale
  - 1525 Greek to English

- King James Version - 1611
Translation Consideration

Thought-for-Thought vs Word-for-Word

**NIV**

“Now when he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them saying,” (Matt. 5:1-2)

“Jesus answered, ‘It is written: ‘Man does not live by bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matt. 4:4 cited from Deut. 8:3).

**ESV**

“Seeing the crowds, he [Jesus] went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them saying,” (Matt. 5:1-2)

“But he [Jesus] answered, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God’”’ (Matt. 4:4 cited from Deut. 8:3).
## Translation Consideration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Level</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>KJV, RSV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>NASB, NRSV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>ESV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-7</td>
<td>NIV, HCSB, NKJV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>NLT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-4</td>
<td>GW, TM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>NCV, NIrV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations

- No comparable work from antiquity
# Observations - Greek NT MSS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>When written</th>
<th>Earliest copy</th>
<th>Timespan</th>
<th>Number of MSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homer (<em>Iliad</em>)</td>
<td>800 BC</td>
<td>400 BC</td>
<td>400 yrs</td>
<td>1,800+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophocles</td>
<td>496-406 BC</td>
<td>300 BC</td>
<td>100 yrs</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plato (<em>Tetralogies</em>)</td>
<td>400 BC</td>
<td>895AD</td>
<td>1,300 yrs</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caesar (<em>Gallic Wars</em>)</td>
<td>100-44 BC</td>
<td>800AD</td>
<td>950 yrs</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacitus (<em>Annals</em>)</td>
<td>100 AD</td>
<td>850AD</td>
<td>750 yrs</td>
<td>2+31 from 1400 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pliny the Elder</td>
<td>49-79 AD</td>
<td>450 AD</td>
<td>400 yrs</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demosthenes</td>
<td>300 BC</td>
<td>1100 AD</td>
<td>1,400 yrs</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| New Testament           | 50-100 AD    | 114 AD (fragment) | 50 yrs | 5,838 |
|                        |             | 200 AD (books)    | 100 yrs|
|                        |             | 250 AD (most of NT)| 150 yrs|
|                        |             | 325 AD (complete NT)| 225 yrs|

Observations – Greek NT MSS

Executive Director for the Center for the Study of NT Manuscripts, Daniel Wallace –

“. . .the average classical author has fewer than twenty copies. In fact, that is a really a pretty high number for an average. And if you were to stack the manuscripts up, they would be about four feet high. . . . Now compare that to the New Testament and the stack of the manuscripts we would have would be over a mile high.
Observations – Greek NT MSS

“Well, the fact is even within 100 years--maybe about 125 years of the New Testament being completed--we have 43 percent of all the New Testament verses found in those early papyri.”

Observations – NT MSS in other Languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number of Manuscripts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vulgate</td>
<td>10,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavic</td>
<td>4,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian</td>
<td>2,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coptic</td>
<td>~975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopian</td>
<td>600+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number of Manuscripts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syriac</td>
<td>350+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Latin</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgian</td>
<td>43+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gothic</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations – NT Citations

Scottish judge and historian, Sir David Dalrymple –

Suppose the entire NT had been destroyed and lost by AD 400. How much of the NT could be reconstructed by citations? After examining writings of early church Fathers through the end of the 3rd century, Dalrymple concludes,

“... I have found the entire New Testament except eleven verses.”

As cited in Charles Leach, Our Bible. How We Got It (Chicago: Moody Press, 1898), 36. Emphasis in the original.
Observations – NT

Professor of Biblical Criticism & Exegesis at the University of Manchester, F. F. Bruce -

“The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no one ever dreams of questioning.
“And if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt.”

Observations

- No comparable work from antiquity
- NT spread much differently than OT
- Destruction of manuscripts
- There are many textual variations
  - What’s a variation?
  - How many are there?
Greek NT Variations

Daniel Wallace –

“A textual variant is simply any difference from a standard text (e.g., a printed text, a particular manuscript, etc.) that involves spelling, word order, omission, addition, substitution, or a total rewrite of the text.
Greek NT Variations

“But with the work done on Luke’s Gospel by the International Greek New Testament Project, Tommy Wasserman’s work on Jude, and Münster’s work on James and 1-2 Peter, the estimates today are closer to 400,000.”

Greek NT Variations

Audience Exercise – Can you read this?

Olny srmat poelpe can raed tihs.

I cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod aulacly uesdnatnrd waht I was rdanieg The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuam mnid, aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uninervtisy, it deosn’t mttae in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rgh it pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses, and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef but the wrod as a wlohe.

Amzanig huh?

Cambridge University Reading Test
Observations

- No comparable work from antiquity
- NT spread much differently than OT
- Destruction of manuscripts
- There are many textual variations
- Major textual variations
Major Textual Variations

- Woman caught in adultery - John 7:53-8:11
Major Textual Variations

Comma Johanneum

- 7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. 8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. 1 John 5:7-8 (KJV)

- 7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. 1 John 5:7-8 (ESV)
Major Textual Variations

- Long ending of - Mark 16:9-20
## Greek NT Variations vs. *Iliad*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>New Testament</th>
<th>Homer's <em>Iliad</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total lines</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lines with questions</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of lines with questions</td>
<td>Less than 1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Greek NT Variations

Distinguished Christian apologist, Norman Geisler -

“Not only is the Bible the most well-preserved book to survive from the ancient world, its variant readings of significance amount to less than one-half of one percent, none of which affect any basic Christian doctrine.”

Observations

- No comparable work from antiquity
- NT spread much differently than OT
- Destruction of manuscripts
- There are many textual variations
- Major textual variations
- Manuscript characteristics
Characteristics – Western

Distinguished Princeton NT text expert, Bruce Metzger –

- “undisciplined and ‘wild’ growth”
- “fondness of paraphrase”
Characteristics – Byzantine

- “lucidity and completeness”
- “smooth away any harshness of language”
- “combine two or more divergent readings into one expanded reading (called conflation)”
- “harmonize divergent parallel passages”
Characteristics - Alexandrian

- “conscientious control”
- “high quality of textual transmission from the earliest times”

Purest MSS

NT text expert and author Philip Comfort –

“textual critics who have worked with many actual manuscripts, collating and doing textual analysis, and who have thereby seen firsthand the kind of errors, expansions, harmonizations, and interpolations that are present in other manuscripts, are convinced that manuscripts like P75 and B [Codex Vaticanus] represent the best of textual purity.”
Purest MSS

“This was Westcott’s and Hort’s assessment of B [Codex Vaticanus], after twenty years of study. This was Kurt Aland’s assessment of P75, after many years of study. Scores of other scholars have come to the same conclusion.”

God’s Preservation of the NT Text – (1) Multiple Lines of Attestation

Christian apologist James White -

“Alter a manuscript, or even a few manuscripts, in one geographical area and those will be seen to differ when compared with earlier manuscripts from another area. One would have to alter all manuscripts completely to be able to make any major textual change, and no one in the ancient world was ever in a position to pull that off.”

God’s Preservation of the NT Text – (1) Multiple Lines of Attestation

But with the Qu’ran, there’s only one line, making it impossible to detect variations. In AD 655, Uthman, the third caliph...

“by his overriding authority as caliph, the leader of all Muslims, had the Qur’an copied and had authoritative, official copies sent to every Muslim province. This became the ‘official’ version, to replace all previous collections. . . .
God’s Preservation of the NT Text – (1) Multiple Lines of Attestation

“But equally noteworthy is this: ‘Uthman sent to every Muslim province one copy of what they had copied and ordered that all the other Qur’anic materials, whether written in fragmentary copies or whole copies, be burnt.’”

God’s Preservation of the NT Text – (1) Multiple Lines of Attestation

“So if Uthman were at all biased, at all influenced by the debates and struggles of his times, the resulting text could be altered forever. And how would anyone know?”

God’s Preservation of the NT Text – (2) Tenacity of Text

Distinguished NT textual scholars Kurt and Barbara Aland -

“The transmission of the New Testament textual tradition is characterized by an extremely impressive degree of tenacity. Once a reading occurs it will persist with obstinacy. . . . It is precisely the overwhelming mass of the New Testament textual tradition which provides an assurance of certainty in establishing the original text.”

UBS’s Editorial Committee

Bruce Metzger

Kurt Aland
God’s Preservation of the NT Text – (3) His Providential Care

“The Old Testament in Hebrew . . ., and the New Testament in Greek . . ., being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical; so as in all controversies of religion the Church is finally to appeal unto them.”

*Westminster Confession of Faith (1646)*
Summing it Up

Philip Comfort -

“the Nestle-Aland text is regarded by many as representing the latest and best in textual scholarship. One can be assured that most of the wording in the text is what the writers of the New Testament actually wrote; and if the editors got it wrong, the correct reading can be found in the critical apparatus [footnotes].”

Four Categories

1. Autographs
2. Manuscripts
3. Critical Editions
4. Translations

Textual Criticism
“collation”
Extra Credit - How would you answer this critic?

**Criticism**
Professor of Religious Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill, Bart Ehrman -

“There are more variations among our manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament.”


**Possible response**
The more MSS we have, the more variances we can expect. It is a good thing to have so many MSS. With all these MSS, we also see (a) multiple lines of attestation and (b) tenacity of the text. These give us *reasonable* certainty of the autographs. 99% of variances are insignificant; remaining 1% don’t impact basic doctrine.
Extra Credit – How would you answer this critic?

**Criticism**

“What good is it to say that the autographs (i.e., the originals) were inspired? We don’t have the originals! We have only error-ridden copies, and the vast majority of these are centuries removed from the originals and different from them, evidently, in thousands of ways.”

**Possible response**

To make the claim that MSS are “error ridden” and “different from” the autographs requires knowing what the autographs said. Ehrman’s claim is self-defeating and necessarily false.

How long did autographs last?

- Autographs written
- Manuscripts
- Now
Importance of question

P\textsuperscript{75} \quad AD 200

Autograph \quad - \quad AD 60

Timegap \quad 140 years

Assume mss last \quad \div \quad 20 years

At least \quad 7 generations
Importance of question
How long did autographs last?

Professor at Houston Baptist University, Craig A. Evans -

“Study of library/correspondence collections found in the trash heaps at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, shows that literary mss [manuscripts] were in use 150-500 years (with most in the 200-300 year range) before being thrown out.”

Craig Evans, “Old and Reliable: Why We Can Trust the NT Manuscripts” (lecture at the Passages exhibit, Charlotte, NC, November 20, 2012).
How long did autograph’s last? (continued)

Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, circa AD 300 -

“How it was the preparation, about the third hour, as the accurate books have it, and the autograph copy itself of the Evangelist John, which up to this day has by divine grace been preserved in the most holy church of Ephesus, and is there adored by the faithful.”

Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, *Fragments from the Writings of Peter* 5.2.
Likely John’s Gospel rather than epistles

Church father and apologist Irenaeus, circa AD 130-200 -

“Later John, the disciple of the Lord and the one who leaned against his chest, also put out a Gospel while residing in Ephesus of Asia.”

How long did the autograph’s last? (continued)

Early church father and apologist Tertullian, circa AD 210 -

“Come now, you who would indulge a better curiosity, if you would apply it to the business of your salvation, run over the apostolic churches, in which the very thrones of the apostles are still pre-eminent in their places, in which their own authentic writings are read, uttering the voice and representing the face of each of them severely.
How long did the autograph’s last? (continued)

“Achaia is very near you, have Philippi; (and there too) you have the Thessalonians. Since you are able to cross to Asia, you get Ephesus. Since, moreover, you are close upon Italy, you have Rome, from which there comes even into our own hands the very authority (of apostles themselves).”

Tertullian, *Prescription Against Heretics*, 36.
Importance of question

- P\textsuperscript{75} (and other MSS we have) may not be multiple generations away
- P\textsuperscript{75} (and other MSS) may have been a direct copy from the autographs
For Further Study

- **iTunes U**
  - Search for “Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts” or “CSNTM”
  - ~4 dozen 2-18 minute videos
  - Free download

- **CSNTM**

[Press here to go to CSNTM website]
Why should we think the NT writers were truthful?

1. Presumption of truth telling
   - Assume innocent until proven guilty
2. Multiple witnesses
3. Early testimony
   - Within 30 years of events
   - Many eyewitnesses were still alive (1 Cor. 15:3-8) and could have refuted any inaccuracies
Why should we think the NT writers were truthful?

4. Supernatural memory to disciples (John 14:26)

5. Embarrassing facts (they told it like it was)
   - Disciples behavior
   - Empty tomb found by women

6. Would you die for a lie?
   - Apostles were in a position to know whether events were true or false
Takeaways

- Four categories to think of the NT text
- There are textual variations
  - Only ~1% impact meaning of the passages
  - No essential beliefs are at stake
  - Correct reading in base text or footnotes
- God has preserved His Word through
  - Multiple lines of attestation/transmission
  - Tenacity of the text
  - His providential care
Questions/Comments