

NT & OT Accurate Historical Documents

II. ACCURACY: ARE THESE SOURCES RELIABLE?

A. Comparison of the sources (see above)

- i. MSS for N.T.** - Approx. 5,000 - Metzger, TCGNT, p. xxiv; 5,686 partial and complete, NETDV, p. 34. 5,700 CRJ, p. 82; IBTR Nearly 5,800 Geisler, 2013
- ii. Versions for N.T.** - 10,000+ Latin Vulgate; 2,000+ Ethiopic; 4,101, Slavic; 2,587, Armenian; 350+ Syriac Pashetta; 245 others – Total = 19,284+ NETDV, p. 34
- iii. Quotations for N.T.** - over 19,000 just of the gospels and over 30,000 of all NT before 325 AD. ETDV, p. 55.

Scholars say the NT could be reconstructed from the quotes alone if all MSS and versions destroyed. NETDV, p. 43.

B. Comparison with other historical works of antiquity

Chart, NETDV, p. 38

Author	Book	Date Written	Earliest Copies	Time Gap	No. of Copies
Homer	Iliad	800 b.c.	c. 400 b.c.	c. 400 yrs.	643
Herodotus	History	480-425 b.c.	c. a.d. 900	c. 1,350 yrs.	8
Thucydides	History	460-400 b.c.	c. a.d. 900	c. 1,300 yrs.	8
Plato		400 b.c.	c. a.d. 900	c. 1,300 yrs.	7
Demosthenes		300 b.c.	c. a.d. 1100	c. 1,400 yrs.	200
Caesar	Gallic Wars	100-44 b.c.	c. a.d. 900	c. 1,000 yrs.	10
Livy	History of Rome	59 b.c.–a.d. 17	4 th cent. (partial) mostly 10 th cent.	c. 400 yrs. c. 1,000 yrs.	1 partial 19 copies
Tacitus	Annals	a.d. 100	c. a.d. 1100	c. 1,000 yrs.	20
Pliny Secundus (Pliny the Elder)	Natural History	a.d. 61-113	c. a.d. 850	c. 750 yrs.	7
New Testament		a.d. 50-100	c. 114 (fragment) c. 200 (books) c. 250 (most of N.T.) c. 325 (complete N.T.)	+50 yrs. 100 yrs. 150 yrs. 225 yrs.	5366

[Herodotus - huh ROD uh tuhs; Thucydides - thoo SID ih deez; Demosthenes - dih MOS thuh neez; Livy - LIH vee]

Compare if a *will* was involved ... which one of these copies would we have the most confidence in?! A will IS involved!

To reject the credibility of the N.T. documents is to relegate all ancient documents to complete untrustworthiness, for none are as well attested as the N.T.!

“Perhaps we can appreciate how wealthy the New Testament is in manuscript attestation if we compare the textual material for other ancient historical works. For Caesar’s *Gallic War* (composed between 85 and 50 bc) there are several extant MSS, but only nine or ten are good, and the oldest is some 900 years later than Caesar’s day. Of the 142 books of the Roman History of Livy (59 bc -ad 17) only thirty-five survive; these are known to us from not more than twenty MSS of any consequence, only one of which, and that containing fragments of Books iii-vi, is as old as the fourth century. Of the fourteen books of the *Histories* of Tacitus (c. ad 100) only four and a half survive; of the sixteen books of his *Annals*, ten survive in full and two in part. The text of these extant portions of his two great historical works depends entirely on two MSS, one of the ninth century and one of the eleventh. The extant MSS of his minor works (*Dialogus de Oratoribus*, *Agricola*, *Germania*) all descend from a codex of the tenth century. The History of Thucydides (c. 460-400 bc) is known to us from eight MSS, the earliest belonging to c. ad 900, and a few papyrus scraps, belonging to about the beginning of the Christian era. The same is true of the History of Herodotus (c. 480-425 bc). Yet no classical scholar would listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt because the earliest MSS of their works which are of any use to us are over 1,300 years later than the originals.” F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents, Are They Reliable?* (Eerdmans, Michigan, 1963), pp. 16,17

See article by John Oates under “Additional Notes” at end about age of MSS mostly used.

C. Authoritative testimony

“Authoritative” - “2...reliable because coming from one who is an expert or properly qualified” WNWD

“Fenton John Anthony Hort, whose life work has been with the MSS...‘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.**’” ETDV, p. 44. Fenton John Anthony Hort, 1828-1892 A.D., was a renowned textual scholar of the 19th century and served on the committee of the English Revised Version in the 1880s. (“Explaining the Variants” CRJ, pp. 85-87) [bold mine]

My N.T. is 421 pages. One thousandth part of that would be .421, or less than half a page!

“Sir Frederick Kenyon (one of the great authorities in the field of N.T. textual criticism) [“director and principal librarian of the British Museum” NETDV, p. 35; director of the British Museum 1909-1930 A.D.]: ‘It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain: Especially is this the case with the New Testament. The number of manuscripts of the New Testament, of early translations from it, and of quotations from it in the oldest writers of the Church, is so large that is it **practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or other of these ancient authorities. This can be said of no other ancient book in the world.** [boldmine]

“Scholars are satisfied that they possess substantially the true text of the principal Greek and Roman writers whose works have come down to us of Sophocles, of Thucydides, of Cicero, of Virgil; yet our knowledge of their writings depends on a mere handful of manuscripts, whereas the manuscripts of the New Testament are counted by hundreds, and even thousands.” ETDV, p. 46.

“Kenyon continues in *The Bible and Archaeology*: ‘The interval then between the dates of the original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the **last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed.** Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.’ (Kenyon, BA, 288)” NETDV, p. 35. [boldmine]

Simon Greenleaf, LL.D., Royall Professor of Law in Harvard University [1833-1848 A.D.], AEFÉ, pp. 27,28: “If any ancient document concerning our public rights were lost, copies which had been as universally received and acted upon as the Four Gospels have been, **would have been received in evidence in any of our courts of justice, without the slightest hesitation.** The entire text of the Corpus Juris Civilis is received as authority in all the courts of continental Europe, upon much weaker evidence of genuineness; for the integrity of the Sacred Text has been preserved by the jealousy of opposing sects, beyond any moral possibility of corruption; while that of the Roman Civil Law has been preserved only by tacit consent, without the interest of any opposing school, to watch over and preserve it from alteration.”

“What can we conclude from the evidence? **Virtually all of the 400,000 differences in the New Testament documents—spelling errors, inverted words, non-viable variants and the like—are completely inconsequential to the task of reconstructing the original.** Of the remaining differences, virtually all yield to a vigorous application of the accepted canons of textual criticism.

This means that **our New Testament is over 99% pure**. In the entire text of 20,000 lines, only 40 lines are in doubt (about 400 words), ³⁷ and none affects any significant doctrine. [boldmine]

Scholar D.A. Carson sums it up this way: “What is at stake is a purity of text of such a substantial nature that nothing we believe to be doctrinally true, and nothing we are commanded to do, is in any way jeopardized by the variants.” ³⁸ <<https://shrtm.nu/9Fha>>

³⁷, Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 475

³⁸, Carson, D.A., *The King James Version Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 56

And these can be multiplied. See, e.g., ETDV.

The OT MSS was completed c. 400 years before Jesus was born. The LXX translation was made 150-250 years before Jesus was born. Did He consider these MSS reliable? Would he appeal to a document written 1500 years before as authoritative for the knowledge of God and His will? ALL of the prophets' writings were at least 400 years in the past (Malachi), and some several hundred years more (1500 yrs from Moses' writing; others 700 years + e.g. Isaiah). The following shows that, at least in the 1st century—although it was many years since the original MSS was written, and the translation was not inspired (LXX)—Jesus considered it a reliable source. If Jesus was the Son of God, that gives us exceeding confidence in the OT record at that point in history. And, his quotes of the OT were never challenged by his enemies, though they were the “scholars” of the text in that day.

OT: INSPIRED & AUTHORITATIVE

- **Mt. 4:4,7,10** - “it is written” **Dt. 8:3; 6:16; 6:13** (“only” LXX; but see **v14**)
Dt. one of most attacked books. Colophon principle. Point: Jesus confirmed it!
- **Mt. 5:17-19** - “not the smallest letter or stroke...the least of these commandments”
- “jot” - smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet; “tittle” - small mark to distinguish between two letters
- **Mt 19:3-6** - “lawful...Have you not read...What God has joined together (declared to be)” **Gen 1:27;2:24**
- **Mt 24:15** - “Daniel the prophet” - Some most remarkable prophecies!
- **Jn. 10:34-35** - “the Scripture cannot be broken” (Ps. 82:6)

OT STORIES: HISTORICAL EVENTS

- **Creation - Mt. 19:4** - Male and female from creation; marriage; Adam = prophet; communication, rationality, will
- **Unparalleled wisdom of Solomon - Mt 12:42**

- **Murder of Abel - Lk. 11:50-51** - and note this at the “foundation of the world,” not millions of yrs later
- **Flood - Lk 17:26,27**
- **Sodom & Gomorrah - Lk 17:28-29,32**
- **Burning bush - Lk 20:37**
- **Bronze serpent - Jn 3:14**
- **Manna - Jn 6:32,49**
- **Jonah - Mt 12:40,41**