

HOW DO WE KNOW
THAT THE BIBLE HAS
NOT BEEN CHANGED?



The background features a light gray field with several overlapping geometric shapes: yellow squares and rectangles in the top-left and bottom-right, and blue squares and rectangles in the top-right and bottom-left. A central, tilted rectangular area contains a snippet of a Greek manuscript, showing lines of text in an ancient script. Overlaid on this manuscript snippet is a solid yellow rectangle containing the text.

IS THE TEXT OF THE NEW
TESTAMENT RELIABLE?

WHAT DO CHINESE, SPANISH, AND ENGLISH HAVE IN COMMON?

Although God speaks all three perfectly, the Bible was not originally written in those languages.



IN WHAT LANGUAGES WAS THE BIBLE WRITTEN?

OLD TESTAMENT

- אֱלֹהִים

- אֱלֹהִי

- Hebrew

- Aramaic (Daniel 2:4b-7:28, Ezra 4:8-6:18, 7:12-26, Jeremiah 10:11, Etc.)

NEW TESTAMENT

- Θεός

- Greek (some Aramaic phrases and words written with Greek letters)

OUR ENGLISH
BIBLES ARE
TRANSLATIONS.



DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHIES PRODUCE DIFFERENCES IN TRANSLATIONS

FORMAL EQUIVALENCE

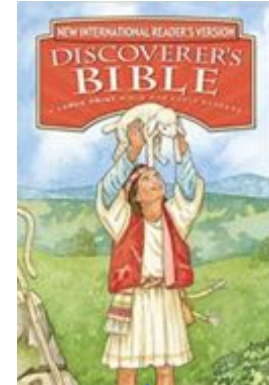
- Emphasizes the source language
- Considers the receptor language
- Tends to be “word for word”

FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE

- Emphasizes the receptor language
- Considers the source language
- Tends to be “thought for thought”

THE SPECTRUM OF TRANSLATIONS: FORMAL VERSUS FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE

Hebrew or Greek Interlinear



NIRV

More formal (less interpretative)

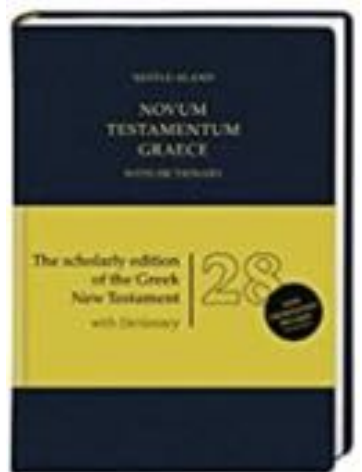
More functional (more interpretative)



In general, translators work from print/digital editions of the Old and New Testaments such as:

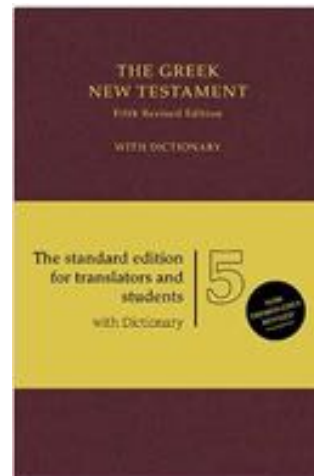


- Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia 5th edition



- Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (28th edition)

- United Bible Society *The Greek New Testament* (5th edition)



WHENCE
COMETH THE
TEXT FOR
TRANSLATION?

UBS GREEK NT: ROMANS 1:1-7

ΠΡΟΣ ΡΩΜΑΙΟΥΣ

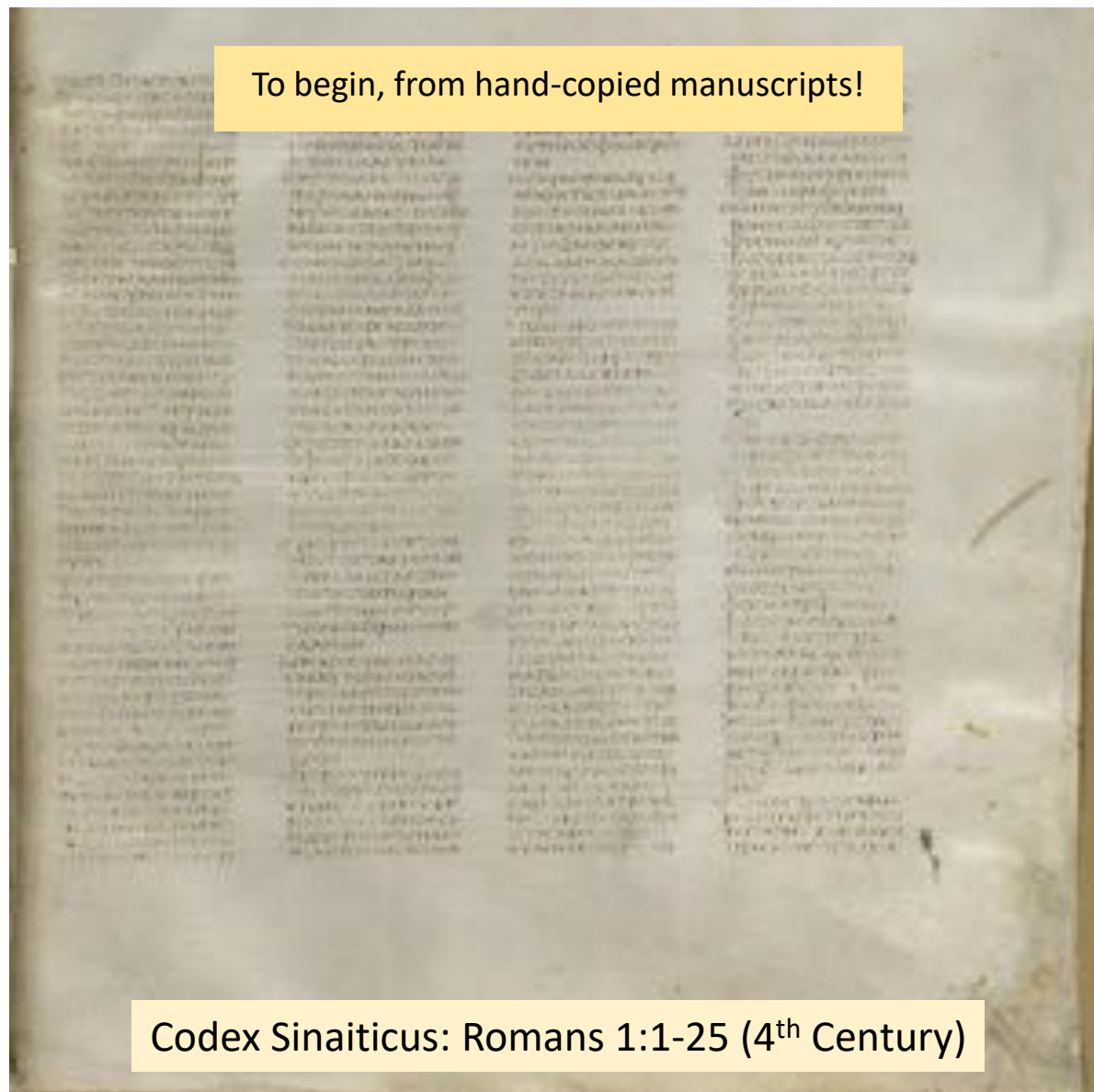
Salutation

1 Παῦλος δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ¹, κλητὸς ἀπόστολος ἀφωρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ, **2** ὃ προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἀγίαις **3** περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα, **4** τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἀγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν, **5** δι' οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολὴν εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ, **6** ἐν οἷς ἐστε καὶ ὑμεῖς κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, **7** πᾶσιν τοῖς οὗσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ² ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ, κλητοῖς ἀγίοις, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

WHENCE COMETH THE TEXT FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT PRINT EDITIONS?

To begin, from hand-copied manuscripts!

Codex Sinaiticus: Romans 1:1-25 (4th Century)



A REVOLUTION



Recreated Gutenberg press at the International Printing Museum, Carson, California
By vlasta2 - Flickr: PrintMus 038, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16412858>

THE WICKED BIBLE: 1631 A.D.

Honour thy father
dayes may bee long vpon
ORD thy God giueth thee.
13 * Thou shalt not kill.
14 Thou shalt commit adultery.
15 Thou shalt not steale.
16 Thou shalt not beare false wit
neighbour
* Thou shalt not couet thy neigh
not couet thy neighbour



Should read: Thou shalt **NOT** commit adultery.

IS THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT RELIABLE?

- The New Testament in English is a translation from Greek manuscripts. Although translations differ for a variety of reasons and there are challenges in that process, it is also true that excellent translations exist which faithfully communicate the text/message found in the manuscripts.
- Since the invention of the printing press in 1440 A.D., the text of the New Testament manuscripts has essentially been “frozen”, such that no new differences have entered the transmission process.

THE PRODUCTION AND TRANSMISSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

TEXTUAL VARIANTS IN ROMANS

Romans 1:1 {B}

1. Παῦλος δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ
2. Παῦλος δοῦλος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

1. Paul servant of Christ Jesus
2. Paul servant of Jesus Christ

TEXTUAL VARIANTS IN ROMANS

Romans 1:7 {A}

1. πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ
2. πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ

1. to all who are in Rome beloved of God
2. to all who are beloved of God

TEXTUAL VARIANTS IN ROMANS

Romans 3:22 {B}

1. εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας
2. ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας
3. εἰς πάντας καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας

1. to all who believe
2. upon all who believe
3. to all and upon all who believe

TEXTUAL VARIANTS IN ROMANS

Romans 5:1 {A}

1. Δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεόν
 2. Δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως εἰρήνην ἔχωμεν πρὸς τὸν θεόν
-
1. Therefore justified by faith peace we have with God
 2. Therefore justified by faith peace let us have with God

TEXTUAL VARIANTS IN ROMANS

Romans 8:1 {A}

1. Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.
 2. Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν.
 3. Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα.
-
1. Therefore now *there is* no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus.
 2. Therefore now *there is* no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus who do not according to the flesh walk.
 3. Therefore now *there is* no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus who do not according to the flesh walk but according to the Spirit.

TEXTUAL VARIANTS IN ROMANS

Romans 8:2 {B}

1. ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν σε
 2. ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν με
 3. ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν ἡμᾶς
- For the law of the Spirit of the life in Christ Jesus freed you (singular)/me/us...

TEXTUAL VARIANTS IN ROMANS

Romans 8:28 {B}

1. πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν
 2. πάντα συνεργεῖ ὁ θεός εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν
-
1. All things work together for good, to/with those who are called according to His purpose (He works all things for good, to/with)
 2. **God** works all things together for good, to/with those who are called according to His purpose

TEXTUAL VARIANTS IN ROMANS

Romans 16:25-27 {C}

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began ²⁶ but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith— ²⁷ to God, alone wise, *be glory* through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

Manuscripts have verses 16:25-27:

1. After 16:24.
2. After 16:24 and after 14:23.
3. After 14:23 only (these manuscripts also have 15:1-16:24).
4. After 15:33 (these manuscripts also have 16:1-23, with one exception)
5. Omit 16:25-27 completely (one manuscript leaves a space for it after 14:23)

TEXTUAL VARIANTS IN ROMANS

MAIN POINTS OF THIS BRIEF SURVEY

- To show that differences in manuscripts can be (very) inconsequential in terms of the text's meaning (1:1; 3:22, 8:2).
- To show that differences and even potentially important differences can lack a solid basis for accepting them as valid (1:8, 8:2 #3).
- To show that methods exist for determining which of the readings should be accepted, even if the differences affect the text's meaning (5:1).
- To show that differences which affect the text's meaning do not necessarily result in a contradiction of a teaching or doctrine taught elsewhere (8:1, 8:28).
- To show that the differences serve the valuable purpose of revealing the text's transmission history. In particular, the fact that these differences exist demonstrates that no one successfully commandeered the transmission process to achieve questionable ends. There was no "funny-business" that prevailed. (All verses)

THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY: JOHN 7:53-8:11

Manuscript Evidence

- Omitted
- Included
- Included with asterisks
- Included but only 8:3-11
- After John 7:36
- After John 21:25 with note
- After Luke 21:38
- Numerous manuscripts, including earlier ones
- Majority of manuscripts, mostly later
- 4 manuscripts
- 9 manuscripts, one with asterisks
- 1 manuscript
- 1 manuscript
- A group of at least 13 manuscripts

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- Differences in the manuscripts, even ones that potentially affect the text’s meaning in a passage, exist but they do not necessarily contradict major doctrinal teachings affirmed elsewhere. Those differences enable us to learn how the transmission process occurred and thereby formulate a text theory and method through which we determine the inspired text with much confidence.

HOW MANY GREEK MANUSCRIPTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT EXIST?

≈5,100-5,300
manuscripts*

* Jacob W. Peterson, “Math Myths: How Many Manuscripts We Have and Why More Isn’t Always Better,” in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 68.

MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

- Papyri: 138*
- Majuscules (Uncials): ≈261-282*
- Minuscules & Lectionaries (≈4,680-4,900)**
 - Minuscules (≈2,555)***
 - Lectionaries (≈2,280)***
- Ancient versions
 - c.a. 125 A.D. to 7th century***
 - 2nd to 11th century A.D.***
 - 9th to 15th century A.D.***
 - 9th to 15th century***
 - 10th to 12th century***
- Church Fathers
 - 3rd century A.D. and on***
 - 2nd century A.D. and on***

* Jacob W. Peterson, “Math Myths: How Many Manuscripts We Have and Why More Isn’t Always Better,” in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 57, 58, 60.

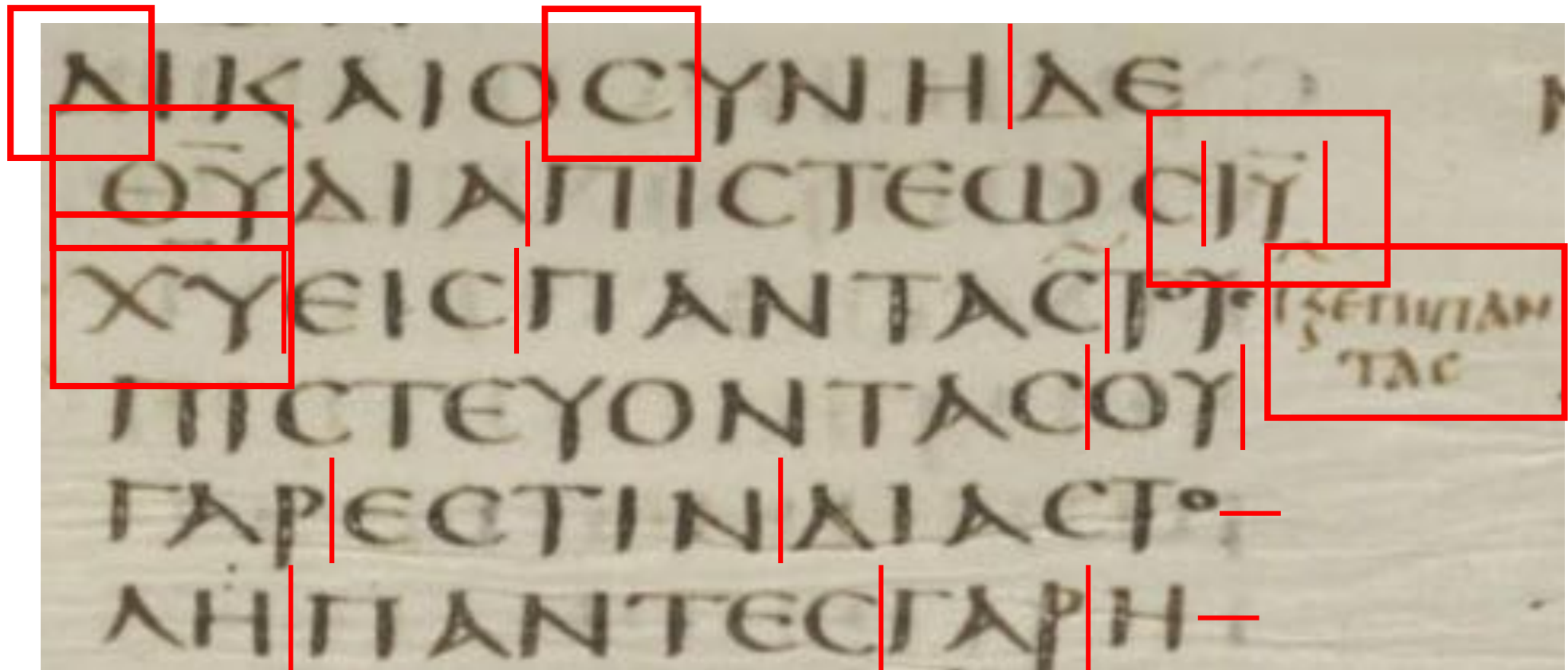
** Peterson does not explicitly give this range and is against calculating it. I used the range of 5,100 to 5,300 of total manuscripts from the previous slide less the number of papyri (also calculated based on information he provides) and the majuscules, then rounded the result.

*** Paul D. Wegner, *A Student’s Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible* (2006), 257.



MAJUSCULE
EXAMPLE:
CODEX ALEPH
(SINAITICUS)

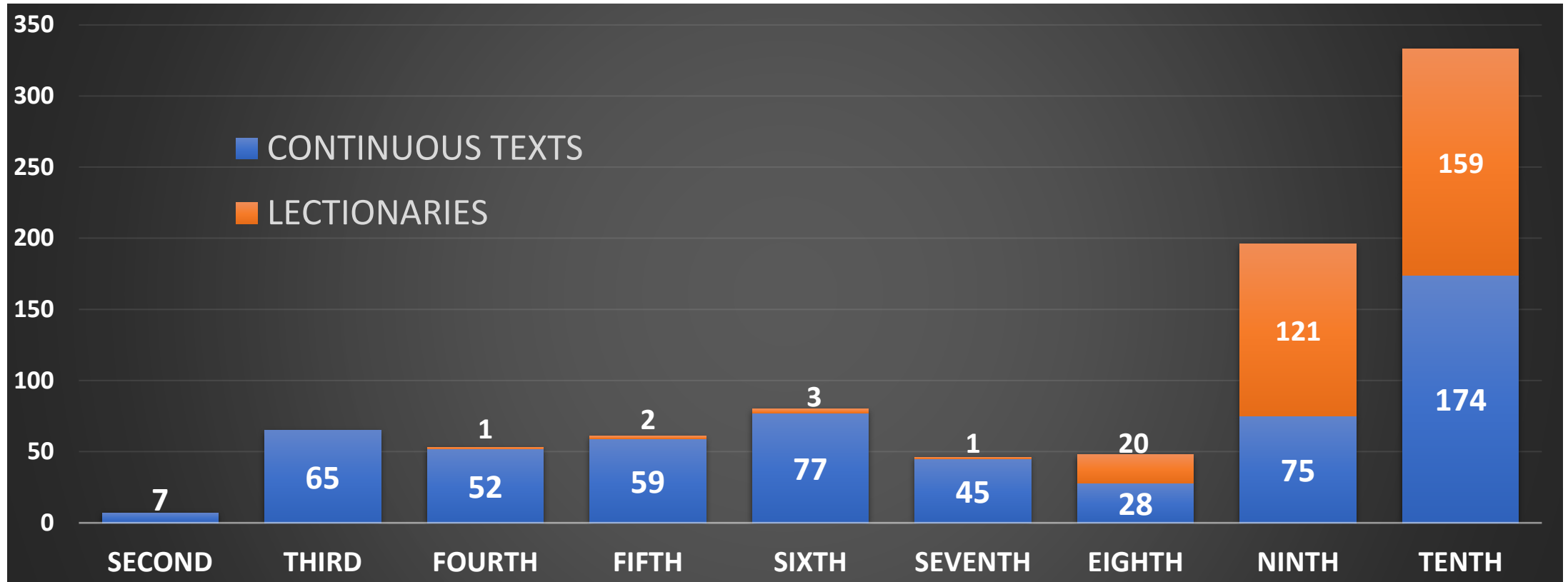




CODEX ALEPH (SINAITICUS):
ROMANS 3:22
MIDDLE 4TH CENTURY

ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ ΔΕ
ΘΕΟΥ ΔΙΑ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ ΙΗΣΟΥ
ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ΕΙΣ ΠΑΝΤΑΣ ΤΟΥΣ
ΠΙΣΤΕΥΟΝΤΑΣ ΟΥ
ΓΑΡ ΕΣΤΙΝ ΔΙΑΦΕΡΕΝΤΙΑ
ΛΗ ΠΑΝΤΕΣ ΓΑΡ Η-

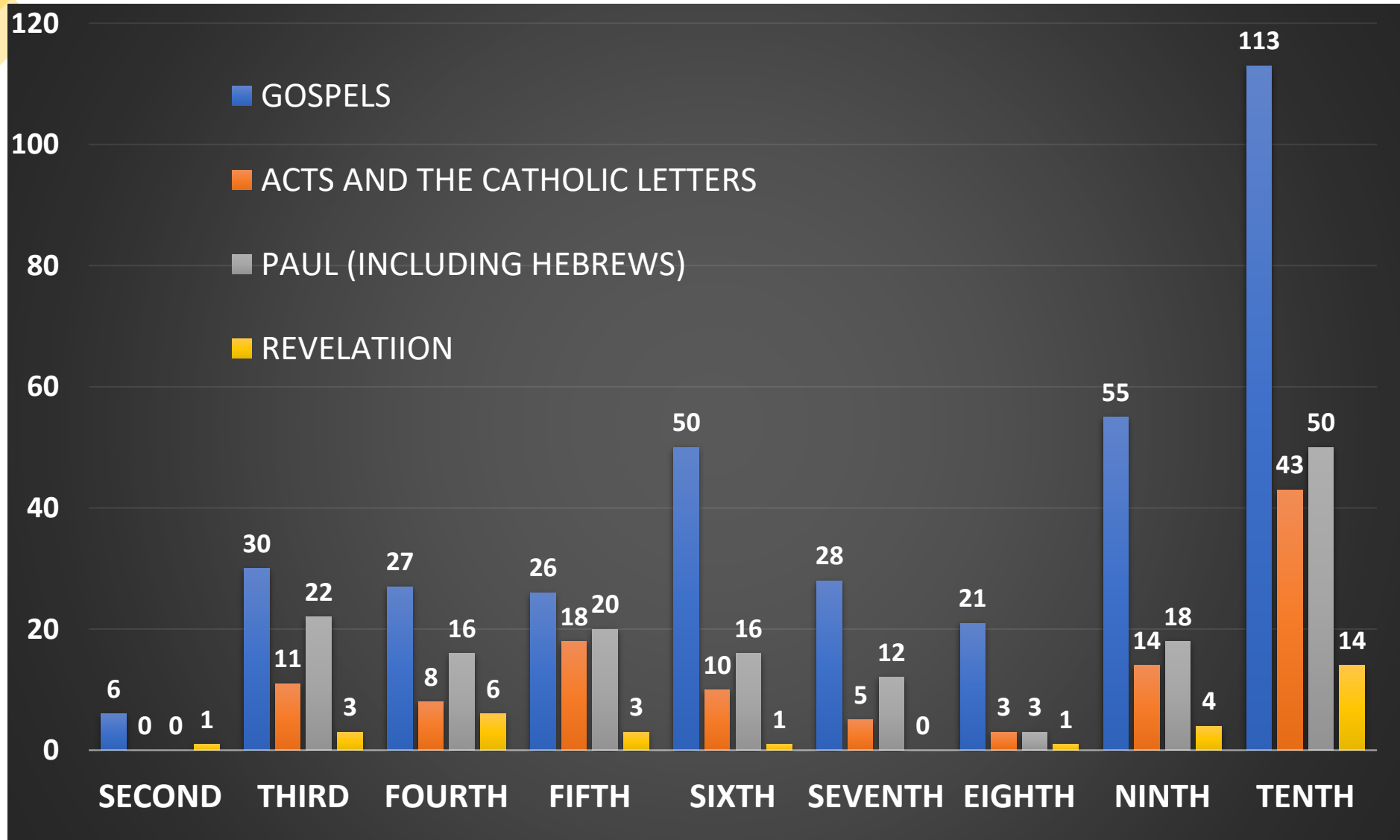
RIGHTEOUNESS EVEN
OF GOD THROUGH FAITH (IN) JESUS
CHRIST TO ALL WHO (UPON ALL WHO)
BELIEVE NOT
FOR IS DIFFERENCE
ALL BECAUSE S-



GREEK NT MANUSCRIPTS BY CENTURY

Reproduced from: Jacob W. Peterson, "Math Myths: How Many Manuscripts We Have and Why More Isn't Always Better," in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 62.

GREEK NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPT CONTENT BY CENTURY



Jacob W. Peterson, "Math Myths: How Many Manuscripts We Have and Why More Isn't Always Better," in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 65.

GREEK NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL EVIDENCE COMPARES FAVORABLY WITH OTHER ANCIENT WORKS

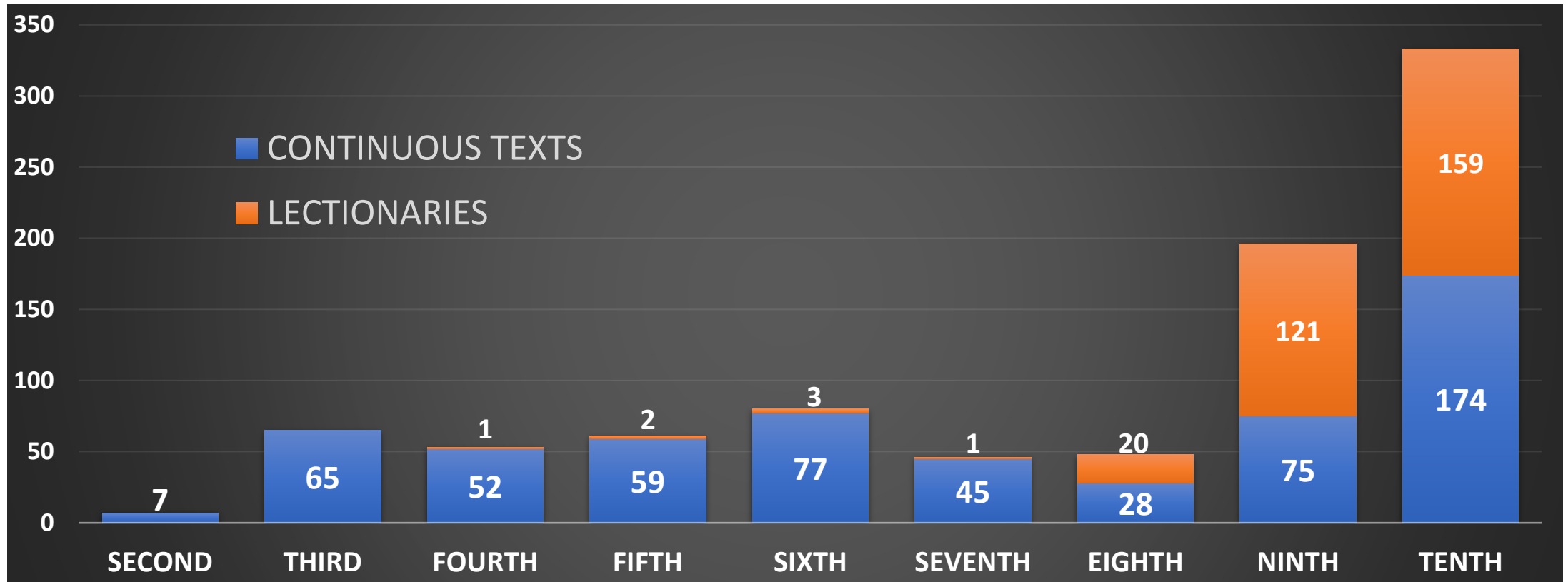
Author	Work	Date Written	Earliest MSS	Time Gap	Old #	New
Herodotus	History	480–425 BC	10th century	1,350	8	109
Caesar	Gallic Wars	100-44 BC	9th century	950	10	251
Livy	History of Rome	59 BC–AD 17	Early 5th century	400	1 Partial, 19 copies	150
Tacitus	Annals	AD 100	1st half: 850, 2nd: 1050 (AD 1100)	750–950	20	2 + 31 15 th C
Pliny, the Elder	Natural History	AD 49–79	5th c fragment: 1; Rem. 14–15th C	400 (750)	7	200
NT		AD 50–100	AD 130 (or less)	40	5,366	5,795

These statistics are from <https://www.equip.org/article/the-bibliographical-test-updated/>, a reposting of an article first published as: Clay Jones, “The Bibliographical Test Updated,” *Christian Research Journal* 35, no. 3 (2012): 32–37. To facilitate a fair comparison and for brevity, this table excludes data about other works which Jones provides. None of those entries has manuscripts closer to work’s date or more number than the New Testament. The discussion in the following led this presenter to the data: James B. Prothro, “Myths about Classical Literature: Responsibly Comparing the New Testament to Ancient Works,” in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 75.

SUMMING UP THE COMPARATIVE ARGUMENT

“The data that emerge in the comparative argument is impressive for the New Testament’s textual basis. No matter how the numbers are updated or changed for classics, the New Testament still has more attestation, better attestation, and better early attestation. Indeed, noted classicist Giorgio Pasquali has said as much of the New Testament: “No other Greek text is handed down so richly and credibly.” This cannot itself prove that we have exactly what the New Testament authors wrote down, but it does show that the New Testament scholar has better material to work with than scholars of standard classical works. If one has any confidence in our methods of analyzing the text of the New Testament in so many manuscripts (and I think one should!), the data in the comparative argument are an excellent step in engendering confidence in the New Testament.”

James B. Prothro, [“Myths about Classical Literature: Responsibly Comparing the New Testament to Ancient Works,”](#) in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 86.



GREEK NT MANUSCRIPTS BY CENTURY

Reproduced from: Jacob W. Peterson, "Math Myths: How Many Manuscripts We Have and Why More Isn't Always Better," in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 62.

WHY AREN'T THERE MORE MANUSCRIPTS AND OLDER ONES?

- Remember the text is often older than the manuscript's date.
- Destruction due to use over time.
- Destruction due to climate.
- Destruction due to other disasters.
- Destruction to avoid corruption.
- Destruction due to persecution.
 - Edict of Diocletian in 303 A.D.



“If God creates a miraculous spermatozoon in the body of a virgin, it does not proceed to break any laws. The laws at once take it over. Nature is ready. Pregnancy follows, according to all the normal laws, and nine months later a child is born. ... Miraculous wine will intoxicate, miraculous conception will lead to pregnancy, inspired books will suffer all the ordinary processes of textual corruption, miraculous bread will be digested. The divine art of miracle is not an art of suspending the pattern to which events conform but of feeding new events into that pattern.”

C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*, ch. 8, pg 81.

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- The quality, quantity, and proximity to the date of the original compositions, especially when compared to other historical documents from the same period, inspire great confidence in the reliability of the New Testament text.



IS THE TEXT OF
THE NEW
TESTAMENT
RELIABLE?



CONCLUSION

“This brings us to the final point, which is the importance of understanding what manuscripts can and cannot do. In the negative, manuscripts alone cannot prove the truth of Christianity. What manuscripts can do is provide evidence of a reliable text. A reliable text attested by thousands of manuscripts is just that: a reliable *text*. *But a reliable text is not a guarantee of reliable content. Just as a reliable text of Thucydides’s History of the Peloponnesian War still requires interpretation and verification to assess its historicity, so does the New Testament. Having a reliable enough text is undoubtedly important, because without it arguing for the accuracy of its material would be impossible. Yet providing arguments for the trustworthiness of a text’s actual claims is not something with which textual criticism can help. Those types of important arguments must come from other fields of inquiry.*”

QUESTIONS?

