

Inspiration and Providence (2): The Revelation, Transmission, Integrity, and Canonicity of Scripture

Isaiah 55:10-11

Introduction

1. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – Scripture is the irreplaceable necessity for right living with God. It is from Him, and for our profitability in serving Him.
 - a. Scripture – *graphē* – “a document, i.e. holy Writ” (STRONG)
 - i. “a writing, thing written” (THAYER)
 - b. God’s chosen method of preserved communication is the written word – **Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:15 (“epistle”); 2 Peter 3:16**
 2. The writing of Scripture is the way God has chosen to save man – **2 Timothy 3:15; John 20:30-31**
 3. Given the importance of the written will of God, a legitimate question and investigation arises as to the reliability and integrity of what we possess and believe to be the inspired Scriptures which completely reveal the will of God.
 - a. Is the Bible (collection of books) the inspired and infallible word of God?
 - b. Is what we have in our possession what God intended for us to have?
 4. Perhaps the two most fundamental topics to be considered when seeking to understand the integrity of the Bible as the final, complete revelation of God’s will are the concepts of inspiration and providence.
 - a. **Inspiration** – that God revealed His will using men through the written word with complete control over the message, and the very words used to convey that message.
 - b. **Providence** – that God, as both omnipotent and omniscient, as well as having the greatest interest in the eternal welfare of mankind, was able by His protective care to reveal and preserve His will through the written word to this day, and for the rest of time.
 5. **Isaiah 55:10-11** – God’s word is sent out by Him (truly an extension of Him) to accomplish His will.
 - a. This cannot be thwarted by the obstinacy of man.
 - b. This cannot be thwarted by time and chance.
 - c. If it is God’s word by which He intends to accomplish His will, then it is only logical that His word, one way or another, would stand the test of time and be preserved throughout the ages to accomplish its stated purpose.
 - d. **This does not provide room for corruption of the Bible, or missing/false books. If God is who He says He is, then His word must be what He says it is, and it must be preserved today – there is evidence for this as being so.**
- I. Providence
- A. What is providence?
 - a. **Providence** – from Latin *providentia*, from *providere* ‘foresee, attend to’ (New Oxford American Dictionary)
 - i. Pro – before; videre – to see
 - ii. To see before.

- iii. “the protective care of God or of nature as a spiritual power; timely preparation for future eventualities” (ibid.)
- iv. New Testament – **Acts 24:2** – Tertullus speaking of Felix the governor in making his accusation against Paul.
 - 1. **“providence” (KJV, ASV, NASB)**
 - 2. *Pronoia* (2x) – forethought, i.e. provident care or supply (STRONG); thoughtful planning to meet a need, forethought, foresight, providence (BDAG)
 - a. **“make no provision (*pronoia*) for the flesh” (Romans 13:14)**
 - 3. Also – *pronoēō* (3x) – to consider in advance, i.e. look out for beforehand (actively, by way of maintenance for others; middle voice by way of circumspection for oneself) (STRONG)
 - a. **“Have regard (*pronoēō*) for good things in the sight of all men.” (Romans 12:17)**
 - b. **“providing (*pronoēō*) honorable things” (2 Corinthians 8:21).**
 - c. **“provide (*pronoēō*) for his own” (1 Timothy 5:8)**
- v. “When applied to God, the word means His foresight and forethought in creating the universe whereby He could be in control and carry out His purpose to its ultimate consummation.” (Hailey, Homer, *Prayer and Providence*, 115)
 - 1. It does not violate free will.
 - 2. It presupposes God’s creation of the universe, and His government in and over what He created – **cf. Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:2-3**
- b. Creation is an expression of God’s will – **Psalm 33:6, 9**
 - i. Word – vehicle of thought – creation was in the mind of God before the beginning, and its existence is the materialization of that will.
 - ii. **Laws of nature** – divinely created laws designed with forethought for God’s complete control over them and use to further His causes.
 - 1. Not just in the suspension of them – miracles.
 - 2. **But through the use of them.**
 - iii. **Mankind** – part of God’s creation, and therefore also subject to His use to carry out His will.
 - 1. Difference – free-will cannot be violated.
 - 2. “His sovereignty over these is exercised by moral suasion through moral government.” (Hailey, Homer, *Prayer and Providence*, 116)
 - 3. **Consideration regarding the transmission and protection of God’s word.**

- c. As an expression of God’s will, creation has purpose:
 - i. **Psalm 19:1** – declare His glory.
 - ii. **Genesis 1:27; Ecclesiastes 7:29; 12:13** – to bring/declare God’s glory by bearing His image, and abiding by His will.
 - 1. **Romans 3:23** – fell short of His glory.
 - 2. Eternal purpose of redemption – **Ephesians 3:8-12**
 - a. Revealed through writing – **Ephesians 3:3-4**
 - b. Ages to come – **Ephesians 2:7**
 - c. **Conclusion – Perpetuation of the written word under the provident care of God, even using mankind – a part of His creation.**
- B. The Correlation of Divine Revelation and Divine Providence
 - a. **2 Timothy 3:15; John 20:30-31; 2 Peter 3:16** – God’s decision to fully reveal Himself, His will, and His plan of redemption through the written word involves some “conclusions from which necessary antecedent inferences and deductions must be drawn:” (Wallace Jr., Foy E., *A Review of the New Versions*, 32)
 - i. “First, that God, the Creator, would communicate by revelation with man his creature”
 - ii. “second, that the record of the stages in the development of this revelation be made”
 - iii. “third, that this record of revelation was made by its original inspired recipients, consisting of a collection of ‘the holy scriptures’”
 - iv. “fourth, that the means and the methods for the record of revelation were providentially provided.” (ibid.)
 - b. This correlation of the divine revelation with the divine provision and preservation of it is evident throughout scripture:
 - i. **Psalm 119:89** – God’s word is settled and cannot be altered.
 - ii. **Isaiah 55:10-11** – As God’s word is sent forth it cannot be overtaken by an opposing force of any kind – it will accomplish.
 - iii. **Matthew 24:35** – God’s word will stand through time and eternity.
 - iv. **1 Corinthians 10:11** – the writings God provides for instruction will stand the test of time. (Speaking of OT canon of scripture preserved through the ages for the availability of ALL in the last dispensation – including us.)
 - v. **1 Peter 1:24-25** – not only the OT word of God, but the gospel (NT) is eternal, and will by no means fade away.
 - vi. **1 Corinthians 13:9-10** – the “perfect” or entire/complete revelation of God would come according to God’s will.
 - vii. **Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:3** – such revelation was once for all delivered.

- c. The only question that remains is whether God could do what He said He would do, and whether He did – **Numbers 23:19; Psalm 77:8; Hebrews 6:13-18**

II. Revelation and Confirmation

- A. The Biblical, and therefore most important, standard of determining the authenticity of a message lies with a **twofold supply of God (these are not what man provides but observes)** – Revelation and confirmation.
 - a. This is what precedes the provident care of the message and helps to identify to a degree how it is that God used men by moral suasion to perpetuate His word, both OT and NT, throughout time.
 - b. Throughout all revelation there has been the corresponding confirmation.
 - c. Before understanding and appreciating the providence of God in the transmission, integrity, and canonicity of scripture we must understand its very birth.
 - i. It is this process revealed in the Bible that led to the weighty estimation of these writings.
 - ii. They were venerated, and their esteem was that of divine authority for a reason.
 - d. Divine revelation is confirmed through divine signification – miracles.
- B. Old Testament and Jesus
 - a. Moses appealed to the scenes of Egypt and Sinai as confirmation of what had been revealed – **Deuteronomy 4:32-36**
 - i. Formula followed w/ 10 commandments – **Exodus 20:1-2**
 - b. The divine test for the prophet – **Ezekiel 2:5; 33:33; Jeremiah 28:9** – when He says something will come to pass and it does you know God speaks through Him.
 - c. “For Christians, however, it suffices that the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament was accepted as divinely authoritative by our Lord and his apostles.” (Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)
 - d. “We may, however, follow our Lord, who placed the *imprimatur* of His infallible authority upon the books of the Old Testament.” (E.J. Young, “The Canon of the Old Testament,” in *Revelation and the Bible*, 168) (Archer, Gleason L., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 85)
 - i. **Imprimatur** – from Latin, ‘let it be printed’, from the verb imprimere
 - ii. “a person's acceptance or guarantee that something is of a good standard” (New Oxford American Dictionary)
 - iii. “an official license by the Roman Catholic Church to print an ecclesiastical or religious book” (ibid.)
 - 1. Above quote suggesting that no church made scripture legitimate, but Jesus certainly placed His stamp of authenticity on it.

2. Even then, its authenticity as being an inspired and authoritative message of God preceded Jesus' coming in the flesh.
- e. Jesus' view of the OT:
 - i. **John 10:35** – cannot be broken.
 - ii. **Luke 24:44** – must be fulfilled.
 - iii. **Matthew 22:29** – ignorance generates error.
 - iv. As He inspired Paul to write – **2 Timothy 3:16** – is given by inspiration of God.
 - f. Jesus' references to OT:
 - i. **Matthew 19:4** – Creation, Adam and Eve.
 - ii. **Matthew 23:35** – Abel killed by Cain; Zechariah's death (**2 Chronicles 24:20-21**)
 - iii. **Luke 17:27** – Flood during Noah's time.
 - iv. **Luke 20:37** – God speaking to Moses through the burning bush.
 - v. **Matthew 12:40** – Jonah swallowed by a fish.
 - vi. **Matthew 12:42** – Queen of Sheba visiting Solomon (**1 Kings 10:1-13**)
 - vii. **Matthew 24:15** – Daniel's prophecies. (Last part of Daniel – most disputed.)
 - g. "Jesus is not only the key to the divine nature of the Old Testament, He is also the key to the extent of the Old Testament. The 'extent' of the Old Testament refers to the question of which books belong in it." (Geisler, Norman L., *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament*, 15)
 - i. **Luke 24:44** – law, prophets, psalms = entire OT as we know it.
 - ii. "The Jewish Old Testament at the time of Christ consisted of the same thirty-nine books as the English Old Testament which Jesus accepted." (ibid.)
 - iii. Concerning the Apocrypha (11 books written between 200 B.C. and the time of Christ):
 1. Jews who were appointed by God to keep the OT never included them (**cf. Romans 3:2**).
 2. Jesus never quoted from them.
 - iv. Jesus quoted from 24 of 39 Old Testament books.
 - v. The New Testament quotes from every Old Testament book except Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.
 1. These books were contained within the Old Testament at the time of Jesus – not disputed.
- C. New Testament and Jesus
- a. "he [Jesus] who accredited the Old Testament retrospectively accredited the New Testament prospectively." (Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)

- b. The Hebrew writer reveals the process of revelation and confirmation – **Hebrews 2:1-4** – the evidence is conclusive to the degree of warning concerning Divine judgment of the neglect of such a word.
- i. **(vv. 1-2)** – sets the contrast between the OT and NT, the NT being greater – and the OT confirmation as the inspired word of God is solid.
 - ii. **(v. 3a)** – great salvation – the gospel.
 - iii. **(v. 3b)** – first spoken by Jesus.
 - iv. **(v. 3c)** – confirmed by His disciples/apostles (**cf. Acts 1:21-22; 4:13**)
 - v. **(v. 4)** – confirmed by God’s witness of miracles.
 1. **Signs** – emphasis on what the event indicates to those who witness it.
 2. **Wonders** – emphasis on the effect the event has on those who witness it.
 3. **Miracles** – emphasis on the event itself, namely, its nature, and therefore its origin – supernatural/God.
 4. **Gifts of the Holy Spirit** – emphasis on the signs, wonders, and miracles performed through men by the Holy Spirit for the revelation and confirmation of the word.
- c. Jesus’ prospective accreditation of the New Testament:
- i. Apostles and prophets lined up with the Cornerstone Jesus – **Ephesians 2:20; 3:3-5**
 - ii. Apostles and prophets continuing what Jesus began to do and teach – **Acts 1:1** – Christ with them – **Matthew 28:20**
 - iii. **John 14:16-18** – Jesus promised another Divine Helper to take His place – Holy Spirit of truth.
 - iv. **John 14:25-26** – the Helper, HS would teach ALL things, and bring to remembrance.
 - v. **John 15:26-27** – with the apostles, the Holy Spirit would bear witness of Jesus.
 - vi. **John 16:12-15** – the Helper, HS would guide into ALL truth, speaking the things of Jesus.
- d. The revelation and confirmation of the New Testament of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit:
- i. **Luke 24:46-49** – to preach the gospel – repentance and remission of sins – with Helper that was promised.
 - ii. **Mark 16:15-18** – to preach the gospel, and signs would follow, confirming the message as from God.
 - iii. **Matthew 28:18-20** – going with the authority of Jesus to preach the gospel, Christ is with them. (**cf. Matthew 16:19** – given keys, authority)
 - iv. The miraculous events through these men confirmed that their words were the words of God – **2 Corinthians 12:12**

- v. Such would also confirm their written words as being Holy Scripture – **1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 2 Peter 3:16**
 - vi. These written words were to be circulated and read as divine revelation – **Colossians 4:16**
 - e. **First century Christians had indisputable miraculous evidence that the writings of these men were the Holy Scripture of God.**
 - i. Therefore, they would have copied and distributed so they all would have God’s word.
 - ii. This led, by the guidance of God’s providence, to the preserved New Testament we have today.
- III. The Development of the Canon
- A. What is the canon?
- a. **Galatians 6:16** – **“rule”** – *kanōn* – from *κάνη kanē* (a straight reed, i.e. rod) (STRONG)
 - i. *kanē* (root of *kanōn*) – where we get our word “cane.”
 - ii. “(1) a rod or straight piece of rounded wood to which any thing is fastened to keep it straight...(1A1) a measuring rod, rule” (THAYER)
 - 1. **“sphere”** (**2 Corinthians 10:13, 15, 16**) – **“limits of the sphere which God appointed us”** – “by implication, a boundary, i.e. (figuratively) a sphere (of activity)” (STRONG)
 - iii. “figuratively, as a measure of assessment of a prescribed norm of action or duty standard, rule, principle” (Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament)
 - 1. **Galatians 6:11-15** – not keeping the Old Law (circumcision), but living by faith in Christ – **“a new creation”**
 - b. **Also, used in reference to an index or list** – “this sense is probably derived from the series of marks on a measuring rod.” (Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)
 - i. The list of books representing the rule or standard of faith – inspired books of God – Holy Scripture.
 - ii. NOTE: Bible is not really a book, but a library of 66 books (39 OT, 27 NT).
 - iii. **Distinction between “canonicity” of a book and its “authority”** – Canonicity (existing as a part of the recognized list of books inspired of God) is preceded by a recognition of the inherent authority of the book – “Both logically and historically, authority precedes canonicity.” (Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)
 - 1. **Galatians grows up to the crescendo of alluding to a “rule” or *kanōn* according to which one must walk to**

receive God's favor – **Galatians 6:16** – the **"rule"** Paul ends the epistle noting is being established throughout based on the precedent of Paul's apostleship and valid gospel.

- a. NOTE: Why is Paul's gospel the rule, and not the Judaizing teacher's gospel? Is chosen by preference, or opinion? No.
 - b. **Galatians 1:1, 8, 11-12** – apostle through God's authority, preached true gospel (verbal), by revelation not man.
 - c. **Galatians 3:1-5** – gospel originally preached (**"hearing of faith"** not **"works of the law"**) as being from the Spirit was not based on works of the Law, their new birth not by works, miracles among them not associated with works message (did not confirm Judaizing message, but the one Paul preached.).
 - d. **Galatians 6:11, 15-16** – Paul's message from the beginning was about a new creation through faith in Christ, not works of the Law – that is the *kanōn*. (Not in the sense of a list of books.)
2. Word and epistle – **2 Thessalonians 2:15** – verbal preceded writing – writing in part tested by prior oral teaching (unity). (**1 Thessalonians 2:13**)
 - a. 1st Century pattern – church established by preaching, epistles written for instruction.
 3. **1 John 4:1, 5-6** (they vs us – false teachers vs apostles); **1 Thessalonians 5:19-22** – disciples to test.
 4. **Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 3:15-16** – had a standard to look to – the NT writings/teachings are confirmed in this way (in part).
 5. Recognizing authority – **Luke 20:1-8** – John worked no miracles (**cf. John 10:41**) but Jesus held them responsible for recognizing and submitting to the apparent authority.
 - a. **This precedes canonicity.**
 - b. "The early Christians were not exceptionally intelligent people, but they did have the capacity to recognize divine authority when they saw it." (Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)
 - c. **Ephesians 5:17; Matthew 7:7-8** – we are to understand what God's will is, and if we seek to understand we will.

B. Early Evidence Within the New Testament

- a. Written word God's chosen method of saving man – **2 Timothy 3:15;**
John 20:30-31; etc. – the record can be perpetuated.
 - i. These inspired writings were understood as God's will.
 - ii. When such a writing was verified to be inspired it carried immense weight, and understandably was considered binding by God, shared, and read among brethren.
 - iii. EX: Jerusalem counsel concerning Judaizing teachers, and truth being defended – **Acts 15:23, 28-31; 16:4-5**
 - 1. Letter written – apostles, Holy Spirit
 - 2. Delivered and read – also spread – IMPLIED COPYING.
 - b. Paul wrote down the mystery by inspiration – **Ephesians 3:3-5**
 - i. **(v. 5)** – implies similar written records of divine revelation from other inspired men.
 - ii. **Ephesians 2:19-20** – foundation of **“apostles and prophets.”**
 - c. Paul's writing was understood to be of divine origin – **1 Corinthians 14:37**
 - i. This was consistently taught everywhere by Paul – **1 Corinthians 4:14, 17**
 - ii. There were known epistles of Paul understood as scripture – **2 Peter 3:15-16**
 - 1. **2 Corinthians 7:8** – referring to 1 Corinthians.
 - 2. **2 Corinthians 10:8-11** – referring at least to 1 Corinthians.
 - 3. Were to be read authoritatively – **1 Thessalonians 5:27; 2 Thessalonians 3:14**
 - iii. Paul commanded sharing and circulation – **Colossians 4:16**
 - d. Paul endorsed Luke's gospel – **1 Timothy 5:18** – quotation – **Luke 10:7**
 - e. Luke referred to accounts of Christ's ministry prior to his – **Luke 1:1-4**
 - i. There is evidence which leads many to believe that Luke used Mark's gospel as a resource.
 - f. Peter alluded to his previous epistle – **2 Peter 3:1-2** – placed on plane with authority of other apostles and prophets.
 - g. This is first century evidence of a growing collection of letters/books which come from God through inspired men and are understood and accepted on a public scale to be the authoritative word of God.
 - i. And pointed forward to a completed revelation – **1 Corinthians 13:10**
- C. Evidence Prior to Church Councils
- a. “The further use of the word [canon] in connection with the decisions of church councils must not mislead one into thinking that the NT canon is an ecclesiastical creation.” (Guthrie, D., *The Canon of the New Testament*, The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, 732)
 - i. “Long before the apostolic letters were recognized as elements in a canonical collection, they were recognized as authoritative by most of those for whom they were written. As we said before,

- authority is the necessary precedent of canonicity.” (Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)
- ii. “The New Testament did not make the Church; there was a Church before there was a New Testament. And ‘the Church assuredly did not make the New Testament; the two grew up together.’ Yet when the New Testament came into being, the Church recognized in it her foundation documents, the title deeds of her existence and purpose.” (Bruce, F.F., *The Spreading Flame*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)
 - iii. **First councils in AD 393, and 397** – “what these councils did was not to impose something new upon the Christian communities but to codify what was already the general practice of those communities.” (Bruce, F.F., *The New Testament Documents*, e-book, Intervarsity Press, 2018)
 - iv. **I.e. prior to any church council to officially establish a list of books comprising the canon of Scripture these books were long understood to be God’s authoritative word – i.e. ultimately since they were written in the 1st century by the inspired men.**
- b. **Gospels** – Not long after the writing of John (AD 90) the 4 gospels appear to have been collected into one volume – “The Gospel,” with each one bearing the words “According to...”
 - c. **Paul’s Epistles** – Similarly, within the same time were the writings of Paul compiled into a volume titled, “The Apostle.” Each epistle distinguished with, “To the...(Romans),” or “First to the Corinthians,” etc.
 - d. **Other** – Letters of the other apostles and “apostolic men,” as well as Revelation (John) “were for similar reasons recognized to bear divine authority.” (Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)
 - i. **These were referred to as “catholic epistles”** – in the sense of universal or general.
 - e. **Efforts to catalogue the authorized books of inspiration came from:**
 - i. **The need to combat heresy, and the mutilation (Marcion) of authoritative books.**
 - ii. **Diocletian persecution (AD 303)** – Roman emperor Diocletian made a decree that all Christians were to turn their copies of the Scripture in to be burned.
 1. **What books must be refused to be handed over.**
 - f. **Marcion (fl. AD 140)** – earliest writer to suggest a formal list of books as authoritative.
 - i. **Heretic (Marcionites)** – believed the OT was to be completely rejected (contrary to **Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11**).
 - ii. Accepted only Paul as a faithful apostle – even took out OT references from his epistles.

- iii. **Suggested list – expurgated edition of Luke, 10 Pauline epistles (excluding Timothy and Titus).**
 - 1. NOTE: His grounds for rejecting the other books shows their existence, his knowledge of them, as well as widespread knowledge and use of them.
- iv. **Churches and Christians saw the necessity of more carefully defining the canon to counteract his heretical efforts.**
- g. **Irenaeus (fl. AD 180)** – brought up at the feet of Polycarp, the disciple of John.
 - i. **Attested books in writings** – fourfold Gospel, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 1 Peter, 1 John, and Revelation.
- h. **Muratorian fragment (no later than AD 170)** – “called the Muratorian fragment, after the antiquarian, Cardinal L. A. Muratori, who discovered it in manuscript and published it in 1740.” (Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)
 - i. Mutilated at the beginning.
 - ii. Mentions Luke as “third gospel” (implying Matthew and Mark), John, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Jude, 1 and 2 John, Revelation.
 - 1. Apocryphal book – Shepherd of Hermas – said to be worthy to read, but not to be included among apostolic writings.
- i. **Tertullian (AD 160-240)** – no list, but writings contain statements concerning the 4 gospels, Paul’s epistles (13) and all other books EXCEPT 2 Peter, James, 2 and 3 John.
- j. **Clement of Alexandria (AD 165-220)** – “we find in his extant writings that he names and quotes from every book in the New Testament except Philemon, James, 2 Peter and 3 John.” (McGarvey, J.W., *Evidences of Christianity*, 61)
- k. **Origen (AD 185-254)** – names all the New Testament books as we now have them in a homily (sermon) on the book of Joshua.
 - i. “After describing the fall of Jericho, when the trumpets were blown by the priests, he says: ‘So, too, our Lord, whose advent was typified by the son of Nun, when he came, sent his apostles, bearing well-wrought trumpets. Matthew first sounded the priestly trumpet in his Gospel. Mark also, Luke and John, each gave forth a strain on their priestly trumpets. Peter, moreover, sounded loudly on the two-fold trumpet of his Epistles; and so also James and Jude. Still the number is incomplete, and John gives forth the trumpet-sound in his Epistles and Apocalypse; and Luke, while describing the Acts of the Apostles. Lastly, however,

came he who said, 'I think that God hath set forth us Apostles last of all,' and, thundering on the fourteen trumpets of his Epistles, threw down even to the ground the walls of Jericho, that is to say, all the instruments of idolatry and the doctrines of philosophers." (*Homily on Joshua vii. 1*, quoted and translated by Westcott, *Canon of New Testament*, 358) (McGarvey, J.W., *Evidences of Christianity*, 57)

1. Hebrews being considered the 14th epistle of Paul in that particular quote – actually believed the thoughts were Paul's, but an unknown other wrote it.
 - l. **Eusebius (AD 270-340)** – "Eusebius, early in the fourth century, mentions all the books of the New Testament as generally acknowledged except James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John. These, he says, were still disputed by some Christians, but recognized by the majority." (Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)
 - m. **Athanasius (AD 326-373)** – compiled a list of all 27 New Testament books in a letter to disciples under his oversight for the purpose of guarding them from deceptive books.
 - i. "These are the fountains of salvation, that he who thirsts may be satisfied with the oracles contained in them: in these alone the doctrine of religion is taught: let no one add to them or take anything from them." (Lardner's *Credibility*, iv., 282-284) (McGarvey, J.W., *Evidences of Christianity*, 53-54)
 - ii. "It must not, however, be supposed that in this Easter letter Athanasius was imposing an alien opinion upon his churches. The letter rather presents a clarification of an established usage." (Guthrie, D., *The Canon of the New Testament*, The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, 739)
 - n. "Is it credible that all of these were deceived, or that they all, in widely separated parts of the world, conspired together to impose upon their fellow-men as apostolic, books which their fellow-men must have known to be of recent origin? If it is not, then the evidence from catalogues alone is credible proof that all of the New Testament books originated in the days of the Apostles." (McGarvey, J.W., *Evidences of Christianity*, 66)
- D. What did the church councils do?
- a. **Two African Synods** – Hippo (AD 393) and Carthage (AD 397) – lists all 27 New Testament books.
 - b. Concerning such councils – "It did not happen, in fact, until nearly three centuries of church usage had virtually fixed the canon. In spite of the variety of churches, subjected as they were to different influences and each exercising independent judgment regarding the separate books, the area of common agreement was remarkable." (Guthrie, D., *The Canon of the New Testament*, The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, 740)

- c. “What is particularly important to notice is that the New Testament canon was not demarcated by the arbitrary decree of any Church Council...it did not confer upon [the books] any authority which they did not already possess, but simply recorded their previously established canonicity.” (Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)
- d. Concerning some books disputed early on – “The fact that the early church questioned some of these books indicates the seriousness with which this question was considered.” (Mattox, F.W., *The Eternal Kingdom*, 100)
- E. What about the apocryphal books?
 - a. **These are books that failed in genuine marks of inspiration, and their character was vastly different than the inspired books.**
 - b. **Apocryphal** – of doubtful authenticity, although widely circulated as being true. (New Oxford American Dictionary)
 - i. Speaking of early Christians – “that they judged wisely in distinguishing the canonical writings from the uncanonical will be apparent to anyone who compares the New Testament with other early Christian literature.” (Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)
 - c. “Apocryphal works...were composed in the first four centuries, in the interest of heresies or for the satisfaction of idle curiosity, and sent forth under the name of an apostle or other eminent person. These apocrypha...were merely designed either to fill chasms in the history of Jesus and the apostles by fictitious stories, or to glorify Christianity by vaticinia post eventum, in the way of pious fraud at that time freely allowed.” (Schaff, Philip, *History of the Christian Church (8 Vols.)*, e-book, Olive Tree, 2017)

IV. The Transmission of the New Testament

A. Consequences of Materials

- a. Works of antiquity owed their perpetuation to the interest and corresponding diligence of their readers.
 - i. Prior to modern technology the necessary means of a work’s reach geographically and through time was copying by hand.
 - ii. Due to human fallibility, this method provided for various negative consequences.
 - iii. In addition to human fallibility is the problem of material limitation – i.e. the limitation, especially regarding durability, of materials used to make copies.
- b. Various materials were used for writing in general, and copying down scripture:
 - i. Clay Tablets, Stone, Bones, Wood, Leather, Metal, Potsherds, Papyrus, Parchment

- ii. Some of these materials are extremely durable, and provide for the preservation of originals – clay, stone, metal.
 - 1. Moabite Stone – Mesha, king of Moab – 850 B.C. – to tell of his conquests.
 - 2. Sennacherib’s Prism – Sennacherib – Assyrian king (704-681 B.C.)
 - 3. Many other ancient inscriptions chronicling history among other things are discovered in archeological remains.
- c. The writing of the New Testament:
 - i. **3 John 13; 2 John 12** – ink, pen, and paper.
 - 1. *chartēs* – ““a sheet of paper made of strips of papyrus” (whence Eng., “paper”), Eng., “chart,” “charter,” etc.” (VINE)
 - 2. “The papyrus reed grew in ancient times in great profusion in the Nile and was used as a material for writing.... The pith of the stem of the plant was cut into thin strips, placed side by side to form a sheath. Another layer was laid upon this at right angles to it. The two layers were united by moisture and pressure and frequently with the addition of glue. The sheets, after being dried and polished, were ready for use.” (VINE)
 - a. Pieces glued together and rolled in a scroll.
 - 3. This material was convenient, but not durable – “Only in such conditions as are provided by the dry sands of Egypt and the volcanic ash of Herculaneum have papyrus documents been preserved; in humid climates they soon rotted away.” (Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)
 - ii. **2 Timothy 4:13** – parchments – perhaps for Paul to write on, or scripture for his own use.
 - 1. *Membrana* – Latin origin (“membrane”) (STRONG)
 - 2. “The writing material was prepared from the skin of the sheep or goat. The skins were first soaked in lime for the purpose of removing the hair, and then shaved, washed, dried, stretched and ground or smoothed with fine chalk or lime and pumice stone. The finest kind is called “vellum,” and is made from the skins of calves or kids.” (VINE)
 - 3. More durable than papyrus but more expensive – “In New Testament times, parchment, being more durable and more costly than papyrus, was used chiefly for documents of greater value, or for such as were constantly in use and were, therefore, exposed to greater wear and tear.”

(Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)

d. Autographs

i. **Autograph** – “from Greek *autographon*, neuter of *autographos* ‘written with one’s own hand’, from *autos* ‘self’ + *graphos* ‘written’.” (New Oxford American Dictionary)

1. Paul dictated his letters and used an amanuensis – **Romans 16:22** – here explicitly stated.

a. **Amanuensis** – “a literary or artistic assistant, in particular one who takes dictation or copies manuscripts.” (New Oxford American Dictionary)

b. **1 Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:18; Philemon 19** – implied that previous writing was dictated.

c. Paul would dictate, likely review to make certain of what was written, then sign off – **2 Thessalonians 3:17**

2. **Galatians 6:11** – perhaps the entire epistle was written by Paul’s hand.

ii. As was most common, the documents that comprise the New Testament writing were composed on papyrus.

1. Due to the frailty of the material, we do not have any of the originals.

2. HOWEVER, SUCH AN IMPORTANT DOCUMENT WOULD HAVE IMMEDIATELY DRAWN GREAT INTEREST REQUIRING THE MAKING OF COPIES. (**cf. 1 Corinthians 14:37** – the commandments of the Lord)

e. Copies

i. **Colossians 4:16** – such sharing of epistles certainly would have included copies being made.

1. The Colossians would not have been finished with their epistle after one read anymore than we are finished with our Bible.

2. Same with Laodicea.

ii. **EXAMPLE – Polycarp of Smyrna to the Philippians (110-140 AD)**

1. “The letters of Ignatius which were sent to us by him, and others as many as we had by us, we send unto you, according as ye gave charge;” (Polycarp 13:2) (THE EPISTLE OF POLYCARP, Translated by J.B. Lightfoot) (<https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/polycarp-lightfoot.html>)

2. “In this way we believe the letters of the Apostles were circulated. Each congregation would hear that a letter was received by a certain church and they in turn would ask for a copy. After receiving it, they in turn would send copies to

others who requested them. There is no reason to doubt that this applied to all of the books of the New Testament.” (Mattox, F.W., *The Eternal Kingdom*, 98)

- f. Copies of Copies – ultimately, not even immediate copies of the originals would have endured.
 - i. This is true for all writings of antiquity.
 - ii. No originals are extant.
 - iii. Only copies of copies.

B. Integrity – A Comparison

- a. Integrity – “(2) the state of being whole and undivided” (New Oxford American Dictionary)
- b. “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 dreams of questioning. And if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt. It is a curious fact that historians have often been much readier to trust the New Testament records than have many theologians. Somehow or other, there are people who regard a ‘sacred book’ as *ipso facto* under suspicion, and demand much more corroborative evidence for such a work than they would for an ordinary secular or pagan writing. From the viewpoint of the historian, the same standards must be applied to both. But we do not quarrel with those who want more evidence for the New Testament than for other writings — firstly, because the universal claims which the New Testament makes upon mankind are so absolute, and the character and works of its chief Figure so unparalleled, that we want to be as sure of its truth as we possibly can; and secondly, because in point of fact there is much more evidence for the New Testament than for other ancient writings of comparable date.” (Bruce, F.F., *New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, e-book, Intervarsity Press (IVP) – UK, 2018)

c. The New Testament Compared to Other Works of Antiquity

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Approximate Time Between Original and Earliest Extant Copy	Number of Manuscripts
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	900 A.D.	1000 years	10
Plato	427-347 B.C.	900 A.D.	1200 years	7
Tacitus	100 A.D.	1100 A.D.	1000 years	20
Pliny	61-113 A.D.	850 A.D.	750 years	7
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	1000 A.D.	1400 years	193
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	1100 A.D.	1300 years	9
Demosthenes	383-322 B.C.	1100 A.D.	1400 years	8

Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	1100 A.D.	1400 years	49
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 years	643
New Testament	45-100 A.D.	130 A.D.	< 100 years	5795

- i. For the New Testament, this is not including copious **ancient manuscripts of translations** – overall, the New Testament boasts of over 24,000 copies of manuscripts.
 1. Latin Vulgate – 4th/5th centuries
 2. Syriac versions – Old Syriac (3rd/4th centuries), Peshitta (5th century)
 3. Coptic – 3rd century
 4. Armenian – 5th century
 5. Georgian – 5th century
 6. Ethiopic – 4th/5th century
- ii. In addition to Greek manuscripts, and that of various ancient translations are the **Patristic Writings** in which scripture is frequently quoted.

Writer	Date of Writing	Total Quotations
Justin Martyr	Fl. 133 A.D.	330
Irenaeus	Fl. 180 A.D.	1,819
Clement of Alexandria	150-212 A.D.	2,406
Origen	185-254 A.D.	17,922
Tertullian	160-220 A.D.	7,258
Hippolytus	170-235 A.D.	1,378
Eusebius	270-340 A.D.	5,176
Total		36,289

1. “So extensive are the patristic citations that if all other sources for our knowledge of the text of the New Testament were destroyed, they would be sufficient to reconstruct practically the entire New Testament.” (Miller, Dave, *Has the Bible Been Corrupted?*, <https://apologeticspress.org/video/introduction-or-has-the-bible-been-corrupted-5807/>)

V. Has the Bible Been Corrupted?

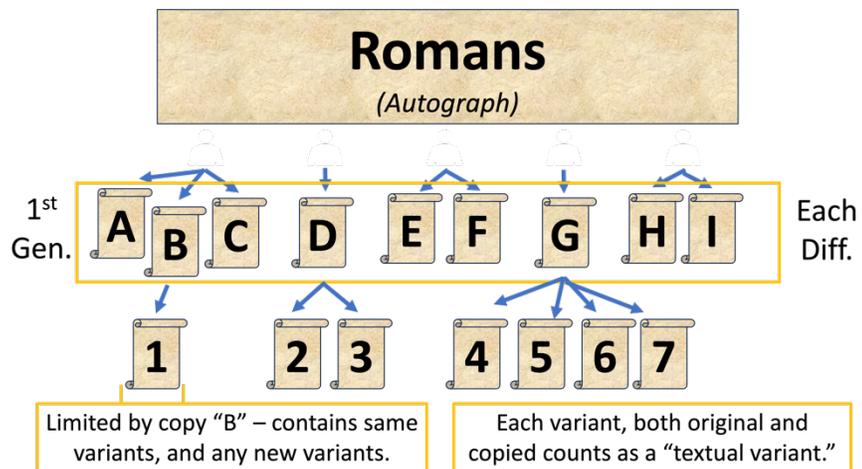
A. The Lie We are Told

- a. We don’t have the original copies (autographs) so we cannot trust that we have the original text. (There are no originals for any work of antiquity.)
- b. There are thousands of mistakes in the text of scripture meaning it has been corrupted. We cannot trust it.
 - i. Textual variants.

- ii. Estimate of textual variants range anywhere from 120,000 to 750,000. (Variations of methodology used to reach the estimates results in the wide range. Truly, no exact number can be claimed.)
- iii. This seems alarming before understanding what consists in a textual variant.

B. Causes of Textual Variants

- a. The only method of transmission was copying by hand (before the printing press) – no two manuscripts are exactly the same.
 - i. Misspellings, inverted letters, word left out, etc.
 - ii. Each of these differences in each manuscript would count for a textual variant.
- b. Understanding textual variants (CHART):



- i. If copy “B” contains a misspelling, then its own copy (1) would contain the same misspelling since it is limited by that copy (not having the original to copy from).
- ii. If copy “D” leaves a word out of a sentence, then its own copies (2, 3) will be missing that word as well.
 - 1. Copies 2&3 will differ from one another as well, with perhaps new variants which will be copied in successive generations.
- iii. If copy “G” has a word out of order in a sentence, then the same will be transmitted in its own copies (4, 5, 6, 7).
- iv. All variants in the 1st generation of copies A-I count as individual textual variants.
 - 1. Each time this variant is copied in 1-7 it counts again as a textual variant.
 - 2. New copies will contain variants from their “parent manuscript,” and will contain their own unique variants.
 - 3. These new variants unique to the copy proceeding from the “parent manuscript” will act as a “parent manuscript” for following copies.

- v. Such is the reason for the multiplicity of textual variants, and it is not near as high as would be expected!
- c. Quotes concerning textual variants:
 - i. “The various readings consist mainly in differences of Greek orthography; in the form of words not affecting the essential meaning; in the insertion or omission of words not essential to the sense; in the use of one synonym for another; and in the transposition of words whose order in the sentence is immaterial.” (McGarvey, J.W., *Evidences of Christianity*, 9)
 - 1. “all the authority and value possessed by these books when they were first written belong to them still.” (ibid., 12)
 - ii. “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.” (Wescott and Hort, *Introduction to Greek New Testament*, 2) (McGarvey, J.W., *Evidences of Christianity*, 8)
 - 1. “That is, only about one thousandth part of the New Testament is so variously expressed in the various copies, as to make any substantial difference of meaning.” (McGarvey, J.W., *Evidences of Christianity*, 8).
 - iii. “It is true indeed that the thousands of variants make no difference of substance to the main thrust of the New Testament. By the singular care and providence of God, the New Testament text (and the Old Testament text too, for that matter) has come down to us in such essential purity that even the most uncritical edition of the original, or the most incompetent or even the most biased translation of such an edition, cannot effectively obscure the Word of God which the Bible proclaims, or neutralize its saving power.” (Bruce, F.F., *Understanding Biblical Criticism*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)
 - iv. The more manuscripts, the more variations – and the NT has the most manuscripts! This does not represent a disadvantage, but an advantage in relation to other works of antiquity:

1. “The case is like that of a certain will. A gentleman left a large estate entailed to his descendants of the third generation, and it was not to be divided until a majority of them should be of age. During the interval many copies of the will were circulated among parties interested, many of these being copies of copies. In the meantime the office of record in which the original was filed was burned with all its contents. When the time for division drew near, a prying attorney gave out among the heirs the report that no two existing copies were alike. This alarmed them all and set them busily at work to ascertain the truth of the report. On comparing copy with copy they found the report true, but on close inspection it was discovered that the differences consisted in errors in spelling or grammatical construction; some mistakes in figures corrected by the written numbers; and some other differences not easily accounted for; but that in none of the copies did these mistakes affect the rights of the heirs. In the essential matters for which the will was written the representations of all the copies were precisely the same. The result was that they divided the estate with perfect satisfaction to all, and they were more certain that they had executed the will of their grandfather than if the original copy had been alone preserved; for it might have been tampered with in the interest of a single heir; but the copies, defective though they were, could not have been. So with the New Testament. The discovery of errors in the copies excited alarm leading to inquiry, which developed the fact that he who has the most imperfect copy has in it all that the original contained of doctrine, duty and privilege.” (McGarvey, J.W., *Evidences of Christianity*, 12).

d. Unintentional Errors:

- i. **Momentary Inattention** – if distracted for even a moment, a scribe may leave a word out, repeat a word, substitute one word for another (synonym, similar letters, etc.), etc.
- ii. **Diversion of attention from the words to the subject matter** – a copyist may get caught up in the message itself, leading to a distraction from the specific wording, resulting in alterations of words, whether left out or added.
- iii. **Writing from dictation** – scribes who wrote as another read from a manuscript might mishear and write the wrong word down – words that sound the same, synonyms, etc. Might result from a verbal error made by the one reading.

- iv. **Homoeoteleuton** – “an occurrence in writing of the same or similar endings near together (as in neighboring clauses or lines) whether happening by chance or done for rhythmical effect” (Merriam-Webster)
1. Such would be the cause of some sections of sentences, or even entire columns being left out.
 2. **John 17:15** – οὐκ ἔρωτῶ ἵνα ἄρῃς αὐτούς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἀλλ’ ἵνα τηρήσῃς αὐτούς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ
 - a. ***“I do not ask that Thou mayest take them out of the world, but that Thou mayest keep them out of the evil.” (John 17:15, YLT).***
 - b. If “out of the” is lined upon itself in both halves of the sentence in a manuscript, what lies between may be left out by accident due to the scribe picking up with the second occurrence when he left off with the first.
 - c. “I do not ask that Thou mayest take them out of the world, but that Thou mayest keep them out of the evil.”
 - i. **Codex Vaticanus** – Such is the case for this verse in this manuscript.
 3. **Luke 10:31-32** – κατὰ συγκυρίαν δὲ ἱερεὺς τις κατέβαινεν ἐν τῇ ὁδοῦ ἐκείνῃ καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὸν ἀντιπαρήλθεν ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Λευίτης γενόμενος κατὰ τὸν τόπον ἐλθὼν καὶ ἰδὼν ἀντιπαρήλθεν
 - a. ***“Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.” (Luke 10:31-32, NKJV).***
 - b. “passed by on the other side” is one word – antiparerchomai
 - i. “Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.”
 - ii. **Codex Sinaiticus** – Jumping from the first to the second, a scribe left out the entire 32nd verse in this manuscript.
- v. **Change of pronunciation** – the same word may be pronounced differently by one of a different tongue leading to different spellings.

- vi. **Trusting to memory** – memory is used in copying from the time taken to look at the manuscript copied to the writing down of what is observed. The more one relies on memory, the more likely a mistake is to be made.
- vii. **Absence of spaces and punctuation** – the earliest manuscripts were written in continuous rows of capital letters with no spaces or punctuation marks. Such would have been the cause of several errors.
 1. INTHEBEGINNINGWASTHEWORDANDTHEWORDWAS WITHGODANDTHEWORDWASGODHEWASIN THEBEGINNINGWITHGODALLTHINGSWEREMADETHROUGH HIMANDWIT HOUTHIMNOTHINGWASMADETHATWASMADEINHIMWAS LIFEANDTHELIFEWASTHELIGHTOFMENANDTHELIGHTSHIN ESINTHEDARKNESSANDTHE DARKNESSDIDNOTCOMPREHE NDIT – **John 1:1-5**
- viii. **Scribal glosses/corrections** – knowledgeable scribes would sometimes determine a comment or correction would need to be made in the margin (or between lines) as they copied from a manuscript. When their copy was used to copy from, the next scribe may mistake it to be a part of the original text.
 1. Scholars speculate that this is what happened in **John 5:3-4**.
 2. Earlier manuscripts don't have the verses – would lead one to wonder what the people were waiting by the pool for, and why the man said what he did – **John 5:7**
 - a. Likely a scribe made comments in the margin to explain what he thought (tradition held) was the reason the people were laying there.
 - b. One who copied from his manuscript might have thought it to be a part of the actual text, and copied it accordingly.
 3. Left out of the ESV; Noted in brackets in the NASB.
 - a. Notation in the NKJV of its exclusion in earlier manuscripts.
- e. Intentional Errors:
 - i. **To correct a supposed mistake** – Sometimes, style-conscious scribes would adjust what they considered to be misspellings, or what they deemed faulty syntax or poor grammar.
 - ii. **To secure fullness of expression** (harmonizing) – Scribes copied copious scripture, and knowing it well, would sometimes add a phrase not found in the text that is legitimate in a parallel passage.
 1. Especially with the gospels being harmonized and accounts in Acts.

- a. **Matthew 9:13; Mark 2:17** – **“to repentance”** is not in the original.
 - i. NASB, ESV, ASV – leave it out.
 - ii. It is added in some manuscripts, perhaps due to knowledge of it legitimately being in Luke’s gospel account – **Luke 5:32**
 - b. **Matthew 27:35** – the prophetic quotation is interpolated from **John 19:24** where it is legitimately found.
 - i. NASB, ESV, ASV – leave it out.
 - ii. NKJV makes a note.
 - c. **Luke 1:28** – **“blessed are you among women”** is not included in the best manuscripts.
 - i. NASB, ESV, ASV – leave it out.
 - ii. **Luke 1:42** (when Elizabeth speaks of Mary to her) – it is found.
 - iii. Scribal interpolation.
 - d. **Acts 9:3-6** – **“It is hard for you to kick against the goads”** – interpolated from **Acts 26:14** (Paul’s recounting of his conversion).
 - i. NASB, ESV, ASV – leave it out.
2. Sometimes words were added due to familiar word association throughout scripture.
 - a. **Matthew 26:3** – **“the scribes”** is not in the oldest manuscripts and was likely added by copyists.
 - b. **Matthew 27:41** – some manuscripts add **“the Pharisees”** in between **“the scribes and elders.”**
 - i. Not in NKJV, but noted in the center column reference.
 - iii. **To support a doctrine** – “There is only a very small number of variations which can be suspected of a doctrinal origin; and fortunately none of these affects materially the doctrine of the Scripture as a whole on the subject involved.” (McGarvey, J.W., *Evidences of Christianity*, 17)
 1. NOTE: Contrary to what many would have us to believe – that some throughout history have conspired to corrupt the text with their erroneous views – these textual variants are relatively few, and do not contain flagrant doctrinal contradictions to the whole of scripture.
 2. Where a scribe may have been tempted to support a particular view he holds over against some he knows to reject it by inserting or eliminate something within the text he is copying.

3. **Matthew 24:36** – **“nor the Son”** – in the best manuscripts (NASB, ESV, ASV)
 - a. NKJV – omits.
 - b. Perhaps a scribe could not reconcile Jesus’ divinity with his ignorance about the Day of judgment, so it was left out.
 - c. **Mark 13:32** – has the phrase.
4. **Luke 2:43** – to protect the doctrine of the virgin birth **“his parents”** was changed.
 - a. **“And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it” (ESV)**
 - i. **“and his parents knew it not;” (ASV)**
 - ii. **“But His parents were unaware of it,” (NASB)**
 - b. **“And Joseph and His mother did not know it;” (NKJV)**
 - i. Perhaps did not want to equate Joseph to Jesus’ **“parent[s]”** because of the virgin birth.
 - c. NOTE: **Luke 3:23** – **“being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph”**
 - i. Literally – **“as it was being thought” (NASB, fn)**
 - ii. Genealogy from Mary, as Matthew’s account takes the genealogy from Joseph.
5. **1 John 5:7-8** – **“in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth:”** – is only found in very few later manuscripts.
 - a. “Historically, the words appear to have been originally included in an exegesis by Cyprian, and to have made their way, via a copyist, into the margin of the text, and then, later, into the text itself.” (Woods, Guy N., Commentary on 1 John)
 - b. Not in other versions:
 - i. **“For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.” (NASB)**
 - ii. **“For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.” (ESV)**
 - iii. **“And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there**

are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one.” (ASV)

- c. Perhaps added in support of the doctrine of the Trinity.
 - d. **NOTE: This does not negate the doctrine of the Trinity. Such is found elsewhere in scripture.**
 - i. **2 Corinthians 13:14**
 - ii. **Matthew 28:19**
 - iii. At Jesus’ baptism – **Mark 1:9-11** – Jesus baptized, Spirit descending upon Him, Father speaking from heaven.
 - f. “When we consider all of the foregoing sources of corruption to which the sacred text was exposed...we have reason to be surprised, not that there are so many various readings, but that they are so few and of so little importance. Nothing short of a miracle could have prevented their existence, and nothing short of reverence for divine things can have so limited their number and character.” (McGarvey, J.W., *Evidences of Christianity*, 18).
- C. Deciphering the Original Reading
- a. Textual critics, using logic and documentary evidence, have legitimate ways of sifting through the various readings, and determining which is likeliest the closest to the original.
 - i. **More difficult reading is preferred** (more difficult to the scribe) – because additions were made often due to a scribe thinking he is bringing clarity to the text.
 - ii. **Shorter reading is preferred** (for the reason stated above) – usually a textual variant is seen with an addition, not a subtraction. (other than homoeoteleuton)
 - iii. **Dissident reading is preferred** (since the scribes tended to harmonize).
 - b. Additionally, it is generally the case that the reading from older manuscripts is preferred due to lesser amount of “parent manuscripts” from which it was copied, logically providing for fewer alterations.

Conclusion

1. **John 15:14-15** – Jesus shows us His love and affection through the revelation of His Father’s will. We show love and friendship to Him by doing what His word says.
2. The word of God has been revealed for the salvation of lost souls – **Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 3:16**
3. It has, is, and will continue to accomplish what God sent it forth to accomplish – **Isaiah 55:10-11**
4. By inspiration God authored the word, and through His providence He has protected it from destruction and corruption to this day. Thank God for His great wisdom, power, and love!