

Do we
have the
Bible as it
was
written
originally?

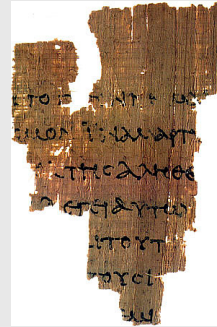


**a (very) short
exploration**



AN OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUE

The following represents a brief overview of the importance and process of textual criticism. For additional information, please consult the excellent treatment of the topic in *The Origin of the Bible*, edited by Philip Comfort.



- "P52"
- ca. AD 110-125
- John 18:31-34; 37-38

1 WE DO NOT POSSESS THE SCRIPTURE AS ORIGINALLY WRITTEN

For example, we do not possess the original letters written by Paul or the original gospel records. What we have are copies of copies of copies of copies (get the picture?)

2 THE ORIGINAL AUTOGRAPHS WERE LOST LONG AGO

Either they were lost, destroyed, or turned to dust.

3 WE MUST RELY ON MANUSCRIPTS

These manuscripts represent the originals that were copied many times over.

4 THE MANUSCRIPTS SOMETIMES DISAGREE

Ancient copies of the New Testament sometimes disagree with one another, such as the addition or omission of words.

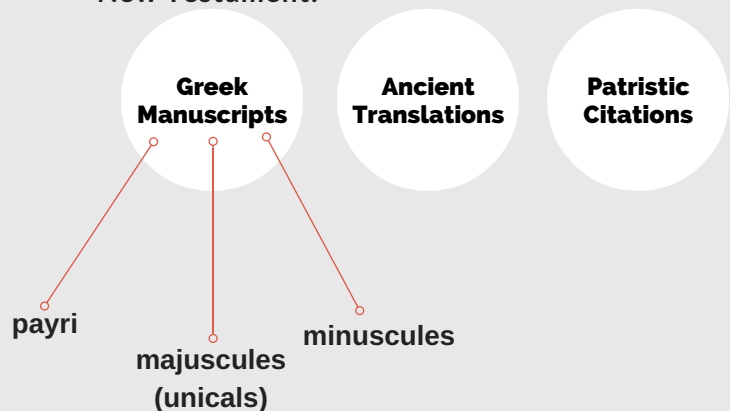
5 WE MUST DETERMINE WHICH IS ORIGINAL

This is a painstaking process of comparing and contrasting.

6 THE NEED FOR TEXTUAL CRITICISM

The practice of comparing the various copies of an ancient document in order to determine, as best as possible, the exact wording of an original text.

3 main documents are used to reconstruct the New Testament:



SOME IMPORTANT NT PAPYRUS MANUSCRIPTS

➔ Oxyrhynchus Papyri

Discovered in 1898 in Oxyrhynchus, Egypt. Contained at least 50 fragments of the NT: Matthew 1, John 1, Hebrews 2-5, 10-12, John 15-16, John 8, Matthew 23, John 18-19, Matthew 21, Revelation 2-15

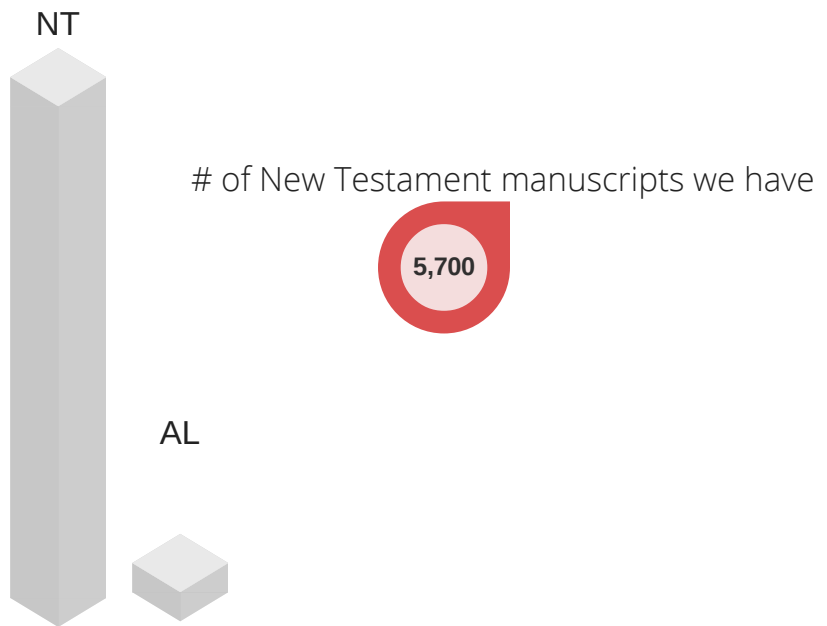
➔ The Chester Beatty Papyri

Purchased from a dealer in Egypt in the 1930's by Chester Beatty and the University of Michigan. Contains a large portion of the NT: portions of all four gospels and Acts, most of Paul's epistles, Hebrews, Revelation 9-17

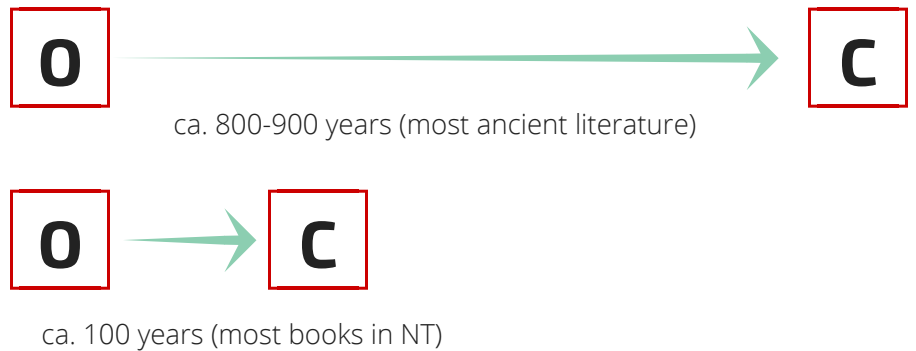
➔ Codex Sinaiticus

Dates from around A.D. 350. Discovered by Constantin von Tischendorf in St. Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Contains the entire New Testament.

NT manuscript evidence vs. ancient literature



Time between original document and earliest copy



Textual Variant: refers to the differences in the manuscripts, such as letters, words, phrases, additions, and omissions



Textual scholars find that groups of manuscripts can be traced to the same "family" and represent a parent original. Represented are the main three.