HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE: LESSON 1: A GENERAL HISTORY OF THE BIBLE

We see that the Bible is our spiritually authority. It is easy to convince ourselves that the scriptures are from God, because of the prophecies, consistencies, and philosophies. Spending time with our Bibles will help us see how divine its existence really is.

Once we trust the Bible, we see all of it from as being from God. However, He did not make the Bible at once. He didn’t inspire one author to write the entire message. God did not directly tell us which books to put in the “cannon”.

Is it possible that there could be human error? Is it possible that imposters could put in their own uninspired books? Could translators change the message to fit their own agenda? Could religious leaders omit texts that contradicted their views? Whether or not you see this as a possibility, many skeptics believe and will argue all these points.

To answer this, we must study the history of how the Bible came into existence.

IS THE BIBLE THE OLDEST BOOK IN HISTORY?

Some people argue that writing didn’t exist in Moses’ day, and therefore the text must be false. Moses lived about 1,500 B.C., and there are Sumerian texts that date far back as 4,000-5,000 B.C. There are Babylonian inscriptions of King Sargon I from 3750 B.C. Clearly forms of writing existed before Moses.

Should we be concerned that there are writings prior to the Bible? No. God has been active since creation, but wasn’t active in recording His actions yet. It wasn’t necessary. In Biblical history, God was ready to fulfill Abraham’s promise, create the Law, and lead our existence to Jesus in the times of Moses. That is when He decided it was necessary to record all of His prior deeds. Moses, or someone else inspired of God, records all the events as told by God Himself. That fact that those events weren’t recorded as they were happening is irrelevant; therefore, the fact that there are other writings more ancient than the first books of the Bible is equally irrelevant.

What about there being writings about stories resembling Noah possibly dated older than Genesis? Again, there is no need to worry. Everyone spawned from Noah, and therefore, the flood would not be an unfamiliar story exempt from being recorded in multiple ways in multiple regions. In fact, we can look at other testimony of the flood completely separate from the Bible as more proof if the flood’s existence.

WHAT WAS THE BIBLE WRITTEN ON?

1) Stone tablets. Ex 31:18.
2) Clay. Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt all wrote on clay oblong tiles. There have been many excavated clay tiles with writing. I don’t know if we’ve ever found Biblical texts on this material.
3) Wood. People used wooden tablets to write on 4 century B.C. Greece still used whitewashed wooden tablets for writing. Lightfoot claims that Habakkuk 2:2 and Isaiah 30:8 refer to wooden tablets.
4) Leather. Animal skin was a very common writing surface, and was likely used by Biblical authors although it is never specifically mentioned. Jer 36:23 refers to a king cutting the scroll with a knife. This might imply that the scroll was tough leather. According to Lightfoot the Talmud was specifically commanded to be copied on animal skins. This might be in keeping with tradition.
5) Papyrus also became a very popular writing surface. It originated in Egypt, but spread all over the region. By the first century, people began compiling papyrus into codexes (book format).
6) Vellum, or parchment. Vellum is a improved way of writing on animal skins. It is also much more durable that writing on papyrus. This was the writing material used for many of the copies of the New Testament.
7) Paper. Originally from China, paper spread to the Middle East when some Chinese were taken prisoner. Paper was widely used in Europe by the 13th century. Manuscripts started being copied on this material.

IN WHAT LANGUAGES IS THE BIBLE WRITTEN?
The Bible is written in three different languages:

By Timothy Bunting
1) **Hebrew**: Hebrew is a Semitic language. It is akin to Aramaic, Akkadian (Assyria-Babylonian), and Arabic. It is written right to left. It has no vowels. If you want to get a sample of the Hebrew alphabet, you could read Psalm 119 in Hebrew. Every stanza begins with the next letter of the alphabet. Almost all of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew. Abraham, the beginning of the gospel story was Hebrew. So, naturally the events would be recorded in the native tongue of Abraham and his descendants.

2) **Aramaic**: Aramaic is similar to Hebrew. Aramaic became the common tongue of the Jews during the exile (500 B.C.). When they returned to Palestine, they continued to speak Aramaic. Nehemiah 8:8 could imply that the Jews were not very familiar with natural Hebrew any more. When Jesus was born, all Jews were speaking Aramaic. Aramaic is the least common language that the Bible is recorded in. All the Aramaic in the Old Testament is: one word in Gen 31:47, one verse in Jer 10:11, six chapters in Daniel, and a few chapters in Ezra. The only Aramaic in the New Testament are the few phrases, such as “Eli, Eli lama sabachtini”, “talitha cumi”, etc. (Mark 5:41, Mark 7:34, Mat 27:46, Rom 8:15, Gal 4:6, and I Cor 16:22).

3) **Greek**: This is what the majority of the New Testament is recorded in. If God was only interested in reaching Jews, the texts could've been recorded in Aramaic. Since Jesus wanted to reach the whole world, all the books were written in Greek. It is important to see that Jesus came at a time when Rome had control over the entire region. Acts 2 tells us that there were many native languages and dialects, but everybody could speak Greek as well. This was perfect timing to preach to the whole world. Mat 1:23 and 27:46 show that the authors translate everything so the Greek audience can understand.

There was confusion with the Greek in the New Testament texts. There were linguistic peculiarities. People could only explain this as “Holy Ghost Greek”. Further study has shown that the Greek is actually Hellenistic Greek. This simply means that it is a more common dialect of Greek. This was confirmed by findings of other Greek texts.

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**THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BIBLE BOOKS:**

The Bible is divided into two main sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. These are divided by the two different covenants made by God in each.

The Old Testament is divided as follows:

- Books of History: Joshua-Esther (12 books).
- Books of Poetry: Job-Song of Solomon (5 books).

This organization of the books is man made. God never mentions what order these books should be in. These books are ordered in this fashion for logic’s sake alone. The Septuagint (Greek Bible) is the first collection to have the books in this order. That was translated into the Latin Vulgate, and our English Bibles adopted the same format from there.

Note that the original Hebrew Bible was not arranged in this same format. The Hebrews Bible is divided into three main sections: books of Law, the Prophets: former, and latter, and writings. The books are arranged in different orders, and the Minor Prophets are summed into one book called “The Twelve”. Even though our familiar order and organization differs from the Hebrew Bible, there are no more or less books.

The New Testament is divided as follows:

- Books of Doctrine: Romans-Jude (21 books).
- Prophecy: Revelation (1 book).

**WHEN WAS THE BIBLE WRITTEN?**

All the Old Testament books, started by Moses in 1500 B.C., were compiled together in the time of Ezra (400 B.C.). Josephus, a secular Jewish historian of the first century records that no books were added after Malachi. Before Jesus walked the earth, the Septuagint, a complete Greek Old Testament, had already been

By Timothy Bunting
written, copied, and distributed. The New Testament was written in a very short period of time (50-100 B.C.). By 160 A.D., Christians were already determining which of the books and letters were the authorized words of God. We have documented proof that the list was comprised of the same 27 books used today by 367 A.D.
INTRO:
People accuse the modern day New Testament of not being accurate to the original. They say that our Bible today isn’t true to the original.

Is this claim accurate? How can we find out?

There has been a murder. There are different accusations and stories but the judge wants to find the truth. What does the judge need in order to determine the truth? Witnesses.

1.) The more witnesses the better.
   • A single witness is not sufficient because you can’t compare his story to others.
   • Multiple witnesses can be compared and contrasted. If many witnesses agree on one story, that shows it to be truthful. False witnesses are easily recognized.

2.) Different kinds of witnesses are better.
   • If all the witnesses come from one group of men, one gang, or one any other single group of similar people, there is a chance that they could all have one common agenda. They want to cheat or protect someone, so they all collectively lie.
   • What if there are multiple witnesses from different backgrounds, different neighborhoods, different social groups, different ages, different economic backgrounds, etc…? There is no reason these multiple various groups would be unified on anything except the truth.

3.) High quality witnesses are better?
   • A judge isn’t willing to trust any person off the street. What if the only witness was drunk at the time? That witness isn’t very good.
   • What if the witness was sober, lacking a criminal record, known for being an upright citizen, mentally sound, educated…etc?
   • These characteristics increase the quality of the witness.

When a judge hears many quality witnesses from various backgrounds and circumstances all agreeing on one single account, the truth becomes easy to determine. Sure there might be differences in certain details (height, hair color, time of day) amongst the many witnesses, but when almost all the accounts are in agreement, that account becomes seen as true. It’s easy to determine the liars when they are alone in their testimony.
This process isn’t very confusing to us, and nor should the process of deriving the accurate New Testament because they are almost the same.

The process of determining an accurate NT is more scholarly and requires intense study, BUT the principle of the matter is just as simple as trying to find the truth amongst human witnesses. However, instead of human witnesses, the NT witnesses are manuscripts. If you want to trust the NT you possess in your hand right now, you need to determine if you trust the witnesses. The way you can learn to trust the NT witnesses is the same way you learn to trust any witness (or anyone): get to know them. We will spend some time getting to know the NT manuscripts from which our English NT is derived. I think we will all come to agree that they are a reliable bunch.

MEET THE MANUSCRIPTS
First we will look at original Greek mss. These are the most significant witnesses because they are in the original language and they comprise of the majority of the oldest mss.

There are around 5,000 Greek manuscripts in our possession today. These are not complete Testaments however. Only a few manuscripts contain the New Testament in its entirety. The main reason is because the books would be too bulky to be practical. Also it is not uncommon for these mss to be damaged and have large chunks of text missing in action.

Papyri:
• There are about 120 papyri.
• All of the papyri were discovered within the 1900s in Egypt. Researchers searched Egyptian towns in search of NT papyri. They found heaps of mss (evidently the Egyptians had the habit of replacing old mss with new nicer copies and simply threw the old away). Many of them turned out to be NT fragments.
• These papyri have only heavily influenced our NT translations for the last 50 to 60 years.
• These are the oldest Greek mss. They date from the second to fifth centuries. The earliest NT mss is a papyri fragment that records several verses of John an estimated 20 to fifty years after the autograph.
• They are unofficially divided into two categories: early and later. Early refers to the 4th century or earlier. Later refers to 400 AD and on. A little over half of these mss are considered early.
• They represent every NT book except for I and II Timothy and I and II John in both early and late papyri. They also include some other non-canonized books.
• They are identified with a P followed by their assigned numeric specification.

Pros:
These papyri are exceptionally useful because of their extreme antiquity. Their calendric proximity to the autographs make them more likely to represent the original text. This gives them a great authority in determining the most accurate translation.

It helps when we see strong textual correlation to mss that come much later. For instance the Vaticanus (350 AD), the most influential mss we possess, is heavily supported by P75 (200 AD). This confirms a consistent preservation of text over hundreds of years.

Cons:
Because they are written on papyri, much of them has corroded and been lost leaving only fragments. Most papyri are only a couple verses, but some are significantly longer. For instance P72 contains all of I and II Peter and Jude (as well as several other Gnostic texts).

They are all found in Egypt. The reason they were discovered in Egypt is because the hot dry conditions preserved them over the years. Naturally there were more papyri in other regions, but they decayed long ago. The fact that they were all found in Egypt raises some questions. Mss representing a larger geographic area reduces the possibility that they are all following a similar concocted recession of corrupted text. This is similar to a band of men retelling the judge a word for word account. That smells fishy. However, fortunately we see that all the papyri are distinct and individual in their variations and show no conspicuous uniformity. They present a text that is widely represented geographically and stylistically by later mss. There is no sign of a uniform corrupt recession in any way. Also it is very possible that not all the mss discovered in Egypt were born in Egypt. They could’ve been imported. For instance, P13 contains portions of Hebrews written on the back of the new epitome of Livy.

The Uncials:
• Uncial refers to the then current style of Greek writing. It is all caps, contains no punctuation, contains no spaces between words, and will even split words in the middle in order to keep columns straight.
• This writing style persisted until the 9th century and was replaced by a kind of cursive writing.
• The uncials are recorded on parchment and vellum.
• They date from the 3rd to 9th centuries.
The papyri are also written in this same writing style, but are not included with these texts for two reasons: 1.) they are recorded on a different material 2.) they were discovered later and were then categorized separately.

The uncials have been the greatest influence on our English Bibles.

There are about 320 uncials.

They have been designated by single letters of the alphabet (English, Greek, and Latin), but now are also assigned a number beginning with 0.

The first 46 uncials are the most significant because of their antiquity and amount of text they represent. The rest are mostly only leaves of text.

We will consider the five most significant uncials now.

01) א: The Sinaiticus (350 AD): This uncial is especially significant for its antiquity and content. It is the only uncial containing the entire NT. It also contains the majority of the OT as well as the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas. This mss was also corrected several thousand times by later scribes from the 4th to 12th centuries. This is good because it shows the meticulous care to portray a correct text, but the scribal notations can be cumbersome when we want to determine the most ancient text. Scholars can, however, easily determine the original hand from scribal emendations.

This mss is of the Alexandrian text type (we will discuss this more later), which is known for being more conservative and concise. This adds to its authority.

02) א: The Alexandrinus (400-440 AD): this mss also represents nearly the whole Bible. It contains almost the entire OT plus some apocryphal texts, and the whole NT and includes I and II Clement as well. Portions of the NT (such as the first 25 chapters of Matthew and a couple chapters from several other books) are damaged and missing, but the majority remains. This mss has some distinct variations which helps incite strict textual investigations of validity and authority.

The text type is Byzantine in the gospels and Alexandrian in the epistles.

03) א: The Vaticanus (350): generally all scholars are in agreement that this mss accurately represents one of the best Greek NT. This is probably the most influential single manuscript for all translations of our modern Bible.

It contains virtually all of the OT except most of Genesis (due to damage). It contains most of the NT, but cuts off in the middle of Hebrews due to damage. The order of NT books was different and scholars assume that I and II Timothy, Titus, and Philemon would’ve been included (as well as some other apocryphal texts). It is also just as likely that Revelation was not included as it being included, but we will never know. Every other NT book is represented.
This mss is also of the Alexandrian text type and heavily relates to P66 and P75 which were written at least 100 years earlier. This signifies that it accurately represents an even more ancient text. Preservation has been successful. This mss is also very similar to the Sinaiticus. Scholars have used these two mss together as the dream team. They are the most influential in the translations of our modern Bibles.

05) D: The Codex Bezea (400): this mss also needs to be mentioned. It is an ancient bilingual (Greek and Latin) mss that contains the Gospels and Acts and in no way conforms or represents any other kind of mss. It is completely unique in its variations. For instance, in this mss, Acts is about 10% longer than in the Vaticanus or Sinaiticus.

Though it is unreliable because of its unique, peculiar, and unsupported differences, it becomes vital in comparing it to other texts that are much similar to each other. It kind of works as a wild card. Though it lacks authority, it never lacks serious consideration. It is another sign that no strong isolated recession was occurring in the early church.

The Cursives/ Minuscules:
• Like the uncial, these mss are identified by the writing style. The uncial style evolved to a more advanced cursive writing by the 9th century.
• These mss are later Greek copies of the New Testament texts. They date from the 9th to the 15th centuries.
• This makes their authority of lesser value than earlier copies.
• We have about 2,500 cursive mss.
• They are not as significant since we have so many other mss that are more authoritative because of their antiquity, but the sheer number of minuscules is encouraging.

Lectionaries:
• As the name denotes, these are copies of the text written specifically to be read aloud in worship service.
• The authors would select segments from the New Testament and copy them just for public readings. They date after the 10th century.
• We have about 2,135 lectionaries.

Other Valuable Manuscripts:
Remember, so far we’ve only been talking about Greek mss. Already we have over 5,000 mss, but what about the Bible being translated into other languages?
Other Translations:
Although they lose some authority since they are one language away from the original, they also can have a very early date as well. There are many translated NTs from the 4th to 7th centuries. Some of the translated languages are Latin, Coptic, Syriac, etc… There are 15,000 total early NT translations (most in Latin).

Church Fathers:
Another great witness is the collected quotes from the early Christians. These numerous quotes can be some of the most ancient witnesses of many NT verses. Many reach as far back as the 2nd and 3rd centuries. According to one scholar, he can cite 86,000 quotes from before 325 AD. This can reconstruct a complete Bible. I cant check the validity of that claim, but another scholar claims that of seven major first century Christian scholars, we have 19,368 Gospel quotes, 1,352 quotes from Acts, 14,035 Pauline Epistle quotes, 870 general epistles quotes, and 664 quotes from Revelation. This adds up to 36,289 New Testament quotes. Though they are not inspired or complete collections they are invaluable when validating and criticizing Biblical manuscripts.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS
Copies compared to Secular Ancient texts: To understand the significance of this number and how early these copies are, we will compare that to other secular ancient texts. Of many other numerous ancient texts, the closest copy to the original spans 750 years. The highest number of copies is 100. The difference is incomparable. The Vatican manuscript, which contains virtually the entire Bible, is less than 400 years difference. This comparison shows that the concern for Biblical accuracy is only brought up by religious skeptics with an axe to grind. No other ancient text is in question. The Bible only gets this amount of attention because of the great influence it carries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>When Written</th>
<th>Earliest Copy</th>
<th>Time Span</th>
<th>No. of Copies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caesar</td>
<td>100—44 B.C.</td>
<td>900 A.D.</td>
<td>1,000 yrs.</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Livy</td>
<td>59 B.C.—A.D.17</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Plato (Tetralogies)</td>
<td>427—347 B.C.</td>
<td>900 A.D.</td>
<td>1,200 yrs.</td>
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<td>Tacitus (Annals)</td>
<td>100 A.D.</td>
<td>1,100 A.D.</td>
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<td>also minor works</td>
<td>100 A.D.</td>
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<td>900 yrs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pliny the Younger</td>
<td>61—113 A.D.</td>
<td>850 A.D.</td>
<td>750 yrs.</td>
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<td>(History)</td>
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<td>Thucydides (History)</td>
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<td>900 A.D.</td>
<td>1,300 yrs.</td>
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<td>Suetonius (De Vita Caesarum)</td>
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<td>950 A.D.</td>
<td>800 yrs.</td>
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<td>Herodotus (History)</td>
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<td>900 A.D.</td>
<td>1,300 yrs.</td>
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<td>Horace</td>
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<td>900 yrs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophocles</td>
<td>496—406 B.C.</td>
<td>1,000 A.D.</td>
<td>1,400 yrs.</td>
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<td>Died 55 or 53 B.C.</td>
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<td>1,100 yrs.</td>
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<td>Catullus</td>
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<td>1,550 A.D.</td>
<td>1,600 yrs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Euripides</td>
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<td>1,100 A.D.</td>
<td>1,500 yrs.</td>
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<td>Demosthenes</td>
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<td>1,300 yrs.</td>
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<td>1,400 yrs.</td>
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<td>450—385 B.C.</td>
<td>900 A.D.</td>
<td>1,200 yrs.</td>
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God (The New Testament) 50-100 A.D. fragment (120 A.D) complete (350 A.D.) 20 yrs; 250 yrs. 4,500

Just because there are many copies doesn’t mean it’s true, but the many copies give us proof that the modern Bible is in fact the same as the ancient original texts. No one thinks the Odyssey is fact, but no questions whether it is accurate to the original. With so many more thousand copies, why do people question the accuracy of the Bible? The answer goes back to the integrity of our character, nor the integrity of the Bible.

Conclusion
We determined that witnesses are needed to validate truth, we’ve discussed what standards qualify trustworthy witness, and we’ve looked at the mss, which are our NT witnesses. Now lets conclude by determining if our witnesses are valid.
1) The more witnesses the better: clearly our witnesses pass this test. With over 5,000 Greek manuscripts, 15,000 early translations, and tens of thousands of quotes from early Christian fathers, there are plenty of available witnesses.

2) Different kinds of witnesses are better: again, our mss pass this test. We don’t have only a single mss, or a single story from a closely related group of mss. We have independent and various mss from all over the region. There are matching accounts written in various words and ways. There is no evidence of any strong recension. Certain styles and families of writing have been identified, but it is impossible to formally and officially categorize any mss because they change on an individual basis.

3) High quality witnesses are better: this test is easily passed as well. We have mss that are nearly as ancient as the original autographs. They are written in the original Greek. The accounts are harmonious. There is no evidence of corrupt recension.

Whether or not we believe the Bible, there are no academic grounds to doubt the accuracy of our modern NT today. This is not a legitimate reason to discount Christianity.
NEW TESTAMENT VARIATIONS AND TEXT TYPES

INTRO:
We might believe that the inspiration of the Bible is flawless, but what about the men copying it? If by the aid of modern printing inventions, misprints and errors still exist in books today, can we presume that the scribes copied down the Biblical texts will complete accuracy? The answer is no. People have made mistakes, and copied mistakes, and mixed these errors in with the pure text.

*Are the errors so numerous that our New Testament can’t be trusted?*

We will study what errors exist, and if they discredit our modern New Testament.

NEW TESTAMENT VARIATIONS
First of all, they are not addressed as errors. An error suggests that it is wrong. Referring to it as an error is presuming that it is wrong. Instead of being called errors, they are referred to as variations. They aren’t wrong. They are different. Example:

*Ms X says pray to our God.*
*Ms Y says pray to our Lord.*

We can’t say that X or Y is a textual error, because that presumes that the ms is wrong. Instead we address this as a variation. The two ms have various readings. The next step is for scholars to determine which of the two various readings they consider to be the most accurate.

Many NT Variations Exist
• Depending on who you are and how you count, there are said to be 150,000, 200,000 or even as high as 300,000 NT textual variants.
• This number seems exceedingly high. We might already be assuming that the NT is not trustworthy. Is this true?
• Christian antagonists happily throw out these large numbers of variations wishing to discredit the Bible (and doing so successfully for many individuals). Even though these large numbers are accurate, they are misleading because they don’t reveal the nature of the variations. We will see that almost all of these variations are no more than typos, misspelled words, and other like insignificancies.
• Antagonists claiming that there are 300,000 variations without mentioning that many are of zero consequence is much like a Christian claiming to have 5,000 Greek mss
without mentioning that many aren’t whole New Testaments. Both sides need to be fair and tell the whole story.

Classifying the NT Variations:
The several hundred thousand variations can be classified and categorized into different types of variations. This is essential because it helps us sort through this immense number and determine which variations are insignificant and which variations demand our attention. All of these variations can be categorized in two different fashions. I will propose the two different ways we can organize the variations. One way of organizing them is in regard to the scribes. The other way to organize them is from our 21st century perspective.

Scribal Variations:
1. Unintentional Errors:
   - These NT variations are accidental orthographical mistakes by the scribe. Today, even with printing presses and word processors, it is not uncommon for books to contain misspelled words. How much more for the poor scribes who spent their whole lives copying mss? The OT scribes crafted extreme guidelines to ensure absolute perfection. The earliest NT scribes didn’t have the same reverence for the text or discipline so many orthographical errors are found amongst the mss. Later NT scribes adopted similar principles into their textual transmission.
   - Fortunately these mistakes generally pose no problem because they are very easily detected and determined and have zero significance to the meaning of the text. This type of Biblical variation makes up the vast majority of total variations.
   Examples of such unintentional errors are:
   1) Skipping a word
   2) Skipping lines
   3) Repeating lines
   4) Incorrectly divide words (GODISNOWHERE).
   5) Mistake one word for another (“affect”, “effect”).

2. Intentional Errors:
   - Previously we discussed errors that scribes accidentally made. These variations were done purposefully. This isn’t to say they had an agenda to invent and pervert a false teaching. The majority of these variations are simple revisions, harmonizations, and freedoms the scribe took that (in his opinion) improved the text. These variations make up a smaller portion of the total variation, but are numerous nonetheless. They are also more difficult to determine and analyze than the unintentional errors.
   Examples of such intentional errors are:
   1) Updating style or grammar
2) Correcting apparent errors of fact (Mk 1:2)
3) Harmonization of texts (Mk 12:40, Mat 23:14)
4) Doctrinal alterations (I John 5:7-8)

• The most significant of these variations are when scribes alter the text to oppose a certain false teaching, or when they alter the text to enforce the teaching they support. These however are very few, and are able to be determined by comparing the vast number of mss against each other.

21st Century perspective of NT Variations:
1) Trivial variations of no consequence: These variations are the orthographical errors. They also include word variations (such as Lord and God), or word order (Our Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ our Lord). It can also include variations that are found in such late mss so as to not demand any regard. The most accurate text is easily found with certainty, and even if we are unable to determine the original text, the meaning of the passage is in no way altered.
2) Substantial variations of no consequence: These variations are more substantial than misspelled words. This can be a variation of and added or omitted text. The variations are substantial, but the variation is so weakly supported that it bears no consequence on our modern translation.
3) Substantial variations of consequence: These variations are substantial and are uncertain enough as to have an impact on our modern translation. There is no absolute solution to the most authentic version of this variant.

Different people will classify different variations under these three categories differently. One scholar might consider a substantial variation to have no consequence, but the next might consider it to have consequence. It’s all subjective.

Examples of (Non-Orthographical) Variations:
Here is a list of almost all the substantial variations that exist in Matthew affected by the 120 papyri. These variations here are a good sample of what scholars consider to be substantial variations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Joseph, to whom was betrothed Mary, a virgin, who gave birth to Jesus</th>
<th>Joseph, to whom Mary, a virgin, was betrothed, was the father of Jesus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mat 1:16</td>
<td>The birth of Jesus Christ</td>
<td>The Birth of the Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mat 5:22</td>
<td>Angry with his brother</td>
<td>Angry with his brother without cause</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The True Nature of the 300,000 NT Variations:
The numbers of these claims are subjective and differ from scholar to scholar depending on their estimations and how they count, but the overriding principle is common. Of the multiple thousand variations, almost all of them are of no significance.

One scholar says:

- Of the 150,000 variations 19/20ths are dismissed immediately because they are found in NT witnesses of such little authority (due to their age, etc…), and no critic would regard them as deserving reception.
- This leaves 7,500 variations left. Of these no more than 19/20ths are anything more than orthographical errors.
- This leaves 375 NT variations that are found in authoritative mss and are more than just orthographical errors.
- Of these 375 variations, most are simply the addition or omission of a few words, or words that differ in meaning slightly.
- Of this number, perhaps a third can be considered substantial differences (a greater difference than something like God or Lord).
- A total of 50 are variations are of great significance.
- None of these variations affect verses that would alter any NT doctrine.

| Mat 5:25 | Lest the adversary hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer | Lest the adversary hand you over to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer |
| Mat 19:9 | And marries another, he commits adultery | And he who marries a divorced woman commits adultery |
| Mat 26:20 | With the twelve | With the twelve disciples |
| Mat 26:27 | A cup | The cup |
| Mat 26:28 | Covenant | New covenant |

| Total Variations | 150,000 |
| Variations existing in authoritative mss | 7,500 |
| Variations that are more than orthographical | 375 |
| Variations that are considered substantial | 100-200 |
| Variations that are considered significant to the meaning | 50 |
Other comments by NT scholars:

- Words that are still subject to doubt make up 1/16th of the whole NT. Of these only a small proportion are considered substantial variations so that they form no more than 1/1000th of the whole text.
- Only 1/8th of the variations have any weight (above orthographical errors). Of those, only 1/60th rise above trivialities (such as Lord or God) so that the text is left 98.33% pure.
- All the NT variations represent 10,000 passages. That means (by simple division) there are 20 variations of each variant section of text. Or, if one word in Mat 3:5 is spelled wrong in 1,000 mss, that makes up 1,000 variations.

Things to keep in mind:

- The large number of variations only exist because the large number of mss we possess.
- The many variations are easily solved because of the large number of mss we possess.

Text Types

Scholars consider all the variations and compare them amongst all the mss. If these variations are studied long enough, certain patterns are seen. Scholars have determined that mss are divided into types based on what variations they contain. For instance, two mss will contain the same readings of variations, whereas another two will share in their opposing variations. The phenomenon has been determined as Text Types.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variation</th>
<th>MSS X</th>
<th>MSS Y</th>
<th>MSS W</th>
<th>MSS Z</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Text Families:

- I like to think of text types as being text families because they are related. A man and woman get married and move to Oregon. They are short with curly blonde hair and brown eyes. They are very quiet and reserved. They have kids and stay in the area. Generations pass and you will see many similar people. They possess the same
physical qualities and personality traits. There are variations, but they are unified in their similarities.

- The mss went through a similar process. Certain regions and areas share in their styles and variations. One text family is known for being brief. Therefore all of the spawned copies share in its simplicity and brevity. Another text type is known for being flowery and embellishment. Its spawn possesses the same embellishments and are encouraged to make their own.
- However it’s more complicated than that. As time passed, the mss begin to share traits and variations similarly to a tall man marrying the short daughter and adding height into the jeans. There are several types of text, but many mss (though maybe heavily based on one text type) will most likely possess similarities to all different text types.
- Text types can be compared to racially based stereotypes. Though they might be based in some truth, it is inaccurate and impossible to make blanket statements or over simplifications.

Now we will consider the three different text types.

**Alexandrian:**

**General information:**
- These are named for where the text type originated. They are found in Egypt.
- This text type comprises the majority of our early Greek manuscripts because the weather conditions are most permissive to the sustenance of the papyri over long periods of time.
- This recension began in the third and fourth centuries.

**Characteristics:**
- This text family is known for its brevity and austerity (simplicity of style). It is shorter and simpler. These scribes didn’t change the text, but polished it stylistically and grammatically. This is seen as a very accurate and trustworthy family of copies.
- When compared to witnesses of the Western text-type, Alexandrian manuscripts tend to be shorter; and are commonly regarded as having a lower tendency to expand or paraphrase.
- This text type tends to have more "difficult" readings. For instance, Matt 24:36 reads "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only", but the Byzantine text omits the phrase "nor the Son", to avoid implication that Jesus lacked full divine foreknowledge.
- This text type tends to avoid textual harmonization in the gospels. For instance, in Luke 11:2, the Alexandrian manuscripts open with "Father", but the Byzantine text opens just like Matt 6:9 ("Our Father in heaven").
- These traits show that they preserve the accurate text over the scribes preferred text.
Strengths:
• This text group makes up a majority of our oldest manuscripts, such as Codex Sinaitic and Codex Vaticanus, and the Coptic (Earliest Egyptian translation (3rd cent)).
• Alexandrian manuscripts are at least 85% identical, and most variations are word orders and other differences that won’t translate into English.

Weaknesses:
• Most Alexandrian manuscripts are from a limited geographic region. Most (not all) are from Egypt.

Manuscripts of this text type:
• The Sinaitic and Vatican are both Alexandrian manuscripts. P66 and P75 are two papyri manuscripts recently discovered that this text group was being formed back in the 2nd century. Coptic Sahidic (the earliest Egyptian translation (3rd cent)).

Western:
General information:
• This was a popular widely used text. It was used in Italy, Gaul, Egypt, and North Africa. It had a very wide spread region.
• It is known that many fathers used this text group (Marcion, Tatian, Irenaus, Tertullian, and Cyprian).

Characteristics:
• This text is similar in its dissimilarities. The Alexandrian text type is highly identical within itself. The Western text type is identical in that they all have many differences (not the same differences, but an equal number of differences).
• This text type is so diverse that some people question whether it really even exists.
• The Western text is known to paraphrase, rearrange, include traditional material, and frequently harmonize the gospels. Western manuscripts are known to include traditional stories (legends) that were passed down by mouth. A possible example of this is the Adulteress woman in John 8.
• The scribes were not as concerned about preserving a sacred text. They took more personal liberties.
• My guess is that the heavily Jewish population that converted to Christianity in Egypt took over the scribal process with the same diligence and discipline as their transmission of the OT text. The scribes of the western text type were primarily gentiles without the same training or reverence to a sacred text.

Strengths:
• Western texts are frequently quoted by 1st century Christians.
• These texts represent a larger geographic region.
Weaknesses:
- These manuscripts tend to greatly differ from each other (as opposed to Alexandrian texts). They include many distinct/ suspicious texts. For instance, Acts is 10% longer in Western texts than other manuscripts. The scribes evidently had less concern for preserving the original.
- There are much less Western manuscripts. The western manuscripts are also much younger. The only Western uncial is the Codex Beza. Scholars in favor of this text type will say that these texts were probably equally numerous in the first few centuries, but the less friendly climate destroyed them (whereas the favorable Egyptian climate preserved Alexandrian manuscripts).

Manuscripts of this text type:
- The Codex Beza (contains Gospels and Acts, 5th cent) is a western manuscript. It has many unique and strange variations. Codex Claromontanus contains Pauline epistles. Codex Washingtonianus (W). P29, P38, P48. The first 8 chapters of John in the Codex Alexandrius are western.

Byzantine:
- The Diocletian persecution is famous for attempting to burn all the Christian mss. Of course it failed. After the persecution passed in 311 AD, a certain scribe, Lucian of Antioch, set out to make a new standard text. He gathered available mss and wrote what we now consider to be a Byzantine mss. This mss started in Antioch but was soon spread throughout the region. By the 9th cent. the Byzantine style became standardized and the official text.
- When Erasmus decided to make the first printed Greek Bible, he relied on 7 manuscripts. All of these but one were Byzantine. Erasmus’s final product is known as the Textus Receptus. This has a heavy influence on Latin translations, and ultimately the KJV. The Greek Orthodox Church relies heavily on this text type.
- This was regarded as the authoritative text, and one of the most widely circulated and accepted. The printing press was available when this text was forming. It became mass-produced.
- The Bible America grew up on is the result of this text type.

Characteristics:
- This is the simplified NT.
- This text type tends to harmonize the gospels.
- This group is also likely to alter “difficult readings” to make the text simpler. For instance, the most original Mark 1:2 reads, "...as it is written in Isaiah the prophet". The Byzantine text reads, "As it is written in the prophets". This quotation is in part from Malachi. The Byzantine scribe would remove “Isaiah” to remove what he thought was presenting a factual inaccuracy.
• These manuscripts are affected by scribes improving the text or correcting what they saw to be errors.

**Strengths:**
• This text type makes up most of our Biblical manuscripts. This is due to the invention of the printing press.

**Weaknesses:**
• This is a very young text type. There are only 6 pre-9th century manuscripts in this type.
• This text type isn’t rooted in accuracy. This group tends to harmonize the gospel. Also this group tends to alter “difficult readings”.

**Manuscripts of this text type:**
• Codex Alexandrinus is Byzantine in the gospels, but the rest is Alexandrian. Most of the minuscules.
NEW TESTAMENT TEXTUAL CRITICISM
We’ve looked at our many NT witnesses. We’ve seen that there are many variations within them. Fortunately, though these variations are numerous, none of them alter any Christian doctrine; however, it is our responsibility to investigate these variations and determine what we consider to be the most accurate and original NT. How do we go about doing that? Today we will learn about Textual Criticism. This is the science that tries to determine the most accurate and original reading among the various readings. We will learn the fundamental rules that govern this process. This class will try to accomplish two things:

1. Provide a basic understanding of what scholars have done to produce the English NT we now possess.
2. Provide a foundational understanding that can help you know what to do should you desire to be more diligent in practicing textual criticism yourself.

Though this process is involved and intense, I feel that any average person can do it for themselves if they put in sufficient time and energy. Scholars have studied hard and provided us with a great number of tools. Equipped with all this information, any (maybe every) diligent Christian should practice some level of textual criticism on passages that question accuracy of.

However, the average Christian isn’t aware of passages in question. They will assume that it’s all good. A list of passages in question will be given. That might incite you to pursue some personal study and determine the truth for yourself.

It is important to know that in some cases, there are no finite answers. MSS provide various readings, and the various readings can be equally evidentially supported on all sides. This may seem disconcerting, but don’t be alarmed. None of these cases will change our faith and practice. We do, however, need to be open-minded, humble, and always willing to consider all possibilities.

TWO IMPORTANT SCIENCES THAT DETERMINE AN ACCURATE NT
Textual critics compare and contrast the integrity and authority of the mss when trying to determine an accurate reading, but how do they know which mss have greater authority? Those conclusions are based on the studies of Higher Critics.

Higher Criticism:
Higher criticism is the study and analysis of the mss themselves. These critics analyze things such as language, writing style, and the material inscribed to determine the mss’ date, authorship (not original author; the scribe(s)), where it was written, etc… These facts help determine the integrity and authority of the mss. Essentially, this study helps
determine the trustworthiness of each NT witness. Our English translations heavily depend on the assumptions of these critics.

**Examples of important information determined by Higher Critics:**

- Date of authorship: For example, if the writing style is Uncial, it is obviously pre-9th cent. Further investigation of the writing style can determine just how ancient it is.
- Authorship: These critics don’t try to determine whether or not Paul wrote Hebrews. They study the actual scribes themselves. For example, many important mss have been later corrected by scribes. For example, scholars determined that one scribe wrote the Sinaiticus mss, and it was later corrected by two other scribes. They also try to determine the date of these corrections. The result is possible several variations of a passage within the same mss over the span of several centuries.

**Lower Criticism (Textual Criticism):**

This is the study to determine what the most accurate and original reading is. These conclusions are based on the external assumptions of Higher Critics, as well as their own internal study of the actual text itself. This class intends to describe this process.

*Since our study is based on variations in the text, we will focus more on Lower Criticism, and assume the claims of Higher Critics. We will not try to argue for or against external evidence such as date or geographic origin. We will assume those claims as accurate.*

**RULES OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM**

**The Various Reading is On Trial:**

Remember that we are investigating the variations. The variant is on trial. When you come to Mat 26:27 and one mss says “a cup”, and another mss says “the cup”, each variation is on trial.

* **A helpful hint:** Treat the variant as a separate entity existing outside of the mss, but witnessed by the mss (a defendant testified by witnesses). For example, we need to consider the age of the reading, not just the age of the mss that contains the reading. “A cup” might be found in a 9th cent. Minuscule, but it is also found in a 2nd cent. Quote by an church father. The reading then is seen to be very old even if it isn’t witnessed by many other old mss.

Each variant is obligated to establish its validity by providing you with evidence supporting its accuracy. Of course you’re going to have to collect the evidence yourself,
but you are essentially seeing which variant is seen to be true by having the majority of supporting evidence in its favor. Critics gather all the evidence to examine the variation on a case-by-case basis. The evidence is divided into two categories: external and internal. Each category of evidence contains its own set of rules for how to analyze the evidence. No rule is absolute. They should be treated as guidelines of how to effectively interpret the evidence.

**External evidence:**
These evidences are the assumptions of the Higher Critics that we previously discussed. This evidence relates to concrete facts about the manuscript: date of origin, location found, language, and textual family. Textual critics gather all the claims and assumptions made by Higher Critics and see what they say about the various readings in question. The reading that is more heavily supported by this external evidence is seen to be more accurate. The following three rules are how lower critics decide what the original text is based on external evidence:

**Rules regarding eternal evidence:**
1) **Prefer reading attested by oldest mss:** Most of the textual variations would have occurred before the 3rd century; therefore the oldest mss are regarded as being more accurate by nature. This rule isn’t flawless. Sometimes an older manuscript can represent a corrupt text.
2) **Prefer reading supported in multiple geographic areas.** If a reading is similar in Rome, Egypt, and Caesarea, it has more authority than a variation limited to one region. This is the evidence that argues against a variation being the result of a scribal recension. It testifies that a certain reading is universal. It was created by a certain scribe and circulated in one area. It is testified by multiple contemporary scribes working independently in multiple regions.
3) **Prefer reading represented in greater number of text types.** This again reduces the possibility that the variation is the result of an isolated recension. If a reading is represented in two opposing text types. A reading represented in mss of both text types is powerful evidence of its originality. Sometimes the reading is found in a mss of a certain text type, but it needs to be in multiple mss of that text type to be able to say that that particular text type as a whole supports that reading.
4) **The quality of witness is stronger than quantity of witnesses.** Manuscripts should be “weighed rather than counted”. Certain errors can be copied for centuries. This doesn’t make it right. It is better to value the integrity of certain manuscripts than the abundance of less authoritative manuscripts. This is seen by readings contained in the Byzantine mss. That text type became the standardized text, and specific readings were copied in abundance whether or not they were accurate.
**Internal evidence:**

This refers to the evidence seen within the text. Instead of being based on the external evidence of the mss (such as antiquity), this evidence relates to the evidence derived from within the mss; namely the content of the mss. Simply put, external evidence is evidence relating to the physical mss. Internal evidence is evidence relating to the words of the mss. Internal evidence is divided into two categories: transcriptional probabilities, and intrinsic probabilities.

1. **Transcriptional probabilities (relating to the scribe that transmitted the text)** relate to habits and patterns of scribes. Patterns and assumptions in their tendencies to paraphrase, include, or omit, etc…

2. **Intrinsic probabilities (relating to the original author)** relate to the original author’s style (vocabulary, writing style, and theology). Evidence like this is what’s used argue whether or not Paul wrote Hebrews.

*Now we will look at five rules how critics examine variations with internal evidence.*

**Rules regarding internal evidence:**

**Transcriptional probabilities (based on habits and patterns of scribes):**

1) **Prefer shorter reading.** Scribes tend to elaborate and supplement more often than they omit. It is more often for scribes to add words rather than omit (Mark 9:44).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASV</th>
<th>KJV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And if thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire.</td>
<td>And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And if thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life halt, rather than having thy two feet to be cast into hell.</td>
<td>Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And if thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out: it is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell;</td>
<td>Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.</td>
<td>Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) **Prefer more difficult reading.** Scribes tend to simplify difficult readings, rather than vice versa. In some cases, perhaps, they think they are correcting the text. Some scriptural examples are Mark 1:2.

3) **Prefer less harmonious reading.** Scribes tend to wrongly harmonize the gospels (Mat 23:14, Mat 17:21). Scribes take liberty to repeat passages in other correlating passages for whatever reason. Perhaps they think it makes the text better and more comprehensive.
Intrinsic probabilities (based on author’s style and theology):

4) **Prefer reading that best suits author’s vocabulary.** This is an involved process that takes into consideration what words an author tends to use. If there is a reading in Ephesians that contains two or three words Paul never uses in any other book, perhaps a different scribe added it. The same idea is applied to an author’s style of writing. To practice this concept, read John 13-16 and I, II, and III John. He has a very distinct style that isn’t seen elsewhere in the Bible. He also uses the same phrases several times throughout. A Pauline style reading could very well stand out like a sore thumb in the middle of his discourse. Here is an example of John’s typical style and vocabulary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Passage</th>
<th>Harmonization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lk 20:47</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mat 23:14</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which devour widows’ houses, and for a show make long prayers; the same shall receive greater damnation</td>
<td>Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KJV</strong></td>
<td><strong>ASV</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5) **Prefer reading that best suits author’s context and theology.** Once a sufficient understanding of different author’s typical topics and content are in grasp, an atypical reading about something seemingly out of place can prove a reading to be false. Here is an example of John’s strong theological similarities amongst books.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John 15:9</th>
<th>I John 4:13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide ye in my love</td>
<td>thereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John 15:7</th>
<th>I John 2:24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you</td>
<td>As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son, and in the Father.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More simply, I focus on whether or not the reading fits within the realm of the overall theology of the entire Bible. If a reading in question speaks of things that seemingly contradict other Biblical principles, perhaps it is a false reading (John 5:3-4).
Finding Passages In Question:
Here we have seen the general rules critics apply when trying to interpret available evidence in order to determine the most accurate reading amongst variations. All that’s left to do is find what passages are in question, gather the information, and begin analyzing. Obviously that’s easier said than done; however, the process of finding passages that contain variations is pretty simple.

The easiest way to do it is to purchase a NASB and go about your daily reading. Occasionally you’ll come across [a passage in brackets like this]. That essentially means this is a passage the editors don’t consider to be in the original text. The NASB by no means denotes every passage in question, but instead they showcase the variations that differ from what we are used to reading in the KJV. A good example is Acts 8:37.

It might startle you to know that these editors don’t consider this fundamental passage to be in the original text, but there are more passages like this one. Before you get too shaken up, realize that there are a great deal of substantial readings that have been preserved in the KJV and become traditional that are in fact very inauthentic. We have looked at a few already. Looking at the history of textual criticism will reveal how this came about. It will help us see, that though the variations are significant, their attestation is so weak that they are easily seen as erroneous. This will help us release these passages that we are emotionally attached to.

HISTORY OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM
As the early Christians copied the NT text, many of the variations were included in the first three centuries. The Alexandrian and Western text types were being established through these centuries. By the seventh century, Greek was only used in the Byzantine Empire. From the seventh to the ninth centuries, the Byzantine text type was formed and became standard. Over time, the Greek text transformed into the Byzantine text type exclusively. In the 15th century, Erasmus prepared the first Greek NT to be released. To construct this Greek Bible he consorted seven mss (six of which were Byzantine). The mss available were few and young. Erasmus’ Greek Bible was called the Textus Receptus (the Received Text), and became the standard text. This standard text is what the KJV is translated from. The English KJV was the result of copying copies of copies over the years. With the limited mss available, they couldn’t compare and contrast readings. They simply copied the only readings available. Imagine this as measuring a foot inch by inch. This is how relatively significant erroneous readings were preserved in our NT.
A significant number of older Greek mss were discovered between the 16th and 19th centuries. This gave scholars something to compare the Textus Receptus to. They found some significant differences. The process of using all these mss to determine the accurate text is like measuring a foot with a yardstick (as opposed to inch by inch). In 1881 two scholars, Hort and Wescott released another Greek Bible to be received as “the standard text”. It is from this text that translations such as the ASV or NASB are conceived. They regarded the 4th century Alexandrian uncial, the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, so highly that they considered them to be the “neutral text”. All their decisions respected those mss as the absolute authority. The NASB’s denoted passages in [brackets] (or ASV, NIV or ESV’s omissions) are nothing more than the differences of a young Byzantine text determined by Erasmus and the Alexandrian text determined by Wescott and Hort.

Since Wescott and Hort, the 120 papyri have been discovered. These mss are valuable because many are even older than the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. Some have shown a great affinity to those Alexandrian uncial, whereas others have very independent readings. This has spurred scholars to acknowledge that the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus are not a neutral text and even mss that old can contain errors.

Today scholars need to combine all of this information and knowledge to determine accurate readings, but fortunately for us, we live in a time where an abundance of resources and information are available. This is similar to the Christians living in a time when they depended on prophecy as compared to now, when we have a complete established NT. They had a limited micro view of God’s revelation. We have a macro aerial view of God’s revelation. Through time the Christians relied on the limited mss available to them in that location. Now we can refer to all the mss everywhere. With these tools we can ensure that our modern Bibles are accurate.

**TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

A textual critic needs tools to study variations. Here I will talk about some of the tools of the trade and several resources I use.

1.) Multiple translations: it’s helpful to have a KJV, NASB, and ASV (or ESV). These translations give you a snapshot of the decisions many scholars have made over time. Compare and contrast how each translation renders a passage with significant variations. If the differences are incite our interest, begin your further investigation of that passage.

2.) USB Greek New Testament: this is a completely Greek NT that contains citations about the witnesses involved in most variant passages. Look up your question in passage to see what mss represent or oppose which various reading.
3.) Interlinear Greek New Testament: since you are consorting a Greek NT (and very few people know much about Greek), you will want to consort an interlinear Greek NT that can help you decipher the Greek.

4.) Resource providing information on each mss involved: after consorting the USB Greek NT you’ve seen lists of mss that represent each variant reading. You need a way to decipher the symbols and a way to know information about the integrity of each mss involved. The USB Greek NT has a great introductory index that lists all the mss cited by the book. It includes their date of conception and symbol. Soon you’ll be able to recognize some of the mss just by seeing their symbol. You will also eventually memorize their date as well. You will also want a resource that tells you the character of each mss. I haven’t found a great one yet. I’ve used online resources, but nothing exceptionally helpful. You can however find charts that will tell you the basic about the essential mss. I also use [a book] that has information regarding the integrity of every papyrus available. It is essential to know the integrity of the mss involved so you know how much they should sway your decision.

5.) Resource providing Text Type information: knowing what text types represent a reading is very important. *New Testament Textual Criticism* by David Alan Black breaks down what major uncials represent which text types in which sections of text. Text type information can be overwhelming and a resource like this can be invaluable.

6.) Breakdown of Textual Criticism rules: you will want a resource that can guide you through all the rules of textual criticism in order. Worksheets can be found (*New Testament Textual Criticism*) or you can make your own. Either way, you want to ensure that the process is systematic.

7.) Commentary: I use *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* by Bruce M. Metzger. After being given the needed information and commencing your own personal investigation, it’s helpful to have the opinion of a learned scholar as well.

Hopefully this process has helped you understand what people did before sending your Bible to the printing press. Hopefully you’ve seen it has been by the result of a painstaking meticulous process bent on seeking out accuracy. Hopefully you have an idea of what to do should you want to determine these things out for yourself (as I might suggest). Next week we’ll get our hands dirty and do some textual criticism ourselves.