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THE RELIABILITY OF NEW TESTAMENT TRANSMISSION AND ITS MANUSCRIPTS

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
EARLY TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION AND ITS TOOLS	2
EARLY TRANSMISSION OF THE NT MANUSCRIPTS AND THEIR RELIABILITY	5
The Four Types of Variants	7
TEXT TYPES, CONFLATION AND TENACITY	11
Text-Types	11
Conflation and Expansion	12
Tenacity	13
THE UNAVOIDABLE CONCLUSION	14
APPENDIX A: CHARTS	I
APPENDIX B: FURTHER STUDY	II
APPENDIX C: BIBLIOGRAPHY	III

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Eph	Ephesians
ESV	<i>English Standard Version</i>
GNT	Greek New Testament
Jn	John
Kindle	Kindle Location(s) in lieu of page numbers
LXX	<i>Septuagint</i>
MS	Manuscript
MSS	Manuscripts
NET	<i>New English Translation</i>
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
Rom	Romans
TT	Textual Transmission

INTRODUCTION

Can the student of the Bible have confidence that the Scriptures which they possess are the inspired words of God; the words which were penned by the original authors under the guidance of the Holy Spirit? This is a highly debated question in the area of textual scholarship and one that posits many differing conclusions. Some announce that the Christian community can have no confidence in the reliability of the New Testament because of wholesale changes in the text. Hence, the skeptics of the faith declare that we only have “copies of copies” and in this sense, have no objective criteria to proclaim original readings. Others who have affection for Christ declare that the textual tradition is expansive and consistent, providing for the reader the message of eternal life through the centuries of transmission of the New Testament.

It is the latter of these positions that the author of this essay will argue, attempting to demonstrate that the text of the New Testament is remarkably pure despite the centuries of hand copying that took place within the tradition. This will be demonstrated in a number of different ways. First, the author will address the early stages of textual transmission, including writing materials and types of manuscripts. Next, the author will address the transmission of the text and demonstrate that textual variation does not reduce the reliability that one might have in the text itself; while also demonstrating that variation was the natural result of the type of uncontrolled transmission that the early church urged. Thirdly, families of texts will be addressed, showing how multiple streams of transmission helped to secure the message of the New Testament authors. Finally, the author will end this essay with a series of final conclusions via the textual evidence in hopes of providing the reader with a valuable apologetic on this most vital topic.

EARLY TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION AND ITS TOOLS

In the early centuries of textual transmission (TT), the original autographs and manuscripts were written on a paper-like material known as *papyrus*. In the process of preparing the papyrus plant for transformation into a writing surface, “the stalk was removed and cut into strips that were laid side by side . . . A second layer was then laid across it to a sheet ranging in size from 6 to 9 inches to 12 by 15 inches.”¹ The oldest of the dated manuscripts in existence, known as P52 (A.D. 125),² is a small section of the Fourth Gospel consisting of Jn 18:31-33, 37-38³ and is preserved on papyri. Although small in size, P52⁴ provides the textual community with a second century attestation of the New Testament (NT) documents and their early development; a critical point when one considers the overall history of TT and its challenges.

By the third and fourth centuries, the use of papyrus gave way to a material known as *parchment*. Also known as *vellum*, this material consisted of dried and stripped animal skins and was the material of choice for earlier writers because of its practicality (it could be rolled into scrolls) and its durability (it did not break down and age like papyrus). David A. Black states that, “Practically all surviving manuscripts of the Greek New Testament are written on parchment. Only the very earliest New Testament manuscripts were written on papyrus.”⁵

¹ David A Black, *New Testament Textual Criticism: A Concise Guide*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 14-15

² Daniel Wallace states; “The oldest manuscript of the New Testament has been P52, a small fragment from John’s Gospel, dated to the first half of the second century. It was discovered in 1934.” Daniel B. Wallace, *Earliest Manuscript of the New Testament Discovered?* Feb 2012, 10. www.csntm.org/ (accessed Aug 06, 2012).

³ However, the textual world is on edge regarding the announcement of a newly found manuscript of the Gospel of Mark, which has been, according to Daniel B. Wallace, dated to the first century by a leading secular Paperologist. For more information on this, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Earliest Manuscript of the New Testament Discovered?* Feb 2012, 10. www.csntm.org/ (accessed Aug 06, 2012).

⁴ Also known as Rylands Library Papyrus P52

⁵ *Ibid.*, Black, 16.

In early transmission, there was also a difference in the type of script that was utilized. In mid-early TT (fourth century), *uncial* font was the preferred form of transmission. Uncial's were block script letters that were given a prefix in order to categorize them, as Black explains, "Uncial manuscripts date from the fourth to tenth century and are designated in two ways; by capital letters . . . and by Arabic numbers with a zero prefixed (e.g. 02)."⁶ Uncial's later gave way to a more free form or "running" form of text known as the *minuscule*, which was a cursive type of writing that allowed for a more rapid reproduction of the Greek text.⁷ Regarding this topic, David Ewert states, "This kind of handwriting not only increased the speed of writing but made it possible to pack much more material into one page, making books more economical."⁸

In Ewert's above statement, he mentions that the minuscule made "books" much more economical. Ewert's words reflect the early Christian practice of forming "Codexis" out of the minuscule manuscripts. The codex, which is in essence, a series of manuscripts that are bound together with a front and back cover and spine, were first popularized by the church in the early second century⁹ and replaced the scroll by the ninth century. James R. White explains, "Christians charted a new course almost from the very beginning. They utilized the 'book' or 'codex' style of manuscript, on which the copyist would write on both sides of a papyrus sheet and would bind these sheets together."¹⁰ The convenience of the codex was unsurpassed, allowing for the reader to easily transport large volumes of writings and also allowing the reader

⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁷ Ibid., 20.

⁸ David Ewert, *A General Introduction to the Bible: From Ancient Tablets to Modern Translations*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1990), 137.

⁹ Ibid., 136.

¹⁰ James R White, *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust Modern Translations?* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2009), 53.

to locate specific passages with much more ease.¹¹ The most famous of the Codexes comes by way of *Codex Sinaiticus* (א), which “contains the vast majority”¹² of the GNT with the addition of the Greek version of the OT Scriptures known as the *Septuagint* (*LXX*). Penned in the fourth century, *Sinaiticus* and her cousin manuscript, *Codex Vaticanus* (B > dated 325-350) are vital early witnesses of NT reliability states Andreas J. Kostenberger and Michael J. Kruger, because early existent manuscripts, “gives us access to the New Testament text at a remarkably early stage, making it very unlikely that the textual tradition could have been radically altered prior to this time period without evidence for those alterations still being visible within the manuscript tradition,”¹³ a topic that will now be addressed.

EARLY TRANSMISSION OF THE NT MANUSCRIPTS AND THEIR RELIABILITY

The NT manuscript tradition is littered with what scholars call, textual variants. A textual variant is, “any place among the manuscripts of the New Testament where there is not uniformity of wording.”¹⁴ By some accounts, of the 5750+ Greek manuscripts in existence, there are approximately 300,000 to 400,000 textual variants in the manuscript tradition. This is up and against the 138,000 words in the GNT; an almost three to one ratio. Critics of the NT point to this number as an objective criteria to dismiss it as historically and textually unreliable, however, this is not the entire story; a point that can readily be demonstrated.

¹¹ Ibid., Ewert, 136.

¹² Ibid., White, 56

¹³ Andreas J Kostenberger, Michael J Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture’s Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity*. (Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers/Crossway Books, 2010), 4602-4604, Kindle.

¹⁴ Ed Komoszewsk, James M. Sawyer, Daniel B Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus: How Contemporary Skeptics Miss the Real Jesus and Mislead Popular Culture*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 461-462, Kindle.

First, it must be noted that early TT was performed under the most hostile of conditions. There were no available modern resources such as the printing press, typewriters or modern computers. Rather, early transmission was performed by the common hand, outside of scriptoriums and often in dark and dismal conditions by candle light. Next, the social-political conditions for early transmission were in their totality, hostile to the infant Christian faith, with widespread persecution and death being the norm until the *Edict of Milan* in A.D. 313, where, “Constantine entered into an agreement with Licinius at Milan . . . extending free exercise of religion to ‘Christians and all others.’”¹⁵ Hence, perfect accuracy was not the *primary* goal of the early copyists up and against MS reproduction for personal usage and this necessity of spreading the early writings led to an uncontrolled reproduction of the NT text. Colin Smith explains;

As a result of persecution and oppression during the first few centuries of the church, the various books of the New Testament were usually hastily copied, either by tradesmen or by churches as they had opportunity. The rapid growth of the church also generated a great demand for copies of the Scriptures. As the church expanded its borders beyond Palestine, her Scriptures traveled with her. Wherever churches were planted and wherever Christian merchants traveled, copies of the various New Testament books made their way into different parts of the world.¹⁶

This type of transmission was up and against the early transmission of the Hebrew Scriptures, where, according to Ellis R. Brotzman, “Students of the Old Testament text . . . have to deal with fewer variants than their New Testament counterparts,”¹⁷ and again, “It is generally accepted that the Old Testament was copied more carefully than the New.”¹⁸ In reorganization of this, a vital

¹⁵ Everett Ferguson, *Church History Volume One: From Christ to Pre-Reformation: The Rise and Growth of the Church in Its Cultural, Intellectual, and Political Context*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 3447-3448, Kindle.

¹⁶ Colin Smith, *An Introduction to Textual Criticism: Part 2–The Writing and Transmission of Ancient Documents*. Mar 03, 2008. <http://www.aomin.org/aoblog/index.php?itemid=2581> (accessed Aug 06, 2012).

¹⁷ Ellis R Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 18.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

theological distinctive must be noted and in it clarity is found. The OT Scriptures are not to be considered the standard in the area of textual transmission because the intent of the copyists was vastly different. The OT Scriptures were directed towards a geo-political entity, Israel, and were reproduced in a mostly controlled environment and a closed society under what was often (but not always) favorable conditions. In contrast, NT transmission was for the nations, with the promise being expended via gentile inclusion into the “common wealth of Israel” (Eph 2:11-22). Hence, the goal of this NT “uncontrolled” reproduction was for practical, Gospel sharing purposes and not for the purpose of historic accuracy. The words of the early NT manuscripts were the words of eternal life and it was vital that the message of the “good news” of Christ reach all peoples and nations. Hence, when these historical factors are considered, the number of variants already expounded upon should come as no surprise to the student of the NT MSS. A perfect text, as in no textual variants, is neither practical standard to demand nor is it possible when one considers the copyists intent and other human and societal factors involved.

The Four Types of Variants

Having explained the nature of textual variants, types of variants will now be considered. In the TT tradition, there are four types of variants that are predominant. The largest category of variants is by far, errors of spelling or nonsense readings. Daniel B. Wallace explains this first category clearly when he states, “Of the hundreds of thousands of textual variants, the majority are spelling differences that have no impact on the meaning of the text.”¹⁹ The most prominent of these variants is what is known as the movable *nu*, which corresponds to the English “n.” An example of this variant is the spelling of the name “John” in the Greek language. Is John spelled with one *nu* (Ἰωάνης > *Ioanes*) or two (Ἰωάννης > *Ioannes*)? Regardless of one’s preferred

¹⁹ Ibid, Kostenberger, Kruger, Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus*, 478-479.

spelling, the “John” in question remains the same individual and this type of variant has no practical impact on the understanding of the text.

A second type of variant is classified as “minor differences that do not affect translation or that involve synonyms.”²⁰ An example of this type of variant is noted in the words, “Jesus loves Paul.” There are at minimum, sixteen different ways to express this phrase in the Greek language and each alternate rendering is accounted as a textual variant, despite the very same practical meaning.²¹ Moreover, in the Greek language, the definite article “the” (τὸν > *ton*) often preceded a proper noun/name, but at other times, it was omitted. Hence, a copyist could cite an individual as “the Paul,” while at other times referencing the same individual without the article (Paul) with the same individual in mind. Thus, when this second largest category of variant is considered in light of the first, the student of the NT text has accounted for the large preponderance of textual variation, with no damage being done to the clarity of the text.

The third category of textual variant that is seen is classified as “meaningful variants that are not viable.” These types of variants deal with readings that are, “found in a single manuscript or group of manuscripts that, by themselves, have little likelihood of going back to the wording of the original text.”²² Perhaps the best example of this third category, as cited by Kostenberger, Kruger and Wallace, is found in 1 Thess 2:9, where the majority of MSS read, “the gospel of God,” with a single, late MS reading “the gospel of Christ.” In short, there is little chance that a single reading such as this could have survived centuries of reproduction without any previous

²⁰ Ibid., 477.

²¹ Just a short example of this is seen in these five examples; 1. Ἰησοῦς ἀγαπᾷ Παῦλον 2. Ἰησοῦς ἀγαπᾷ τὸν Παῦλον 3. ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀγαπᾷ Παῦλον 4. ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀγαπᾷ τὸν Παῦλον 5. Παῦλον Ἰησοῦς ἀγαπᾷ. In all of these examples, the exact same thought is expressed, “Jesus loves Paul.”

²² Ibid., 517.

witness and then come back into the TT tradition. Hence, the variant itself is meaningful, but, it is in no way viable in regards to the original reading or autograph.

Another type of this third category of variant is that of *harmonization*. Harmonization takes place when the copyist transposes similar readings from another section of Scripture into the wrong section of the text. For instance, Matthew 9:11 reads in the *NET*, “When the Pharisees saw this they said to his disciples; ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’” (Matt 9:11, *NET*). A similar, parallel reading of this verse is found in Lk 5:30, “But the Pharisees and their experts in the law complained to his disciples, saying, ‘Why do you eat *and drink* with tax collectors and sinners?’” (Lk 5:30, *NET, emphasis added*). Of interest when these two verses are considered in relationship with one another is the variant that is found in Matthews Gospel, with some MSS adding the words “and drink” into the text.²³ Assuming the scribes intent in these changes is impossible to determine. Was this scribal error intentional, with the scribe himself attempting to correct what he deemed as a wayward copy of the text? Was the scribe simply more accustomed to the Lukian rendering of this text and as a result, transposed that reading into Matthew? The honest scholar will readily admit that we will never know the answer to such a question, despite the best efforts of critics of the faith such as Bart Ehrman, who dogmatically asserts, “This scribal tendency to ‘harmonize’ passages in the Gospels is ubiquitous. Whenever the same story is told in different Gospels, one scribe or another is likely to have made sure that the accounts are perfectly in harmony, eliminating differences by strokes of their pens.”²⁴

²³ The following is the textual data from the SBLGNT textual apparatus on Matt 9:11: ἔλεγον] κ B C L W f1 33 892 1010 al NR CEI Riv TILC NM εἶπον] D Θ 0233 f13 Byz ς ND Dio Nv ἐσθίει ὁ διδάσκαλος ὑμῶν] Byz ς WH ἐσθίετε καὶ πίνετε] syr *sedes*] it^k ἐσθίετε καὶ πίνει ὁ διδάσκαλος ὑμῶν] M 565 al cop^{mae23}

²⁴ Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible*, (New York, NY. HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), 97.

An assertion such as this is impossible to reach given the historical data, if Ehrman is claiming that there was a conspiracy amongst scribes to alter the text in such a fashion as to make the Christology of Christ more bedrock than before. Is it likely that certain scribes attempted to harmonize in the manner that Ehrman is asserting? Yes, this is a possibility and almost a certainty. Yet, as already noted, it is just as likely that in many cases, these scribes were simply in error and that there was no grand conspiracy behind the instances of textual harmonization. On this section of Ehrman's text, Wallace states, "Although Ehrman overstates the point, it is true that narrative harmonization was a stronger impetus than a high Christology . . . They even did so in such a way that would, at times, turn high Christology into a highly suspect Christology."²⁵ Hence, as Wallace points out, despite the intent of the scribe, harmonization was not as rampant in the area of high Christology as Ehrman would assert and was even counterproductive to this idea at times. Moreover, since a great deal of harmonization took place within the later MSS tradition,²⁶ after significant Christological conclusions had already been drawn, it is more reasonable to conclude that harmonization was the result of error or esthetics and not, in many cases, to improve a Christology that was already fixed.

The final category of textual variants is variants that are both meaningful and viable. This is by far the smallest of the variant categories, accounting for one percent or less of the entirety of textual variation. For a variant to be both meaningful and viable means that the understanding or clarity of the text to some degree is in dispute. Using Rom 5:1 as an example, Wallace explains

²⁵ Daniel B Wallace, ed. *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament: Manuscripts, Patristic, and Apocryphal Evidence*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2011), 52-53.

²⁶ Wallace states; "Scribes had a tendency to harmonize parallel passages in Mark, Matthew, and Luke. Two groups of manuscripts, known as the Western text and the Byzantine text, especially did this kind of thing . . . Since it is a known scribal practice to harmonize the wording between two Gospels," the reading that does not harmonize is typically considered to be authentic. *Especially when such non-harmonizations are found in earlier manuscripts*, the evidence that there is no harmonization is convincing that these readings are authentic." Ibid., Kostenberger, Kruger, Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus*, 520-524, *emphasis added*.

this type of variant when he states, “Does Paul say, ‘We have peace’ (*echomen*) or ‘let us have peace’ (*echomen*)? The difference between the indicative and subjunctive mood is a single letter. The similar sounding omicron (o) and omega (w) were most likely pronounced alike in Hellenistic Greek (as they are in later Greek), making the decision even more difficult. Indeed, scholars are split on this textual problem.”²⁷ Hence, there is point-in-fact, variant readings that are questionable and in dispute and not all in the area of textual criticism has been settled. However, variation such as this does not affect the overall rendering of the Gospel message, despite the one percent or less of variation that falls into fourth and critical category.

Additional and perhaps the most well known meaningful and viable variants come by way of the long ending of the Mk (16:9-20) and the *pericope adulterae* of Jn 7:53-8:11. Both of these variants are clearly identified as later additions to the MS tradition via the Greek witness; the very witness that provides the textual scholar with the issue of textual variation. Hence, for the NT skeptic, the issue of textual variation cuts both ways. First, they attempt to produce a case via the existing variant MSS in hopes to prove unreliability. However, it this same MS tradition that allows the careful textual critic to reproduce and even identify variant readings from what is, “far and away the best-attested work of Greek or Latin literature in the ancient world.”²⁸

TEXT TYPES, CONFLATION AND TENACITY

Text-Types

The rapid reproduction of the NT autographs and early manuscripts caused widespread distribution of the text of the NT throughout the entire known world in very quick order. Because of this rapid distribution, “families” or “types” of texts are identified within the TT tradition.

²⁷ Ibid., 538-540.

²⁸ Ibid., 627-628.

Most of the papyri MSS originate from the region of Alexandria, Egypt. Hence, this text-type is known as the Alexandrian family. Typically considered the most reliable MSS, the Alexandrian texts are usually the oldest of the MSS in existence and provide the textual scholar with an early and reliable witness of the first centuries of TT.

A second text-type hails from the area of Byzantium and is known as the Byzantine text-type. This family consists mainly of uncial and minuscule manuscripts²⁹ and provides more MS evidence than any of its counterparts. Dubbed the “Majority Text” because of its sheer numbers, this second text-type provides a consistent and uninterrupted stream of transmission up to the pre-reformation era. A third text-type comes by way of the Western Roman Empire and is known as the Western text-type. This family of MSS is found in both Greek and Latin and is an important witness in the MS tradition. The fourth and final text family is the Caesarean text family. This type of MS is disputed as to its existence with some scholars such as Black not even listing it as a viable type; with others, such as James R. White listing it with the qualification that this “family” is “disputed by some.”³⁰

Conflation and Expansion

Of the four possible text-types, it is the Alexandrian and Byzantine families of MSS that are most relied upon, for differing reasons. Within these two traditions, the Alexandrian text is typically the shorter, more concise reading; with the later Byzantine readings demonstrating an “expansion of piety”³¹ and a possible variety of other traditional readings, known as *Conflation*. James R. White explains, “Most . . . believe the Byzantine represents a later period in which

²⁹ Ibid., White, 71.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 72.

readings from other text-types were put together (conflated) into the Byzantine readings. This is not to say the Byzantine does not contain some distinctive and very ancient readings, but rather, that the readings *unique* to that text-type are generally secondary or later readings.”³² The expansion of piety in the Byzantine text can be demonstrated by the following example: where the Alexandrian text would provide a rendering of “Lord” or “Lord Jesus,” the Byzantine reading might cite the same text as “Lord Jesus Christ.” This is a vital point to recognize when one considers the criticism that many aim towards the modern translations of the Bible and their supposed removal of the deity and/or Lordship of Christ. Meaning, the rendering of the modern translations, which almost always place their weight on the “Critical Text,” which relies heavily on the Alexandrian family, has not “removed” readings or titles concerning the deity or Lordship of Christ, but rather, is utilizing a textual tradition that never contained them in the first place. Hence, translation committees simply do not have, or do not utilize the expanded MSS that offer such readings.

Tenacity

One key element in evaluating the reliability of the textual tradition is the issue of the *textual tenacity*. Textual scholars Kurt and Barbara Aland define tenacity as, “a stubborn resistance of the readings and the text types to change.”³³ Textual tenacity posits that readings that are introduced into the MS tradition do not disappear, but rather, remain in the textual tradition. White explains the significance of this point when he states; “Why is this so important? Because readings just don’t ‘disappear’ in the New Testament. And this means *we still have the original*

³² Ibid., 71-72.

³³ Kurt Aland, Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing., 1995), 69.

readings of the New Testament works.”³⁴ In essence, when the whole of the MS tradition is considered and variants, conflation and expansion are brought into view, it is appropriate to proclaim that the NT MS tradition is a one thousand piece jigsaw puzzle with one thousand and twenty-five pieces. Meaning, the transmission tradition has more information than was present in the original autographs, but, it is not lacking the original readings, because readings do not disappear in the MS tradition. Hence, the reader of the NT can rest with confidence that they are reading the words of the original author, as inspired by the Spirit of YHWH, even if some of these readings may be in dispute or not as clear as other NT readings.

THE UNAVOIDABLE CONCLUSION

When the whole of TT is considered and variant readings, types of variants, types of MS distribution, conflation and tenacity are taken into account, a few bold yet factual statements can be made. First, there was no point in history when the text of the NT was localized. Meaning, at no point has someone or some entity ever possessed the whole of the MS tradition and as a result, it is impossible that wholesale changes have been made to the message contained therein. This is a vital point when one considers the oft proclaimed yet shallow criticism of the NT which is stated in terms of, “How do we know that the Bible has not been changed by some power hungry group after all of these years?” Because of the uncontrolled transmission method and the widespread distribution of the NT texts, this criticism is an impossibility and is found wanting. Any wholesale changing of the NT text would show up in one of the four presented streams of TT via the text-type families. However, the evidence is opposed to this type of criticism, showing a consistent, albeit somewhat different message of the NT due to minor variations.

³⁴ Ibid., 78.

Next, concerning textual variants and the reliability of the text, the NT is at least ninety-nine percent pure in its transmissional condition, with variants that are *meaningful and viable* constituting one percent or less of all textual variation. This point is explained nicely by Gregory Koukl when he states, “What can we conclude from the evidence? Virtually all of the 400,000 differences in the New Testament documents—spelling errors, inverted words, non-viable variants and the like—are completely inconsequential . . . This means that our New Testament is over 99% pure. In the entire text of 20,000 lines, only 40 lines are in doubt (about 400 words), and none affects any significant doctrine.”³⁵ Further, “no cardinal doctrine depends on any plausible variant,”³⁶ states Wallace, a point readily admitted by Ehrman when he states in the Q&A section of *Misquoting Jesus*, “The position I argue for in *Misquoting Jesus* does not actually stand at odds with Prof. Metzger’s position that essential Christian beliefs are not affected by textual variants in the manuscript tradition of the New Testament.”³⁷

Finally, the *tenacity of the text* of the NT assures the student of Scripture and fair-minded scholar alike that they are reading the inspired words of the original authors; words that in some cases are hidden beneath generations of variants. This principle gives the textual scholar confidence that the original readings of the NT are present in the realm of TT and that it is possible in the future to come to an even more pure reproduction of the original text of the NT.

With this information in mind, the student of the NT can feel confident in the text that is before them. God in His providence has provided a manner of transmission that allowed for the widespread distribution of the NT text and in this sense, provided a manner for the words of

³⁵ Gregory Koukl, "Misquoting Jesus? Answering Bart Ehrman." (*Stand to Reason*, Sept/Oct 2010), 264-266, Kindle.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Kostenberger, Kruger, Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus*, 1128-1129.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Wallace, *Revisiting the Corruption of the NT*, 55.

eternal life to reach the masses. This is an essential point to note, for, “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom 10:17, *ESV*).³⁸

³⁸ For further study, see Appendix B of this essay.

APPENDIX A

Figure 1: Number of Variant Readings (400,000) v. Words in the GNT (138,000)

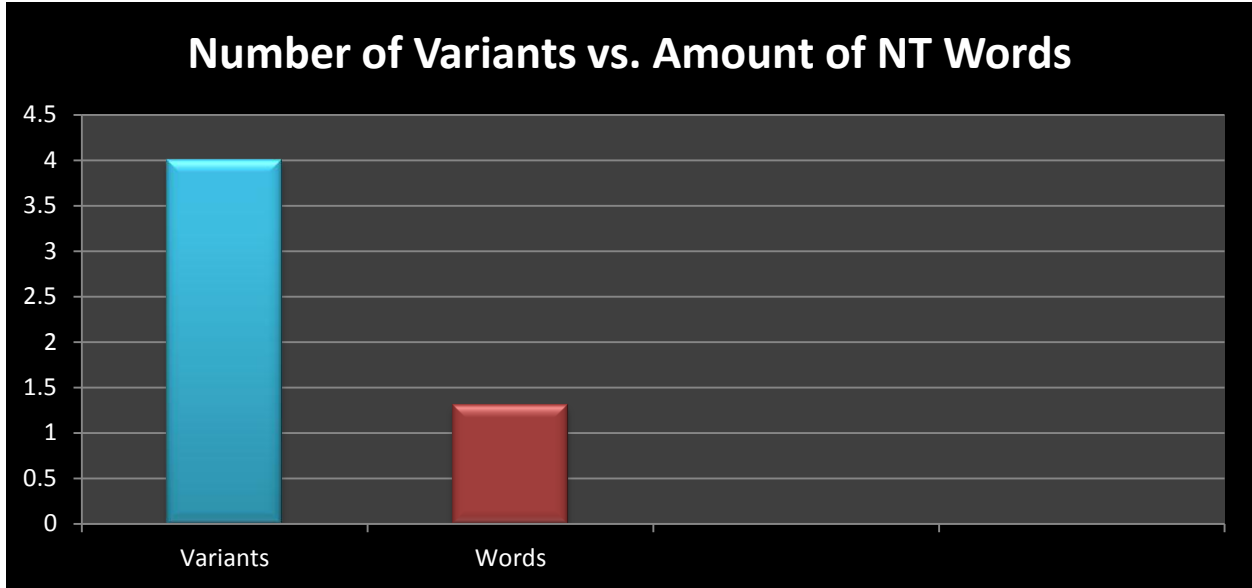


Figure 1: Number of Variants 400,000, GNT words 138,000 (Produced by Jeffrey S. Krause).

Figure 2: Number of Variants after First Three Categories of Textual Variation are Eliminated

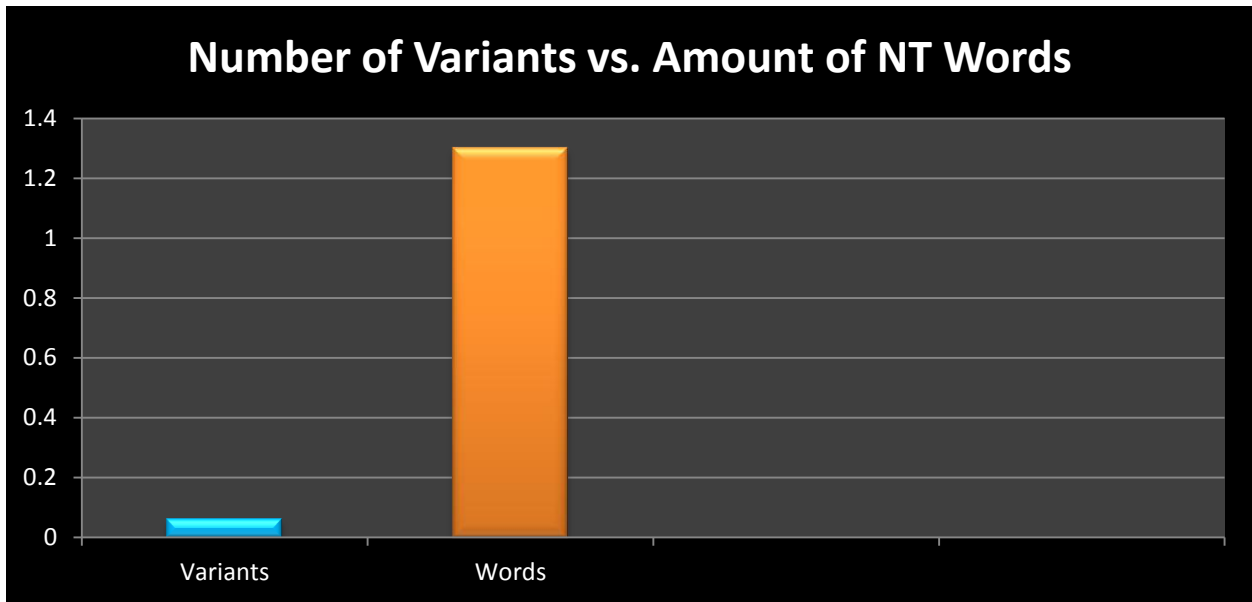


Figure 2: Chart includes only meaningful and viable variants (Produced by Jeffrey S. Krause).

APPENDIX B

For further study, see the following titles (listed by relevance):

- 1) White, James R. *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust Modern Translations?* 2nd. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2009.
- 2) Black, David A. *New Testament Textual Criticism: A Concise Guide*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994.
- 3) Mounce, William B. *Greek for the Rest of Us: Mastering Bible Study Without Mastering Biblical Languages*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003. In this title, Mounce has a masterful section on the translation process that is very helpful to the student of Scripture.

APPENDIX C

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