

Consider the following facts about the N.T. Texts

- 124 ancient Greek N.T. manuscripts have been dated to within 300 years after the originals.

- 12 of those manuscripts (from the 2nd Century) date to within 100 years after the originals (these include portions of all four gospels, nine books of Paul, Acts, Hebrews, and Revelation.)

- We also have early translations (2nd and 3rd Century) of the N.T. into Latin, Coptic, Syriac, and other less prominent languages. Combined with the Greek texts we have over 20,000 early handwritten witnesses of the N.T.

THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT IS THIS...

NONE of doctrines, commandments, or principles taught in the Bible are altered in any way as a result of the minor variations in the text. **ALL** of the doctrines and principles taught by our Lord and His Apostles remain intact, trustworthy, and authoritative.

Compare the Book of Mormon (B.O.M.)

FACTS – There are **NOT ANY** existent ancient manuscripts of the Book of Mormon in the original language (said to be Reformed Egyptian).

- All B.O.M. manuscripts are in English, the oldest English texts are less than 200 yrs old.

- BYU Professor Royal Skousen was hired by the LDS Church to conduct "The Critical Text Project" of the B.O.M. and, according to Skousen, there are over 105,000 variant readings contained within the English texts of the Book of Mormon.

- Therefore, if you can't trust the Bible, you certainly cannot trust the Book of Mormon.

THE RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

FACTS - There are approximately 400,000 word variants in the ancient handwritten Greek manuscripts of the New Testament (N.T.).

- There are only 138,162 total words in the Greek N.T.

- Considering this alone, one might conclude that there are 3 variants per word – YIKES!!!

"Here's the rest of the story..."

99% of all variants do not impact the meaning of the word or phrase in any way - (they are spelling, grammar, punctuation, or word order and the majority of these variants are so minor you could not translate them into English.) This means 1% of the variants might be a problem.

1% of 400,000 = 4,000 meaningful variants in 138,162 N.T. words which is only about 2.9% of the text. And less than half of the 4,000 meaningful variants are "**VIABLE**".

What is viability? Viable means the variant word can be significant enough to alter meaning, plus scholars are uncertain as to the original word in the text.

When considering viability we are looking at a very small number of meaningful variants... there are approx. 1,500 to 2,000 viable variants.

In reality only about 1.4% of the words in the ancient hand written Greek manuscripts could be considered viable variants. This would equate to only one viable variant in every three pages of ancient handwritten text.

Therefore, when you hear someone throw out the number "400,000 variant readings" you are dealing with a person who is: **#1)** Ignorant of the facts or **#2)** Just trying to upset your faith.

OTHER FACTS THEY WON'T TELL YOU

The more manuscripts you have, the more potential exists for variations between texts.

If there is only one existing manuscript, how many variants would be in consideration? None! And let's say there is only one text from say 700 years after the original was written. There would be no variant words, but there would also be no concrete reasons to trust that the text contains the same message as the original.

Presently there are 5,780 catalogued hand copied manuscripts of the Greek New Testament.

- The average of which is 200 pages long.
- That equates to well over a million pages of ancient handwritten Greek text.
- That is a lot of handwritten text which also adds a much greater probability for variation.

FACTS - Literally 1,000's of hand copied New Testament manuscripts were created during the first 250 years of the church. Ordinary everyday Christians were simply copying and re-copying the letters of the apostles. These copies were then passed from person to person and from church to church. It should be noted that during this time, the Christian Church faced severe persecution and was scattered to the far reaches of the Roman Empire (from about 67 A.D. until 325 A.D.).

THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT POINT!!!

Because the N.T. texts were scattered throughout Asia Minor, Africa, and Europe, it would have been absolutely impossible for there to have been any governmental or ecclesiastical control over these manuscript copies.

Consider this summary...

- There are approx. 1,500–2,000 viable variants.
- Found in over a million pages of hand copied text.
- Spanning over a period of over 1,500 years (prior to the invention and common use of the printing press) this is an amazingly small % of the text -- Reflecting an amazingly accurate history of transmission.
- Also consider that the New Testament is the earliest and most widely attested work of all of antiquity – nothing else comes even close - (except for the Old Testament).

<u>Author</u>	<u>No. of Existing Texts</u>	<u>Time Span to Earliest Surviving Copies</u>
Caesar	10	1,000 yrs
Plato (<i>Tetralogies</i>)	7	1,200 yrs
Tacitus (<i>Annals</i>)	20	1,000 yrs
Pliny the Younger (<i>History</i>)	7	750 yrs
Suetonius (<i>De Vita Caesarum</i>)	8	800 yrs
Homer (<i>Iliad</i>)	643	500 yrs
New Testament	5,752	25-100 yrs

So, if you are going to question the accuracy of the N.T. (or Old Testament) texts, you must question all of antiquity. If we can't trust the Bible, we can have absolutely no certainty of ancient history.