

Name: _____

Apologetics Homework Assignment 20

How do we know the Bible is true?

Workbook pages 45-48

For today's assignment, you will read a selection from the book *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, edited by Josh McDowell (1999), p. 37-39, printed on the back of this paper. Read the selection, then answer the questions.

Note that the abbreviations "MS" and "MSS" refers to the word "manuscript" and "manuscripts," respectively. A manuscript is an ancient copy of a writing—specifically, the actual, physical object on which the writing is found (like a piece of papyrus on which is written part of the Gospel of John).

1. According to Greenlee, what is the time interval between the oldest known manuscripts (MSS) of most Greek classical authors and the death of those authors?

2. By contrast, how far removed from the original writings are some virtually complete New Testament books as well as extensive fragmentary manuscripts of the N.T.?

3. According to Bruce Metzger, how many manuscripts of Velleius Paterculus's history of Rome survived to modern times?

4. What happened to that manuscript after it was copied by Beatus Rhenanus at Amerbach?

5. What happened to the only known manuscript of the *Epistle to Dignetus* in 1870? _____

6. What two qualities of John Rylands's manuscript of the Gospel of John tend to confirm the traditional date of the composition of the Gospel at the end of the 1st century?

A. _____

B. _____

7. Before the discovery of John Rylands's manuscript of the Gospel of John, what year did professors such as Ferdinand Christian Baur argue was the earliest possible date that it could have been composed?

8. What three qualities about the New Testament lead Ravi Zacharias to conclude that it is the best attested ancient writing?

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

9. According to the chart, what is the time gap between when Tacitus's *Annals* was originally written and when its earliest surviving manuscript was written?

Memory Work:

2 Timothy 3:16-17: All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Greenlee writes in *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* about the time gap between the original MS (the autograph) and the extant MS (the oldest surviving copy), saying,

The oldest known MSS of most of the Greek classical authors are dated a thousand years or more after the author's death. The time interval for the Latin authors is somewhat less, varying down to a minimum of three centuries in the case of Virgil. In the case of the N.T., however, two of the most important MSS were written within 300 years after the N.T. was completed, and some virtually complete N.T. books as well as extensive fragmentary MSS of many parts of the N.T. date back to one century from the original writings. (Greenlee, INTTC, 16)

Greenlee adds,

Since scholars accept as generally trustworthy the writings of the ancient classics even though the earliest MSS were written so long after the original writings and the number of extant MSS is in many instances so small, it is clear that the reliability of the text of the N.T. is likewise assured. (Greenlee, INTTC, 16)

Bruce Metzger, in *The Text of the New Testament*, cogently writes of the comparison:

The works of several ancient authors are preserved to us by the thinnest possible thread of transmission. For example, the compendious history of Rome by Velleius Paterculus survived to modern times in only one incomplete manuscript, from which the *editio princeps* was made—and this lone manuscript was lost in the seventeenth century after being copied by Beatus Rhenanus at Amerbach. Even the *Annals* of the famous historian Tacitus is extant, so far as the first six books are concerned, in but a single manuscript, dating from the ninth century. In 1870 the only known manuscript of the *Epistle to Diognetus*, an early Christian composition which editors usually include in the corpus of Apostolic Fathers, perished in a fire at the municipal library in Strasbourg. In contrast with these figures, the textual critic of the New Testament is embarrassed by the wealth of his material. (Metzger, TNT, 34)

John Rylands's MS (A.D. 130) is located in the John Rylands Library of Manchester, England (oldest extant fragment of the New Testament). "Because of its early date and location (Egypt), some distance from the traditional place of composition (Asia Minor), this portion of the Gospel of John tends to confirm the traditional date of the composition of the Gospel about the end of the 1st century." (Geisler, GIB, 268)

Bruce Metzger speaks of defunct criticism: "Had this little fragment been known during the middle of the past century, that school of New Testament criticism which was inspired by the brilliant Tübingen professor, Ferdinand Christian Baur, could not have argued that the Fourth Gospel was not composed until about the year 160." (Metzger, TNT, 39)

F. F. Bruce writes: "There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament." (Bruce, BP, 178)

Compared with nearly 5,700 Greek manuscripts of the NT, the chart on the next page demonstrates the poverty of manuscripts of some other ancient documents. (Geisler, GIB, 408)

No wonder Ravi Zacharias concludes: "In real terms, the New Testament is easily the best attested ancient writing in terms of the sheer number of documents, the time span between the events and the document, and the variety of documents available to sustain or contradict it. There is nothing in ancient manuscript evidence to match such textual availability and integrity." (Zacharias, CMLWG, 162)

AUTHOR	BOOK	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPIES	TIME GAP	NO. OF COPIES
Homer	<i>Iliad</i>	800 B.C.	c. 400 B.C.	c. 400 yrs.	643
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	480–425 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,350 yrs.	8
Thucydides	<i>History</i>	460–400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,300 yrs.	8
Plato		400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,300 yrs.	7
Demosthenes		300 B.C.	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1,400 yrs.	200
Caesar	<i>Gallic Wars</i>	100–44 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,000 yrs.	10
Livy	<i>History of Rome</i>	59 B.C.–A.D. 17	4th cent. (partial) mostly 10th cent.	c. 400 yrs. c. 1,000 yrs.	1 partial 19 copies
Tacitus	<i>Annals</i>	A.D. 100	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1,000 yrs.	20
Pliny Secundus	<i>Natural History</i>	A.D. 61–113	c. A.D. 850	c. 750 yrs.	7
New Testament		A.D. 50–100	c. 114 (fragment) c. 200 (books) c. 250 (most of N.T.) c. 325 (complete N.T.)	+ 50 yrs. 100 yrs. 150 yrs. 225 yrs.	5366