



UNPARALLELED MANUSCRIPT SUPPORT

Author	When Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	Number of Copies
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	900 A.D.	1000 years	10
Tacitus	100 A.D.	1100 A.D.	1000 years	20
Suetonius	75-160 A.D.	950 A.D.	800 years	8
Herodotus	480-425 B.C.	900 A.D.	1300 years	8
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	1100 A.D.	1400 years	49
New Testament	45-100 A.D.	fragment: 125 A.D.; full copies: third and fourth centuries	fragment: 25 years; full copies: 200-300 years	24,000

(compiled from Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*)



VALIDATION FROM ARCHAEOLOGY

Since 1974, 17,000 tablets have been unearthed from ancient Ebla (now northern Syria). These writings corroborate the world of the patriarchs (around 2000 B.C.). In his book *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell states,

The victory of Abraham over Chedolaomer and the Mesopotamian kings has been described as fictitious and the five Cities of the Plain (Sodom, Gomorrah, Adamah, Zeboiim, and Zoar) as legendary. Yet the Ebla archives refer to all five Cities of the Plain and on one tablet the cities are listed in the exact same sequence as Genesis 14. The milieu of the tablets reflect the culture of the patriarchal period and depict that, before the catastrophe recorded in Genesis 14, the area was a flourishing region experiencing prosperity and success, as recorded in Genesis.

In 1963, a tablet was found during a renovation of the amphitheater in Caesarea (on the Mediterranean Sea). This tablet had the name "Pontius Pilate" inscribed on it. Up until that time, the name Pilate was found only in the New Testament and in a few other secular historical sources. This find is just one more validation that the people and events of the Bible are real.

It seems strange that the text of Shakespeare, which has been in existence less than two hundred and eight years, should be far more uncertain and corrupt than that of the New Testament, now over eighteen centuries old. . . . With perhaps a dozen or twenty exceptions, the text of every verse in the New Testament may be said to be . . . settled by general consent. . . . But in every one of Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays there are probably a hundred readings still in dispute. . . .

—John Lea, *The Greatest Book in the World*



VALIDATION FROM SECULAR SOURCES

Often nonbiblical sources describe events as recorded in the Bible. The following are a few examples:

Now some of the Jews thought that Herod's army had been destroyed by God, and that it was a very just penalty to avenge John, surnamed the Baptist. For Herod had killed him, though he was a good man, who bade the Jews practise virtue, be just one to another and pious toward God, and come together in baptism.

—Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities XVIII.5.2*,
writing around 100 A.D.

Hence to suppress the rumor, he falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also.

—Tacitus, *Annals XV.44*,
writing around 100 A.D.

They affirmed, however, that the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verse a hymn to Christ as to a god, and bound themselves to a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft, adultery, never to falsify their word, not to deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up.

—Pliny, Governor of Bithynia,
Epistles X.96, writing to the emperor Trajan,
explaining what the Christians
he arrested said to him



TRANSLATION VS. TRANSMISSION

People sometimes confuse the effects of *translation* (creating a new document in a new language) with the effects of *transmission* (copying a document word-for-word to make a second, identical document). An ancient document can be translated into a thousand different languages, and as long as we keep going back to the oldest manuscripts for each new translation, the number of translations has no bearing on the accuracy of the version before us. Virtually every English Bible around today has been translated from ancient Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. Scholars who make a modern translation do not use more recent versions, and certainly don't go to other translations (for example, a French Bible) as a source; instead, they start with the oldest and most reliable manuscripts of the Old and New Testament, and then make their translation fresh from those primary sources (which are very close to the original writings).



CAREFUL COPYING TECHNIQUES

The scribes who copied the Bible were trained professionals, with stringent job performance standards. For example, rules for the Talmudists (100–500 A.D.) included:

No word or letter must be written from memory without the scribe looking at the codex before him

Between every consonant the width of a hair or thread must intervene

Between every section (parashah) the breadth of nine consonants

Between every book, three lines

The fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line, but the rest need not do so

The copyist must sit in full Jewish dress and be recently bathed

He should not begin to write the name of God with a p newly dipped in ink

If a king addresses him while writing the divine name, the scribe should ignore him

The Massoretes who followed (500–900 A.D.) likewise exercised great care in copying. As Sir Frederick Kenyon noted in *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*,

They numbered the verses, words, and letters of every book. They calculated the middle word and the middle letter of each. They enumerated verses which contained all the letters of the alphabet, or a certain number of them; and so on. These trivialities, as we may rightly consider them, had yet the effect of securing minute attention to the precise transmission of the text; and they are but an excessive manifestation of a respect for the sacred scriptures which in itself deserves nothing but praise. The Massoretes were indeed anxious that not one jot nor tittle, not one smallest letter nor one tiny part of a letter, of the Law should pass away or be lost.