

NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS, TEXTUAL FAMILIES, AND VARIANTS

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Many years ago in Dublin, Ireland, I went to the Trinity College Library to see the Book of Kells. Arguably the most famous illuminated vellum Latin manuscript of the New Testament, it dates to the eighth century AD. On that same trip, I visited the British Library in London, where I viewed some of the earliest uncials (Greek parchment manuscripts written with stylized capital letters) of the New Testament, dating to the fourth and fifth centuries, and later the Chester Beatty Museum in Dublin to see its collection of biblical papyri dating to AD 200–250 (papyri discovered in Egypt and acquired by Beatty in 1931). An even earlier text of the New Testament is a small bit of papyrus containing a few verses from John’s Gospel dating to about AD 125 that resides in the John Rylands Museum in Manchester, England. Found in 1920 in Egypt, it shows that John’s Gospel was circulating at a very early date far from Ephesus, its traditional place of origin.

Which of these New Testament texts is more accurate? The one dated AD 700, AD 350, AD 200, or AD 125? Is an earlier dated text

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always better than a later one? A text from the book of Romans in the Beatty Collection is a case in point: one of the oldest papyrus texts, it dates to AD 200 but has a large percentage of variations when compared with other papyri of that time period.¹ How do we know if the biblical texts we are reading have been copied accurately?

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly” (Article of Faith 8). Joseph learned from Moroni’s quotation of biblical books that the King James Version is not the only acceptable translation (see Joseph Smith—History 1:36). The proliferation of New Testament manuscripts and families of texts since the beginning of the second century AD illustrates the Prophet’s need to qualify our acceptance of the Bible as it has come down to us today. What follows is an overview of the various textual families of the New Testament, an explanation of the major theories concerning the causes of textual variants, and examples of each. It will support Joseph Smith’s vision of needing a more accurate translation and transmission of the Bible in order to more clearly understand the doctrine of the Lord’s covenants with the house of Israel.

THE NEED FOR A CLEAR TRANSLATION

Soon (probably within a century) after the word of God flowed from the mouths and pens of the Apostles and leaders in New Testament times, plain and precious truths concerning Christ and His covenants with the house of Israel were removed. Joseph Smith referred to textual corruption when he stated, “From sundry revelations which had been received, it was apparent that many important points touching the salvation of men, had been taken from the Bible, or lost before it was compiled.”² He further stated, “I believe the Bible, as it ought to be, as it came from the pen of the original writers.”³

This textual corruption occurred in two ways. The first happened early and intentionally, resulting in the loss of whole doctrines and entire books (see 1 Nephi 13:26–29).⁴ A second type of textual corruption occurred generally after the time when plain and precious truths were removed. Well-meaning scribes made inadvertent errors or believed they were improving the text by clarifying passages that appeared unclear, so that small errors built up over decades and

centuries until there were hundreds of variants from one manuscript to another.

When Moroni visited Joseph Smith three times during the night of September 21, 1823, he quoted several passages of scripture to illustrate the nature of the mission that lay before the young prophet, as well as some of the biblical prophecies that were about to be fulfilled. Joseph noticed that Moroni quoted some passages differently than they appeared in his King James Version of the Bible (see Joseph Smith—History 1:36–39). This may be the first time Joseph was introduced to the idea that the Bible was not transmitted accurately but that through “the gift and power of God” the truth could be recovered (see Book of Mormon Title Page; Omni 1:20; Mosiah 8:13; 28:13–16). It is noteworthy that at the time when Joseph Smith received new sacred texts, the field of modern biblical textual criticism was just emerging. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw a growing uneasiness with the accuracy of the Greek texts behind the widely used King James Bible. Textual criticism arose when scholars began to realize that the many Greek manuscripts of the New Testament did not agree in thousands of instances. Around this time, German scholars developed critical methods of editing classical Greek texts that spilled over into biblical textual criticism.⁵ The concepts of collating (comparing and noting variants) and grouping ancient texts into families were applied to the many Greek biblical manuscripts that were coming to light.⁶

FIVE GROUPS OF MANUSCRIPTS

There are today over 5,700 extant manuscripts of the Greek New Testament. These manuscripts are normally divided into four basic groups: papyri, uncials, minuscules, and lectionaries. Papyrus was a writing material derived from a reed plant and was in use as early as the third millennium BC until well into the first millennium AD.⁷ Great quantities of papyri, including biblical papyri, have been preserved in the sands of Egypt. Two of the most important collections of New Testament papyrus manuscripts are those acquired by Chester Beatty of London in 1930–31 and Martin Bodmer of Geneva in 1955. Two significant early papyri manuscripts are P⁶⁶ from the Bodmer collection, which contains a major portion of the Gospel of John and is dated

sometime before AD 200, and P⁴⁵ from Beatty's library, which has portions of all the Gospels and Acts and is dated to the third century. As papyrus became more difficult to obtain, parchment (scraped and prepared animal skin) eventually replaced papyrus around the fourth century for most biblical manuscripts. As a classification of New Testament manuscripts, "uncial" (from "inch-high" letters) refers to parchment texts (similar to papyri with no letter spacing and minimal punctuation). Uncials were written in a formal and careful literary hand using capital letters that were sometimes more rounded than ordinary Greek capitals. This script (also known as "majuscule") was used in biblical texts from the second to the ninth century AD, after which the cursive or "running" hand, known as "minuscule" (small-lettered), became dominant because of its convenience and economy in writing.⁸ Most biblical Greek texts are minuscules of which there are about 2,800. Of these, only a very small number contain the complete New Testament. The smaller yet elegant minuscule script was introduced in the ninth century and continued to be used while texts were copied by hand.⁹

After the minuscules, of all the categories of Greek New Testament manuscript evidence, the lectionaries are the least studied because they preserve only cyclical readings, not running text. Numbering about 2,400 manuscripts, lectionaries are church service books containing readings, or "lections," from the Bible for each day of the church year. They were extremely important to the churches, which could get along without a continuous Bible manuscript for study but definitely needed a lectionary for reading during church services.¹⁰

Though not included in the manuscript evidence, another important source for studying the text of the New Testament is the large body of quotations of the New Testament preserved in the writings of early Christians. Metzger and Ehrman conclude that if all the other Greek manuscripts were lost, almost the entire New Testament could be reconstructed from the writings of the Church Fathers.¹¹ (The term *Church Fathers* refers to the prominent early Christian writers in the first few centuries after the Apostles.) These quotations help place specific readings and types of texts in definite places and times. Two key factors in assessing these quotes are, first, establishing the best text of the writings of the Church Father himself and, second, determining whether

the particular Church Father is paraphrasing a passage, possibly from memory, or quoting verbatim from a manuscript. If a Church Father paraphrased a passage, he would be more likely to introduce elements that were not part of the original text. For example, Irenaeus (about AD 140–202) cites John 1:18 in three different forms:

1. “No man has seen God at any time, the only begotten God . . .”
2. “No man has seen God at any time; except the only begotten Son . . .”
3. “No man has seen God at any time, except the only begotten Son of God . . .”¹²

This verse will be discussed below, but one can see that Irenaeus’ quotations appear to complicate the issue.

MAJOR UNCIALS

Before discussing the major Greek textual families, I will highlight some prominent members of these families. Along with the Beatty and Bodmer papyrus collections, some early uncial texts have exerted the most influence on changes made to modern Bibles. In all, there are approximately 310 uncials. Five important ones are Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, Ephraemi Rescriptus, and Bezae.¹³ These five have enjoyed a prestigious niche in the history of textual criticism. They are quite early and less fragmentary than other manuscripts. Codex Sinaiticus, dated to the fourth century, was discovered in the monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai by Constantin von Tischendorf in 1844 and published in 1862. Tischendorf persuaded the monks of St. Catherine to present the manuscript to the protector of the Greek Church, the czar of Russia, for nine thousand rubles.¹⁴ Years later, in 1933, after the Bolshevik Revolution, the Russians were in need of cash and sold the codex for half a million dollars to the British government. It is now on display in the British Library in London. Because of its importance, it has been assigned the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, aleph, or 01.¹⁵

Codex Alexandrinus, known as “A” or 02, dates from the middle of the fifth century. Sir Thomas Roe (English ambassador to the Ottoman court) first mentioned it in a 1624 letter to the earl of Arundel, stating that he had received “an autographall bible intire” as a gift for the king

of England. Cyril Lucar, patriarch at Constantinople, brought the manuscripts with him from Alexandria (thus the name *Alexandrinus*), where he was previously patriarch. He gave it to Roe in recompense for his help in struggles against the Latin Church.¹⁶ This was the first of the great uncials to be made available to scholars.

Dating to the middle of the fourth century, *Codex Vaticanus* is one of the most valuable manuscripts of the Greek Bible. As the name indicates, it is in the Vatican Library at Rome, where it arrived sometime prior to 1475 (when it was first mentioned in a library catalog). It is designated as “B” or 03 and was not made available to scholars until 1889. Some scholars have suggested that the two oldest parchment manuscripts, *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus*, were originally part of a collection of fifty that were copied according to Constantine’s edict in the fourth century AD.¹⁷

Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus is what is known as a palimpsest (Greek, “rescaped”), a manuscript that has been erased by scraping and washing and then written over. Originally a complete Old and New Testament from the fifth century, it was erased in the twelfth century and used to copy the sermons of Ephraem, a Syrian church father. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, an émigré scholar brought the codex to Florence, after which Catherine de’ Medici brought it to France as part of her dowry. It was considered unreadable until Tischendorf deciphered nearly the entire manuscript in 1843. It is designated as “C” or 04 and currently resides in the National Library in Paris.¹⁸

Codex Bezae (also known as *Cantabrigiensis*) differs significantly from the other four uncials. Presented to Cambridge University by the Protestant scholar Theodore Beza in 1581, it has both Latin and Greek texts. The Gospels are in a different order (Matthew, John, Luke, Mark), and it contains only the Gospels and Acts. Known as “D” or 05, it has been variously dated from the fourth to the sixth century. This manuscript has a remarkable number of variations and was so far removed from the accepted standard Byzantine text that it has been corrected by scribes many times over the centuries. For example, it is the only known Greek text to substitute Luke’s version of Jesus’ genealogy with a form of Matthew’s genealogy in reverse order (beginning with “Joseph, husband of Mary,” instead of Abraham).¹⁹

The early uncials have directly influenced scholarly assessment of New Testament variants. Though these uncials existed prior to the advent of the King James Version, they did not come to light nor were they studied seriously by scholars until the nineteenth century. With the availability of the uncials, along with the gathering of minuscule manuscripts and the discovery of ancient papyri in the twentieth century, the textual evidence for the Bible has increased significantly since the King James translators produced their new version in 1611.

TEXTUAL FAMILIES

For the past few centuries, scholars have catalogued and categorized the papyri and uncials along with the rest of this large group of manuscripts. Since J. A. Bengel first divided New Testament witnesses into three families in 1725,²⁰ scholars have continued to refine a number of criteria for evaluating manuscripts.²¹ Today, there are occasional proposals for regrouping and redefining the families of the extant Greek manuscripts.²² Currently, however, New Testament textual critics generally agree that there are three main text types or “families” of texts, with the possibility of a fourth. The main families are Byzantine, Alexandrian, Western, and possibly Caesarean.

The majority of Greek manuscripts, both uncials and minuscules (in other words, the Majority Text) are from the Byzantine textual family. This is the text type from which the *Textus Receptus* was developed. *Textus receptus* means the “received text,” or the text that has been accepted universally as authoritative since about 1624. It was essentially that published by the Christian theologians Erasmus, Stephanus, and Beza. The *Textus Receptus* was the source for most early English versions of the New Testament. These, in turn, influenced the compilers and translators of the Authorized or King James Version. Codex Alexandrinus and Codex Ephraemi contain mixed readings and are often considered typical examples of the Byzantine family. The Byzantine text type was used by the Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire and originated later than other families. It was widespread during the medieval Christian period, and subsequently manuscripts from this text type were used as the source for the first printed editions of the Greek New Testament. The Byzantine text type is usually regarded

as far removed from the original autographs (manuscripts penned by the authors or their scribes) and probably derived from other text types. It is characterized by the replacement of difficult language with easier terms. For example, Matthew 6:1 says, "Take heed lest you do your alms [Greek, "righteousness" or acts of religious devotion] before men." The Byzantine text replaces "righteousness" with "alms." Another characteristic of the Byzantine text type is harmonization and conflation of variant readings. To *harmonize* is to eliminate contradictions within a text by scribal insertion. *Conflation* occurs when different readings of the same passage are combined. For example, in Matthew 8:26, the Alexandrian textual family has "Do not enter the village," and the Western family has "Do not speak to anyone in the village." The Byzantine text type has "Do not enter and do not speak to anyone in the village."

Because of these characteristics, most scholars have long considered the Byzantine text type less accurate and of lower quality than the earlier Alexandrian family. A few scholars have taken a new look at this family and have found justification for some of its readings, which they feel appear older and more original than previously thought.²³ Most scholars, however, are still persuaded that the Byzantine text type often contains a corrupted text.²⁴

The Alexandrian textual family is usually considered the oldest and most faithful in preserving the original text of the New Testament. Both Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, along with some significant papyri (Bodmer's P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵), contain this text type. The Alexandrian text type is characterized by brevity and austerity and is a probable source for later texts. For example, this text type concludes the Gospel of Mark at 16:8 and omits the story of the adulterous woman in John 8, both of which lack early manuscript support. This does not mean that the omitted passages are untrue but that they may have been placed in these particular chapters after the Gospels were originally written.²⁵

Though some scholars dispute the existence of a distinct Western textual family, most do not.²⁶ The Western family is often found in manuscripts that contain both the Greek and the Latin New Testament. The term *Western* is a bit of a misnomer because members of the

Western text type have been found in the Christian East. This family is represented by Codex Bezae (its most important example) and Codex Claromontanus²⁷ (in Paul's letters), as well as many minuscules and the writings of most of the Syriac Church Fathers. These text types are characterized by extensive paraphrase which results in addition, omission, substitution, and "improvement" of the text. For example, in Luke 23:53, the Western text adds "twenty men could not move the stone." Luke 22:19–20 omits the reference to "the cup after supper" and the reference to Christ's sweat as "great drops of blood" (Luke 22:44) and does not have the prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them . . ." (Luke 23:34).²⁸ Some scholars see evidence that the Western family eventually combined with a distinct eastern or "Caesarean" text, and together they evolved into the Byzantine family.²⁹ The so-called Caesarean text employs mild paraphrase and strives for a certain elegance of expression. It is not as extreme as the Western and so is thought to fall between the Alexandrian and Western text types. However, no typical examples of the Caesarean type exist, and most descriptions of this text type are conjectural.³⁰

Each of these text families has characteristic variant readings by which it is identified. The earliest biblical manuscripts will sometimes contain evidence of more than one textual family from book to book even within one manuscript. There are enough patterns and consistencies among these variations, especially in later manuscripts, that confirm the existence of these families.

The fact that one text type is attested in thousands of manuscripts does not necessarily mean that the family is more original or accurate. Quantity does not equal quality.³¹ Conversely, because a manuscript is dated early and is rare does not automatically mean it is closest to the original (see the discussion of John 1:18 below). Scholars follow certain criteria as they judge individual variants. For example, scholars give more weight to the shorter reading (*lectio brevior*) among variants since scribes tend to add rather than delete.³² In addition, scholars give more weight to the more problematic reading (*lectio difficilior*) among variants because copyists tend to simplify difficult readings.³³ Scholars also give more weight to those variants which are in higher quality manuscripts,

have wide geographical distribution, or appear in more than one textual family.³⁴

THE CAUSES OF VARIANT READINGS

How have these variant readings emerged in thousands of manuscripts? There are two categories of variant readings: intentional and unintentional. Scribes introduced intentional changes when they attempted to improve either the grammar or problematic readings of the text.³⁵ Sometimes scribes harmonized one Gospel with another, or they attempted to clarify a doctrine by adding words or phrases.³⁶ Scribes introduced unintentional changes when they failed to distinguish between letters of similar appearance, or when they erred in their attempt to write out a passage from memory.³⁷ Some scribes failed to hear correctly when transcribing a text that was dictated to them.³⁸ These thousands of variants not only resulted from but also contributed to even more doctrinal confusion in the early Christian church. One aspect of the apostasy occurred early on as the loss of whole books and the corruption of passages of scripture contributed to the loss of doctrinal purity.³⁹ During the late first and early second century, some early Christian leaders abandoned the original gospel covenant as they battled over who would control the infant church.⁴⁰ Today, textual variants can also cause battles over the specific meaning of important passages in the New Testament. The various methods of textual criticism usually involve tracing the transmission of extant manuscripts to the earliest stages. Textual critics also rely on internal criteria such as scribal habits, as well as the author's style, vocabulary, and theology, to determine which variant best suits the passage. All these criteria assist the textual critic to determine which passages are most likely original.⁴¹

TEXTUAL VARIANTS

One of the prominent textual variants in New Testament manuscripts is I John 5:7–8, known as the Johannine Comma. The verses read, “For there are three that bear record *in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*” The italicized words are lacking in all early Greek manuscripts

before the sixteenth century. Without the added phrase, the verses originally read, “For there are three that bear record, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one.” Many early English translations, including the King James, include this spurious phrase. In other words, a passage discussing Christ’s Atonement and being born again by the spirit, water, and blood was altered to include a comparison of these three elements to the Trinity. This addition originated as a marginal note added to certain Latin manuscripts during the fourth century, which was eventually incorporated into the Vulgate manuscripts. Erasmus, who resisted including the variant in his Greek New Testament because he found it in no early Greek manuscripts, was persuaded to include it in his third edition in 1522. Most of Erasmus’s work was later incorporated into the Textus Receptus, which was essentially the source for the King James Version.⁴²

Another interesting textual variant is Luke 23:34, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” These words of Christ as He hung on the cross are absent from the earliest Greek witness, P⁷⁵ (about AD 200). They are also missing from Vaticanus and Bezae and are crossed out in Sinaiticus. It is possible that the prayer was left out of some early manuscripts because some Christians felt Jesus was referring to the Jews who participated in the Crucifixion and could not believe that He would implore God on their behalf. It is also possible that, like the true story of the woman taken in adultery, this true response of the Savior was added later. Although scholars disagree about whether Jesus was referring to the Roman soldiers or the Jews,⁴³ the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible clearly states that Jesus was pleading for forgiveness on behalf of the Roman soldiers (see JST, Luke 23:34).

John 5:3–4 contains another apparent scribal insertion, which describes the tradition of an angel who stirred the waters at the Pool of Bethesda. The verses read: “In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, *waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.*” The italicized passage is missing in the earliest Greek papyri (P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵) as well as Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Ephraemi, and Bezae. Since it is

clear that these words are not original, they are not included in modern English translations.⁴⁴ The italicized words were originally a marginal note, and scribes eventually incorporated them into later manuscripts and then the *Textus Receptus*.

Another variant in John 1:18 reads, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” The early and best manuscripts (P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵, Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Ephraemi) have “the only begotten God” instead of “the only begotten Son” (Alexandrinus; later correctors of Sinaiticus and Ephraemi and many later Byzantine manuscripts). Despite the early manuscript support for “the only Begotten God,” Bart Ehrman feels that “the only begotten Son” is the original reading but was changed from “Son” to “God” by Alexandrian scribes who wanted to emphasize Jesus’ divinity against the beliefs of some Gnostics, centered in Alexandria, who thought that He was merely human and adopted as God’s Son.⁴⁵

CONCLUSION

There are tens of thousands of New Testament variants. Scholars continue to discuss and debate the evidence for variants of all kinds. The field of textual criticism continues to evolve as scholars generate fresh theories and abandon previously established conclusions. Since 1966 the United Bible Societies have published four editions of the Greek New Testament designed for translators and students. The primary changes have been with the “critical apparatus” which continually updates the textual evidence for variant readings. This brief survey of New Testament manuscripts, families of texts, and textual variants has demonstrated that the King James Version contains some errors.

The Prophet Joseph Smith knew that the King James Version was not perfect yet revered its inspired words. He stated that we as a church “believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly” (Article of Faith 8). On one occasion, when he was referring to Malachi 4:5–6, the Prophet taught that he could have “rendered a plainer translation” but that the translation was “sufficiently plain” (D&C 128:18). Thus, although the King James Version contains inaccuracies, it still teaches the truth of the gospel. Thankfully, the Joseph

Smith Translation, modern revelation, and teachings of the prophets and Apostles have clarified many of the issues in the New Testament. For Latter-day Saints, a careful study of early manuscripts and textual variants accompanied by responsible scholarship and the Spirit of the Lord may bear fruit. Perhaps Latter-day Saint scholars can discover additional insights from a study of the critical text of the Greek New Testament and modern English translations, in addition to the King James, which are based upon better manuscripts. As we identify scribal and translation errors, we can gain a better understanding of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and His earliest followers while they established the infant church in the meridian of time.

NOTES

1. Frederic Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, rev. A. W. Adams (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 188–89.
2. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 9–10.
3. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 256.
4. See Bible Dictionary, “Lost Books,” 725; John Gee, “The Corruption of Scripture in Early Christianity,” in *Early Christians in Disarray*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2005), 163–204; Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
5. According to Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, three German scholars—Friedrich Wolf (1759–1824), Immanuel Bekker (1785–1871), and Karl Lachmann (1793–1851)—were the first to prepare critical editions of Greek texts and to introduce the concept of textual families (see Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 2005], 206).
6. Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 71–125; Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 206–9.
7. John C. Trever, “Papyrus,” in *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. G. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 3:649.
8. Eldon J. Epp, “Uncials,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:418.
9. Jack Finegan, *Encountering New Testament Manuscripts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 31–32; Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 20.

10. Klaus Junack, "Lectionaries," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 4:271.
11. Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 126–27.
12. See *Against Heresies*, 4.20.11; 4.20.6; 3.11.6, in Finegan, *Encountering New Testament Manuscripts*, 167–68.
13. Some other important Greek manuscripts include Codex Claromontanus (D^o or 06) of the sixth century and Codex Washingtonensis (I or 016) from the fifth century, which both contain portions of the Pauline Epistles.
14. Later accounts of Tischendorf's transaction with the monks have attempted to discredit the agreement once the true value of the manuscript continued to come to light (see James Bentley, *Secrets of Mount Sinai: The Story of the World's Oldest Bible* [New York: Doubleday, 1986], 106–15).
15. The Trustees of the British Museum, *The Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Alexandrinus* (Oxford: University Press, 1963), 5–8.
16. British Museum, *The Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Alexandrinus*, 30–31.
17. Constantine wished to provide copies of the scripture for new churches to be built in Constantinople, so he requested that Eusebius produce without delay "fifty copies of the sacred Scriptures . . . to be written on fine parchment." Other scholars refute this account by noting that the text of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus is a different type than the one usually employed by Eusebius. They point to Egypt as the place of origin for Vaticanus (see Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 15–16).
18. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 109.
19. Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 70–73.
20. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 71–125; Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 159.
21. For a discussion of the theories of J. Griesbach, B. F. Wescott, F. J. A. Hort, H. F. von Soden, H. Leitzmann, F. G. Kenyon, and B. H. Streeter, see Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 165–94; J. Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 81–88; Finegan, *Encountering New Testament Manuscripts*, 61–73; Eldon J. Epp and Gordon D. Fee, *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 274–97; Epp, "Textual Criticism," in Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:427–33.
22. See, for example, Aland and Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, 317–37; Eldon J. Epp, "Decision Points in New Testament Textual Criticism," 37–39, "The Significance of the Papyri For Determining the Nature of the New Testament Text in the Second Century: A Dynamic View of Textual Transmission," in Epp and Fee, *Studies in the Theory and Method*, 274–97.
23. Epp, "Textual Criticism," 6:422.
24. See Daniel B. Wallace, "The Majority Text Theory," in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and M. W. Holmes (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 297–320.
25. Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 316–27.

26. Aland and Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, 54–55.
27. Epp, “Textual Criticism,” 6:421.
28. D. Ewert, *A General Introduction to the Bible: From Ancient Tablets to Modern Translations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 160.
29. Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 307–10; Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, 81–88.
30. Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 310–11; Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, 89–90.
31. For example, most Byzantine and Alexandrian manuscripts have the voice of the Father at Jesus’ baptism saying, “Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11; Luke 3:23). But one early manuscript, Codex Bezae of the Western text type, says, “Thou art my beloved Son, today I have begotten you.”
32. In Romans 8:1, early manuscripts (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Bezae) do not include the ending phrase, “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” which was a marginal explanatory note probably taken from verse 4. This phrase eventually was incorporated into the text in later manuscripts and remains in the English KJV and NIV.
33. Mark 1:2 was originally “As it is written in Isaiah the prophet” (in Alexandrian, Western, and Caesarean witnesses) but was changed in later Byzantine manuscripts to “As it is written in the prophets,” because the quote that follows in verses 2–3 is a composite of Isaiah and Malachi.
34. Epp, “Textual Criticism,” 6:431.
35. In words of the angel chorus in Luke 2:14, the addition of one Greek letter (sigma) at the end of the noun *eudokia* (goodwill) changes the case of the noun to “of goodwill” (*eudokias*). The phrase becomes “peace to men of goodwill.” This variant is in the oldest witnesses of the Alexandrian and Western texts. The meaning becomes one in which peace at Christ’s birth comes not to everyone but only to those of goodwill.
36. In Luke 11:2–4, a majority of manuscripts have changed a shorter version of the Lord’s Prayer to the longer version in Matthew 6:9–13.
37. 1 Timothy 3:16 reads: “God was manifested in the flesh,” while the preferred reading according to the best manuscripts is “Who was manifested in the flesh.” The abbreviation of the word “God” (which was often used in religious texts) in Greek looks like the pronoun *who*.
38. In Revelation 1:5, “and washed us from our sins,” the late manuscripts have the Greek word *lousanti* (washed), while the early texts (Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Ephraemi) have *lusanti* (loosed), which could have been pronounced the same and confused if the scribes were copying from oral dictation (see Ewert, *General Introduction to the Bible*, 152–55).
39. See Colossians 4:16, which refers to an “epistle from Laodicea” that is lost to us.
40. For example, see Diatrophes versus John in 3 John 9–10; see also Reynolds, “What Went Wrong for the Early Christians?”; “The Decline of Covenant in Early Christian Thought”; “New Testament Evidences and Prophecies of Apostasy in

the First-Century Church,” in Reynolds, *Early Christians in Disarray*, 1–28; 295–324; 355–70.

41. Epp, “Textual Criticism,” 6:432.

42. Metzger and Ehrman, *Text of the New Testament*, 146. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 80–82.

43. Bentley, *Secrets of Mount Sinai*, 134; Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 191–93.

44. Bruce M. Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1975), 209.

45. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 198; Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 161–62; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), 4:740 ff.14; Epp, “Gnosticism,” in Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 2:1035–39.