

## Bibliographical Test

The bibliographical test is the examination of the textual transmission by which the documents reach the present. Since we do not have the original documents of the Bible, how reliable are the manuscripts we do have and what is the time interval between the original and the extant copies.<sup>1</sup> There are more than 5,000 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, over 10,000 Latin Vulgate and about 9,000 other early versions. In all, there are more 25,000 manuscript copies of the New Testament extant today. No other work of antiquity comes close to the manuscript attestation of the New Testament. In comparison, Homer's Iliad has a total of 643 manuscripts extant today. The importance of the sheer number of manuscripts extant today cannot be underestimated. The abundance of manuscript copies makes it possible to reconstruct the original documents with almost complete accuracy. The time interval between the original to the extant copies establishes the fact that "myth" or error did not have time to enter into the manuscript tradition. Sir Fredrick Kenyon writes in *The Bible and Archaeology*: "The interval then between the dates of the original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."<sup>2</sup> Following is a comparison chart of the New Testament documents verses other writings of antiquity:

| Author/ Book                              | Date Written      | Earliest Copies  | Time Gap                                 | No. of Copies          | Percent Accuracy |
|---|-------------------|--|--|------------------------|------------------|
| Homer, <i>Iliad</i>                       | 800 B.C.          | c. 400 B.C.  | c. 400 yrs                               | 643                    | 95               |
| Herodotus<br><i>History</i>               | 480-425 B.C.      | c. A.D. 900  | c. 1,350 yrs                             | 8                      | ?                |
| Thucydides,<br><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                      | ?                |
| 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)<br>mostly 10th cent.  | c. 400 yrs<br>c. 1,000 yrs               | 1 partial<br>19 copies | ?                |
| Tacitus,<br><i>Annals</i>                 | A.D. 100          | c. A.D. 1100   | c. 1,000 yrs                             | 20                     | ?                |
| Pliny Secundus,<br><i>Natural History</i> | A.D. 61-113       | c. 850   | c. 750 yrs                               | 7                      | ?                |
| New Testament                             | A.D. 50-100       | c. 114 (fragment)<br>c. 200 (books)<br>c. 250 (most of N.T.)<br>c. 325 (complete N.T.) | ±50 yrs<br>100 yrs<br>150 yrs<br>225 yrs | 5366                   | 99+              |