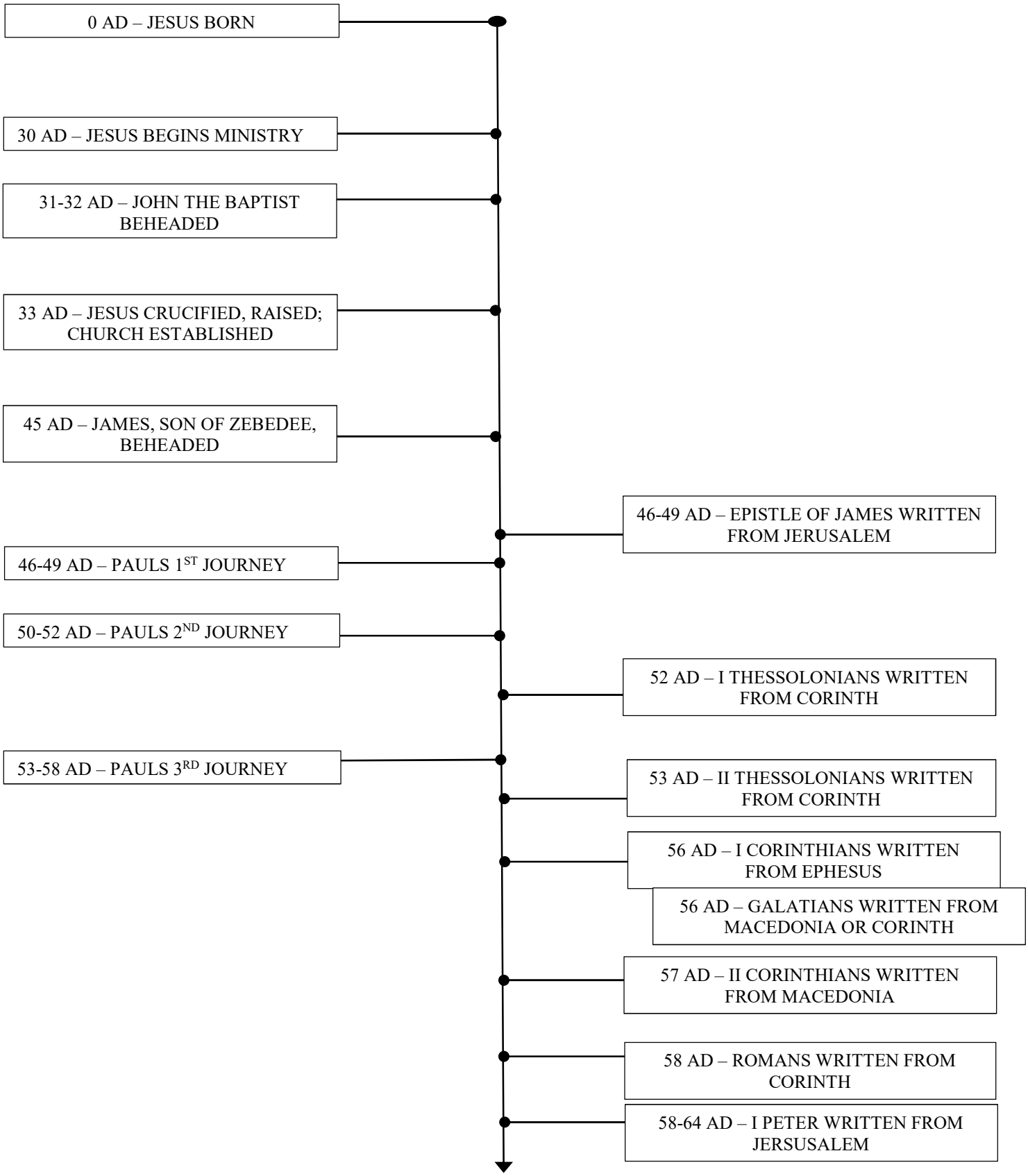
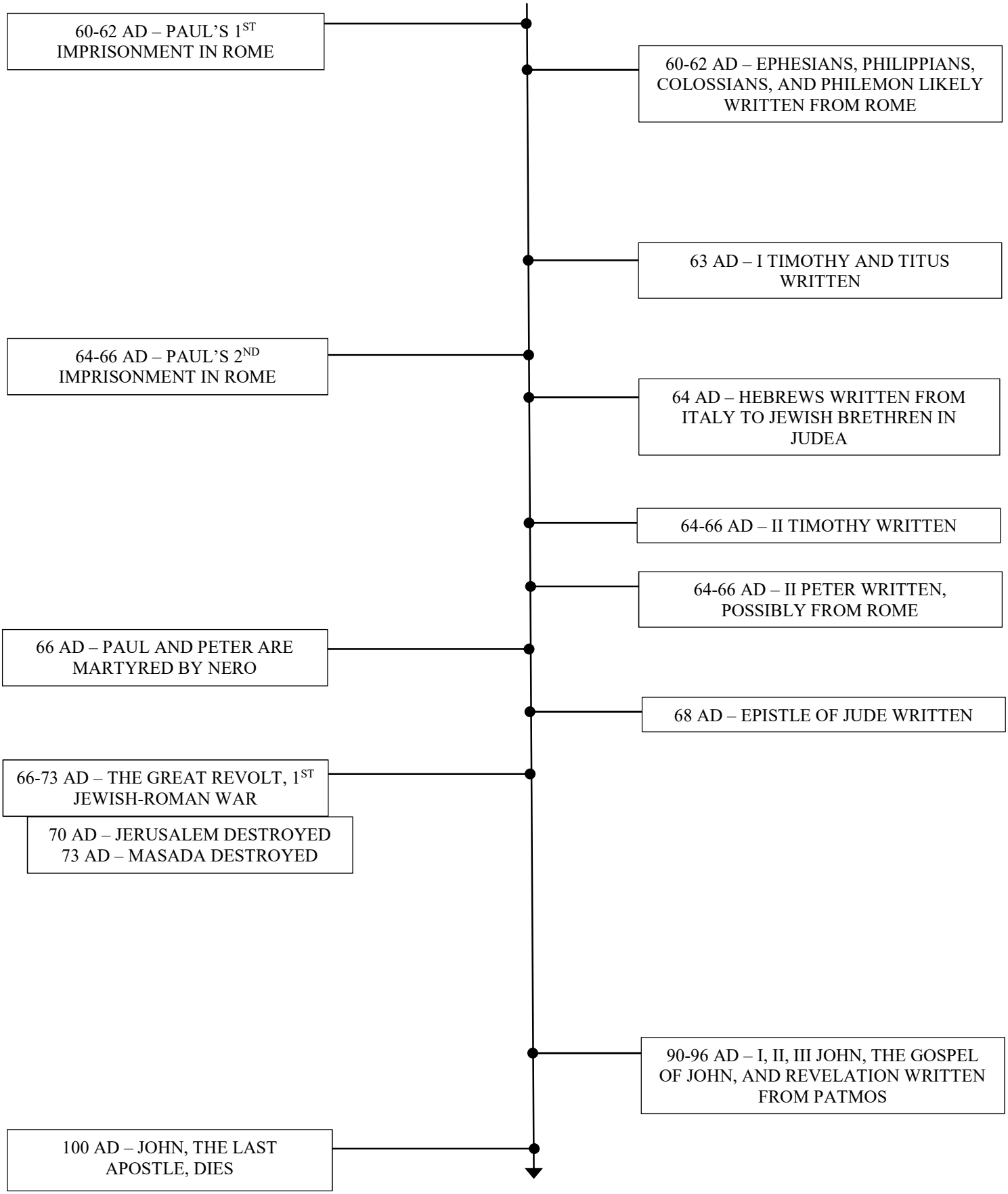
Church History and Evidences
Timeline: 0-100 AD




60-62 AD – PAUL'S 1ST IMPRISONMENT IN ROME
60-62 AD – EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS, AND PHILEMON LIKELY WRITTEN FROM ROME
63 AD – I TIMOTHY AND TITUS WRITTEN
64-66 AD – PAUL'S 2ND IMPRISONMENT IN ROME
64 AD – HEBREWS WRITTEN FROM ITALY TO JEWISH BRETHREN IN JUDEA
64-66 AD – II TIMOTHY WRITTEN
64-66 AD – II PETER WRITTEN, POSSIBLY FROM ROME
66 AD – PAUL AND PETER ARE MARTYRED BY NERO
68 AD – EPISTLE OF JUDE WRITTEN
66-73 AD – THE GREAT REVOLT, 1ST JEWISH-ROMAN WAR
70 AD – JERUSALEM DESTROYED
73 AD – MASADA DESTROYED
90-96 AD – I, II, III JOHN, THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, AND REVELATION WRITTEN FROM PATMOS
100 AD – JOHN, THE LAST APOSTLE, DIES

Church History and Evidences
Notes: What Happened to the Apostles?

I. The James' (and Jude)

A. James, the son of Zebedee – Killed by Herod, Acts 12
B. James the Less – Mk. 15:40 = The Lord's brother (along with Joses, Simon, and Judas – Matt. 13:55)
C. If James the Lord's brother was an apostle, then he is the same as James the son of Alphaeus – See I Cor. 15:7, Gal. 1:19, Acts 1:13
D. Letter of Jude written by another brother of Jesus? Apostle? – See Jude 1:1, Acts 1:13 ("brother of James" – KJV)
E. Did not believe? John 7:5 possibly only Joses and Simon

II. The (13) Apostles (not including Iscariot)

A. **Simon** (**Peter**) – Killed by Nero 66AD
B. **Andrew** (brother to Peter) – Possibly preached in Russia, Asia Minor, and Greece where he is said to have been crucified in the city of Patras.
C. **James** (son of Zebedee; "sons of thunder") – Killed by Herod 44AD (Acts 12:2)
D. **John** (son of Zebedee; "sons of thunder") – The last apostle to die, he is considered to have been exiled to Patmos, during the persecutions under Emperor Domitian. According to Tertullian (in The Prescription of Heretics) John was banished (presumably to Patmos) after being plunged into boiling oil in Rome and suffering nothing from it. It is said that all in the audience of Colosseum were converted to Christianity upon witnessing this miracle. This event would have occurred in the late 1st century, during the reign of the Emperor Domitian, who was known for his persecution of Christians. He is said to have lived to an old age, dying at Ephesus sometime after AD 98.
E. **Matthew** – Legend says he taught in Persia and Ethiopia.
F. **Thomas** – Possibly preached in area east of Syria; legend says he preached as far east as India where he was killed by the spears of four soldiers.
G. **Philip** – Legend says he preached in North Africa and then Asia Minor where he converted the wife of a Roman proconsul. In retaliation, the proconsul had Philip arrested and killed.
H. **Bartholomew** – Legend says he went to India with Thomas, preached in Armenia, Ethiopia, and southern Arabia.
I. **James** (son of Alphaeus) – Preached in Syria. Josephus recorded that he was stoned and then clubbed to death.
J. **Lebbaeus** (**Thaddaeus**; aka **Jude** or **Judas**, the brother of James, and possibly Jesus) - According to tradition, Saint Jude suffered martyrdom about 65 AD in Beirut, in the Roman province of Syria, together with the apostle Simon the Zealot, with whom he is usually connected. The axe that he is often shown holding in pictures symbolizes the way in which he was killed. A plain ossuary marked with the inscription "Judas Thaddaeus" was

found in Kefar Barukh, Jezreel Valley, alongside fragments of four uninscribed ossuaries.

K. **Simon** the Canaanite (Matt. 10:4, Mk. 3:18) (aka Simon the Zealot; See Luke 6:15, Acts 1:13) – Purportedly preached in Persia and was killed after refusing to sacrifice to the sun god.

L. **Matthias** – Tradition says he went to Syria with Andrew and was killed by burning.

M. **Paul** of Tarsus – killed by Nero 66AD

Church History and Evidences
Notes: Paul's Companions and Roman Persecution

I. Timothy, Titus, Barnabas, John Mark, and Luke

A. **Timothy -** That Timothy was jailed at least once during the period of the writing of the New Testament is implied by the writer of Hebrews mentioning Timothy's release at the end of the epistle. The apocryphal Acts of Timothy states that in the year 97 AD, the 80-year-old tried to halt a procession in honor of the goddess Diana by preaching the gospel. The angry pagans beat him, dragged him through the streets, and stoned him to death.

B. **Titus** - Early church tradition holds that Paul, after his release from his first imprisonment in Rome, stopped at the island of Crete to preach. Due to the needs of other churches, requiring his presence elsewhere, he left Titus to finish the work he had started. Paul summoned Titus from Crete to join him at Nicopolis in Epirus [Titus 3:12]. Later, Titus supposedly traveled to Dalmatia. He returned to Crete and remained there into his old age, dying at age 94 in Gortyna, near the city of Candia (modern Heraklion).

C. **Barnabas** - Although the date, place, and circumstances of his death are historically unverifiable, Christian tradition holds that Barnabas was martyred at Salamis, Cyprus, in 61 AD. After he returned to Cyprus, his native country, he suffered martyrdom in the following manner: certain Jews coming from Syria and Salamis, where Barnabas was then preaching the gospel, being highly exasperated at his extraordinary success, fell upon him as he was disputing in the synagogue, dragged him out, and after the most inhuman tortures, stoned him to death. His kinsman, John Mark, who was a spectator of this barbarous action, privately interred his body in a cave.

D. **John Mark** - Was sent by Paul to Colossae (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24) and serving with him in Rome (2 Tim 4:11); from Pentapolis he made his way to Alexandria. When Mark returned to Alexandria, the pagans of the city resented his efforts to turn the Alexandrians away from the worship of their traditional gods. In AD 68, they placed a rope around his neck and dragged him through the streets until he was dead.

E. **Luke** - He was the only Gentile (non-Jew) to write books of the Bible. See Col. 4:10-11, 14, "*My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. ... 14 Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings*." As a physician, Luke must have been curious about the medical conditions behind Christ's miracles. As a matter of fact, Luke uses more medical terms than any other New Testament writer. For example, he doesn't just say Publius' father was sick: he tells us he suffered from fever and dysentery. He is believed to have been a martyr, reportedly having been hanged from an olive tree. Luke died at age 84 in Boeotia, according to a "fairly early and widespread tradition".

II. Major Persecutions from Rome

A. Prior to Nero's accusation of arson and subsequent anti-Christian actions in 64, all animosity was apparently limited to Jewish hostility.

B. From the time of Nero (64 A.D.) until the conversion of Emperor Constantine and the Edict of Milan (313 A.D.), whereby Christianity was made legal, the Christian faith was officially regarded as a religio prava, an evil or depraved religion.

C. The early Christians were the targets of repeated persecutions - some of unspeakable cruelty. For example, the emperor Nero blamed the Christians for the great fire that destroyed 10 of the 14 city wards at Rome in 64 A.D., a fire that Nero apparently had ordered himself. The historian Tacitus, not a Christian, said that Nero had the believers "torn by dogs, nailed to crosses, . . . even used as human torches to illumine his gardens at night."

D. According to some historians, Jews and Christians were heavily persecuted toward the end of Domitian's reign (89-96). The Book of Revelation, which mentions at least one instance of martyrdom (Rev 2:13; cf. 6:9), is thought by many scholars to have been written during Domitian's reign. Early church historian Eusebius wrote that the social conflict described by Revelation reflects Domitian's organization of excessive and cruel banishments and executions of Christians, but these claims may be exaggerated or false.

E. But Christians were not under persecution everywhere and all the time. The persecutions were sporadic, with peaceful intervals in between. They varied in their intensity and were mostly localized.

F. Between 109 and 111, Pliny the Younger was sent by the emperor Trajan (r. 98-117) to the province of Bithynia (in Anatolia) as governor, and their correspondence is considered a valuable historical source. In one of his letters (Letter 10.96), Pliny reports on his actions with regard to some people who had been denounced as Christians, some of them anonymously: those that persisted in confessing that they were Christians he had executed or, if Roman citizens, sent to Rome; those who denied that they were Christians he subjected to the test of invoking the gods, offering them incense and a libation in the presence of an image of the emperor, and cursing Christ. Some who admitted that they had formerly been Christians but proved, by passing the test, that they were no longer Christian, declared that Christians did not commit the crimes attributed to them, a declaration confirmed under torture by two slave women who were called deaconesses. Pliny therefore asked the emperor whether ceasing to be a Christian was enough to secure pardon for having been one, and whether punishment was merited just for being a Christian ("the name itself") or only for the crimes associated with the name. Trajan responded that the problem could only be dealt with case by case. The authorities were not to seek Christians out, but people who were denounced and found guilty were to be punished unless, by worshiping the Roman gods, they proved they were not Christians (having denied Christ) and so obtained pardon. Anonymous denunciations were to be ignored.

G. Christians who refused to recant by performing ceremonies to honor the gods would meet with severe penalties; Roman citizens were exiled or

condemned to a swift death by beheading. Slaves, foreign-born residents, and lower classes were liable to be put to death by wild beasts as a public spectacle. A variety of animals were used for those condemned to die in this way. There is no evidence for Christians being executed at the Colosseum in Rome.

H. There were two all-out empire-wide persecutions intended to utterly destroy the church. The first, under the emperor Decius, began in December 249AD. Everyone in the empire had to get a certificate from a government officer verifying that he or she had offered a sacrifice to the gods - an act that most Christians in good conscience could not do.

I. The second, called "The Great Persecution," began on February 23, 303, under Emperor Diocletian. Galerius, the empire's second-in-command, was behind this persecution policy and continued it after Diocletian's death. For eight long years, official decrees ordered Christians out of public office, scriptures confiscated, church buildings destroyed, leaders arrested, and pagan sacrifices required. All the reliable methods of torture were mercilessly employed - wild beasts, burning, stabbing, crucifixion, the rack. But they were all to no avail. The penetration of the faith across the empire was so pervasive that the church could not be intimidated nor destroyed. In 311, the same Galerius, shortly before his death, weak and diseased, issued an "edict of toleration." This included the statement that it was the duty of Christians "to pray to their god for our good estate."

Church History and Evidences
Notes: Church "Fathers": Clement

I. **Church "fathers" and their writings: Clement**

A. **Clement of Rome**

1. His epistle, 1 Clement (c. 96), was copied and widely read in the Early Church. Clement calls on the Christians of Corinth to maintain harmony and order. It is the earliest Christian epistle aside from the New Testament.
2. Pope Clement I (died age 99), also known as Saint Clement of Rome, is listed by Irenaeus and Tertullian as [a] Bishop of Rome, holding office from 88 to his death in 99. He is considered to be the first "Apostolic Father of the Church", one of the three chief ones together with Polycarp and Ignatius of Antioch.
3. While Clement is traditionally identified as a pope, there is no evidence for monarchical bishops in Rome at such an early date. The epistle is addressed as "the Church of God which sojourneth in Rome to the Church of God which sojourneth in Corinth". Its stylistic coherence suggests a single author.
4. Few details are known about Clement's life. Clement was said to have been "consecrated" by Saint Peter, and he is known to have been a leading member of the church in Rome in the late 1st century. The Liber Pontificalis states that Clement died in Greece in the third year of Emperor Trajan's reign, or 101 AD.
5. Early succession lists name Clement as the first, second, or third successor of Saint Peter. However, the meaning of his inclusion in these lists has been very controversial. There is no evidence for a monarchical episcopacy in Rome at such an early date. There is also, however, no evidence of a change occurring in ecclesiastical organization until the latter half of the 2nd century, which would indicate that a new or newly-monarchical episcopacy didn't establish itself until much later than traditionally thought.
6. Starting in the 3rd and 4th century, tradition has identified him as the Clement that Paul mentioned in Philippians 4:3, a fellow laborer in Christ.
7. According to tradition, Clement was imprisoned under the Emperor Trajan; during this time, he is recorded to have led a ministry among fellow prisoners. Thereafter he was executed by being tied to an anchor and thrown into the sea.

B. **Writings**

1. Clement's only existing, genuine text is a letter to the Christian congregation in Corinth, often called the First Epistle of Clement or 1 Clement. The history of 1 Clement clearly and continuously shows Clement as the author of this letter. It is considered the earliest authentic Christian document outside the New Testament.
2. The letter was written in response to a dispute in which certain bishop/presbyters of the Corinthian church had been deposed. He asserted the authority of the bishop/presbyters as rulers of the church on

the ground that the Apostles had appointed such. His letter, which is one of the oldest extant Christian documents outside the New Testament, was read in church, along with other epistles, some of which later became part of the Christian canon. The epistle mentions episkopoi (overseers, bishops) or presbyteroi (elders, presbyters) as the upper class of minister, served by the deacons, but, since it does not mention himself, it gives no indication of the title or titles used for Clement in Rome. These works were the first to affirm the apostolic authority of the “clergy”. A second epistle, 2 Clement, was attributed to Clement, although recent scholarship suggests it to be a homily by another author.

3. The letter was occasioned by a dispute in Corinth, which had led to the removal from office of several presbyters. Since none of the presbyters were charged with moral offences, 1 Clement charges that their removal was high-handed and unjustifiable. The letter was extremely lengthy—it was twice as long as the Epistle to the Hebrews—and includes many references to the Old Testament, of which he demonstrates a knowledge. Clement repeatedly refers to the Old Testament as Scripture.

4. 1 Clement offers valuable evidence into the state of the ministry in the early church. He calls on the Corinthians to repent and to reinstate the leaders that they had deposed. He explains that the Apostles had appointed “bishops and deacons”, that they had given instructions on how to perpetuate the ministry, and that Christians were to obey their superiors. The author uses the terms “bishops” and “elders” (presbyters) interchangeably.

5. New Testament references include admonition to “Take up the epistle of the blessed Paul the Apostle” (xlvii. 1) which was written to this Corinthian audience; a reference which seems to imply written documents available at both Rome and Corinth. 1 Clement also alludes to the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians; and may allude to Paul's epistles to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians, numerous phrases from the Epistle to the Hebrews, and possible material from Acts, James, and I Peter. In several instances, the author asks his readers to “remember” the words of Jesus, although they do not attribute these sayings to a specific written account. These New Testament allusions are employed as authoritative sources which strengthen the letter's arguments to the Corinthian church. Despite Bruce Metzger's claim that Clement never explicitly refers to them as “Scripture,” Clement 56 provides a quote which he refers to as "the holy word;" this quote is found in Hebrews 12:6, *FOR WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE CHASTENS, AND SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES*."

6. Additionally, 1 Clement expressly references the martyrdom of Paul and very strongly implies the martyrdom of Peter (sections 5:4 to 6:1).

7. 1 Clement was written at a time when some Christians were keenly aware that Jesus had not returned as they had expected. Like 2 Peter, this epistle criticizes those who doubt their faith because of the delay of the Second Coming.

8. Clement writes to the troubled congregation in Corinth, where certain "presbyters" or "bishops" have been deposed (the class of clergy above that of deacons is designated indifferently by the two terms). Clement calls for repentance and reinstatement of those who have been deposed, in line with maintenance of order and obedience to church authority, since the apostles established the ministry of "bishops and deacons." He mentions "offering the gifts" as one of the functions of the higher class of clergy. The epistle offers valuable insight into Church ministry at that time and into the history of the Roman Church. It was highly regarded and was read in church at Corinth along with the Scriptures c. 170.

9. "*We should be obedient unto God, rather than follow those who in arrogance and unruliness have set themselves up as leaders in abominable jealousy.... For Christ is with them that are lowly of mind, not with them that exalt themselves over the flock*." 1Clem 14:1; 16:1

10. "*Do we then think it to be a great and marvelous thing, if the Creator of the universe shall bring about the resurrection of them that have served Him with holiness in the assurance of a good faith, seeing that He showeth to us even by a bird the magnificence of His promise?"* 1Clem 26:1

11. In the epistle, Clement uses the terms bishop and presbyter interchangeably for the higher order of ministers above deacons. In some congregations, particularly in Egypt, the distinction between bishops and presbyters seems to have become established only later. But by the middle of the second century all the leading Christian centers had bishops.

Church History and Evidences
Notes: Church "Fathers": Ignatius

I. **Church "fathers" and their writings: Ignatius**

A. **Ignatius of Antioch**

1. Ignatius of Antioch (also known as Theophorus) (c. 35-50 – c. 110) was the third bishop or Patriarch of Antioch and a student of the Apostle John. En route to his martyrdom in Rome, Ignatius wrote a series of letters which have been preserved. Important topics addressed in these letters include ecclesiology, the sacraments, the role of bishops, and the Incarnation of Christ. He is the second after Clement to mention Paul's epistles.

2. Nothing is known of Ignatius' life apart from what may be inferred internally from his letters, except from later (sometimes spurious) traditions. It is said Ignatius converted to Christianity at a young age. Tradition identifies Ignatius, along with his friend Polycarp, as disciples of John the Apostle. Later in his life, Ignatius was chosen to serve as Bishop of Antioch.

3. A tradition arose that he was one of the children whom Jesus Christ took in his arms and blessed, although if he was born around 50 AD, as supposed, then Christ had ascended approximately 20 years prior.

4. Ignatius' own writings mention his arrest by the authorities and travel to Rome to face trial:

1. "*From Syria even to Rome I fight with wild beasts, by land and sea, by night and by day, being bound amidst ten leopards, even a company of soldiers, who only grow worse when they are kindly treated.*" — Ignatius to the Romans, 5.

5. Ignatius' transfer to Rome is regarded by scholars as unusual since those persecuted as Christians would be expected to be punished locally. If he were a Roman citizen, he could have appealed to the emperor, but then would usually have been beheaded rather than tortured.

6. During the journey to Rome, Ignatius and his entourage of soldiers made a number of stops in Asia Minor. Along the route, Ignatius wrote six letters to the churches in the region and one to a fellow bishop, Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna. In his Chronicle, Eusebius gives the date of Ignatius's death as AA 2124 (2124 years after Abraham), i.e. the 11th year of Trajan's reign, AD 108. Ignatius himself wrote that he would be thrown to the beasts, and in the fourth century Eusebius reports tradition that this came to pass, which is then repeated by Jerome, who is the first to explicitly mention "Lions".

7. After Ignatius' martyrdom in the Circus Maximus, his remains were carried back to Antioch by his companions

B. **Writings**

1. Seven supposed authentic letters:
   1. The Letter to the Ephesians,
   2. The Letter to the Magnesians,
   3. The Letter to the Trallians,
   4. The Letter to the Romans,
   5. The Letter to the Philadelphians,

6. The Letter to the Smyrnaeans,

2. Writing in 1886, Presbyterian minister and church historian William Dool Killen asserted none of the Ignatian epistles were authentic. Instead, he argued that Callixtus, bishop of Rome, pseudepigraphically wrote the letters around AD 220 to garner support for a monarchical episcopate, modeling the renowned Saint Ignatius after his own life to give precedent for his own authority. Killen contrasted this episcopal polity with the presbyterian polity in the writings of Polycarp.

3. Most scholars, however, accept at least the two Ignatian epistles which were referenced by Origen and believe that by the 5th century, this collection had been enlarged by spurious letters. Ignatius's letters proved to be important testimony to the development of Christian theology since the number of extant writings from this period of Church history is very small. They bear signs of being written in great haste and without a proper plan, such as run-on sentences and an unsystematic succession of thought.

4. Ignatius is known to have taught the deity of Christ:

1. "*There is one Physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit; both made and not made; God existing in flesh; true life in death; both of Mary and of God; first passible and then impassible, even Jesus Christ our Lord*." — Letter to the Ephesians, ch. 7, shorter version, Roberts-Donaldson translation

5. Also, in the interpolated text of the 4th Century Long Recension:

1. "*But our Physician is the Only true God, the unbegotten and unapproachable, the Lord of all, the Father and Begetter of the only-begotten Son. We have also as a Physician the Lord our God, Jesus the Christ, the only begotten Son and Word, before time began, but who afterwards became also man, of Mary the virgin. For "the Word was made flesh." Being incorporeal, He was in the body, being impassible, He was in a passible body, being immortal, He was in a mortal body, being life, He became subject to corruption, that He might free our souls from death and corruption, and heal them, and might restore them to health, when they were diseased with ungodliness and wicked lusts*." — Letter to the Ephesians, ch. 7, longer version

6. He stressed the value of the Eucharist, calling it a "medicine of immortality" (Ignatius to the Ephesians 20:2). The very strong desire for bloody martyrdom in the arena, which Ignatius expresses rather graphically in places, may seem quite odd to the modern reader. An examination of his theology of soteriology shows that he regarded salvation as one being free from the powerful fear of death and thus to bravely face martyrdom.

7. Ignatius is claimed to be the first known Christian writer to argue in favor of Christianity's replacement of the Sabbath with the Lord's Day:

1. "*Be not seduced by strange doctrines nor by antiquated fables, which are profitless. For if even unto this day we live after the manner of Judaism, we avow that we have not received grace ... If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer observing Sabbaths but fashioning their lives after the Lord's day, on*

which our life also arose through Him ... how shall we be able to live apart from Him?" — Ignatius to the Magnesians 8:1, 9:1-2, Lightfoot translation.

2. "*Let us therefore no longer keep the Sabbath after the Jewish manner, and rejoice in days of idleness, ... But let every one of you keep the Sabbath after a spiritual manner, rejoicing in meditation on the law, not in relaxation of the body ... and not eating things prepared the day before, nor using lukewarm drinks, and walking within a prescribed space ... And after the observance of the Sabbath, let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days [of the week]. Looking forward to this, the prophet declared, "To the end, for the eighth day," on which our life both sprang up again, and the victory over death was obtained in Christ"* — Letter to the Magnesians 9, Roberts and Donaldson translation, p. 189

8. Ignatius is the earliest known Christian writer to emphasize loyalty to a single bishop in each city (or diocese) who is assisted by both presbyters (elders) and deacons. Earlier writings only mention either bishops or presbyters. For instance, his writings on bishops, presbyters and deacons:

1. "*Take care to do all things in harmony with God, with the bishop presiding in the place of God, and with the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles, and with the deacons, who are most dear to me, entrusted with the business of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father from the beginning and is at last made manifest*" — Letter to the Magnesians 2, 6:1

9. He is also responsible for the first known use of the Greek word katholikos (καθολικός), meaning "universal", "complete" and "whole" to describe the church, writing:

1. "*Wherever the bishop appears, there let the people be; as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful to baptize or give communion without the consent of the bishop. On the other hand, whatever has his approval is pleasing to God. Thus, whatever is done will be safe and valid.*" — Letter to the Smyrnaeans 8, J.R. Willis translation.

10. It is from the word katholikos ("according to the whole") that the word catholic comes. When Ignatius wrote the Letter to the Smyrnaeans in about the year 107 and used the word catholic, he used it as if it were a word already in use to describe the Church. This has led many scholars to conclude that the appellation Catholic Church with its ecclesial connotation may have been in use as early as the last quarter of the First century.

11. On the Eucharist, he wrote in his letter to the Smyrnaeans:

1. "*Take note of those who hold heterodox opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us, and see how contrary their opinions are to the mind of God ... They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which that Father, in his goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God are perishing in their disputes*." — Letter to the Smyrnaeans 6:2–7:1

Church History and Evidences
Notes: Church "Fathers": Polycarp

I. **Church "fathers" and their writings: Polycarp**

A. **Polycarp of Smyrna**

1. Polycarp of Smyrna (c. 69 – c. 155) was a Christian bishop of Smyrna (now İzmir in Turkey).

2. According to Eusebius (260-340AD) supposedly quoting Irenaeus (130-202AD), Polycrates of Ephesus (130-196AD) cited the example of Polycarp in defense of local practices during the Quartodeciman Controversy. Polycarp supposedly tried and failed to persuade Pope Anicetus to have the West celebrate Passover on the 14th of Nisan, as in the Eastern calendar.

3. Around A.D. 155, the Smyrnans of his town demanded Polycarp's execution as a Christian, and he died a martyr. The story of his martyrdom describes how the fire built around him would not burn him, and that when he was stabbed to death, so much blood issued from his body that it quenched the flames around him. Polycarp is recognized as a saint in both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches.

4. Both Irenaeus, who as a young man heard Polycarp speak, and Tertullian recorded that Polycarp had been a disciple of John the Apostle.

5. There are two chief sources of information concerning the life of Polycarp: the letter of the Smyrnaeans recounting the martyrdom of Polycarp and the passages in Irenaeus' Adversus Haereses. Other sources are the epistles of Ignatius, which include one to Polycarp and another to the Smyrnaeans, and Polycarp's own letter to the Philippians. In 1999, some third to 6th-century Coptic fragments about Polycarp were also published.

6. According to Irenaeus, Polycarp was a companion of Papias, another "hearer of John" as Irenaeus interprets Papias' testimony, and a correspondent of Ignatius of Antioch. Ignatius addressed a letter to him and mentions him in his letters to the Ephesians and to the Magnesians.

7. Irenaeus regarded the memory of Polycarp as a link to the apostolic past. He relates how and when he became a Christian, and in his letter to Florinus, a fellow student of Polycarp who had become a Roman presbyter and later lapsed into heresy. Irenaeus stated that he saw and heard Polycarp personally in lower Asia. Irenaeus wrote to Florinus:

   a) "I could tell you the place where the blessed Polycarp sat to preach the Word of God. It is yet present to my mind with what gravity he everywhere came in and went out; what was the sanctity of his deportment, the majesty of his countenance; and what were his holy exhortations to the people. I seem to hear him now relate how he conversed with John and many others who had seen Jesus Christ, the words he had heard from their mouths."

8. In particular, he heard the account of Polycarp's discussion with John and with others who had seen Jesus. Irenaeus also reports that Polycarp was converted to Christianity by apostles, was consecrated a bishop, and communicated with many who had seen Jesus. He repeatedly emphasizes

the very great age of Polycarp. Polycarp kissed the chains of Ignatius when he passed by Smyrna on the road to Rome for his martyrdom.

9. In the Martyrdom, Polycarp is recorded as saying on the day of his death, "Eighty and six years I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong", which could indicate that he was then eighty-six years old or that he may have lived eighty-six years after his conversion. Polycarp goes on to say "How then can I blaspheme my King and Savior? You threaten me with a fire that burns for a season, and after a little while is quenched; but you are ignorant of the fire of everlasting punishment that is prepared for the wicked." Polycarp was burned at the stake and was pierced with a spear for refusing to burn incense to the Roman Emperor. On his farewell, he said, "I bless you Father for judging me worthy of this hour, so that in the company of the martyrs I may share the cup of Christ."

10. Polycarp occupies an important place in the history of the early Christian Church. He is among the earliest Christians whose writings survived. Jerome wrote that Polycarp was a "disciple of the apostle John and by him ordained bishop of Smyrna". He was an elder of an important congregation which was a large contributor to the founding of the Christian Church. He is from an era whose orthodoxy is widely accepted by Eastern Orthodox Churches, Oriental Orthodox Churches, Church of God groups, Sabbatarian groups, mainstream Protestants and Catholics alike. According to David Trobisch, Polycarp may have been the one who compiled, edited, and published the New Testament. All of this makes his writings of great interest.

11. Irenaeus, who as a young man had heard Polycarp preach, said of him: "a man who was of much greater weight, and a more steadfast witness of truth, than Valentinus, and Marcion, and the rest of the heretics". Polycarp had learned from apostle John to flee from those who change the divine truth. One day he met in the streets of Rome the heretic Marcion who, resenting that Polycarp did not greet him, said: "Do you know me?" Polycarp replied: "Yes, I know you, the first-born of Satan."

12. Polycarp lived in an age after the deaths of the apostles, when a variety of interpretations of the sayings of Jesus were being preached. His role was to authenticate orthodox teachings through his reputed connection with the apostle John: "a high value was attached to the witness Polycarp could give as to the genuine tradition of old apostolic doctrine", Wace commented, "his testimony condemning as offensive novelties the figments of the heretical teachers". Irenaeus states (iii. 3) that on Polycarp's visit to Rome, his testimony converted many disciples of Marcion and Valentinus.

B. **Writings**

1. The sole surviving work attributed to him is Polycarp's letter to the Philippians, a mosaic of references to the Greek Scriptures. It, and an account of The Martyrdom of Polycarp form part of the collection of writings Roman Catholics and some Protestants term "The Apostolic Fathers." This title emphasizes the writings' particular closeness to the apostles in Church traditions. After the Acts of the Apostles, which describes the death of

Stephen, the Martyrdom is considered one of the earliest genuine accounts of Christian martyrdom and is one of the earliest-known Christian documents of this kind.

2. The **Letter to the Philippians** (often simply called ***Philippians***) is an epistle composed around AD 110 to 140 by Polycarp of Smyrna, from Antioch to the early Christian church in Philippi. The letter is described by Irenaeus as follows:

a) "There is also a forceful epistle written by Polycarp to the Philippians, from which those who wish to do so, and are anxious about their salvation, can learn the character of his faith, and the preaching of the truth."

3. The letter is one of a number believed to have been written by Polycarp but is the only extant document. The letter was composed in Greek, but the Greek text has not been preserved in its entirety; there is also a Latin translation of the letter. Moreover, a few quotations of it are preserved in Syriac.

4. The letter warns against a number of disorders in the church and against apostasy and encourages the Christians to persevere in good works. It also acted as a covering letter for a collection of writings by Ignatius of Antioch, whose works were being collected by the church at Philippi after Ignatius' visit there.

5. This is one quotation from the epistle: "Stand fast, therefore, in this conduct and follow the example of the Lord, 'firm and unchangeable in faith, lovers of the brotherhood, loving each other, united in truth,' helping each other with the mildness of the Lord, despising no man."

6. One of the letter's more important features is its use and citation of other early Christian writings, many of which later came to be part of the New Testament.

Church History and Evidences
Notes: Church "Fathers": Papias

I. **Church "fathers" and their writings: Papias**

A. **Papias of Hierapolis**

1. **Papias** was a Greek Apostolic Father, Bishop of Hierapolis (modern Pamukkale, Turkey), and author who lived c. 60–163 AD. It was Papias who wrote the *Exposition of the Sayings of the Lord* in five books. This work, which is lost apart from brief excerpts in the works of Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 180) and Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 320), is an important early source on Christian oral tradition and especially on the origins of the canonical Gospels.

2. Very little is known of Papias apart from what can be inferred from his own writings. He is described as "an ancient man who was a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp" by Polycarp's disciple Irenaeus (c. 180). Eusebius adds that Papias was Bishop of Hierapolis around the time of Ignatius of Antioch. In this office Papias was presumably succeeded by Abercius of Hierapolis. The name Papias was very common in the region, suggesting that he was probably a native of the area.

3. Eusebius refers to Papias only in his third book, and thus seems to date him before the opening of his fourth book in 109. Papias himself knows several New Testament books, whose dates are themselves controversial, and was informed by John the Evangelist, the daughters of Philip and many "elders" who had themselves heard the Apostles. He is also called a companion of the long-lived Polycarp (69–155). For all these reasons, Papias is thought to have written around the turn of the 2nd century.

B. **Writings**

1. The work of Papias is dated by most modern scholars to about A.D. 95–120. Despite indications that the work of Papias was still extant in the Late Middle Ages, the full text is now lost. Extracts, however, appear in a number of other writings, some of which cite a book number.

2. Papias describes his way of gathering information in his preface:

a) I shall not hesitate also to put into ordered form for you, along with the interpretations, everything I learned carefully in the past from the elders and noted down carefully, for the truth of which I vouch. For unlike most people I took no pleasure in those who told many different stories, but only in those who taught the truth. Nor did I take pleasure in those who reported their memory of someone else's commandments, but only in those who reported their memory of the commandments given by the Lord to the faith and proceeding from the Truth itself. And if by chance anyone who had been in attendance on the elders arrived, I made enquiries about the words of the elders—what Andrew or Peter had said, or Philip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's disciples, and whatever Aristion and John the Elder, the Lord's disciples, were saying. For I did not think that information from

the books would profit me as much as information from a living and surviving voice.

3. Papias, then, inquired of travelers passing through Hierapolis what the surviving disciples of Jesus and the elders—those who had personally known the Twelve Apostles—were saying. One of these disciples was Aristion, probably bishop of nearby Smyrna, and another was John the Elder, usually identified (despite Eusebius' protest) with John the Evangelist, residing in nearby Ephesus, of whom Papias was a hearer; Papias frequently cited both. From the daughters of Philip, who settled in Hierapolis, Papias learned still other traditions.

4. Eusebius concludes from the writings of Papias that he was a chiliast, understanding the Millennium as a literal period in which Christ will reign on Earth, and chastises Papias for his literal interpretation of figurative passages, writing that Papias "appears to have been of very limited understanding", and felt that his misunderstanding misled Irenaeus and others.

5. Irenaeus indeed quotes the fourth book of Papias for an otherwise unknown saying of Jesus, recounted by John the Evangelist, which Eusebius doubtless has in mind:

a) The Lord used to teach about those times and say: "The days will come when vines will grow, each having ten thousand shoots, and on each shoot ten thousand branches, and on each branch ten thousand twigs, and on each twig ten thousand clusters, and in each cluster ten thousand grapes, and each grape when crushed will yield twenty-five measures of wine. And when one of the saints takes hold of a cluster, another cluster will cry out, "I am better, take me, bless the Lord through me." Similarly, a grain of wheat will produce ten thousand heads, and every head will have ten thousand grains, and every grain ten pounds of fine flour, white and clean. And the other fruits, seeds, and grass will produce in similar proportions, and all the animals feeding on these fruits produced by the soil will in turn become peaceful and harmonious toward one another, and fully subject to humankind.… These things are believable to those who believe." And when Judas the traitor did not believe and asked, "How, then, will such growth be accomplished by the Lord?", the Lord said, "Those who live until those times will see."

6. On the other hand, Papias is elsewhere said to have understood mystically the Hexaemeron (six days of Creation) as referring to Christ and the Church.

7. Eusebius, despite his own views on Papias, knew that Irenaeus believed Papias to be a reliable witness to original apostolic traditions.

8. Modern scholars have debated Papias' reliability. Much discussion of Papias's comments about the Gospel of Mark and Gospel of Matthew is concerned with either showing their reliability as evidence for the origins of these Gospels or with emphasizing their apologetic character in order to discredit their reliability. Yoon-Man Park cites a modern argument that Papias's tradition was formulated to vindicate the apostolicity of Mark's

Gospel but dismisses this as an unlikely apologetic route unless the Peter-Mark connection Papias described had already been accepted with general agreement by the early church. Casey argued that Papias was indeed reliable about a Hebrew collection of sayings by Matthew the Apostle, which he argues was independent of the Greek Gospel of Matthew, possibly written by another Matthew or Matthias in the early church.
9. Others argue Papias faithfully recorded what was related to him but misunderstood the subjects of narrations he was unfamiliar with.

Church History and Evidences
Notes: Lost Books of the Bible

"People may still be heard to say, 'After all, these Apocryphal Gospels and Acts, as you call them, are just as interesting as the old ones. It was only by accident or caprice that they were not put into the New Testament'. The best answer (...) has always been, and is now, to produce the writings and let them tell their own story. It will very quickly be seen that there is no question of anyone's having excluded them from the New Testament: they have done that for themselves."

M.R. James (1862-1936 British scholar)

– **Epistle of Barnabas (70-130 AD)**
  - Speaks against Judaism, sees NT as superseding Mosaical law
  - Claims that the Jews were never in a covenant relationship with God; Jewish traditions not accurately interpreted
  - Claims to have "special knowledge" (*Gnosis*) regarding Christianity

– **Shepherd of Hermas (120-160 AD)**
  - Man claims to have received visions from God instructing him regarding new mandates (mainly moral)
  - Refers to a "Son of God" as a "virtuous man" that was filled with a "pre-existing spirit" who was adopted as the "Son"

– **Gospel of Thomas (proposed 60-140 AD)**
  - Claims to have the secret knowledge that Christ revealed only to those closest to Him
  - Does not deal with doctrine, but rather "experiencing" truth
  - Claims that salvation is achieved through "insight"

– **Gospel of Judas (160-180 AD)**
  - Claims that Jesus had in fact entrusted Judas with secret knowledge regarding how events must unfold
  - Claims that Jesus instructed Judas to hand Him over to the Jews
  - Claims that none of the other apostles, save Judas, understood Jesus' teachings

– **Didache (70-120 AD)**
  - Claims that every disciple and teacher must be received for two or three days, but if they stay longer, they are false teachers seeking money
  - Baptism essential, but if enough for immersion was not available, then pouring water three times was accepted

(from *biblestudy.org*)

There are valid reasons why certain writings, though supported by some, are not inspired by God, and therefore are rightfully not included in our modern translations. Usually the reason for rejection is that such lost books contradict clear Biblical facts or doctrinally sound teachings confirmed by the existing Bible.

For example, one lost book called St. Thomas' gospel teaches things that are contrary to sound Biblical doctrines. It teaches that God had two distinct creations of man, one that was a bit flawed, and the other that was perfect.

The "lost gospel" of Thomas also promotes the idea that people can acquire the "image of God." Scholars view this spurious writing with skepticism. There exists only a small cultic following that thinks it portrays the 'real Jesus' better than what is already in the Bible.

Many of the larger and more expensive translations contain a section with the Apocrypha. These are writings that some in the past thought should have been included in the canon but were excluded. Many of them will have their history in their introductory remarks. Volumes printed by Catholic-centered publishers are often the most comprehensive in this area.

Several reference works offer information regarding why certain writings were excluded from scripture, the discovery dates of the writings and so on. The title of two of them is "Lost Books of the Bible" by Solomon J. Schepps and William Hone and "The Forgotten Books of Eden," which is an anthology of ancient, apocryphal writings. Together, these works discuss the lost writings below that various people argue should become part of holy writ.

Several books claim to be the Gospel of the Birth of Mary, the infancy of Jesus Christ, Nicodemus (Acts of Pilate) and Peter's lost gospel. Additionally, there are writings that claim to be the Epistle of Jesus Christ and Abgarus King of Edessa, Paul the Apostle to the Laodiceans, Paul the Apostle to Seneca, Barnabas, Polycarp to the Philippians, and Clement.

There also exists an epistle believed to be written by Ignatius to the Ephesians, and epistles written for the Magnesians, Romans, Smyrneans, Trallians and Philadelphians.

Several lost letters also claim inspiration such as one from Herod to Pilate the Governor and another from Pilate to Herod. Still other writings thought by some to be inspired include those purported from Adam, the Odes, and the Psalms of Solomon, the testaments of the twelve Patriarchs, and the secrets of Enoch.

A search of the Internet or your local public library may well show these volumes on hand or available as well as quite a few others that will help you find the answers to your questions. After some forty years of researching the subject and reading most of the lost books of the Bible and the apocryphal writings, a simple in-depth reading of such material will usually produce obvious reasons why they are excluded from Biblical canon.

9. From Original Autographs to Copies

Do we have reason to believe that the Bible we possess today is what the writers actually wrote? Skeptics would have us to think that there is so much corruption in the biblical manuscripts that we just cannot have confidence in them. The evidence, however, tells another story. Moreland observed, "Most historians accept the textual accuracy of other ancient works on far less adequate manuscript grounds than is available for the New Testament."[1]

We would love to be able to look at the original autographs of the New Testament—those actual texts penned by the writers—but the fact is that we do not have those originals. This bothers some because it brings up the question of how we can know whether or not the copies and translations that we do have accurately reflect the originals. Perhaps there has been such corruption of the text that we cannot have confidence that we are actually reading the word of God. How do we really know?

Enter the task of textual criticism. "Criticism" may sound bad, but in reality the field of textual criticism is all about getting to the original wording of the text in question. It is the study of copies and manuscripts of a text in order to determine what the originals said. The question here is not, "Is God's word true?" but rather, "What is the actual text of God's word?" This field of study is necessary because of the fact that we lack the original texts and because no two copies agree in every single

[1] J.P Moreland, *Scaling The Secular City* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1987), 136.

instance. That may make it sound as though it is a hopeless effort, but bear with me as we see that we really do have solid reason to believe that we have an accurate text today.

Textual criticism is applied to both Old and New Testaments, but for our purposes here, and particularly because of our interest in establishing the Gospels as reliable, we are going to focus on the New Testament. How can we be sure that the New Testament we possess today accurately gives us what was originally written?

Number of Manuscripts and Copies

If people pressed the idea that we cannot know what the New Testament really said because we no longer have the originals, "then we must deny that most facts of ancient history can be recovered, because whatever doubts we cast on the text of the New Testament must be cast a hundredfold on virtually any other ancient text."[2] The reason for this is that the New Testament manuscripts are much closer to the originals than any other text of antiquity. Further, there are more New Testament manuscripts than any other ancient work. "The New Testament is far and away the best attested work of Greek or Latin literature in the ancient world."[3] This is not debatable.

Consider that together there are more than 5,700 partial and full handwritten Greek Manuscripts that have been found dating between the second and sixteenth centuries A.D., and that number keeps growing as new discoveries are made. In contrast, the average number of extant manuscripts for other classical works is about twenty. For example, for Tacitus (A.D. 56–120), there are less than 20 surviving manuscripts with the earliest one dating to the ninth century A.D. For Livy (59 B.C.–A.D. 17), there are less than 30, with a time span of 400 plus years to the earliest copies. For Homer's *Iliad,* there are fewer than 2,500 manuscripts with the earliest dating about 500 years

[2] J. Ed Komoszewski, *Reinventing Jesus: How Contemporary Skeptics Miss The Real Jesus and Mislead Popular Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 70.

[3] Ibid., 71.

from the original. Homer's *Iliad* is the closest work of antiquity to matching the New Testament, but even it doesn't come close. The New Testament has thousands of manuscripts, with the earliest fragments showing up in the second century A.D. There is even a fragment of John 18 that appears less than 50 years from the original. Complete copies of the New Testament show up within 350 years. Nothing in antiquity compares.

But wait! There is more. We are talking only about Greek manuscripts so far, which alone exceeds the average classical writings by nearly 300 times. Now add to this Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Gothic, Georgian, Arabic, and many other versions of the New Testament that also date to within a few hundred years of the originals. Latin versions were well in production within a couple hundred years of the originals. In fact, Latin manuscripts alone number over ten thousand and date from the third century. "All told, the New Testament is represented by approximately one thousand times as many manuscripts as the average classical author's writings."[4] Skeptics, of course, want to minimize this point, but the sheer force of the evidence speaks for itself.

And there is still more. Did you know that if all of the manuscripts and copies of the New Testament were lost, we could reconstruct virtually the entire New Testament based upon the writings of the early "church fathers"? They quoted Scripture incessantly and so much that the New Testament stays intact just from them. In fact, there are hundreds of thousands of such quotations. Once again, no other ancient classical work has anything like this.

Because of the evidence, F.F. Bruce observed: "The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning. And if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt."[5] Notice

[4] Ibid., 72.

[5] F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids,

how Bruce touched on the problem of presuppositions, also. When it comes to the manuscript evidence for the New Testament, we are in great shape.

What about Variants and Differences?

"So who cares if there are lots of manuscripts when all of those copies have thousands of variants and errors in them? That proves they can't be reliable." Skeptics can sound pretty intimidating when they say, "There are thousands and thousands of errors and variants in those manuscripts." How do we respond to this?

First, it is correct to say that there are thousands and thousands of variants in the manuscripts. Is this a huge problem? Not really. There are approximately 138,000 words in the Greek New Testament. And yes with the thousands of manuscripts, there are multiple thousands of variants that exist. But just counting the quantity of variants does not consider the whole picture. The question is, what is the quality of those variants? How many of these variants really affect the meaning of the text? Basically, the variants and problems in the manuscripts can be categorized as follows:[6]

- Spelling differences and nonsense mistakes;
- Minor differences that have no effect on translation, or that involve synonyms;
- Differences that do affect the meaning but are not viable (meaning that they do not have enough support to take seriously); and
- Differences that affect the meaning of the text and are viable.

Spelling and Nonsense. The majority of those thousands and thousands of variants are spelling differences. A name might be spelled differently, but it is clearly the same person. A word

MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 15.

[6]Komoszewski, *Reinventing Jesus*, 54–63.

might have an extra letter or is missing a letter. Copyists occasionally misspelled a word. Big deal, right? But these spelling differences do not viably affect the meaning of the text in any way. Sometimes the differences are "nonsense," meaning that a tired or inattentive scribe wrote something that makes no sense. This type of error is rarely repeated by the next scribe since it is easy to detect. And again, the meaning of the text remains intact. If there is a question about the reading in one text, there are many other texts to which it can be compared.

Synonyms and Unaffected Translation. The next largest category is differences that do not affect the translation or that involve synonyms. For example, sometimes the Greek uses an article when English does not (as in names—"Mary" or "the Mary"). Sometimes the article in a manuscript is dropped or added, but it makes no difference for translation purposes. There are also transpositions, when the order of words in the Greek is changed (e.g., "Jesus Christ" or "Christ Jesus"). But since Greek meaning is based upon inflection (suffixes and prefixes, etc.) and not word order (as in English), the meaning is the same and the translation is mostly unaffected. Some differences involve the use of synonyms. In that case, the translation might be affected somewhat, but the meaning will typically still be the same.

Meaningful but not viable. Then there are meaningful variants that are *not* viable. This might be a reading that is found in only a single manuscript or a family of manuscripts, but the evidence is clearly against the reading being original. Many of these are found in later manuscripts and probably the result of a scribal addition. "There is little chance that one late manuscript could contain the original wording when the textual tradition is uniformly on the side of another reading."[7] Some scribes were prone to try to harmonize the Gospels, for example, so they might bring a phrase from one Gospel over into another, and usually that is obvious.

Meaningful and viable. Finally, there are the meaningful

[7] Ibid., 59.

variants that are also viable. In this case, the meaning is affected to a degree and it changes the reading of the text and translation. There are a few of these, but the two most notable are John 7:53–8:11 and Mark 16:9–20 (most translations have a footnote about these). This is not the place to get into all of the issues about these particular passages, and I would not minimize the importance of the issues raised in those passages, but there are some important matters to note:

1. *No fundamental truth is lost if these passages are not authentic.* For example, the compassion of Jesus is taught in multiple places, and so is baptism. No major doctrine hinges only on these passages. The same is true of the other passages that fall into this category. So if you are discussing this with people who bring the problem up as given in their translation notes, you can simply go to several other places to show the same doctrine. "You don't want to use Mark 16? Okay, let's go over to Acts 2, or Galatians 3, or Colossians 2, or Romans 6, or..." You get the idea. All of those other passages are not in question, so it is easy enough to use them when teaching someone who is uncomfortable with what their marginal notes tell them about a verse. There is no need to get hung up on them.

2. This last category is by far the smallest, comprising only *about one percent* of variants. These would be the ones that matter the most, but they are found the least. All other variants either do not affect the translation significantly enough to be a problem or they are simply not viable enough to be a real issue.

So, while there are many variants found in the thousands of manuscripts, the bottom line is this: *only about one percent are meaningful and viable, and not one of them affects any foundational doctrine or belief!* In other words, "we can be certain that no truth of Scripture or Christian doctrine rests on a doubtful text."[8] In the bigger picture, they are not nearly the problem that skeptics would have us to believe. Christianity is not seriously at stake even in the most problematic of passages.

[8] J. Harold Greenlee, *Scribes, Scrolls, and Scripture: A Student's Guide to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1985), 38.

Between the Greek manuscripts, the versions and early translations, and the writings of the early "church fathers," we truly have been blessed with what some call an "embarrassment of riches." We believe that God has had a hand in the preservation of His word. Yet the work of textual criticism has been able to successfully demonstrate that the original words of Scripture are available to us. The evidence is overwhelming in this regard. Once again, if skeptics doubted what we have with the Bible, they will not be able to trust any ancient work. The Bible surpasses all other, and not just by a little. We can confidently read our biblical text, knowing that what we have is what the authors—and ultimately God—intended to convey.

Greenlee notes: "If twenty manuscripts of a book of the New Testament were selected at random and distributed to twenty people who could read them, any person in the group could read from his manuscript and the others would have no trouble in following him in their manuscripts. Indeed, the verbal agreement between the various New Testament manuscripts is actually closer than the verbal agreement between many English versions of the New Testament."[9]

If skeptics wish to fight Scripture, they will need to take their battle elsewhere.

Defending Faith Against Atheism and Skepticism

Using Evidences and Reasoning

to Answer Attacks against Christianity

While God communicated through various personal means to the prophets and inspired writers, we have scriptures in written form for several reasons:

Precision of message: Information would be clearly understood
Permanence: Not reliant on memory to transfer information
Objectivity: Preserve against misinterpretation
Dissemination: Easier to spread message

We have a document that contains the history of God's people from creation to the years after Christ, as well as the wisdom and code of ethics that is to guide a Christian's actions and morality. But, how can we be assured that the document that we have now is an accurate replication of the original writing? How can we know that there has not been centuries of corruption, mistranslation, and manipulation that has resulted in an aberrant copy that misleads people today?

When compared to other manuscripts of antiquity, biblical texts are the most numerous in copy and more reliable than other texts we never questions the validity of.[1] After examining the manuscript evidence for the reliability of the Bible, to doubt the reliability of the Bible would be to disregard hundreds of writings from antiquity that are used in scholarship and study today. The Bible manuscripts are more numerous than comparable documents from antiquity, more accurately translated, written closer in time to the original autograph (original document which manuscripts are a copy of), and subsequent manuscripts in time are more continuous, having no gaps in the timeline of transmission.

[1] Doy Moyer, "*Mind Your Faith*"

Author and work	Date of writing	Earliest manuscript date	Gap between autograph and manuscript	Copies
Plate, *Dialogues*	4th century BC	900 AD	1,250 years	20
Homer, *Iliad*	9th century BC	400 BC	500 years	643
Herodotus, *The Histories*	484-425 BC	900 AD	1,350 years	8
Aristotle, assorted works	4th century BC	1100 AD	1,400 years	5
Sophocles, assorted works	448-385 BC	900 AD	1,400 years	193
New testament authors	45-100 AD	125-325 AD	30-300 years	5,600+

Table 5: Comparison of ancient manuscripts[2]

A common criticism of Biblical reliability is that there are no surviving autographs. How can one be assured that the manuscripts we have are accurate copies of the original? How can we be sure the manuscripts are free of errors without the original to compare you? It is unreasonable to assume that there are miniscule superficial discrepancies among thousands of manuscripts, but they are all exactly deviated from the original autograph. Inerrancy is not empirically provable, but the manuscript evidence supports Biblical claims of inerrancy, and judging by the same criteria used for other ancient manuscripts, the Bible is the most reliably and accurately translated of all works of antiquity.

Could God not have preserved the autographs? Is the lack of autographs evidence of the powerlessness of God to preserve his word? God could have protected the autographs to provide them to us, but perhaps they were not preserved for several practical reasons. They would have become an object of worship, rather than the contents, or they could have become an object to fight over, build temples around, etc. They would be considered to sacred to read, except by kings or priests, and then without popular copies then followers could be manipulated if the only people authorized to read were corrupt. There are examples of physical items becoming idolized, the people attributing near-shamanistic attributes to the physical while neglecting the spiritual meaning. Consider example of Moses' bronze serpent (Numbers 21:8-9) having to be destroyed by Hezekiah 700 years later because it had become the object of idolatry (2 Kings 18:4).

There is a multitude of New Testament manuscripts - over 5,000 have been discovered, documented, and catalogued so far. More may yet be found. Compare this to other works of antiquity: Homer's Iliad: 643 copies; Livy's History of Rome: 20 copies; Caesar's Gallic Wars: 9 copies; Works of Tacitus: 2 copies. There is not a scholastic movement calling these works into question for lack of autographs, doubting translational accuracy, or accusing readers of being fooling or superstitious.

New Testament manuscripts survive in higher quantities than other works for several reasons. Copies were made by the faithful rather than scribes or academics, while other ancient literature was not available to the general populace. Extra copies made in case manuscripts were destroyed during persecution, and also extra copies were made and circulated since there was no central temple or church that controlled or issued manuscripts. These are personal copies rather than official copies.

On the other hand, there are less copies of Old Testament manuscripts due to both practical and cultural reasons. Practical limitations on the number of surviving manuscripts include the age and materials of the manuscripts causing unavoidable decay and disintegration. Also, between 1800 BC and 1948 AD, Jerusalem was conquered 47 times, so many objects of antiquity have been destroyed, including repositories of religious writings (both canonical and non-inspired). Cultural factors that led to a smaller quantity of

[2] Josh McDowell, "*The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*"

manuscripts include scribal laws that demanded the burial of worn or flawed manuscripts – this kept mistakes out of preserved copies but limited the number of copies available. Though there are fewer copies, they all tend to be high quality recording scribal accuracy. These are officially created and controlled copies. The text was copied under extremely strict scribal rules and inspected for mistakes – any mistake found resulted in the document being systematically destroyed.

The other New Testament writers also used the Law and the Prophets for examples, exegesis, and authority for their message. They put the gospel and sermons in their own words, but everything they said was reinforced by scripture. The book of Hebrews is a continuous apologetic for the new law under Christ, based on scriptural evidence from the Old Testament. The New Testament does not have long intervals between references to the history and scriptures of the Old Testament.

After the time of Christ, the early church fathers (within the first two generations after the twelve apostles: Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, Justin Martyr, etc.) reference all of the NT throughout their works. There are enough historically reliable secondary references that the entire NT could be reconstructed from their writings alone, if there was not a single NT manuscript. They quoted with accuracy every single verse of the NT throughout their collected works. Even though the writings of the early church fathers were not divinely inspired, they still reveal information about the sociopolitical and cultural background in the time of Christ and serve as first-hand witnesses to the initial spread of Christianity. As their work extensively quotes and is reliant on New Testament scriptures, their writing is evidence of the impact of scriptures as well as the accuracy of transmission.

Logical resolution of discrepancies, errors, and difficulties

Atheists will criticize the Bible as being full of errors and contradictions, undermining the inerrancy of scriptures in an effort to deny the infallibility of scriptures. Believers that fall for this criticism will perceive the Bible as a collection of human wisdom rather than a book of divine revelation. The Biblical manuscripts have been studied and analyzed more than any other document in the world, using the same criteria as other documents of antiquity. It is illogical and a double standard to evaluate Biblical manuscripts using the same criteria we have for contemporary works, composed with modern technology, publishing techniques, and other advantages. While Bible manuscripts are not perfect, evaluating them by the same critical standards as other ancient works shows that the Bible has been preserved and translated with amazing accuracy, with errors being only superficial, and no discrepancies that bring contradiction to the overall message.

Writers in Biblical times were more focused on transmitting a faithful message rather than a word-for-word replication. The emphasis was on “actual voice” rather than “actual words”. During New Testament times, the Septuagint (LXX) was used, since it was the authoritative translation commonly used through Greek speaking lands. The Septuagint was also the only version of scriptures in circulation outside of Palestine. It was used by New Testament authors because it was what the target audience was familiar with and had access to. It has its own deviations in wording from the original Hebrew text, but concepts and doctrine were unaffected. Since New Testament writers used Septuagint translations it can be assumed they considered the variations inconsequential and focused on the context, concepts, and doctrine more than syntax. The Biblical narrative is composed of condensed conversations: simple phrases could have great implications, since biblical writers would often represent summaries of conversations with profound implications but few words. For example, in Luke 9:59-60, the phrase “bury my father” would include caretaking of dying father, burial, settling family affairs, allocating birthright, etc. not a one-time funeral event. This would imply an indefinite time period of potential responsibility changes – there’s Jesus’s response. He was not saying skip a funeral, he was saying make a decision on where your focus will be – indefinite responsibilities or time frames or dedication to discipleship. For another example of a compressed narrative, compare the abbreviated story of Jesus

withering a tree in Matthew 21:18-22 to the more detailed account of Mark 11:12-14 & 20-25. The authors of the Bible used cultural expressions and literature devices in their writing. While the content of scriptures is divinely inspired, the authors were allowed to put the message they were gifted into their own words, cultural vernacular, and writing style. The authors also generally wrote to a specific target audience, influencing the literary aspect of their works without compromising the content. One gospel might elaborate more on specific detail due to its target audience; another gospel might omit detail based on presupposition of knowledge that is explained elsewhere. For example, in Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10, a name to represent a group – in one passage the centurion comes to Jesus, in the other representatives are sent. One is literal, the other uses a figure of speech.

The consideration of the target audience's needs and knowledge base are a major reason why the gospels tell the same stories but with variation in detail. The variation does not imply error, it is simply a result of writing to a specific group.

Historians evaluate reliability of ancient narratives with the following criteria:[3]

- Do we possess copies that are reasonably close to the originals?
- Did the authors intend to convey reliable history to the readers?
- Were the authors in a position to know what they were talking about?
- Did the author's bias distort their historical reporting?
- Are the reports consistent with what we know about eye-witness testimony?
- Is there self-damaging material in the documents?
- Are the documents reasonably self-consistent and consistent with other documents that tell about the same events?
- Are the recorded events believable?
- Is there other literary evidence that help to establish the reliability of the events recorded in the examined documents?
- Does archaeology help to shed any light on the recorded events?

There is a difference between a textual error and an interpretive difficulty. Some passages are harder to translate or put into language that is understandable in today's vernacular – all languages have idiosyncrasies and idioms that would be nonsensical if translated literally. Thus, many passages have to be carefully phrased to retain the connotation or inference made in one language using verbiage unique to that language. There are standard principles for understanding apparent discrepancies in the Bible:[4]

- The unexplained is not necessarily unexplainable
- Fallible interpretations do not mean fallible revelation
- Understand the context of the passage
- Interpret difficult passages in the light of clear ones
- Don't base teaching on obscure passages
- The Bible is worded by humans and contains human characteristics
- Just because a report is incomplete does not mean it is false
- New Testament citations of the Old Testament need not always be exact
- The Bible does not necessarily approve of all its records
- The Bible uses non-technical, everyday language
- The Bible may use round numbers as well as exact numbers

[3] Doy Moyer, "*Mind Your Faith"*

[4] Josh McDowell, "T*he New Evidence that Demands a Verdict"*

- Note when the Bible uses different literary devices
- An error in a copy does not equate to an error in the original
- General statements don't necessarily mean universal promises Later revelation supersedes previous revelation

The errors in translation are largely superficial, with no errors that lead to significant dispute over doctrine. These are unintentional errors of syntax and grammar, not errors that influence meaning.

Human errors in transmission does not nullify the divinely inspired aspect of scriptures. An error that led to a contradiction would be more serious, and potential to undermine the inerrancy of scripture. For example, if one gospel described meat in the Lord's supper instead of bread, the symbolism of the bread of life, bread representing his crucified body, etc. would be changed. In addition to the symbolism being changed, the doctrine of the Lord's supper would also be disputable. However, no such errors exist in the Bible manuscripts. Human errors can be generalized into errors of the eye (mistake during reading source material), and errors of transmission (mistake during copying to new document). Both errors of the eye and transmission are understandable considering the circumstances of the average ancient scribe. Both types of errors can be resolved using context clues and common sense. More difficult errors are resolved with comparison to other documents – with the vast majority of manuscripts being nearly identical, any variant is easily identifiable, standing out from the crowd.

Examples of errors of the eye include:[5]

Incorrect placement of vowels: The early manuscripts do not have punctuation, spacing, or vowels. These would have to be read out loud to get the greatest accuracy of interpretation. As written language developed, these features of grammar were added to new manuscripts. The oral tradition of public reading and memorization of scripture assisted reading the text with no vowels or punctuation, but occasionally during the modernization of manuscripts mistakes were made. This could lead to incorrect words due to multiple options on spacing: HEISNOWHERE could be read as HE IS NOW HERE or HE IS NO WHERE. However, context clues lead to the correct interpretation.

Repetitions: The same word duplicated, either adjacently or interspersed elsewhere in a passage.

Transposition: The reverse position of letters or numbers, or accidental substitution. For example, some versions mix up the age of Ahaziah in 2 Chronicles 22:2 and 2 Kings 8:26: one passage lists his age as 42 years, the other at 22 years.

Misreading letters: Differences in scribe's writing style, development of the alphabet, the similar appearance of some letters, and other penmanship considerations can cause some letters to be easily confused. The letters j and i look very similar and can be identical depending on handwriting, and for printed material, dependent on font as well. i.e. "John" vs "Iohn."

Examples of transmission errors include:

Haplography: Writing something one that should have been written twice. i.e. "writen" vs "written."

Dittography: Writing something twice that should have been written once. i.e. "ttwice" instead of "twice."

Metathesis: Reversal in order of letters or words. i.e. "letters reversed" vs "reversed letters", or "erversed letters"

Fusion: Combining the last letter/letters of a preceding word with the beginning of the next word, i.e.

[5] Error types compiled from Gleason Archer, "*The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*" and Josh McDowell, "*The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*"

"they spoke" vs "the yspoke"

Fission: The separation of one word into two, i.e. "abundances" vs "a bun dances"

Homophony: The substitution of words that sound the same phonetically but have different meanings and spellings, i.e. "bread" vs "bred"

Homoeoteleuton & homoeoarkton: The omission of phrases when two adjacent sentences had the same endings or same beginnings, respectively. i.e. "His hands hurt from writing. His eyes hurt from writing. He wanted to sleep." Vs "His hands hurt from writing. He wanted to sleep." Similar wording causing the scribe to accidentally overlook an intervening phrase.

Omission or inclusion of words: Accidentally skipping or adding a word, often conjunctions, i.e. "He was writing a book" vs "He was a book" or "he was not writing a book"

Omission or inclusion of letters: Accidentally adding or leaving out a letter, i.e. "Sing and by joyful" miscopied as "sin and be joyful" or "Do not cause your brother to sing" instead of "Do not cause your brother to sin"

There are general practices for determination of accuracy when evaluating divergent manuscripts. These practices are used by translators, scholars, researchers, and theologians alike. Perceived errors and difficulties must be resolved systematically and without bias in order to reach a complete and accurate understanding of the text. Difficulties must not be solved with a preconceived end in sight – this could lead to a false, misleading solution. The principle behind these guidelines is that the more reliable manuscript must be identified as a baseline to resolve ambiguity. These practices include:[6]

- The older manuscript should be preferred, since normally the older the manuscript is, the closer it is to the original and thus less opportunity for mistakes
- The more difficult writing should be preferred, since a scribe seeking to make a passage easier would be more likely to make a mistake
- The shorter manuscript should be preferred, since longer manuscripts are more likely to have points added for clarification

Despite variants and mistakes, the manuscript preservation and translation of the New Testament is considered over 99% pure[7] Compare this to the Iliad, with less manuscript copies and less opportunity for error, and is considered 95% pure. Since there are thousands of New Testament manuscripts, written over centuries by hundreds of people, one would expect them and the translations to be impossibly tainted with mistakes. However, the accuracy and purity of the manuscripts itself is evidence towards divine preservation of these documents, revealing the God intended for them to endure for all his people to learn from. Considering the evidence, the Bible as we know it today is entirely reliable. The fact that there are dubious and biased translations in the market today does not mean that the manuscripts and faithful, accurate translations are untrustworthy. The question should not be "do Biblical manuscripts contain errors?" There are errors made during duplication of manuscripts, but at a lower rate of frequency and magnitude than documents of comparable age. The questions should be "are there mistakes that introduce ambiguity of the message, or introduce conflicting doctrine?" That answer is no - no doctrine is changed by any mistakes or errors found in manuscripts.

[6] Gleason Archer, "*The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties"*

[7] Geisler & Nix, "*From God to Us*"

Church History and Evidences
Notes: Differences in Greek manuscripts between KJV and ASV

There are three main English Bible versions from which all others come:

- KJV (aka Authorized Version - AV) – 1611 – TR text (Textus Receptus)
- RV (1885) – Based on Westcott and Hort translation (1881) – NU-Text (Novum Testamentum Graece), CV text (Codex Vaticanus)
- ASV (1901) – Americanized version of the RV

Differences in Greek Manuscripts:

- The Textus Receptus (Latin: "received text") is the name subsequently given to the succession of printed Greek texts of the New Testament which was first collated by Desiderius Erasmus in the 16th century. It constituted the translation base for the translation of the New Testament into English by William Tyndale, the King James Version, and most other Reformation-era New Testament translations throughout Western and Central Europe. Stanley Porter explains, "The Textus Receptus is any form of the Greek text that goes back to the edition of Erasmus and the several late manuscripts he used. The Textus Receptus is a more restricted and limited form of Byzantine text, but it is not the Byzantine text as found in the edition of Robinson and Pierpont, or the Majority text found in the edition of Hodges and Farstad. Manuscripts of the Byzantine family represent the vast majority of the 5700 New Testament manuscripts that have currently been found and collated, no two of which are identical. These are now generally thought to represent a much later copy of the original text in contrast to the earlier yet corrupt copies of the Alexandrian text-type, but were the predominant text-type available to Erasmus
- The Majority Text (M-Text) represents the Byzantine text-type, which was used in Eastern Greek speaking churches and was dominant from the late middle ages onwards. It is similar to the Textus Receptus.
- The modern critical text (e.g. Novum Testamentum Graece or NU-Text) is close to the Alexandrian text-type, which accounts for some of the earliest New Testament manuscripts; it stands behind most modern English translations of the New Testament including the American Standard Version, New International Version, Revised Standard Version, New Revised Standard Version, New American Standard Bible, Jerusalem Bible, New American Bible, English Standard Version, and others.

The KJV and ASV translations are similar in the following ways:

- They both are literal translations of the original languages (Hebrew/Aramaic for the Old Testament, Greek for the New Testament).
- They both were translated by committees, not individuals. This is good because it significantly reduced mistakes and biases.

- They have both been tremendously popular since the date of their publication. Many believers have grown in their knowledge and understanding of God's Word through these great translations.
- Both translations do a very good job of communicating God's Word into the English language. Although they are derived from different manuscript traditions (see below), they agree in well over 90% of their text.

They are different in the following ways:

- The King James Version's New Testament was translated from the Greek Textus Receptus, which comes from what most scholars consider to be a supposedly younger, less reliable manuscript tradition. The ASB was translated from a modern critical edition, which allegedly considers many more manuscripts from different geographic locations, some of which supposedly go back much closer to the original autographs.

KJV History:

In January 1604, King James convened the Hampton Court Conference, where a new English version was conceived in response to the problems of the earlier translations perceived by the Puritans, a faction of the Church of England.

The followers of John Wycliffe undertook the first complete English translations of the Christian scriptures in the 14th century. These translations were banned in 1409 due to their association with the Lollards (pre-protestant, c.1395). The Wycliffe Bible pre-dated the printing press but was circulated very widely in manuscript form, often inscribed with a date earlier than 1409 to avoid the legal ban. As the text translated in the various versions of the Wycliffe Bible was the Latin Vulgate, and as it contained no heterodox readings, there was in practice no way by which the ecclesiastical authorities could distinguish the banned version; consequently many Catholic commentators of the 15th and 16th centuries (such as Thomas More) took these manuscript English Bibles to represent an anonymous earlier orthodox translation.

In 1525, William Tyndale, an English contemporary of Martin Luther, undertook a translation of the New Testament. Tyndale's translation was the first printed Bible in English. Over the next ten years, Tyndale revised his New Testament in the light of rapidly advancing biblical scholarship and embarked on a translation of the Old Testament. Despite some controversial translation choices, and in spite of Tyndale's execution on charges of heresy for having made the translated bible, the merits of Tyndale's work and prose style made his translation the ultimate basis for all subsequent renditions into Early Modern English. With these translations lightly edited and adapted by Myles Coverdale, in 1539, Tyndale's New Testament and his incomplete work on the Old Testament became the basis for the Great Bible. This was the first "authorised version" issued by the Church of England during the reign of King Henry VIII. When Mary I succeeded to the throne in 1553, she returned the Church of England to the communion of the Roman Catholic faith and many English religious

reformers fled the country, some establishing an English-speaking colony at Geneva. Under the leadership of John Calvin, Geneva became the chief international center of Reformed Protestantism and Latin biblical scholarship.

These English expatriates undertook a translation that became known as the Geneva Bible. This translation, dated to 1560, was a revision of Tyndale's Bible and the Great Bible on the basis of the original languages. Soon after Elizabeth I took the throne in 1558, the flaws of both the Great Bible and the Geneva Bible (namely, that the Geneva Bible did not "conform to the ecclesiology and reflect the episcopal structure of the Church of England and its beliefs about an ordained clergy") became painfully apparent. In 1568, the Church of England responded with the Bishops' Bible, a revision of the Great Bible in the light of the Geneva version. While officially approved, this new version failed to displace the Geneva translation as the most popular English Bible of the age—in part because the full Bible was only printed in lectern editions of prodigious size and at a cost of several pounds. Accordingly, Elizabethan lay people overwhelmingly read the Bible in the Geneva Version—small editions were available at a relatively low cost. At the same time, there was a substantial clandestine importation of the rival Douay–Rheims New Testament of 1582, undertaken by exiled Roman Catholics. This translation, though still derived from Tyndale, claimed to represent the text of the Latin Vulgate

The newly crowned King James convened the Hampton Court Conference in 1604. That gathering proposed a new English version in response to the perceived problems of earlier translations as detected by the Puritan faction of the Church of England. Here are three examples of problems the Puritans perceived with the Bishops and Great Bibles:

Instructions were given to the translators that were intended to limit the Puritan influence on this new translation. The Bishop of London added a qualification that the translators would add no marginal notes (which had been an issue in the Geneva Bible). King James cited two passages in the Geneva translation where he found the marginal notes offensive to the principles of divinely ordained royal supremacy : Exodus 1:19, where the Geneva Bible notes had commended the example of civil disobedience to the Egyptian Pharaoh showed by the Hebrew midwives, and also II Chronicles 15:16, where the Geneva Bible had criticized King Asa for not having executed his idolatrous 'mother', Queen Maachah (Maachah had actually been Asa's grandmother, but James considered the Geneva Bible reference as sanctioning the execution of his own mother Mary, Queen of Scots). Further, the King gave the translators instructions designed to guarantee that the new version would conform to the ecclesiology of the Church of England. Certain Greek and Hebrew words were to be translated in a manner that reflected the traditional usage of the church. For example, old ecclesiastical words such as the word "church" were to be retained and not to be translated as "congregation". The new translation would reflect the episcopal structure of the Church of England and traditional beliefs about ordained clergy.

Issues with KJV:

The King James version contains several mistranslations; especially in the Old Testament where the knowledge of Hebrew and cognate languages was uncertain at the time. Most of these are minor and do not significantly change the meaning compared to the source material. Among the most commonly cited errors is in the Hebrew of Job and Deuteronomy, where רְאֵם "Re'em" with the probable meaning of "wild-ox, aurochs", is translated in the KJV as "unicorn"; following in this the Vulgate unicornis and several medieval rabbinic commentators. The translators of the KJV note the alternative rendering, "rhinocerots" [sic] in the margin at Isaiah 34:7. On a similar note Martin Luther's German translation had also relied on the Vulgate Latin on this point, consistently translating רְאֵם using the German word for unicorn, "Einhorn." Otherwise, the translators on several occasions mistakenly interpreted a Hebrew descriptive phrase as a proper name (or vice versa); as at 2 Samuel 1:18 where 'the Book of Jasher' סֵפֶר הַיָּשָׁר properly refers not to a work by an author of that name, but should rather be rendered as "the Book of the Upright."

The King James Only movement advocates the superiority of the King James Version over all other English translations. Most adherents of the movement believe that the Textus Receptus is very close, if not identical, to the original autographs thereby making it the ideal Greek source for the translation. They argue that manuscripts such as Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, on which most modern English translations rely, are corrupted New Testament texts.

History of the ASV:

By the first half of the 18th century, the Authorized Version had become effectively unchallenged as the English translation used in Anglican and English Protestant churches, except for the Psalms and some short passages in the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England. Over the course of the 18th century, the Authorized Version supplanted the Latin Vulgate as the standard version of scripture for English-speaking scholars. With the development of stereotype printing at the beginning of the 19th century, this version of the Bible became the most widely printed book in history, almost all such printings presenting the standard text of 1769 extensively re-edited by Benjamin Blayney at Oxford, and nearly always omitting the books of the Apocrypha. Today the unqualified title "King James Version" usually indicates this Oxford standard text.

Westcott and Hort published The New Testament in the Original Greek in 1881, in which they rejected what they considered to be the dated and inadequate Textus Receptus. Their text is based mainly on Codex Vaticanus in the Gospels

In the United States, the Revised Version was adapted and revised as the "Revised Version, Standard American Edition" (better known as the American Standard Version) in 1901. The American Standard Version is largely identical to the Revised Version of 1885, with minor variations in wording considered to be slightly more accurate.

Text-types:

Most textual critics of the New Testament favor the Alexandrian text-type (i.e. ASV) as the closest representative of the autographs for many reasons. One reason is that Alexandrian manuscripts are the oldest found; some of the earliest Church Fathers used readings found in the Alexandrian text. Another is that the Alexandrian readings are adjudged more often to be the ones that can best explain the origin of all the variant readings found in other text-types.

Nevertheless, there are some dissenting voices to this consensus. A few textual critics, especially those in France, argue that the Western text-type, an old text from which the Vetus Latina or Old Latin versions of the New Testament are derived, is closer to the originals.

In the United States, some critics have a dissenting view that prefers the Byzantine text-type (i.e. KJV), such as Maurice A. Robinson and William Grover Pierpont. They assert that Egypt, almost alone, offers optimal climatic conditions favoring preservation of ancient manuscripts while, on the other hand, the papyri used in the east (Asia Minor and Greece) would not have survived due to the unfavorable climatic conditions. Thus, it is not surprising that ancient Biblical manuscripts that are found would come mostly from the Alexandrian geographical area and not from the Byzantine geographical area.

The argument for the authoritative nature of the latter is that the much greater number of Byzantine manuscripts copied in later centuries, in detriment to the Alexandrian manuscripts, indicates a superior understanding by scribes of those being closer to the autographs. Eldon Jay Epp argued that the manuscripts circulated in the Roman world and many documents from other parts of the Roman Empire were found in Egypt since the late 19th century.

According to the preface to the New King James Version of the Bible, the Textus Receptus, the Alexandrian text-type and the Byzantine text-type are 85% identical (that is, of the variations that occur in any manuscript, only 15% actually differ between these three).

New Testament Text-types:

Early New Testament texts include more than 5,800 Greek manuscripts, 10,000 Latin manuscripts and 9,300 manuscripts in various other ancient languages (including Syriac, Slavic, Ethiopic and Armenian). The manuscripts contain approximately 300,000 textual variants, most of them involving changes of word order and other comparative trivialities. Thus, for over 250 years, New Testament scholars have argued that no textual variant affects any doctrine. Professor D. A. Carson states: "nothing we believe to be doctrinally true, and nothing we are commanded to do, is in any way jeopardized by the variants. This is true for any textual tradition. The interpretation of individual passages may well be called in question; but never is a doctrine affected."

The sheer number of witnesses presents unique difficulties, chiefly in that it makes stemmatics in many cases impossible, because many writers used two or more different manuscripts as sources. Consequently, New Testament textual critics have adopted eclecticism after sorting the witnesses into three major groups, called text-types.

Text type	Date	Characteristics	Bible version
The Alexandrian text-type (also called the "Neutral Text" tradition; less frequently, the "Minority Text")	2nd–4th centuries CE	This family constitutes a group of early and well-regarded texts, including Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus. Most representatives of this tradition appear to come from around Alexandria, Egypt and from the Alexandrian Church. It contains readings that are often terse, shorter, somewhat rough, less harmonised, and generally more difficult. The family was once[*when?*] thought[*by whom?*] to result from a very carefully edited 3rd-century recension, but now is believed to be merely the result of a carefully controlled and supervised process of copying and transmission. It underlies most translations of the New Testament produced since 1900.	NIV, NAB, NABRE, Douay, JB and NJB (albeit, with some reliance on the Byzantine text-type), TNIV, NASB, RSV, ESV, EBR, NWT, LB, ASV, NC, GNB, CSB
The Western text-type	3rd–9th centuries CE	Also a very early tradition, which comes from a wide geographical area stretching from North Africa to Italy and from Gaul to Syria. It occurs in Greek manuscripts and in the Latin translations used by the Western church. It is much less controlled than the Alexandrian family and its witnesses are seen to be more prone to paraphrase and other corruptions. It is sometimes called the Caesarean text-type. Some New Testament scholars would argue that the Caesarean constitutes a distinct text-type of its own.	Vetus Latina
The Byzantine text-type; also, Koinē text-type (also called "Majority Text")	5th–16th centuries CE	This group comprises around 95% of all the manuscripts, the majority of which are comparatively very late in the tradition. It had become dominant at Constantinople from the 5th century on and was used throughout the Eastern Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire. It contains the most harmonistic readings, paraphrasing and significant additions, most of which are believed[*by whom?*] to be secondary readings. It underlies the Textus Receptus used for most Reformation-era translations of the New Testament.	KJV, NKJV, Tyndale, Coverdale, Geneva, Bishops' Bible, OSB

Church History and Evidences
Notes: Comparing the different English Bible Versions

All sources and excerpts have been slightly edited [By Michael McCleeary] for the sake of cohesion.

I. Why So Many Versions?

Since 1895 many archeological and manuscript discoveries have been made which have which have pronounced judgment on some of the renderings found in the King James. The single most important discovery was that of the Egyptian papyri. In 1895, Adolf Deissmann published a volume, given the unassuming title, Bible Studies (Bibelstudien), which revolutionized NT scholarship. Deissmann discovered that ancient papyrus scraps, buried in Egyptian garbage dumps some 2,000 years ago, contained Greek which was quite similar to the Greek of the NT. He concluded that the Greek of the NT was written in the common language of the day. It was not the dialect which only the most elite could understand. Since Deissmann's discovery, translators have endeavored to put the NT into language the average person could comprehend--just as it was originally intended. Not only that but the papyri have helped us to understand many words--words which were only guessed at by King James translators.

There are two implications of what Deissmann did for the Bible translations:

- First, if the apostles wrote in easy-to-understand terms, then translations of the Bible should reflect this. We ought not to translate with big 50-cent religious-sounding words if the original was not written that way. The King James word 'propitiation,' for example, basically means 'satisfaction'--that is, God is satisfied with Christ's payment for our sins. Our Lord's final word from the cross, "It is finished," has been found on papyrus business documents--on receipts, if you will. It means "paid in full."

    - In other words, Bible translations need to be clear. One of the obvious proofs of this is that the gospel offends people. And it cannot be offensive unless it is understood!

- Second, the papyri discoveries have helped us to understand words which the King James translators merely guessed at. For example, in the King James version of John 3:16, the Greek word translated 'only begotten' really means 'one and only' or 'unique.' The Bible, then, does not say that Jesus was the begotten Son of God--which might suggest that he had a beginning--but that he is the unique Son of God. [**Editor's note: To be fair, this term is ONLY ever used in connection to children. However, the point as it pertains to Christ is valid; He is not a created being, He has always been, as the Father and the Spirit have been.**]

Finally, there have been philosophical influences. That is, the theory of translation is being revamped today. Missionaries have made a significant contribution toward this end--because they are eager to see a particular tribe read the Bible in its own language.

These differences--textual, informational, philosophical--have been the parents of a new generation of Bible translations. But are these translations any good? Are they any better than the King James?

II. The Text of Modern Translations

Where have all the verses gone? The modern translations seem to have cut out many of the most precious lines of Scripture. They end Mark's gospel at the 8th verse of chapter 16; they omit the reference of the angel of the Lord stirring the waters at the pool of Bethesda (verse 4 of John 5); and, most notably, they excise the story of the woman caught in adultery in John 8.

Besides omissions, these modern versions make significant changes in the text. For example, in I Timothy 3:16, the King James reads, "God was manifest in the flesh," but most modern translations read, "He was manifest in the flesh." In Revelation 22:19 the King James speaks of the "book of life" while virtually all modern versions speak of the "tree of life." Altogether, there are hundreds of textual changes between the King James and modern translations.

In this brief space we will make a few observations:

- First, the textual changes in the modern translations affect no major doctrine. The deity of Christ, virgin birth, salvation by grace alone **[Editor's Note: salvation by grace alone is accurate in that we have been saved by grace "*through faith*" (Eph. 2:8-9), and faith requires obedience]**--and all the rest--are still intact. Though certain passages are omitted or changed, the doctrines are not.

- Second, the textual changes in these modern translations are based on the most ancient MSS of the Greek NT. These MSS date from early in the second century A.D. But the Greek texts behind the King James belong to a group of MSS--called the Byzantine text--which are much more recent. On the other hand, although these MSS are more recent, they comprise at least 80% of the 5000+ MSS of the NT that we presently have. It is theoretically possible that, at times, these MSS point to an early tradition as well. **[Editor's Note: Taking into account of the critical examination we've already done regarding the Byzantine and Alexandrian Text-types, the argument can also be made that the Byzantine text-type represents the original type of the New Testament, which was written in the Byzantine region and not Alexandrian.]**

III. Which Translation Is Best?

One of the best safeguards you can follow is to stay away from the sectarian translations or those done by an individual. The **New World Translation**, by the Jehovah's Witnesses, is the best-known sectarian translation. Translations by individuals include **Moffatt's**, **Weymouth's, J. B. Phillips**, **The Living Bible**, **Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation**, and the **Berkley New Testament**.

- **King James Version**
  The King James Bible has with good reason been termed, "the noblest monument of English prose" (RSV preface). Above all its rivals, the King James Version has had the greatest impact in shaping the English language. It is a literary masterpiece. But, lest anyone wishes to revere it because it was "good enough for St. Paul," or some such nonsense, we must remember that the King James Bible of today is not the King James of 1611. It has undergone three revisions, incorporating more than 100,000 changes! Further, there are over 300 words in the King James that no longer mean what they meant in 1611. If one wishes to use a Bible that follows the same Greek and Hebrew texts as the King James, I recommend the **New King James Version**.

- **Revised Standard Version**
  The RSV was completed in 1952 and was intended to be, in part, a revision of the King James. Of course, it used the ancient MSS of the NT, resulting in the omission of several verses and words. But the wording was still archaic. The RSV attempts to be a word-for-word translation where possible. The **NRSV** follows the same principle of translation, though has now become more "gender-inclusive" in its approach. At times this is very helpful; at other times, it is misleading.

- **New American Standard**
  The NASB is something of an evangelical counterpart to the RSV. It, too, was intended to be something of a revision of the King James. There are three major differences between the RSV and the NASB: first, the NASB is less archaic in its wording. Second, its translators were more conservative theologically than the RSV translators. Third, because of the translators' desire to adhere as closely to the wording of the original, often this translation is stilted and wooden. Still, the NASB is probably the best word-for-word translation available today.

- **New English Bible**
  The NEB was completed in 1971, after a quarter of a century of labor. It marks a new milestone in translation: it is not a revision, but a brand-new translation. It is a phrase-for-phrase translation. Unfortunately, sometimes the biases of the translators creep into the text. The **REB (Revised English Bible)** follows the same pattern: excellent English, though not always faithful to the Greek and Hebrew.

- **New International Version**
  The NIV was published in 1978. It may be considered a counterpart to the NEB. It is more a phrase-for-phrase translation than a word-for-word translation, and the scholars were generally more conservative than those who worked on the NEB. I personally consider it the best phrase-for-phrase translation available today. However, its major flaw is in its simplicity of language. The editors wanted to make sure it was easy to read. In achieving this goal, they often sacrificed accuracy (in particular, in the NT, sentences are shortened, subordination of thought is lost, conjunctions are deleted).

- **New World Translation**
  A word should be said about the New World Translation by the Jehovah's Witnesses. Due to the sectarian bias of the group, as well as to the lack of genuine biblical scholarship, I believe that the New World Translation is by far the worst translation in English dress. It purports to be word-for-word, and in most cases is slavishly literal to the point of being terrible English. But, ironically, whenever a sacred cow is demolished by the biblical writers themselves, the Jehovah's Witnesses twist the text and resort to an interpretive type of translation. In short, it combines the cons of both worlds, with none of the pros.

- **New English Translation**
  The NET Bible (or New English Translation) has all the earmarks of a great translation. It may well be more accurate than the NASB, more readable than the NIV, and more elegant than either. In addition, the notes are genuine gold mine of information, unlike those found in any other translation. **[Editor's Note: After a cursory examination the NET, there doesn't seem to be anything significantly different to that of the NKJV aside from sounding weird given its modern language. However, proceed with caution as this is a very new version and there may be something not accurately translated (given the inaccuracy of modern English) which may lead to inaccurate application. More study of the NET is needed). A major update is coming to it this year.]**

- **New Living Translation (NLT)**
  Tyndale House Publishers launched the New Living Translation (NLT) in 1996, a revision of the Living Bible. Like many other translations, it took seven years to produce. The goal was to communicate the meaning of the ancient texts as accurately as possible to the modern reader. Ninety biblical scholars labored to make the text fresher and more readable, conveying whole thoughts in everyday language rather than translating word by word.

- **English Standard Version (ESV)**
  The English Standard Version (ESV) was first published in 2001 and is considered an "essentially literal" translation. One hundred scholars produced it based on faithfulness to the historic orthodox text. They delved into the meanings of the Masoretic text, consulting the Dead Sea Scrolls and other sources. It's extensively footnoted to elaborate on why the text choices were made. They meet every five years to discuss revisions.

IV. Does translation philosophy really matter?

Most people believe that different Bible translations are simply a function of varying levels of readability, though all are roughly similar in accuracy. Translations are not equal in accuracy, and "readability" may come at the expense of precision to God's words and therefore His message.

Before the middle of the 20th century there was only one basic philosophy of Bible translation: “word-for-word” or “formal equivalence.” This translation philosophy placed a premium on making the original languages transparent to the reader to the extent that English grammar would allow. This translation theory is grounded in 2 essential facts.

1. Plenary (Verbal) Inspiration -the fact that God inspired not only the “thoughts” of the biblical writers, but also the “words.” (Psalm 12:6, Proverbs 30:5, Matthew 4:4, 2 Timothy 3:16, Revelation 22:18-19) Since God inspired the words, one must be hesitant to place a disproportionate weight on ‘readability’ at the expense of accuracy. It should be noted, however, that the English language changes. Many modern readers would be extremely hard pressed to understand the English that John Wycliffe spoke in the 14th century (or the AV of the 17th century.)

> “*For God louede so the world, that he yaf his `oon bigetun sone, that ech man that bileueth in him perische not, but haue euerlastynge lijf*.”
> (John 3:16 Wycliffe 1382)
> “*That if thou knoulechist in thi mouth the Lord Jhesu Crist, and bileuest in thin herte, that God reiside hym fro deth, thou schalt be saaf.”*
> (Romans 10:9 Wycliffe 1382)

Word-for-word translation theory does not suggest the preservation of archaic English. It attempts to render the original biblical languages as close as possible to their contemporary equivalents.

2. Thoughts cannot be disconnected from the words that produce them. This is true in the Bible as it is all aspects of communication. Scholar Raymond Van Leeuwen says, “It is hard to know what the Bible means when we are uncertain about what it says.” (We Really Do Need Another Bible Translation) In other words, even if one didn’t hold to the verbal inspiration of Scripture, changing words necessarily changes the resulting meaning.

An "essentially literal" translation attempts to make the original biblical languages as transparent as possible to the reader. It gives the reader the best view of the original wording of the biblical writers. The focus of the "essentially literal" translation is on word-for-word precision. On the other end of the translation spectrum, are versions which attempt to translate the ideas of the biblical authors. These are often characterized as thought-for-thought translations. Most translations fall somewhere within this continuum. It is true that less literal translations may be more "readable," but often at the expense of accuracy and intended cross reference. The NASB, ESV, KJV and NKJV are superb choices for those who hold transparency to the original text, as a premium for an excellent translation.

Originally the Bible was written in Hebrew (and some Aramaic) for the Old Testament, and Greek for the New Testament. It is a profound challenge—and responsibility—to translate Scripture into the native tongue of the reader in such a way we can understand what God has said.

V. Dynamic Equivalence Vs. Formal Equivalence

Most laymen today think that a faithful translation of the Bible means a word-for-word translation. If the original has a noun, they expect a noun in the translation. If the original has sixteen words, they don't want to see seventeen words in the translation. We might call this translation "formal equivalence." The King James, old American Standard, and the New American Standard come closest to this ideal.

On the other end of the spectrum is a "phrase-for-phrase" translation, or a dynamic equivalence translation. It is not so concerned about the grammatical form of the original language as it is of the meaning of the original. A dynamic equivalence translation is more interpretive--but it is also easier to understand. The New International Version (in part) and the New English Bible follow this philosophy.

Anyone who has ever learned a second language knows that a word-for-word translation is impossible much or most of the time. Idioms in one language need to be paraphrased. Even the King James translators realized this. In a couple of places in the OT, the Hebrew text literally reads, "God's nostrils enlarged." But the King James has something like, "God became angry"--which is what the expression means. And in many places in Paul's letters, the King James reads, "God forbid!" But the original has neither "God" nor "forbid." Literally, it says, "May it never be!" (as most modern translations render it!)

Therefore, when we speak of faithfulness in translation, we need to clarify the question: Faithfulness to form? or faithfulness to meaning? Sometimes faithfulness to one involves lack of fidelity to the other. There are problems with each of these. The King James, with its attempted fidelity to form, in some passages makes no sense. And in 1611 they made no sense! The New American Standard, likewise, is often characterized by wooden, stilted English.

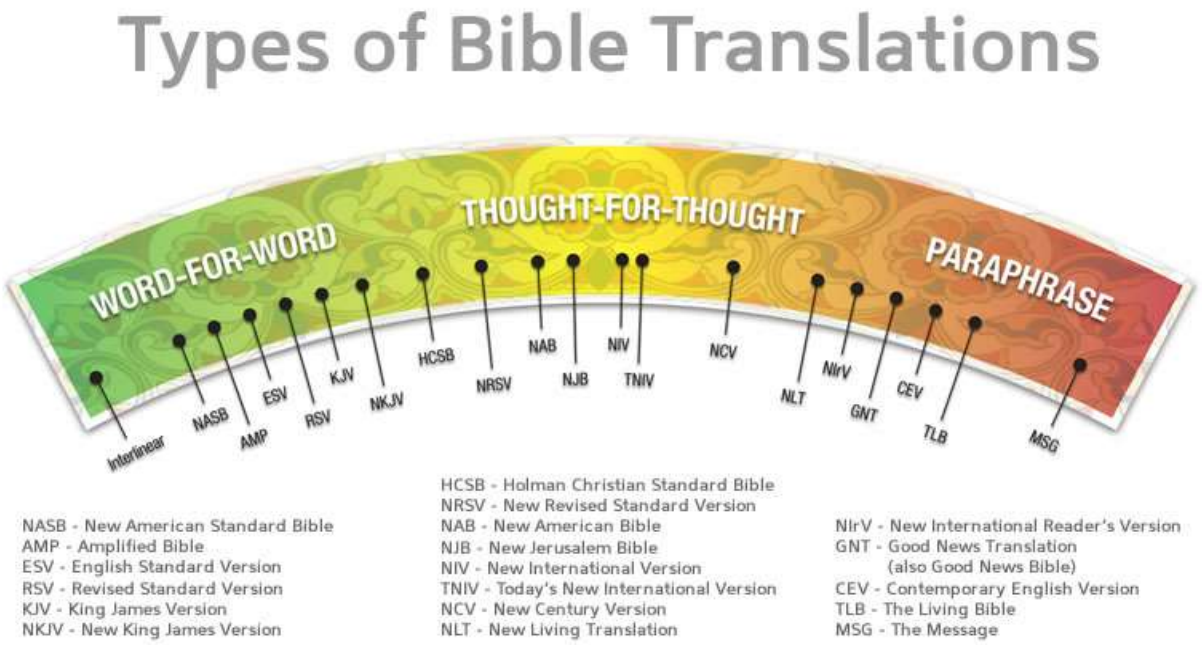
On the other hand, dynamic equivalence translations sometimes are too interpretive. The NIV, in Eph 6:6, tells slaves to "Obey (their masters) not **only** to win their favor. . .," but the word "only" is not in the Greek and Paul did not mean to imply it, either. This reveals one of the problems with dynamic equivalence translations: the translators don't always know whether their interpretation is right.

But some versions don't interpret--they distort. Some are notorious for omitting references to Christ's blood, or for attempting to deny his deity. In these instances, the translators are neither faithful to the form or the meaning. They have perverted the Word of God.

Yet, dynamic equivalence translators who are honest with the text often make things very clear. In Phil 2:6, for example, the NIV tells us that Jesus was "in (his) very nature God." But most formal equivalence translations state that he was in the form of God. The problem with these formally correct translations is that they are misleading: the Greek word for 'form' here means essence or nature.

Dynamic equivalence versus formal equivalence: two different philosophies of translation. A formal equivalence translation lets the reader interpret for himself. But too often, the average reader doesn't have the background or the tools to interpret accurately. The net result is that he often badly misunderstands the text.
On the other hand, a dynamic equivalence translation is usually clear and quite understandable. But if the translators missed the point of the original--either intentionally or unintentionally--they will be communicating an idea foreign to the biblical text.

VI. How Literal?



At one end of the spectrum is the word-for-word translation (also referred to as a formal equivalent or literal translation). This approach seeks to represent the original Greek and Hebrew in a more word-for-word manner and preserve—as far as possible—original word order, grammar, and syntax. Many prefer this method because each Greek or Hebrew word is generally represented by the same English word in all occurrences. Some of the more literal translations include: the **King James Version (KJV)**, the **New King James Version (NKJV)**, the **English Standard Version (ESV)**, and the **New American Standard Bible (NASB)**. The most literal translation is the **interlinear** which contains the text in its original language with the English equivalent under the text.

On the other end of the spectrum we find the thought-for-thought translation (also referred to as a paraphrase or functional equivalent). This approach is more concerned with putting meaning of the passage in a colloquial language familiar to the reader. This type of translation seeks to render the ideas of the original text as accurately as possible in the target language (like English). Many find this translation more readable, especially for new readers. A translation's premium is on the thoughts and ideas expressed in passages, rather than translating each phrase word-for-word. This

philosophy is necessarily interpretive. Translations that follow this general philosophy: (**NLT**, **CEV**, **NJB**, **The Philips New Testament in Modern English**, **The Living Bible**, and **The Message**.

The middle of the spectrum is occupied by the dynamic equivalent, or mediating translation. These translations seek to strike a balance between the two translation approaches. They are sometimes more literal, sometimes more colloquial or conversational depending on the subject and text. Some examples in this category are the **New International Version (NIV)**, **Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)**, and the **New American Bible (NAB)**.

A **Parallel Bible** contains two or more translations for easy comparison.

We believe A. the Holy Spirit not only inspired the thoughts of the Bible writers, but the words themselves. B. Thoughts cannot be disconnected from the words that produce them. C. Intended Biblical cross-references will get obscured when word-for-word translation philosophy is not employed. All **[Editor's Note: No, not all. Most, maybe.]** translations in fairness employ both ideas in their philosophy – translating is always to some degree a trade-off between "accuracy" and "clarity." Anyone who is bilingual knows that the 'best' translation is not always the most 'literal.'

VII. Biblical Examples

- **Psalm 2:7**
  Word-for-Word

  King James Bible (KJV)
  I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.
  New King James Bible (NKJV)
  "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.
  American Standard Version (ASV)
  I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee.

  Thought-for-Thought
  Contemporary English Version (CEV)
  I will tell you promise the LORD made to me: "You are my son, because today I have become your father."
  The Message
  Let me tell you what GOD said next. He said, "You're my son, and today is your birthday."
  Living Bible
  His chosen one replies, "I will reveal the everlasting purposes of God, for the Lord has said to me, 'You are my Son. This is your Coronation Day. Today I am giving you your glory.'"

- **1Corinthians 6:9**,
  (ASV) "Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."

  There are various ways versions miss the boat in translating this passage.

  Using a different term in place of "unrighteous" or "unjust", which is not precisely the same thing: NIV, NLT, CEV, NRSV.

  Using incomplete definitions instead of the precise theological terms "sanctified" and "justified": NLT, CEV, GW. (Note: I have accepted NWT's "declared righteous" in place of "justified.")

  Failing to distinguish practicing homosexuals from celibate homosexuals: BLB, NASB, ISV, GW, WEB, CEV, NKJV, LITV.

  Using some word other than "washed", or explanatory text to eliminate baptism as an interpretation of "washed": AMP, ALT, CEV, NLT.

  Weymouth translated the term for a practicing homosexual to "guilty of unnatural crime."

  The Message was sort of a babbling without much connection to the text.

- **Acts 22:16**,
  (ASV) "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name."

  NLT, HCSB, AMP, ALT, CEV, GNV, MSG and NWT all fail on this verse by inserting the word "by" before "calling on his name" without warrant from the original text. The term "wash" connects to "be baptized" (which is a washing), and the term "by" is inserted to force the interpretation that it is "calling on his name" that washes away the sins rather than the baptism. Interestingly the CSB, the update of the HCSB, corrects this error.

  So, in pointing out this error, are we supporting baptism that is effective regardless of the faith of the subject? No; what we are saying is you need a stronger argument than a doctrinally biased translation, because even a moderately educated opponent will be able to say the word "by" should not be there in this verse. Where I would go with this is to point out that Paul had obviously already repented, so he did not need to be told again to repent; so, what Ananias said to Paul is identical to what Peter told the crowd in Acts 2:38.

- **Acts 16:14**,
  (ASV) "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul."

  A lot of versions fail on this one: NIV, NLT, BSB, NASB, NET, GW, AMP, CEV, MSG, NRSV and NWT. The text says the Lord opened her heart to give heed or pay attention to Paul's message. It does not say the Lord opened her heart to respond to, to accept, to make her willing to pay attention, to give her a trusting heart, or to listen eagerly to Paul's message. The NWT fails because it inserts the name Jehovah without warrant from the original text; otherwise the NWT was correct.

VIII. Conclusion

What's Good and What's Definitely Not [from http://www.chapter3min.org/bible-translations-comparison-charts]

Recommended: The Bible that you choose to use is one of the most important decisions you will make as a Christian. Having the correct knowledge of God and your spiritual well-being are strongly dependent upon the accuracy of the Bible that you read and study. Please be careful and choose a good one. I recommend choosing a Bible from the left side of the charts like the New American Standard Bible (NASB), the English Standard Version (ESV), the King James Version (KJV), or the New King James Version (NKJV). (Though it is on the left side, I do not recommend the Amplified Bible.) These four versions do the best job of accurately translating the words and meaning of the original languages.

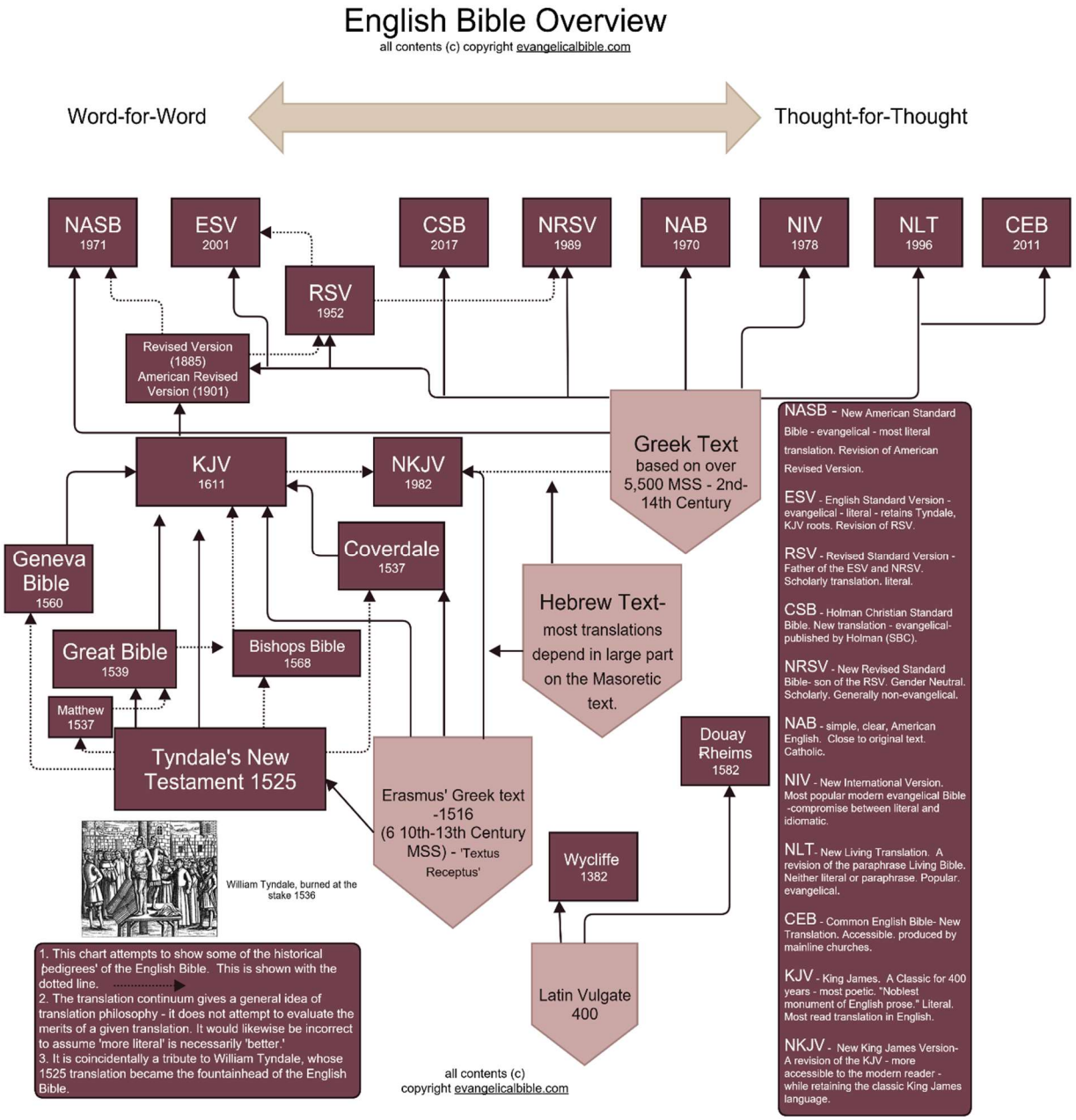
Avoid: Please do not choose the option on the far right of every chart: The Message Bible by Eugene H. Peterson. It is not a reliable version. I have long warned against it, as there are significant problems with it. To learn more please see the following articles on chapter3min.org

Avoid: There is a Bible that is growing in popularity. It is new, and hence not on the charts; yet it probably wouldn't be best to include it anyway. It is The Passion Translation (TPT) by Brian Simmons. If you use or are considering using this Bible, please note that it has some significant problems. Consider this quote from the GotQuestions.org article What is the Passion Translation of the Bible?

> "The most important problem with The Passion Translation of the Bible (TPT) is actually found in its name—specifically, the term translation. In truth, The Passion Translation is a re-worded and re-written Bible, apparently intended to support a particular strain of theology. If the same material was marketed as a "commentary" or as a "study guide," it would still be concerning. As it is, The Passion Translation cannot honestly be called a translation or even a paraphrase. The TPT goes well beyond the idea of "translation" and reimagines the Bible as one human author thinks it ought to be written."

[Editor's Addition]
Avoid: All Bibles on the "Paraphrase" end of the above chart. The translations are entirely up to the translator's interpretations, which means they are likely biased in some way based on the beliefs of the translators.

Recommended: With any Bible, be aware that there are variations in English translation, some more accurate but less clear, some more easy to understand but less accurate. Be cautious and aware.



Church History and Evidences
Notes: 150-325 AD: The Advent of the Catholic church

0-100 AD: The Church, The Apostles, Timothy and Titus

100- circa 160AD: The "church fathers" – Clement, Ignatius, etc.

150-175 AD: Beginnings of the "Episcopal polity"- the Catholic church

Episcopal polity:

Churches with an episcopal polity are governed by bishops, practicing their authorities in the dioceses and conferences or synods. Their leadership is both sacramental and constitutional; as well as performing ordinations, confirmations, and consecrations, the bishop supervises the clergy within a local jurisdiction and is the representative both to secular structures and within the hierarchy of the church. Bishops are considered to derive their authority from an unbroken, personal apostolic succession from the Twelve Apostles of Jesus. Bishops with such authority are said to represent the historical episcopate or historic episcopate. Churches with this type of government usually believe that the Church requires episcopal government as described in the New Testament. In some systems, bishops may be subject to bishops holding a higher office (variously called archbishops, metropolitans, or patriarchs, depending upon the tradition). They also meet in councils or synods. These gatherings, subject to presidency by higher ranking bishops, usually make important decisions, though the synod or council may also be purely advisory.

For much of the written history of institutional Christianity, episcopal government was the only known form of church organization. This changed at the Reformation. Many Protestant churches are now organized by either congregational or presbyterian church polities, both descended from the writings of John Calvin, a Protestant reformer working and writing independently following the break with the Catholic Church precipitated by The Ninety-Five Theses of Martin Luther.

The definition of the word episcopal has variation among Christian traditions. There are subtle differences in governmental principles among episcopal churches at the present time. To some extent the separation of episcopal churches can be traced to these differences in ecclesiology, that is, their theological understanding of church and church governance. For some, "episcopal churches" are churches that use a hierarchy of bishops that regard themselves as being in an unbroken, personal apostolic succession.

"Episcopal" is also commonly used to distinguish between the various organizational structures of denominations. For instance, "Presbyterian" (Greek: 'πρεσβύτης, presbútēs) is used to describe a church governed by a hierarchy of assemblies of elected elders, referred to as Presbyterian polity. Similarly, "episcopal" is used to

describe a church governed by bishops. Self-governed local congregations, governed neither by elders nor bishops, are usually described as "congregational".

More specifically, the capitalized appellation "Episcopal" is applied to several churches historically based within Anglicanism ("Episcopalianism"), including those still in communion with the Church of England.

All orthodox Christians were in churches with an episcopal government, that is, one Church under local bishops and **regional Patriarchs**. Writing between ca. 85 and 110, St. Ignatius of Antioch, Patriarch of Antioch, was the earliest of the Church fathers to define the importance of episcopal government. **Assuming Ignatius' view was the Apostolic teaching and practice, the line of succession was unbroken and passed through the four ancient Patriarchal sees** (those local churches known to be founded by apostles), Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria. Rome was the leading Patriarchate of the ancient four by virtue of its founding by Saints Peter and Paul and their martyrdom there, not to mention being the political center of the Roman empire at the time. Some organizations (e.g. the Assyrian Church of the East), though aloof from the political wranglings of imperial Christianity, nevertheless also practiced episcopal polity.

The traditional view of the origin of Episcopal polity:

According to Christian tradition **[in fact, according to the Scriptures]**, the Christian Church **[i.e. Christianity]** was founded by Jesus. In the Gospel according to Matthew, the resurrected Jesus gathered his Twelve Apostles together, issued the Great Commission, and selected Simon Peter as their leader, proclaiming "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" **[This is the basis for ALL apostolic succession within many churches, including Catholicism – this is NOT in harmony with the Scriptures]**. **Many modern scholars, including some Catholic ones, flatly deny that Jesus ever even intended to found a Church, much less that he did so**. **Even those scholars who agree that Jesus founded some kind of Church are divided on whether he founded it on Simon Peter or gave him any sort of primacy**. **Even those scholars who accept that Peter held some sort of primacy among the apostles are divided on the issue of whether Jesus intended that primacy to be continued by others after Peter's death (apostolic succession)**. **Even those scholars who accept that Jesus intended a continuing Petrine primacy are divided on whether this primacy was uniquely devolved upon the Church of Rome**; some, for example, following the lead of Cyprian of Carthage, insist that the Petrine primacy is possessed by every bishop throughout the world who stands in legitimate apostolic succession, whether in communion with Rome or not. **Even those scholars who accept that a unique Petrine primacy attached to the See of Rome are divided on exactly how and why that primacy became attached to Rome, by what means or succession it was passed down within the See of Rome, whether Rome itself remained true to that primacy, and exactly what authority the primacy legitimately exercises in the world today**.

Congregational Polity:

Ecclesiastical government is congregational rather than denominational. Churches of Christ purposefully have no central headquarters, councils, or other organizational structure above the local church level. Rather, the independent congregations are a network with each congregation participating at its own discretion in various means of service and fellowship with other congregations. Churches of Christ are linked by their shared commitment to restoration principles.

Congregations are generally overseen by a plurality of elders (also known in some congregations as shepherds, bishops, or pastors) who are sometimes assisted in the administration of various works by deacons. Elders are generally seen as responsible for the spiritual welfare of the congregation, while deacons are seen as responsible for the non-spiritual needs of the church. Deacons serve under the supervision of the elders and are often assigned to direct specific ministries. Successful service as a deacon is often seen as preparation for the eldership. Elders and deacons are chosen by the congregation based on the qualifications found in Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Congregations look for elders who have a mature enough understanding of scripture to enable them to supervise the minister and to teach, as well as to perform governance functions. In lieu of willing men who meet these qualifications, congregations are sometimes overseen by an unelected committee of the congregation's men.

While the early Restoration Movement had a tradition of itinerant preachers rather than "located Preachers", during the 20th century a long-term, formally trained congregational minister became the norm among Churches of Christ. Ministers are understood to serve under the oversight of the elders. While the presence of a long-term professional minister has sometimes created "significant de facto ministerial authority" and led to conflict between the minister and the elders, the eldership has remained the "ultimate locus of authority in the congregation".

Churches of Christ hold to the priesthood of all believers. No special titles are used for preachers or ministers that would identify them as clergy. Churches of Christ emphasize that there is no distinction between "clergy" and "laity" and that every member has a gift and a role to play in accomplishing the work of the church.

~ 200 AD: The Catholic church –

The Catholic Church has an episcopate, with the Pope, who is the Bishop of Rome, at the top. The Catholic Church considers that juridical oversight over the Church is not a power that derives from human beings, but strictly from the authority of Christ, which was given to his twelve apostles. The See of Rome, as the unbroken line of apostolic authority descending from St. Peter (the "prince and head of the apostles"), is a visible sign and instrument of communion among the college of bishops and therefore also of the local churches around the world. In communion with the worldwide college of bishops, the Pope has all legitimate juridical and teaching authority over the whole

Church. This authority given by Christ to St. Peter and the apostles is transmitted from one generation to the next by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the laying on of hands from the Apostles to the bishops, in unbroken succession.

According to Catholic tradition, the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ. The New Testament records Jesus' activities and teaching, his appointment of the twelve Apostles, and his instructions to them to continue his work. The Catholic Church teaches that the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, in an event known as Pentecost, signaled the beginning of the public ministry of the Church. Catholics hold that Saint Peter was Rome's first bishop and the consecrator of Linus as its next bishop, thus starting the unbroken line which includes the current pontiff, Pope Francis. That is, the Catholic Church maintains the apostolic succession of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope – the successor to Saint Peter.

In the account of the Confession of Peter found in the Gospel of Matthew, Christ designates Peter as the "rock" upon which Christ's church will be built. While some scholars do state that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome, others say that the institution of the papacy is not dependent on the idea that Peter was Bishop of Rome or even on his ever having been in Rome. **Many scholars hold that a church structure of plural presbyters/bishops persisted in Rome until the mid-2nd century, when the structure of a single bishop and plural presbyters was adopted**, and that later writers retrospectively applied the term "bishop of Rome" to the most prominent members of the clergy in the earlier period and also to Peter himself. On this basis, Oscar Cullmann and Henry Chadwick question whether there was a formal link between Peter and the modern papacy, and Raymond E. Brown says that, while it is anachronistic to speak of Peter in terms of local bishop of Rome, Christians of that period would have looked on Peter as having "roles that would contribute in an essential way to the development of the role of the papacy in the subsequent church". **These roles, Brown says, "contributed enormously to seeing the bishop of Rome, the bishop of the city where Peter died, and where Paul witnessed to the truth of Christ, as the successor of Peter in care for the church universal".**

The Catholic Church believes itself to be the continuation of the Christian community founded by Jesus in his consecration of Simon Peter. In the Catholic view, modern bishops are the successors to the apostles.

The See of Rome is traditionally said to be founded by Peter and Paul. While the New Testament says nothing directly about Peter's connection with Rome, indirectly Romans 15:20–22 may indicate that when Paul wrote it, another Apostle was already in Rome, and it is highly probable that the "Babylon" mentioned in 1 Peter 5:13, a letter attributed to Peter, is Rome **[Editor's Note: It shows the Gospel had been taught there already, but not necessarily by an apostle, and there's certainly no indication it was Peter. "Babylon" has many different possibilities, of which Rome is only one.]**. The tradition that links Peter with Rome is "early and unrivalled"

[according to a Catholic source]. In the first years of the 2nd century, Ignatius of Antioch implies that Peter and Paul had special authority over the Roman church **[this implication has been assumed by biased historians]**. Irenaeus of Lyons, also of the 2nd century, believed that Peter and Paul had been the founders of the Church in Rome and had appointed Linus as bishop **[as we've already seen, Irenaeus' testimony is itself questionable at best, and much of what he supposedly wrote or said no longer exists separately from the recordings of Eusebius (325 AD, whose bias for the Catholic papacy is clear).]**. Dionysius of Corinth also serves as a witness to the tradition. **[Interestingly, Dionysius is ONLY known to us through Eusebius. There is no other source for his existence or what he taught.]**

The traditional narrative starts with Peter being consecrated by Jesus, followed by Peter traveling to Rome sometime after Pentecost, founding a church there, serving as its first bishop and consecrating Linus as bishop, thus starting the line of Popes of whom Francis I is the current successor. This narrative is often related in histories of the Catholic Church.

Elements of this traditional narrative agree with the surviving historical evidence, which includes the writings of several early church Fathers (among them Pope Clement I) and some archaeological evidence. While some historians of Christianity assert that the Catholic Church can be traced to Jesus's consecration of Peter, others argue that Jesus did not found a church in his lifetime but provided a framework of beliefs. **Other historians disagree with the traditional view that the papacy originated with Peter, instead asserting that the papal office developed at an unspecified date before the mid-150s and could possibly have been superimposed by the traditional narrative upon the primitive church.**

The only part of this narrative that is supported directly by the Scriptures is the **[supposed, being improperly interpreted]** consecration of Peter; however, elements of the rest of the narrative are attested to in the writings of Church Fathers such as Ignatius **[The seven epistles preserved under the name of Ignatius are generally considered authentic, since they were mentioned by the historian Eusebius in the first half of the fourth century. Ever since the Protestant Reformation, the authenticity of all the Ignatian epistles has come under intense scrutiny. John Calvin called the epistles "rubbish published under Ignatius' name." Protestants have tended to want to deny the authenticity of the epistles because they seem to attest to the existence of a monarchical episcopate in the second century. In 1886, Presbyterian minister and church historian William Dool Killen published an essay extensively arguing that none of the epistles attributed to Ignatius is authentic. Instead, he argued that Callixtus, bishop of Rome, forged the letters around AD 220 to garner support for a monarchical episcopate, modeling the renowned Saint Ignatius after his own life to give precedent for his own authority.]** Irenaeus **[almost everything we know about Irenaeus come from Eusebius, including even some of his supposed writings]** and Dionysius of

Corinth **[again…Eusebius…]**. Largely as a result of a challenge to this narrative initiated by Alfred Loisy, some theologians have challenged the historicity of the traditional narrative, resulting in a less literal interpretation of the Church's "founding" by Jesus and less specific claims about the historical foundations and transmission of the Petrine primacy in the Church's early years. Some historians have also challenged the traditional narrative of Peter's role in the early Roman Church.

The New Testament offers no proof that Jesus established the Papacy nor that he established Peter as the first Bishop of Rome. The official documents of the Catholic Church do not apply to Peter the title "Bishop of Rome", applying it instead to the "successor of Peter", and presenting the Pope as Peter's successor in his relationship with the whole of the Catholic Church. However, some present the Church as linking Peter's primacy with his being bishop of Rome: Eamon Duffy says the official Catholic Church position is that Jesus had essentially appointed Peter as the first pope, with universal primacy as bishop of Rome. **Some historians have challenged the view that Peter was bishop (as the term is now understood) of Rome**.

While most scholars agree that Peter died in Rome, it is generally accepted that there was a Christian community in Rome before either Peter or Paul arrived there. The Catholic Church draws an analogy between Peter's seeming primacy among the Twelve in New Testament texts such as Matthew 16:17–19, Luke 22:32, and John 21:15–17 and the position of the Pope among the Church's bishops.

Two apostolic and patriarchal sees are claimed to have been founded by Peter: those of Antioch and Rome. With the see of Alexandria, viewed as founded by a disciple of Peter, these formed what became known as the three Petrine Sees, endowed with special authority as recognized by the First Council of Nicaea (325 AD)

100 – 325 AD: Ante-Nicene Period (literally meaning "before Nicaea") (First Council of Nicaea-325 AD)

Christianity throughout the 2nd and 3rd centuries have generally been less studied than the periods that came before and after it. This is reflected in that it is usually referred to in terms of the adjacent periods with names as such "post-apostolic" (after the period of 1st century formative Christianity) and "ante-Nicene" (before the First Council of Nicaea). However, the 2nd and 3rd centuries are quite important in the development of Christianity.

There is a relative lack of material for this period, compared with the later Church Father period. For example, a widely used collection (Ante-Nicene Fathers) includes most 2nd- and 3rd-century writings in nine volumes. This includes the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, Apologists, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus of Lyons, Origen of Alexandria and the New Testament Apocrypha, among others. In contrast, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (consisting mainly of Augustine, Jerome and Chrysostom) fills twenty-eight volumes.

According to Siker the developments of this time are "multidirectional and not easily mapped". While the preceding and following periods were diverse, they possessed unifying characteristics lacking in this period. 1st-century Christianity possessed a basic cohesion based on the Pauline church movement, Jewish character, and self-identification as a messianic movement. The 2nd and 3rd centuries saw a sharp divorce from its early roots. There was an explicit rejection of then-modern Judaism and Jewish culture by the end of the 2nd century, with a growing body of adversus Judaeos literature. Christianity in the 4th and 5th centuries experienced imperial pressure and developed strong episcopal and unifying structure. The ante-Nicene period was without such authority and immensely diverse. Many variations in this time defy neat categorizations, with as various forms of Christianity interacted in a complex fashion to form the dynamic character of Christianity in this era.

By the early 2nd century, Christians had agreed on a basic list of writings that would serve as their canon, see Development of the New Testament canon, but interpretations of these works differed, often wildly. In part to ensure a greater consistency in their teachings, by the end of the 1st century many Christian communities evolved a more structured hierarchy, with a central bishop, whose opinion held more weight in that city. By 160, most communities had a bishop, who based his authority on the chain of succession from the apostles to himself.

Bishops still had a freedom of interpretation. The competing versions of Christianity led many bishops who subscribed to what is now the mainstream version of Christianity to rally more closely together. Bishops would call synods to discuss problems or doctrinal differences in certain regions; the first of these to be documented occurred in Roman Asia in about 160. Some bishops began to take on a more authoritative role for a region; in many cases, the bishop of the church located in the capital city of a province became the central authority for all churches in that province. These more centralized authorities were known as metropolitan churches headed by a Metropolitan bishop. The churches in Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome exerted authority over groups of these metropolitan churches.

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The development of doctrine, the position of orthodoxy, and the relationship between the various opinions is a matter of continuing academic debate. Since the Nicene Creed came to define the Church, the early debates have long been regarded as a unified orthodox position against a minority of heretics. Walter Bauer, drawing upon

distinctions between Jewish Christians, Pauline Christians, and other groups such as Gnostics and Marcionites, argued that early Christianity was fragmented, with various competing interpretations. According to Bauer, orthodoxy and heresy do not stand in relation to one another as primary to secondary, but, in many regions, heresy was the original manifestation of Christianity.

The Ante-Nicene period saw the rise of a great number of Christian sects, cults and movements with different interpretations of Scripture, particularly the divinity of Jesus and the nature of the Trinity. These were called heresies by the leaders of the Proto-orthodox church, but many were very popular and had large followings. Some of the major movements were:

Gnosticism – 2nd to 4th centuries – reliance on revealed knowledge from an unknowable God, a distinct divinity from the Demiurge who created and oversees the material world.

Marcionism – 2nd century – the God of Jesus was a different God from the God of the Old Testament.

Montanism – 2nd century – relied on continual prophetic revelations from the Holy Spirit.

Adoptionism – 2nd century – Jesus was not born the Son of God, but was adopted at his baptism, resurrection or ascension.

Docetism – 2nd to 3rd century – Jesus was pure spirit and his physical form an illusion.

Sabellianism – 3rd century – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three modes of the one God and not the three separate persons of the Trinity. (aka Modalism)

Arianism – 3rd to 4th century – The Arian concept of Christ is based on the belief that the Son of God did not always exist but was begotten within time by God the Father. Jesus, as the Son, was therefore subordinate (lesser) to God the Father. During the Council of Antioch, which was convened in 325, Eusebius was excommunicated for subscribing to the heresy of Arius.

Some of the teachings that arose during the 2nd and 3rd centuries include:

Infant baptism - Infant baptism was widely practiced at least by the 3rd century, but it is disputed whether it was in the first centuries of Christianity. Some believe that the Church in the apostolic period practiced infant baptism, arguing that the mention of the baptism of households in the Acts of the Apostles would have included children within the household. Others believe that infants were excluded from the baptism of households, citing verses of the Bible that describe the baptized households as believing, which infants are incapable of doing. In the 2nd century, Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, may have referred to it. Additionally, Justin Martyr wrote about baptism in First Apology (written in the mid-2nd century), describing it as a choice and contrasting it

with the lack of choice one has in one's physical birth. However, Justin Martyr also seems to imply elsewhere that believers were "disciples from childhood", indicating, perhaps, their baptism.

The so-called Apostolic Tradition says to "Baptize first the children, and if they can speak for themselves let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them." If it was written by Hippolytus of Rome, Apostolic Tradition could be dated about 215, but recent scholars believe it to be material from separate sources ranging from the middle second to the fourth century, being gathered and compiled on about 375–400. The 3rd century evidence is clearer, with both Origen (calling infant baptism "according to the usage of the Church") and Cyprian advocating the practice. Tertullian acknowledges the practice (and that sponsors would speak on behalf of the children), but, holding an unusual view of marriage, argues against it, on the grounds that baptism should be postponed until after marriage.

Interpretation of the baptismal practices of the early church is important to groups such as Baptists, Anabaptists, and the Churches of Christ who believe that infant baptism was a development that occurred during the late 2nd to early 3rd centuries. The early Christian writings mentioned above, which date from the 2nd and 3rd century indicate that Christians as early as the 2nd century did maintain such a practice, as inferred from the Didache.

Monasticism - Institutional Christian monasticism seems to have begun in the deserts in 3rd century Egypt as a kind of living martyrdom. Anthony of Egypt (251-356) is the best known of these early hermit-monks. Anthony the Great (251-356) and Pachomius (c. 292–348) were early monastic innovators in Egypt, although Paul the Hermit (c.226/7-c.341) is the first Christian historically known to have been living as a monk. There is historical evidence that individuals were living the life later known as monasticism before the legalization of Christianity.

Anthony the Great was the first to specifically leave the world and live in the desert as a monk. Anthony lived as a hermit in the desert and gradually gained followers who lived as hermits nearby but not in actual community with him. One such, Paul the Hermit, lived in absolute solitude not very far from Anthony and was looked upon even by Anthony as a perfect monk. This type of monasticism is called eremitical or "hermit-like."

Early iconography - Christian art emerged only relatively late. According to art historian André Grabar, the first known Christian images emerge from about AD 200, though there is some literary evidence that small domestic images were used earlier. Although many Hellenized Jews seem, as at the Dura-Europos synagogue, to have had images of religious figures, the traditional Mosaic prohibition of "graven images" no doubt retained some effect. This early rejection of images, although never proclaimed by theologians, and the necessity to hide Christian practice from persecution, leaves few archaeological records regarding Early Christianity and its

evolution. The oldest Christian paintings are from the Roman Catacombs, dated to about 200, and the oldest Christian sculptures are from sarcophagi, dating to the beginning of the 3rd century.

Sabbath - According to Bauckham, the post-apostolic church contained diverse practices regarding the Sabbath. It seems clear that most of the Early Church did not consider observation of the Sabbath to be required or of eminent importance to Christians and in fact worshiped on Sunday.

Premillennialism - the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment. Justin Martyr and Irenaeus were the most outspoken proponents of premillennialism. Justin Martyr saw himself as continuing in the “Jewish” belief of a temporary messianic kingdom prior to the eternal state. Irenaeus devoted Book V of his Against Heresies to a defense of the physical resurrection and eternal judgement.

Other early premillennialists included Pseudo-Barnabas, Papias, Methodius, Lactantius, Commodianus, Theophilus, Tertullian, Melito, Hippolytus of Rome and Victorinus of Pettau. By the 3rd century there was growing opposition to premillennialism. Origen was the first to challenge the doctrine openly. Eusebius said of the Premillennialian, Papias, that he was "a man of small mental capacity" because he had taken the Apocalypse literally.

312 AD: Constantine makes Christianity legal –

The first “Christian” Emperor, Constantine the Great, had converted to Christianity directly after the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312 A.D, after reputedly seeing a flaming cross in the sky which was emblazoned with the words "In Hoc Signo Vinces"; which translates to "In this Sign Conquer." According to Eusebius, in the evening before the battle Constantine went to sleep unsure what this sign could mean, but then had a dream in which Christ appeared to him, and commanded him to make a likeness of the sign which he had seen in the heavens, as it would protect him in all future engagements with his enemies. The next day, Constantine promised the Christian God that if his army were to win the battle, he would adopt the Christian religion - which is precisely what happened.

260-340 AD: Eusebius –

Eusebius of Caesarea, also known as Eusebius Pamphili, was a historian of Christianity, exegete, and Christian polemicist. [A polemic is contentious rhetoric that is intended to support a specific position by aggressive claims and undermining of the opposing position. Polemics are mostly seen in arguments about controversial topics. The word is derived from Ancient Greek (polemikos), meaning 'warlike, hostile', (polemos), meaning 'war'.] He became the bishop of Caesarea Maritima about 314 AD. Together with Pamphilus, he was a scholar of the Biblical canon and is regarded as an extremely learned Christian of his time. He wrote Demonstrations of the Gospel,

Preparations for the Gospel, and On Discrepancies between the Gospels, studies of the Biblical text. As "Father of Church History" (not to be confused with the title of Church Father), he produced the Ecclesiastical History, On the Life of Pamphilus, the Chronicle and On the Martyrs. He also produced a biographical work on the first Christian Emperor, Constantine the Great, who ruled between 306 and 337 AD.

Little is known about the life of Eusebius. Beyond notices in his extant writings, the major sources are the 5th-century ecclesiastical historians Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, and the 4th-century Christian author Jerome. There are assorted notices of his activities in the writings of his contemporaries Athanasius, Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and Alexander of Alexandria. Eusebius' pupil, Eusebius of Emesa, provides some incidental information.

During the Council of Antioch, which was convened in 325 and held shortly before the First Ecumenical Council in the Bythnian city of Nicaea, he was excommunicated for subscribing to the heresy of Arius.

His works cannot be trusted to be from subjectivism, for some scholars believe that "Eusebius is a notoriously unreliable historian, and so anything he reports should be critically scrutinized." This is especially true of his 'Life of Constantine', which he wrote as an eulogy shortly after the emperor's death in 337 A.D, and which is "Often maligned for perceived factual errors, deemed by some so hopelessly flawed that it cannot be the work of Eusebius at all." Yet others see him as a "Constantinian flunky," for as a trusted adviser to Constantine, it was politically expedient for him to present Constantine in the best light as possible. Never recognized as a saint, the likely reason for this is that traditional sources view Arius finding support " ... from Eusebius of Nicomedia, and our Eusebius, who by that time was bishop of Caesarea. Regarding Church History or Ecclesiastical History, the accuracy of Eusebius' account has often been called into question. In the 5th century, the Christian historian Socrates Scholasticus described Eusebius as writing for “rhetorical finish” in his Vita of Constantine and for the “praises of the Emperor” rather than the “accurate statement of facts.” The methods of Eusebius were criticized by Edward Gibbon in the 18th century. In the 19th century Jacob Burckhardt viewed Eusebius as 'a liar', the “first thoroughly dishonest historian of antiquity.” Ramsay MacMullen in the 20th century regarded Eusebius' work as representative of early Christian historical accounts in which “Hostile writings and discarded views were not recopied or passed on, or they were actively suppressed... matters discreditable to the faith were to be consigned to silence.” Consequently, this kind of methodology in MacMullen's view has distorted modern attempts, (e.g. Harnack, Nock, and Brady), to describe how the Church grew in the early centuries. Arnaldo Momigliano wrote that in Eusebius' mind "chronology was something between an exact science and an instrument of propaganda " Drake in the 21st century treats Eusebius as working within the framework of a "totalizing discourse" that viewed the world from a single point of view that excluded anything he thought inappropriate. Eusebius has been often accused of intentional falsification of

the truth; in judging persons or facts he is not entirely unbiased. In Eusebius' Praeparatio evangelica (Book XII, Chapter 31) Eusebius discussed "That it will be necessary sometimes to use falsehood as a remedy for the benefit of those who require such a mode of treatment." Joseph Lightfoot also notes that Eusebius cannot always be relied on: "A far more serious drawback to his value as a historian is the loose and uncritical spirit in which he sometimes deals with his materials. This shows itself in diverse ways. He is not always to be trusted in his discrimination of genuine and spurious documents."

325 AD: The First Council of Nicaea –

The First Council of Nicaea was the first ecumenical council of the church. Most significantly, it resulted in the first uniform Christian doctrine, called the Nicene Creed. With the creation of the creed, a precedent was established for subsequent local and regional councils of bishops (synods) to create statements of belief and canons of doctrinal orthodoxy—the intent being to define unity of beliefs for the whole of Christendom.

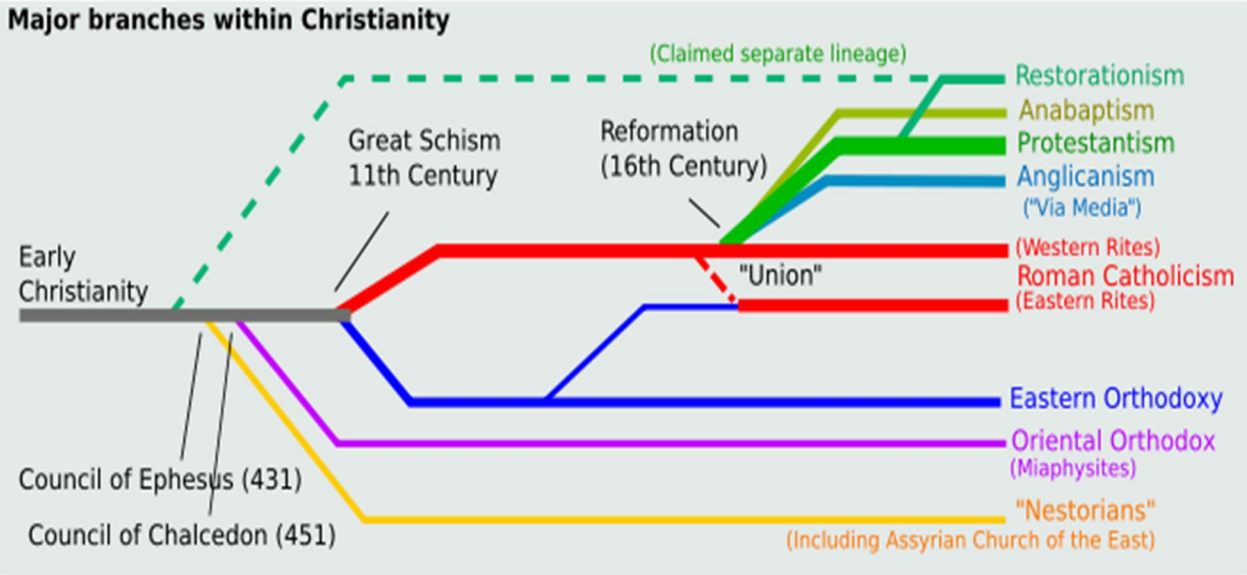
Derived from Greek (Ancient Greek: lit. 'the inhabited one'), "ecumenical" means "worldwide" but generally is assumed to be limited to the known inhabited Earth, (Danker 2000, pp. 699–670) and at this time in history is synonymous with the Roman Empire; the earliest extant uses of the term for a council are Eusebius' Life of Constantine 3.6 around 338, which states "he convoked an ecumenical council" and the Letter in 382 to Pope Damasus I and the Latin bishops from the First Council of Constantinople.

One purpose of the council was to resolve disagreements arising from within the Church of Alexandria over the nature of the Son in his relationship to the Father: in particular, whether the Son had been 'begotten' by the Father from his own being, and therefore having no beginning, or else created out of nothing, and therefore having a beginning. St. Alexander of Alexandria and Athanasius took the first position; the popular presbyter Arius, from whom the term Arianism comes, took the second. The council decided against the Arians overwhelmingly (of the estimated 250–318 attendees, all but two agreed to sign the creed and these two, along with Arius, were banished to Illyria).

Another result of the council was an agreement on when to celebrate Easter, the most important feast of the ecclesiastical calendar, decreed in an epistle to the Church of Alexandria in which is simply stated:

> “We also send you the good news of the settlement concerning the holy pasch, namely that in answer to your prayers this question also has been resolved. All the brethren in the East who have hitherto followed the Jewish practice will henceforth observe the custom of the Romans and of yourselves and of all of us who from ancient times have kept Easter together with you.”

Historically significant as the first effort to attain consensus in the church through an assembly representing all of Christendom, the Council was the first occasion where the technical aspects of Christology were discussed. Through it a precedent was set for subsequent general councils to adopt creeds and canons. This council is generally considered the beginning of the period of the First seven Ecumenical Councils in the History of Christianity.



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