

The bibliographical test seeks to determine **how many manuscript copies** we have of the document and **how far removed** they are in time from the originals (see table 1).

A brief perusal of the table indicates that for a representative sample of ancient historical works, we possess **only a handful of manuscripts which are, on the average, one thousand years removed from their originals.**

**In contrast to this, the New Testament documents have a staggering quantity of manuscript attestation.** Approximately 5,000 Greek manuscripts, containing all or part of the New Testament, exist. There are 8,000 manuscript copies of the Vulgate (a Latin translation of the Bible done by Jerome from 382-405) and more than 350 copies of Syriac (Christian Aramaic) versions of the New Testament (these originated from 150-250). Besides this, virtually the entire New Testament could be reproduced from citations contained in the works of the early church fathers. There are some thirty-two thousand citations in the writings of the Fathers prior to the Council of Nicea (325).

The dates of the manuscript copies range from early in the second century to the time of the Reformation. Many of the manuscripts are early—for example, the John Rylands manuscript (about 120; it was found in Egypt and contains a few verses from the Gospel of John), the Chester Beatty Papyri (200; it contains major portions of the New Testament), Codex Sinaiticus (350; it contains virtually all of the New Testament), and Codex Vaticanus (325-50; it contains almost the entire Bible).



**Compare NT—Gospel of John written about AD 80-90** with the earliest copy being about AD 120 (John Rylands) so time between earliest copy and original about 30-40 years.



- **How many manuscript copies we have?**
- **How far removed they are in time from the originals?**

**From our chart let's look at two in which we have name recognition—>>>**

**Plato (Tetralogies):** Written 427-347 BC with the earliest copy being in AD 900. Time between earliest copy and original about 1,200 years.

**Aristotle:** Written 384-322 BC with the earliest copy being in AD 1,100 so time between earliest copy and original about 1,400 years.

<i>Author</i>	<i>When Written</i>	<i>Earliest Copy</i>	<i>Time Span</i>	<i>No. of Copies</i>
Caesar	100-44 BC	900 AD	1,000 yrs.	10
Livy	59 BC - AD			20
Plato ( <i>Tetralogies</i> )	427-347 BC	900 AD	1,200 yrs.	7
Tacitus ( <i>Annals</i> )	100 AD	1,100 AD	1,000 yrs.	20
also minor works	100 AD	1,000 AD	900 yrs.	1
Pliny the Younger ( <i>History</i> )	61-113 AD	850 AD	750 yrs.	7
Thucydides ( <i>History</i> )	460-400 BC	900 AD	1,300 yrs.	8
Suetonius ( <i>De Vita Caesarum</i> )	75-160 AD	950 AD	800 yrs.	8
Herodotus ( <i>History</i> )	480-425 BC	900 AD	1,300 yrs.	8
Horace			900 yrs.	
Sophocles	430-406 BC	1,000 AD	1,400 yrs.	100
Lucretius	Died 55 or 53 BC		1,100 yrs.	2
Catullus	54 BC	1,550 AD	1,600 yrs.	3
<u>Euripedes</u>	480-406 BC	1,100 AD	1,500 yrs.	9
Demosthenes	383-322 BC	1,100 AD	1,300 yrs.	200*
Aristotle	384-322 BC	1,100 AD	1,400 yrs.	5**
Aristophanes	450-385 BC	900 AD	1,200 yrs.	10

\*All from one copy. \*\*Of any one work.

From Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, rev ed. (San Bernardino, Calif.: Here's Life, 1979), p. 42.