**Comparing the Reliability of the New Testament and the Qur’an – A Response to “Textual Reliability / Accuracy of the New Testament”**

June 19, 2025

[www.MuslimHope.com/ComparingTheReliabilityOfTheNewTestamentAndTheQuran.html](http://www.MuslimHope.com/ComparingTheReliabilityOfTheNewTestamentAndTheQuran.html) (and docx)

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# Introduction

Day by day, serious Christians read the Scriptures. But as Christians, how do we know that the Bible was transmitted through the ages reliably? There are two complementary answers. The first answer is by faith: God promised to preserve His word reliably. God promised to preserve His word, with as much precision as we need, in Isaiah 59:21; Isaiah 40:6-8; 1 Peter 1:24-25; Matthew 24:35 and implied in Isaiah 55:10-11. However, while this answer is sufficient for a Christian, it is likely not very satisfying for a non-Christian.

The second answer is the evidence of history; both the biblical manuscripts we have and the early commentaries and other writings about the Bible. We don’t have to be concerned about how it was transmitted through the centuries because we can just go back and look at the earliest copies. But just how early is the evidence of the earliest manuscripts, and how well do they corroborate with each other and later manuscripts? Even Christians might be curious as to the accuracy and variation in the New Testament we read.

In evaluating the reliability of the textual transmission of any ancient writing, religious or secular, we need to look at two aspects.

**Attestation:** What is our confidence in being able to estimate the uncertainty of the transmission of an ancient text? For example, if we only had one copy we could not tell. We could tell the reliability quite well if we had a lot of independent copies, especially early ones. On top of that, what other writings (commentaries, etc.) that discuss the text? Having a lot of early manuscripts and writings does not necessary mean it is reliable; it only means we can a higher confidence that we can do a better job telling if it is reliable.

**Variation:** Next, look at the variations in those writings and copies. What is the uncertainty in knowing what the original said, on two levels? 1) Precision: Excluding obvious small mistakes like spelling or numbers, how confident are we in knowing the exact original words? 2) General meaning: are there manuscripts or other writings that witnesses that the original text said something totally different?

Let us illustrate with a couple of extreme examples. As an example of good variability and bad attestation, let say every copy of a particular writing had at most three words different, - but there were only three copies, all in the same location and 1,000 years from the original. An example of good attestation and bad variability would be that we had 50,000 copies of a particular writing all within 50 years of the original. - but no two copies agreed more than 25%.

In summary, the attestation shows how well we can judge the reliability; and variation is an estimate of the reliability. How do people judge the confidence of the reliable copying of an ancient work? One way is by comparing it with other ancient works.

## 1.1 Outline

This article is a response to the Muslim article by Islamic Awareness: *Textual Reliability / Accuracy of the New Testament* (<https://www.islamic-awareness.org/bible/text/bibaccuracy>) June 9, 2022 version. Let me say at the outset that I am not sure the Muslim author understood the two previous points, so I will go into more detail on those later in the article.

The Muslim article looks at four points, listed in the introduction.

“In this paper, we will examine the claim, firstly, whether numerical supremacy directly translates into textual reliability; secondly, if Patristic citations can completely reconstruct the New Testament text; thirdly, the magnificent numbers for textual accuracy that are quoted are correct and fourthly, the claim of very early manuscript evidence for the New Testament text.”

For clearer discussion I took the liberty to separate his first point into two related points, and I extended his last point to comparing the reliability of the text and meaning of the New Testament and the Qur’an.

First, for ancient copies of the New Testament, it asks if the numerical supremacy directly translates into textual reliability. I don’t know of anybody who says that number of manuscripts directly translates into textual reliability; you have to weigh how early the manuscripts were written also, as well see the number of manuscripts and see the differences between manuscripts. This response will look at that in detail.

Second and included in the author’s first point, is a comparison of the evidence of the New Testament over other books such as Homer’s *Iliad*, the Hindu *Mahabharata*, the *Annals of Tacitus*, *Pliny’s Natural History*, etc. This response will address that, but also focus on a comparison of the reliability of the New Testament and the Qur’an too. Independent of a person’s beliefs, this merely compare the earliness and copies of the New Testament, other literature, and the Qur’an.

Third, the articles asked how well Patristic citations can completely reconstruct the New Testament text. The short answer is that early, pre-Nicene Christian quotes can reconstruct about 63% of the New Testament text. This article will go into the data behind that.

Fourth, we will see why I think the evidence shows we can be very confident of about 97% of the words in the New Testament. We will also see how different authors could produce slightly different numbers.

Fifth, we will look some of the variations in meaning of in the New Testament text, and contrast this with the variations in meaning in the Qur’an text.

## 1.2 Methodology: How Do You Measure Manuscript Reliability?

First of all, what is a variant? Among copies of an ancient work, variants are alternative readings found in two or more copies with respect to a particular place in the text, either a word, a phrase, a sentence, or in less common cases a larger unit of text. Variants can involve a change, an addition, or a subtraction.

Before we even being to gauge the accuracy of the transmission of a text, let ask, how would you know? If you were to ask the question, “how sure are we of the contents of an ancient document?” how would you answer? If we had only one copy of an ancient manuscript, written down 1500 years later, would it be a reliable copy or not? The answer is that if you had only a single copy, you would have no way of telling. It might be extremely reliable, or totally unreliable. So, one of more manuscripts, at various dates, does not answer that question all by itself. But what it does do is give us a measure of the confidence we can have in answering the question. Let’s say in one case we only had two manuscripts, and they only differ by 1%. In a second case we had 30 manuscripts, and they differ on average of 5%. But by looking at outliers (i.e., one-of’s), and not counting obvious spelling errors, they only differ by 3%. Would you think we could tell if the first case of 1% was more reliable, with only two manuscripts, or the second case with 3% of thirty manuscripts. I would think the second if the different was only 3%, but I would think the first if the different was 10%. But we have to see what the numbers are before trying to compare.

Since we don’t have the original, would one manuscript written shortly after be as significant as five manuscripts written later, or as 5000 manuscripts? You might think the early one would be all that matters, but what if it were copied carelessly, and the later ones were copied not that much later? Would a large number of manuscripts, spread across three continents in different languages provide better evidence against major changes than a solitary manuscript, no matter how early?

As I hope you can see, you cannot set an exact equivalence between early manuscripts and a large number of late manuscripts. Many different, later manuscripts, and especially in different languages are good to confirm that the general message was transmitted faithfully. On the other hand, if you are looking for exact words and verb tenses, manuscripts in different languages are only slightly helpful.

So you want both; a large number of manuscripts, early or late, to establish the reliability of the meaning in a coarse way, and early manuscripts that not only affirm the general meaning, but for the precision of finding the exact phrasing of the originals.

You cannot set a “degree of equivalence of the earliness of a few manuscripts, vs. a large number of manuscripts. Since you cannot, I hope you can understand why you want to see both. Sometimes Christian apologists all too quickly quote the number of manuscripts, and the early manuscripts without first explaining why both are important.

# 2. How Many New Testament Manuscripts?

Here are comparisons of manuscripts of the Bible; the next section shows other ancient literature and the Qur’an. The other ancient literature is thought by scholars to be copied reliably in general. Having one standard for non-religious literature, and a more critical standard for the Bible or the Qur’an would not be consistent. Let’s just see how they look when they compare them all. This chart shows the most significant half of the 69 New Testament manuscripts written by 325 CE.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Manuscript** | **Preserved Content** |
| 117-138 CE or 110-125 CE | p52 (John Rylands) (= Papyrii Rylands 457) | John 18:31-33, reverse side John 18:37-38 (5 verses) |
| 100-150 CE | p104 (=P. Oxyrhynchus 4404) | Matthew 21:34-37,43,45(?)(5 verses) |
| c.125 CE | p87 | Philemon 13-15,24,25b (3 verses) |
| 100-150 CE (Comfort) 81-96 CE (Young Kyu Kim) | **p46** (=Chester Beatty II)  1,680 verses | **1,390 verses** from Paul and 290 verses from Hebrews. This is 70% of the 2,389 verses in Paul and Hebrews. |
| 100-150 or 125-175 CE | **p66** | John **808.5 out of 879 verses** (92%) |
| mid to late 2nd century CE | p77 and p103 | 16 verses in Matthew |
| ca.200 or 150-175 CE | p64 (Magdalen) and p67 | 19 verses in Matthew |
| 150-200 CE | p32 (P. Rylands 5) | Titus 1:1-15; 2:3-8 (21 verses) |
| c.200 CE | p1 (= p. Oxyrhynchus 2) | 17 or 18 verses in Matthew |
| 2nd century CE | p98 (P.IFAO Inv. 237b [+a] | Revelation 1:13-2:1 (9 verses) |
| late 2nd / early 3rd century | p38 (P. Michigan Inv. 1571) | 12 verses in Acts |
| late 2nd / early 3rd century | Uncial 0189 | 19 verses in Acts 5:3-21 |
| c.215 CE or 200-250 CE | p111 | Luke 17:11-13, 22-23 (5 verses) |
| early to mid-2nd century CE | **p4** (handwriting is the same as p64 and p67.) | Luke 1:58-59; 1:62-2:1,6-7; 3:8-4:2,29-32,34-35; 5:3-8; 5:30-6:16 (**95 verses**) |
| c.175 CE | p90 (P. Oxyrhynchus 3523) | John 18:36-19:7 (12 verses) |
| 2nd or 3d century CE | p137 | Mark 1:7-9,16-18 (6 verses) |
| ca.200 CE | p23 Urbana | 47 verses in John |
| 175-225 CE (ca 175 CE) | **p75 1,355 total verses** | Luke 758 verses; John 597 verses |
| 200-225 CE | p45 (=Chester Beatty I) | Mt 71 verses; Mk 147 verses; Lk 242 verses; Jn 84 verses; Acts 289 verses |
| 200-225 CE | p29 | Acts 26:7-8, 20 |
| c.220 CE | p48 | Acts 23:11-17,25-29 (12 verses) |
| early 3rd century CE | Green Collection #425 | Romans 9:18-21, some Romans 10 |
| ca.225 CE | p30 | 1 Thess. 19 verses; 2 Thess. 6 verses |
| early 3rd century CE | p5 | 47 verses in John |
| 200-250 CE | p39 | John 8:14-22 (9 verses) |
| 200-250 CE | p106 | John 1:29-35,40-46 (14 verses) |
| 225-250 CE | p13 | 114 verses in Hebrews |
| 3rd century CE | p27 + p40 | 63 verses in Romans |
| mid-3rd century CE | p37 | 34 verses: Matthew 26:19-52 |
| 250-300 CE | p47 (=Chester Beatty III) | 125 verses in Revelation |
| mid to late 3rd century CE | p115 (=p. Oxyrhynchus 4499) | 119 verses in Revelation |
| late 3rd century CE | p15 + p16 | p15 1 Cor 27 verses; p16 Php 15 verses |
| c.300 CE | p72 | All 191 verses of 1 Peter, 2 Peter, Jude |
| ca.300 CE | 0171 (PSI 2.124) | Matthew 30 verses |
| ca. 300 CE | p92 | 6 and 4 verses in Ephesians & 2 Thess. |
| 275-320/325 CE | Sahidic Coptic British Museum MS Oriental 7594 | Dt many verses; Jonah 1:1-4:11; Acts 1:1-20:4; 20:6-24:16; 26:32-27:17; 27:21-27; 27:29-28:20; 28:23-27,30-31 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 325-350 CE | Vaticanus (B). Most of the OT | All N.T. up to Heb 9:15. 6,979 verses |
| 340-350 CE | Sinaiticus (Aleph). Half of OT | Almost all of the New Testament |

You can see these at <https://biblequery.org/Bible/BibleReliability/ExistingNTManuscripts.html> (and .docx)

Three main families of Greek New Testament manuscripts are the Alexandrian, Byzantine, and Western, where the western seems just a combination of the first two. The Alexandrian family manuscripts are earlier but the Byzantine are more numerous. John Chrysostom, who was fairly early, dying around 407 CE, quoted from the Byzantine family, so in a sense we have fairly early Byzantine copies too through him. Here is a percentage of each book preserved in New Testament manuscripts, up to 325 CE.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **New Testament book** | **% of book** | **Verses** | **Verses** | **Total** |
|  | **quoted** | **quoted** | **not quoted** | **verses** |
| Matthew | 18.1% | 194 | 877 | 1071 |
| Mark | 23.5% | 159 | 519 | 678 |
| Luke | 70.6% | 813 | 338 | 1151 |
| John | 95.7% | 841.5 | 37.5 | 879 |
| Acts | 96.3% | 965.5 | 37.5 | 1003 |
| Romans | 64.0% | 277 | 156 | 433 |
| 1 Corinthians | 99.1% | 433 | 4 | 437 |
| 2 Corinthians | 91.1% | 234 | 23 | 257 |
| Galatians | 94.6% | 141 | 8 | 149 |
| Ephesians | 96.8% | 150 | 5 | 155 |
| Philippians | 82.7% | 86 | 18 | 104 |
| Colossians | 83.2% | 79 | 16 | 95 |
| 1 Thessalonians | 49.4% | 44 | 45 | 89 |
| 2 Thessalonians | 17.0% | 8 | 39 | 47 |
| 1 Timothy | 10.6% | 12 | 101 | 113 |
| 2 Timothy | 0.0% | 0 | 83 | 83 |
| Titus | 45.7% | 21 | 25 | 46 |
| Philemon | 16.0% | 4 | 21 | 25 |
| Hebrews | 93.4% | 283 | 20 | 303 |
| James | 38.9% | 42 | 66 | 108 |
| 1 Peter | 100.0% | 105 | 0 | 105 |
| 2 Peter | 100.0% | 61 | 0 | 61 |
| 1 John | 5.8% | 6 | 98 | 104 |
| 2 John | 69.2% | 9 | 4 | 13 |
| 3 John | 0.0% | 0 | 14 | 14 |
| Jude | 100.0% | 25 | 0 | 25 |
| Revelation | 40.3% | 163 | 241 | 404 |
| **Total New Testament** | **64.8%** | **5156** | **2796** | **7952** |

All but 59.5 verses of the Gospel of John are quoted by 200 A.D. You can see these and all the details at <https://biblequery.org/Bible/BibleReliability/EarlyChristianNTQuotes.html> (and .docx)

Now if you go out 25 years to 350 CE, then we have the entire New Testament.

How about total manuscripts? The totals of New Testament manuscripts in the Muslim article are similar to the totals I have, but they do not match exactly. The differences do not change any of the arguments though. So let me list each Greek or Sahidic Coptic manuscript in each time period. When two different numbers are two fragments of the same manuscript, such as p77+p103, they are only counted as one. This does not include numerous non-Greek NT manuscripts.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Dates** | **# copies** | **Greek Manuscripts + four Latin, + two Syriac + one Sahidic Coptic** |
| 150-200 CE | 10 | p52, p46, p66, p90, p98, p77+p103, p32, 0189, p64, LXIV 4403 |
| 201-250 CE | 17 | p104, p111, p4, p24, p38, p75, p137, p45, Green’s Collection #1425, p30, p5, p23, p48, p39, p106, p13, p22 |
| 251-299 CE | 26 | p12, p9, p20, p27+p40, p28, p35, p. Antinoopolis 2.54; p69, p70, p80, p95, p101, p107, p108, p109, p113, p114, p133, p135, p53, p49+p65, p47, p115, p15+p16, p17, p110 |
| 200-300 CE | 7 | p1, p37, p87, p118, p119, p121, p141 |
| around 300 CE | 18 | p38, p72, p92, p100, p102, 0162, 0171, 0220, p7, p13, p16, p18, p35, p115, p125, 0312, Sahidic Coptic 7594, Syr(c ) |
| 301-400 CE | 29+ | Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, p8, p10, p24, p25, p62, p71, p81, p86, p88,p89, p110, 058, 0185, 0188, 0296, 0207, 0221, 0228, 0231, 0242, It(a), etc. |
| around 400 CE | 25+ | p7, p19, p21, p50, p51, p57, p82, p85, 057, p160, W, it(k), vg(cl), etc. |
| 401-500 CE | 40+ | A, C, D, I, Q, 026, T, p14, p93, p112, p127, 048, 062, 068, 069, 077, 0165, 0166, 0172, 0173, 0175, 0176, 0182, 0201, 0216, 0218, 0226, 0227, 0232, 0236, 0249, 0244, 0252, 0254, 0261, 0274, Syr(p), etc. |
| 501-600 CE | 24+ | p11+p14, p33+p58, p36, p76, p83, p84, p105, E 08, H 015, O, P 024, Z, Σ 242, 060, 066, 067, 070, 071, 072, 076, 078, 079, 081, 082, etc. |
| 500-700 CE | 13+ | 03, p43, p44, p56, p93, p31, p43, p44, p55, p68?, p76, p97, p116, etc. |
| 9th to 15th cent. | ~3000 | Miniscules 33, 556, 1080, Uncials 030, 049, 0115, Lectionaries, etc. |
| Others > 700 CE | 2495+ | p41, E, 0101, 0126, 0127, 0146, 0148, 0161, 0229, 0235, it(ff1), etc. |
| Total Greek | 5664 | There are about 18,336 copies in other languages too. |

You can see these at <https://biblequery.org/Bible/BibleReliability/ExistingNTManuscripts.html> (and .docx)

Some of these manuscripts were first dated 70 years ago, but subsequent similar papyrii have shown that some of those dates were too late. The dates are taken from *The Complete Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts* (Comfort, 1999), *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible* (Metzger, 1981), *The Greek New Testament 4th Revised Edition* (Aland et al., 1993), <https://www.bibletranslation.ws/manu.html>, and Daniel Wallace’s https://manuscripts.csntm.org.

Now let’s analyze this data a bit. In general, how many different manuscripts would you need to have for a document to corroborate what the original said? One might think you would need at least five copies, over 760 years later, to corroborate what they had in common. At least scholars agree that this would be sufficient, – for Aristotle. But if you had more, not only could you corroborate the original text, but you could see the amount of variance among the documents. Now let’s say you had 65 instead of 3. You would expect to see more variants due to more manuscripts, but you would have a clearer picture of how often copyists did not copy correctly, and the kinds of errors they made. Now let’s say you also have over 5,000 manuscripts to compare, though these manuscripts were much later and so did not carry as much weight. Since these later manuscripts agree with the earlier ones on the whole, why would someone think all these later manuscripts would detract from the reliability of transmission? The breadth of the parts of the world, the different translations, etc., and their independence from the earlier manuscripts does not mean their weight should count for zero. Even though the weight of a later manuscript should be considered as less than an early manuscript, the weight of many later manuscript is additive, not subtractive, of the total estimate of how well we can judge the reliability.

**Conclusion:** The New Testament is well-attested by a combination of 69 early, pre-Nicene manuscripts, and thousands of later manuscripts.

# 3. Comparison with Other Ancient Literature and the Qur’an

Even though the Muslim author does not put much stock in comparisons with other ancient works, I will show these anyway. It should be emphasized that even with the relatively few copies of these manuscripts, scholars generally believe the copies we have of these are reliable. Here is the count of extant (existing) manuscripts of other ancient works.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Author or work** | **When written** | **# copies** | **Earliest copy** |
| Aristophanes | 450-385 BCE | 10 | 900 CE |
| Aristotle | 364-322 BCE | 5 | 1100 CE |
| Caedmon’s Hymn | 658-680 CE. | 21 | 700-750 CE. |
| Demosthenes | 400-300 BCE | 200 | 1100 CE |
| Euripides’ *Tragedies* (*The Origin of the Bible* p.182) | 480-406 BCE | 330 | 1100 CE |
| Herodotus | 480-425 BCE | 27 | 900 CE |
| Hesiod *Theonomy*, *Works and Days*, *Shield* | ca.700 BCE | 50 | 1-100 CE |
| Homer *The Iliad*. | 900//730 BCE | 1,757 | 400 BCE |
| Note: More copies than any other ancient secular work. 5% of the words in question. | | | |
| Isidore of Seville | 560-636 CE | 86+ | c.900 CE |
| Josephus Flavius *The Jewish War* | 85 CE | 9 complete mss. | 401-500 CE |
| Jubilees (Jewish apocryphal book) | **?** | 15 (Dead Sea scrolls) + 27 Ge’ez | 100 BCE |
| Julius Caesar *The Gallic Wars* | 100-44 BCE | 10 | 900 CE |
| Note: only direct evidence we have that Julius Caesar entered Gaul. | | | |
| Livy *History of Rome* | 27 BCE-17 CE |  | c.1450 CE |
| *Mahabharata* (a Hindu scripture) | 400 BCE-300 CE |  | 80-230 CE by RC dating |
| Note: 10% of the words in question, but the general meaning is clear. | | | |
| Old Testament manuscripts | 1440-400 BCE | 235 among the Dead Sea Scrolls alone | 250 BCE |
| Note: From the Great Isaiah scroll, about 5% of the words are different vs. the Masoretic text. However, most of these are archaic vs. later words and grammar with the same meaning. | | | |
| Plato | 427-347 BCE | 7 | 900 CE |
| Pliny the Younger | 61-113 CE | 7 | 850 CE |
| Suetonius *The Twelve Caesars* | 70-140 CE | 8 | 950 CE |
| Tacitus | 100 CE | 20 | 1100 CE |
| Thucydides *History of the Peloponnesian War* | 460-400 BCE | 8 | 900 CE |

You can see these at: <https://biblequery.org/Bible/BibleReliability/ExistingNTManuscripts.html> (and .docx)

For a very detailed list of additional authors, see also <https://www.tertullian.org/rpearse/manuscripts/greek_classics.htm>

Now let’s look at earliest copies of the Qur’an.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Dates** | **Manuscript** | **Preserved Content** |
| 671-695 CE or 7th century | Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus (BnF arabe 328a and BnF arabe 328b) | 46 leaves |
|  | BnF arabe 329(c) | Sura 10:35 to 11:95 and 29:99 to 23:11. |
| 625-700 CE | An early Qur’an with Sura 2. | https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early\_Quranic\_manuscripts#:~:text=More%20than%2060%20fragments%20including,by%20the%20Government%20of%20Germany. |
| 568-645 CE | Birmingham Qur’an | Sura 18-20 (‘Uthmanic) |
| 662-669 CE | Sana’a manuscript lower text | Parts or all of Suras 2, 8, 9, 11, 12, 37 |
| 578-669 CE | Sana’a I manuscript |  |
| Very early | MS.67.2007.1 parchment | In the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha |
| 649-765 CE | Tübingen fragment | Sura part of Sura 17:35 and Suras 17:36 to 36:57. About 26% of the Qur’an. |
| 7th or 8th century CE | Ms. Or. 2165 | In Ma’il script. 121 folios, two-thirds of the Qur’an  Sura 7:40-9:96; 10:9-39:48; 40:63-43:71 |
| 8h/9h century per Dr. Altikulac | Cairo al-Mushaf al-sharif in the husayni mosque | 1088 parchment folios. (*CiEQM20* p.75) |
|  | MIA.2014.491 | 9 folios in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha. (*CiEQM20* p.83) |
| ? | NLR Marcel 1 |  |
| Probably early 8th century CE (*CiEQM20* p.44-45) | NLR Marcel 2 | 42 folios |
| ? | NLR Marcel 3 |  |
| ? | NLR Marcel 4 |  |
| 850-875 CE. Islamic Awareness claims 622-721 CE | NLR Marcel 5 | 17 folios |
| ? | NLR Marcel 6 |  |
| 9th or 10th century CE | NLR Marcel 7 | 10 folios. 8 corrections. (*CiEQM20* p.79) |
| ? | NLR Marcel 8 |  |
| ? | NLR Marcel 9 |  |
| ? | NLR Marcel 10 |  |
| 700-850 CE or first part of the 8th century CE | Fustat Umayyad Codex | Includes Marcel 11,13,15, Bnb arabe 330c. Daniel Brubaker says Marcel 11 has 12 folios and 46 corrections in (*CiEQM20* p.77) |
| ? | NLR Marcel 14 |  |
| ? | NLR Marcel 16 |  |
| Islamic awareness claims 622-721 CE | NLR Marcel 17 |  |
| Islamic Awareness claims 622-721 CE | NLR Marcel 18 |  |
| ? | NLR Marcel 19 = arabe328f | 15 folies, about 6.8% of the Qur’an. Parts of Suras 18:29-28:32. See <https://www.islamic-awareness.org/quran/text/mss/arabe328f.html> |
| ? | NLR Marcel 20 |  |
| 7th to 8th century CE. Islamic Awareness claims 622-721 CE | NLR Marcel 21 |  |
| ? | NLR Marcel 22 |  |
| ? | NLR Marcel 23 |  |
| ? | NLR Marcel 24 |  |
| ? | NLR Marcel 25 |  |
| ? | NLR Marcel 26 |  |
| ? | NLR Marcel 27 |  |
|  | Bnf arabe 340 | 121 folios from different Qur’ans, written at different times. 91 corrections were made. (*CiEQM20* p.68) |
| Probably 8th century | MS.474.2003 in Doha, Qatar | 12 folios. 30 physical changes according to (*CiEQM20* p.47) |
| 8th century | Add. 1125 | A1 leaf: Sura 8:10-27. At the University of Cambridge |
| early 8th century | Topkapi Qur’an | 408 folios. All but 23 verses of the Qur’an |
| 795-855 CE or 8th century | Samarkand Kufic Qur’an (=Tashkent Qur’an) | Sura 2:7b-43:10 |
| up to the 9th century | Gotthelf Burgsträßer | Almost all (or else 78%) of the Qur’an |
| 700-799 CE | Ma’il Quran | Two-thirds of the Qur’an |
| late 9th/early 10th CE | Blue Qur’an | 100 out of 600 folios |

If you look at a large list at <https://www.islamic-awareness.org/quran/text/mss/> it is hard to tell exact dates, but if you go up to about 200 years, you have more than 62 manuscripts.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Quranic_manuscripts#:~:text=More%20than%2060%20fragments%20including,by%20the%20Government%20of%20Germany> (June 9, 2022) say this: “More than 60 fragments including more than 2000 folios (4000 pages) are so far known as the textual witnesses ([manuscripts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manuscript)) of the Qur’an before 800 CE (within 168 years after the death of Muhammad), according to [Corpus Coranicum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corpus_Coranicum), a research organisation funded by the [Government of Germany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_Germany).[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Quranic_manuscripts#cite_note-7)”

There are about 28 early manuscripts of the New Testament within 200 years and about 60 manuscripts of the Qur’an with 168 years. The average Qur’anic manuscript is more than the average New Testament manuscript or fragment. So, we have more very early extant copies of the Qur’an than the New Testament, which makes sense, both because the Qur’an is a later book, and the Roman persecutions tried to destroy New Testament manuscripts. Of course, we still need to look at the variants of each, which we will do later.

However, complicating matters is that Caliph ‘Uthman ibn Affan “standardized” the Qur’an. He told everyone to turn in their Qur’ans, he had them burned, and he re-issued new copies of a standardized Qur’an. However, some Qur’ans were not turned in. But while existing manuscripts of the Qur’an do have variants, they have fewer than the New Testament, and you can thank Caliph ‘Uthman for burning the others.

The author of the Muslim article calculates that the proportion of the earlier manuscripts to all the manuscripts is small, by this measure, finding any more late manuscripts, even if they agreed exactly, would decrease the reliability in his eyes. The author sarcastically asks why Christian apologists use these ”wonderful” numbers. We use these numbers, and will continue to use these numbers, because they do add weight to the reliability of the New Testament.

**Conclusion:** The New Testament is one of the best attested works of ancient literature. If you doubt the reliability of the New Testament based on the number of copies, to be consistent you have to doubt almost all other ancient literature. The Qur’an is even better attested than the New Testament, with more early manuscripts.

# 4. Early Church Quotes of the New Testament Text

In this section, only early Christian quotes, prior to the 325 Council of Nicea, are considered. A couple of authors, Athanasius of Alexandria and Eusebius of Caesarea, span both sides of 325 CE, but only their quotes prior to 325 CE are considered.

To put this in terms that a Muslim can more easily relate to, this section on the New Testament is analogous to asking how well one could reconstruct the text of the Qur’an just from quotes from the hadiths, early commentaries, and al-Tabari’s *History*. For both the Qur’an and the New Testament, you could reconstruct many of the words, but not anything near 100%, and many times it would not tell the order of verses.

How should we count fractional verses? For example, if only one writer quoted a verse and he only quoted half of it, do you count it as “the verse was quoted” because he affirmed the verse was there? Or do you not count it because “the entire verse was not quoted”. If the question is not “what verses did the Patristic author affirm”, but rather “what is the exact wording according to that author” you would count it as 0.5 because half, and only half, the verse was quoted. That is what I followed in creating the table below.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Book of the** | **% of book** | **Verses** | **Verses** | **Total** | **Number** | **Quotes per** |
| **New Testament** | **quoted** | **quoted** | **not quoted** | **verses** | **of quotes** | **total verses** |
| Matthew | 87.5% | 937.31 | 133.69 | 1071 | 2134 | 199.3% |
| Mark | 79.0% | 535.41 | 142.59 | 678 | 461 | 68.0% |
| Luke | 86.5% | 996.11 | 154.89 | 1151 | 1641 | 142.6% |
| John | 96.7% | 850.22 | 28.78 | 879 | 1290 | 146.8% |
| Acts | 20.4% | 204.86 | 798.14 | 1003 | 216 | 21.5% |
| Romans | 62.9% | 272.19 | 160.81 | 433 | 684 | 158.0% |
| 1 Corinthians | 69.1% | 301.75 | 135.25 | 437 | 1070 | 244.9% |
| 2 Corinthians | 47.0% | 120.74 | 136.26 | 257 | 313 | 121.8% |
| Galatians | 58.6% | 87.29 | 61.71 | 149 | 241 | 161.7% |
| Ephesians | 70.9% | 109.82 | 45.18 | 155 | 311 | 200.6% |
| Philippians | 42.5% | 44.15 | 59.85 | 104 | 233 | 224.0% |
| Colossians | 68.8% | 65.37 | 29.63 | 95 | 157 | 165.3% |
| 1 Thessalonians | 40.1% | 35.68 | 53.32 | 89 | 63 | 70.8% |
| 2 Thessalonians | 55.1% | 25.92 | 21.08 | 47 | 42 | 89.4% |
| 1 Timothy | 56.5% | 63.90 | 49.10 | 113 | 144 | 127.4% |
| 2 Timothy | 39.5% | 32.77 | 50.23 | 83 | 73 | 88.0% |
| Titus | 32.7% | 15.04 | 30.96 | 46 | 29 | 63.0% |
| Philemon | 2.2% | 0.55 | 24.45 | 25 | 2 | 8.0% |
| Hebrews | 48.9% | 148.16 | 154.84 | 303 | 190 | 62.7% |
| James | 2.5% | 2.75 | 105.25 | 108 | 16 | 14.8% |
| 1 Peter | 42.9% | 45.01 | 59.99 | 105 | 168 | 160.0% |
| 2 Peter | 3.8% | 2.29 | 58.71 | 61 | 6 | 9.8% |
| 1 John | 43.5% | 45.20 | 58.80 | 104 | 129 | 124.0% |
| 2 John | 28.0% | 3.64 | 9.36 | 13 | 5 | 38.5% |
| 3 John | 0.0% | 0.00 | 14.00 | 14 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Jude | 28.8% | 7.19 | 17.81 | 25 | 11 | 44.0% |
| Revelation | 57.5% | 232.41 | 171.59 | 404 | 282 | 69.8% |
| **Total New Testament** | **65.2%** | **5185.73** | **2766.27** | **7952** | **9270** | **116.6%** |
| Total number of quotes does not add because they sometimes quoted multiple verses together. | | | | | | | |

This table is on-line, along with the references of every quote behind it, at [www.biblequery.org/Bible/BibleReliability/EarlyChristanNTQuotes.xlsx](http://www.biblequery.org/Bible/BibleReliability/EarlyChristanNTQuotes.xlsx) (and html), where you can see how I counted each individual quote. However, if one quote covered an entire verse, I sometimes did not put the fraction on other factional quotes of the same verse since it would not change the overall totals.

The Muslim author gives very low numbers, but he does not give any source or any research that he did.

The Muslim author challenges why various Christian apologists have come up with much higher numbers for Patristic quotations. While I don’t know the exact reason, I have three speculations. First, there are a whole lot more quotes, and higher percentages, if one extends the period studied a little past 325 CE. (Athanasius had a lot after 325 CE) Second, a valid “citation” can just be an allusion (example: “Jesus raised Lazarus”). This is much broader than a quote, and I only counted quotes, not allusions, here. Third, the percentage of the Gospel of John that was quoted might have been mistakenly applied to all the New Testament.

Finally, here is a summary of the Pre-Nicene Bible manuscripts plus early Christian New Testament quotes.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Book** | **% of book** | **Verses** | **Verses** | **Total** | |  | **quoted** | **quoted** | **not quoted** | **verses** | | Matthew | 91.7% | 982.07 | 88.93 | 1071 | | Mark | 79.0% | 535.79 | 142.21 | 678 | | Luke | 96.3% | 1108.69 | 42.31 | 1151 | | John | 98.6% | 867 | 12 | 879 | | Acts | 96.3% | 965.5 | 37.5 | 1003 | | Romans | 86.4% | 374.2 | 58.80 | 433 | | 1 Corinthians | 99.5% | 435 | 2 | 437 | | 2 Corinthians | 92.7% | 238.28 | 18.72 | 257 | | Galatians | 98.3% | 146.46 | 2.54 | 149 | | Ephesians | 96.8% | 150 | 5 | 155 | | Philippians | 83.2% | 86.5 | 17.5 | 104 | | Colossians | 85.9% | 81.62 | 13.38 | 95 | | 1 Thessalonians | 65.6% | 58.39 | 30.61 | 89 | | 2 Thessalonians | 60.2% | 28.29 | 18.71 | 47 | | 1 Timothy | 55.5% | 62.66 | 50.34 | 113 | | 2 Timothy | 38.1% | 31.62 | 51.38 | 83 | | Titus | 64.2% | 29.53 | 16.47 | 46 | | Philemon | 16.0% | 4 | 21 | 25 | | Hebrews | 94.0% | 284.73 | 18.27 | 303 | | James | 40.6% | 43.82 | 64.18 | 108 | | 1 Peter | 100.0% | 105 | 0 | 105 | | 2 Peter | 100.0% | 61 | 0 | 61 | | 1 John | 49.6% | 51.58 | 52.42 | 104 | | 2 John | 84.6% | 11 | 2 | 13 | | 3 John | 0.0% | 0 | 14 | 14 | | Jude | 100.0% | 25 | 0 | 25 | | Revelation | 75.9% | 306.82 | 97.18 | 404 | | **Total New Testament** | **89.0%** | **7074.55** | **877.45** | **7952** | |

# 5. Reliable Precision of the New Testament

The preceding has only dealt with the aspect of attestation. The New Testament is very well-attested, and the Qur’an is even better attested. From here on we will look at variation for reliability of the New Testament and the Qur’an in two ways: confidence in precision of the words, and in section 5 confidence in the accuracy of the overall meaning.

According to my research, we are virtually certain of about 97% of the New Testament words. Here is a book-by-book summary. For the details see <https://www.biblequery.org/ntmss.html> You can see the individual variants that comprise this number at [www.biblequery.org/[bookname]%20Manuscripts.html](http://www.biblequery.org/%5bbookname%5d%20Manuscripts.html) replacing [bookname] with the book’s name.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Book of the New Testament** | **Total verses** | **Total words in Greek** | **Greek words in question** | **Percent accuracy** | **100 - % accuracy** | **Meaningful Greek words in question** |
| Matthew | 1,071 | 18,346 | 560 | 96.9 % | 3.1 % | 197 |
| Mark (exc.16:9-20) | 666 | 11,270 | 409 | 96.4 % | 3.6 % | 140 |
| -- Mark 16:9-20 | Add. 12 | 166 | 166 | (-1.5%) | + 1.5 % | 166 |
| Luke | 1,151 | 19,482 | 502 | 97.4 % | 2.6 % | 227 |
| John (exc.7:53-8:11) | 879 | 15,635 | 352 | 97.7 % | 2.3 % | 218 |
| -- John 7:53-8:11 | Add. 12 | 169 | 169 | (-1.1) % | + 1.1 % | 169 |
| Acts | 1003 | 18,450 | 600 | 96.7 % | 3.3 % | 225 |
| Romans | 433 | 7,111 | 201 | 97.2 % | 2.8 % | 49 |
| order: Rom 16:25-27 | --- | --- | additional 53 | (-0.7%) | 0.7% | 0 |
| 1 Corinthians | 437 | 6,830 | 108 | 98.4 % | 1.6 % | 23 |
| Order: 1 Cor 14:34-35 | --- | --- | additional 36 | (-0.5%) | 0.5% | 0 |
| 2 Corinthians | 257 | 4,477 | 68 | 98.5 % | 1.5 % | 8 |
| Galatians | 149 | 2,230 | 43 | 98.1 % | 1.9 % | 14 |
| Ephesians | 155 | 2,422 | 54 | 97.8 % | 2.2 % | 8 |
| Philippians | 104 | 1,629 | 37 | 97.7 % | 2.3% | 34 |
| Colossians | 95 | 1,582 | 38 | 97.7 % | 2.3 % | 12 |
| 1 Thessalonians | 89 | 1,481 | 28 | 98.1 % | 1.9 % | 8 |
| 2 Thessalonians | 47 | 823 | 13 | 98.4 % | 1.6 % | 5 |
| 1 Timothy | 113 | 1,591 | 32 | 98.0 % | 2.0 % | 11 |
| 2 Timothy | 83 | 1,238 | 17 | 98.6 % | 1.4 % | 2 |
| Titus | 46 | 659 | 8 | 98.8 % | 1.2 % | 4 |
| Philemon | 25 | 335 | 6 | 98.2 % | 1.8 % | 4 |
| Hebrews | 303 | 4,953 | 87 | 98.2 % | 1.8 % | 59 |
| James | 108 | 1,743 | 32 | 98.2 % | 1.8 % | 4 |
| 1 Peter | 105 | 1,678 | 69 | 96.0 % | 4.0 % | 18 |
| 2 Peter | 61 | 1,100 | 44 | 96.0 % | 4.0 % | 14 |
| 1 John excluding 1 Jn 5:8 | 104 | 2,140 | 34 | 98.4 % | 1.6 % | 19 |
| 2 John | 13 | 245 | 8 | 96.8 % | 3.2 % | 4 |
| 3 John | 14 | 218 | 4 | 98.2 % | 1.8 % | 0 |
| Jude | 25 | 458 | 14 | 96.9 % | 3.1 % | 9 |
| Revelation | 404 | 9,851 | 138 | 98.6 % | 1.4 % | 51 |
| **Totals** | 7,964 | 138,312 | 3,946 | 97.1 % | 2.9 % | 1.2% |

Below are characteristics of the typographical errors in the New Testament. The following table was calculated from the possible significant manuscript variations listed at the end of the discussion of each book.

According to a brief conversation I had with Dr. Daniel Wallace, the variation in ancient manuscripts is no greater than the variation between modern versions, such as the New King James and the New International Version.

These tables show differences primarily due to typos, spelling, grammar, and word changes. Note the high percentage of single word changes.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Section of the New Testament** | **Total Greek words** | **Total words in question** | **Percent accuracy** | **Places with the number of words in question** | | | | | | | | | | |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **11+** |
| Matthew | 18,346 | 558 | 97.0 % | 138 | 33 | 18 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 15,12,12,17,30,12,12,15,22,19,13 |
| Mark | 11,270 | 575 | 96.4-1.5% | 81 | 48 | 20 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 11,11,17,166 |
| Luke | 19,482 | 502 | 97.4 % | 102 | 39 | 19 | 11 | 12 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 20,26,21 |
| John | 15,635 | 521 | 97.7-1.1% | 134 | 37 | 8 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 12,168,29 |
| Acts | 18,450 | 600 | 96.7 % | 235 | 44 | 13 | 11 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 12,12,18,23,23 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Paul’s writings | 32,408 | 735 | 97.75 % | 351 | 59 | 13 | 7 | 7 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 11,13,14,53,36 |
| Romans | 7,111 | 254 | 96.4 % | 84 | 12 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 11,13,14,53 |
| 1 Corinthians | 6,830 | 144 | 97.9 % | 66 | 11 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 36 (order only) |
| 2 Corinthians | 4,477 | 68 | 98.5 % | 45 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Galatians | 2,230 | 43 | 98.1 % | 28 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Ephesians | 2,422 | 54 | 97.8 % | 26 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Philippians | 1,629 | 37 | 97.7 % | 17 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Colossians | 1,582 | 36 | 97.6 % | 29 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| 1 Thessalonians | 1,481 | 28 | 98.1 % | 10 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| 2 Thessalonians | 823 | 13 | 98.4 % | 11 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| 1 Timothy | 1,591 | 32 | 98.0 % | 13 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| 2 Timothy | 1,238 | 17 | 98.6 % | 12 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Titus | 659 | 8 | 98.8 % | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Philemon | 335 | 6 | 98.2 % | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Section of the New Testament** | **Total Greek words** | **Total words in question** | **Percent accuracy** | **Places with the number of words in question** | | | | | | | | | | |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **11+** |
| Other NT | 12,544 | 267 | 97.9 % | 189 | 24 | 6 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | - |
| Hebrews | 4,953 | 87 | 98.0 % | 42 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | - |
| James | 1,743 | 32 | 98.2 % | 26 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| 1 Peter | 1,678 | 68 | 96.0 % | 38 | 8 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| 2 Peter | 1,100 | 44 | 96.0 % | 30 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| 1 John(excl. 1Jn5:8) | 2,140 | 34 | 98.4 % | 29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| 2 John | 245 | 8 | 96.8 % | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| 3 John | 218 | 4 | 98.2 % | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Jude | 458 | 14 | 96.8 % | 12 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Revelation | 9,851 | 138 | 98.6 % | 99 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| Totals | 137,977 | 3,946 | 97.1 % | 1184 | 290 | 100 | 51 | 39 | 17 | 15 | 8 | 10 | 10 | 31 places |
| Uncertainty in % | - | - | 2.8 % | .9 | .2 | .1 | .04 | .03 | .01 | .01 | .01 | .01 | .01 | .6 |
| % uncertainty | - | - | 100% | 30% | 15% | 8% | 5% | 5% | 3% | 3% | 2% | 2% | 3% | 26% |

This is online at <https://www.biblequery.org/ntmss.html>

Thus, over half of the New Testament words with variants are in places with only one to three word variations. Mark and the other NT books have more uncertain typographical errors, probably due to having fewer preserved manuscripts.

## 5.2 Percentages by Other Authors

Before comparing numbers, it is important to notice that different numbers report different things.

**My 97%** is for all manuscript variations that have any reasonable probability of being the correct reading. This is regardless of how insignificant the spelling or other change in meaning would be. So for example, in the Book of Philippians in many places some manuscripts have “Christ Jesus” and others have “Jesus Christ”. There is no change in meaning, but since we are not certain which one is correct, I count changes like. Of course, someone else might have a much higher number if they did not include no-change-in-meaning variants. Many scholars will say changes such as the ending of Mark and John 7:53-8:11 are obvious too, but other scholars disagree. So, these are included also. If only one or a few later manuscripts have a change that is obvious to scholars as an error, I would not count that. Of course, my numbers would be higher if I excluded variants that have no difference in meaning, but I included those too.

The *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* p.532 and *A General Introduction to the Bible* p.474 say that Westcott and Hort’s figures would make **98.33%.**

Some have claimed, without citing any source, that Bruce Metzger said we are sure of 99.5% of the Bible, ignoring manuscript variations that have no change in meaning. However, I have not found any evidence that Bruce Metzger ever gave an actual percentage.

The *Greek New Testament* (4th revised edition) ranks the degree of uncertainty for variant places in one of four ways: A = “the text is certain”, B = “the text is almost certain”, C = “the Committee had difficulty in deciding which variant to place in the text”, D = “the Committee had great difficulty in arriving at a decision”. If you add all of the C’s and D’s, from Matthew to Romans, that is 879 words in 249 places. Since there are 90,294 words from Matthew to Romans, that would be just over **99%** where the text is “almost certain”.

Keith Elliot and Ian Moir, in *Manuscripts and the Text of the New Testament* p.8, say, “Most modern textual critics can agree on the bulk of the text (some **95** percent of it, perhaps). It is the remaining 5 percent or so where disputes occur and differing conclusions may be found.”

According to *A General Introduction to the Bible* p.474 in earlier times Ezra Abbot (died in 1884) estimated about **95% / 99.75%** certainty in the text. The variant rival readings give the 95% figure. Removing the variations that make no appreciable difference in the sense of the text give the 99.75% figure.

For all variations in all manuscripts, *A General Introduction to the Bible* p.468 says that there is variation in 10,000 places in the New Testament if one counts all the variations in all the manuscripts. If 1 variant occurs in 20 manuscripts, then in a manuscript count of variants there are 20. Multiplying that procedure for all the variants yields 200,000 manuscript-places (ibid.). It is interesting that in talking with Mormon missionaries and reading footnotes by Muslim authors, I only encounter the number 200,000 for the variations in biblical manuscripts. There is no explanation that this number derives form multiplying a variant by all the manuscripts that contain it, doing this for all the New Testament variants, and then adding the products of all these multiplications. When someone repeats that number, 200,000, without clarifying what it means, ask them how there could be 200,000 variations in the New Testament text when it has less than 134,000 words. Subsequent writings have put that figure at 300,000. This sum is for all variants, regardless of how improbable or insignificant they are.

**Conclusion:** Different scholars have different numbers for the percentage of the New Testament about which we are virtually certain. The numbers range from 95% to 99.75%. Higher numbers come from ignoring variants that have no change in meaning. Also, higher numbers could come from only focusing on the Alexandrian manuscripts and having a too low confidence in the Byzantine manuscripts (at least too low in my opinion). Independent of percentage estimates put forth by other scholars, I came up with 97%.

# 6. Variation in Meaning in the New Testament

Let’s look at the widest variations in meaning, first in the New Testament and then in the Qur’an.

Here are fourteen places with perhaps the widest variation in meaning in the New Testament; with the most probable text given first. It is obvious to most scholars that the first one is an addition, but it is still included here because many Christians still believe this is authentic.

**1 John 5:7-8** the verses are absent vs. 25 words. I would almost not include this text because most scholars today agree it was not in ancient manuscripts. As the *General Introduction to the Bible* (p.484) says, “In fact, the acceptance of the longer rendering as a genuine part of the text of 1 John violates almost every major canon of textual criticism.” However, Christians who prefer the King James Version generally accept this passage, so I included it.

**Ending of Mark: Mark 16:9-20** (166 words) vs. the verses are absent. It is not in Vaticanus and Sinaiticus and absent in Clement of Alexandria (193-217/220 CE), but the *First Apology of Justin Martyr*  (c.150 CE), *The Diatessaron* (c.172 CE), Irenaeus (182-188 CE), Tertullian (198-220 CE), and 38 ancient texts refer to it. So if it were an addition, it would have to be added before c.150 CE when Justin Martyr wrote his *First Apology*. If it were deleted, it would be deleted prior to Clement of Alexandria by 217/220 CE.

**Pericope of the adulteress: Jn 7:53-8:11** the words are absent vs. 169 words. “And everyone went to his *own* house. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, ‘Teach, this woman was caught in the adultery, in the very act. ‘Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say? This they said, testing Him, that they might have *something* of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with *His* finger,’ etc.”

**Mt 16:2-3** “…When evening comes, you say, ‘it will be fair weather, for the sky is red, and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times…..” the alternative is the text’s absence in Egyptian manuscripts, where the dry climate is such that red skies do not mean rain. See Bruce Metzger in *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* 2nd edition p.33 for more information on this variant. (31 words)

**Mt 12:47** “Then said one to him, Behold, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak to you.” vs. verse 47 is absent (17 words) Verse first attested in the *Diatessaron* (c.172 CE)

**Mt 17:21** the verse is absent vs. “But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.” (12 words) Verse first attested in the *Diatessaron* (c.172 CE).

**Mt 23:14** the verse is absent vs. “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You devour widow’s houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Therefore you will be punished more severely.” (NIV translation) (23 words) Verse first attested in the *Diatessaron* (c.172 CE)

**Mt 18:11** “For the son of man is come to save that which has been lost.” vs. absent (9 words). Verse first attested in the *Diatessaron* (c.172 CE).

**Mk 1:41** “being moved with compassion/being filled with pity” vs. “being moved with anger” (1 word)

**Mk 11:26** “But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your sins/transgressions.” vs. absent. (17 words) First attested by Irenaeus of Lyons (182-188 CE) and in p70 (3rd century CE)

**Mk 15:28** the entire verse is absent vs. “And the scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘He was counted with the transgressors/ lawless ones” (10 words). Verse first attested in the *Diatessaron* (c.172 CE)

**Lk 22:43-44** “And an angel from Heaven appeared to Him, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more intently. And His sweat became as drops of blood falling down onto the earth” [Green’s literal translation] vs. both verses are absent (26 words). First attested in the *Diatessaron* (c.172 CE) and p75 (175-225 CE).

**Lk 23:34a** (absent) vs. “Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (12 words) Verse first attested in p75 (175-225 CE).

**Jn 5:4** “for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.” vs. absent (29 words). This is first attested in p66 (100-150 CE) and the *Diatessaron* (c.172 A.D.)

# 7. Variation in Meaning in the Qur’an

Here are more than fourteen places with wide variation in meaning in the Qur’an.

## 7.2.1 Intercession of the Daughters of Allah

**The Star Sura (Sura 53) verses 19-20 say, “Have ye seen Lat, and ‘Uzza, And another, the third (goddess), Manat?”**

Allah was prominent in Pre-Islamic Arabia, as a god with three daughters: al-Lat, al-Uzza, and Manat. (Note that *al*- means “the”.)

The four early biographers of Mohammed wrote that the verses **originally** were followed by:

**“These are the exalted cranes (intermediaries) Whose intercession is to be hoped for.”**

Interpretation: Allah’s daughters were considered heavenly beings and intercessors. High-altitude Numidian cranes were a metaphor for them. An alternate reading for “is to be hoped for” (*turtaja*) is “is accepted with approval” (*turtada*). (from Alfred Guillaume’s translation of Ibn Ishaq’s *The Life of Mohammed* p.166)

**Later**, this passage was taken out, and the following was put in its place:

**“What! For you the male sex, And for him, the female? Behold, such would be Indeed a division Most unfair.” (verses 53:21-22 today)**

**Al-Wahidi/Wakidi** (died 207 AH/823 CE) wrote *Asbab al-Nozul*. “On a certain day, the chief men of Mecca, assembled in a group beside the Kaaba, discussed as was their wont the affairs of the city; when Mahomet appeared and, seating himself by them in a friendly manner, began to recite in their hearing the 53 Sura…. ‘And see ye not Lat and Ozza, and Manat the third besides?’ When he had reached this verse, the devil suggested an expression of the thoughts which for many a day had possessed his soul; and put in to his mouth words of reconciliation and compromise, the revelation of which he had been longing for from God, namely; ‘These are the exalted Females, and verily their intercession is to be hoped for.’ The Coreish were surprised and delighted with this acknowledgement of their deities; and as Mahomet wound up the Sura with the closing words ‘Wherefore bow down before God, and serve him’ the whole assembly prostrated themselves with one accord on the ground and worshipped. … In the evening Gabriel visited him; and the prophet recited the Sura unto him. And Gabriel said, ‘What is this that thou has done? Thou has repeated before the people words that I never gave unto thee’. So Mahomet grieved sore, …”

**Ibn Sa’ad/Sa’d** (died 230 AH/845 CE), was aware of al-Wahidi’s work, but he himself was a biographer who wrote the 15-volume *Kitab al Tabaqat al Kabir*.

**Ibn Isaq/Ishaq** (died 145/767 or 151 AH/773 CE) was a Shafi’ite Sunni who later started his own short-lived school. He wrote *Sirat Rasullallah* (*The Life of Allah’s Prophet*). “[The emigrants] remained where they were [in Ethiopia] until they heard that the people of Mecca had accepted Islam and prostrated themselves. That was because the chapter of The Star [Sura 53] had been sent down to Mohammed and the apostle recited it. Both Muslim and polytheist listened to it silently until he reached his words ‘Have you seen al-Lat and al-Uzza?’ They gave ear to him attentively while the faithful believed [their prophet]. Some apostatized when they heard the ‘saj’ of the Satan and said, ‘By Allah we will serve them (the cranes) so that they may bring us near to Allah’. The Satan taught these two verses to every polytheist and their tongues took to them easily. This weighed heavily upon the apostle until Gabriel came to him and complained….” (He mentions the chain of transmission as Yazid bin Ziyad -> Mohammed bin Ishaq -> Salama -> Ibn Hamid -> ibn Isaq

**Ibn Jarir al-Tabari** (died 923 CE) was a Shafi’ite Sunni who wrote a 38-volume Islamic *History* of the world until 915 CE. He has been titled “the sheikh of commentators”. He writes in volume 6 p.108-110, “When the messenger of God saw how his tribe turned their backs on him and was grieved to see them shunning the message he had brought to them from God, he longed in his soul that something would come to him from God which would reconcile him with his tribe…. And when he came to the words: ‘Have you thought upon al-Lat and al-Uzza and Manat, the third, the other?’ Satan cast on his tongue, because of his inner debates and what he desired to bring to his people, the words: ‘These are the high flying cranes; verily their intercession is accepted with approval [alternately: to be desired or hoped for].’ When the Quraysh heard this, they rejoiced and were happy and delighted at the way in which he spoke of their gods, and they listened to him, while the Muslims, having complete trust in their prophet in respect of the message which he brought from god, did not suspect him of error, illusion, or mistake. … Then [later] Gabriel came to the Messenger of God and said, ‘Mohammed, what have you done? You have recited to the people that which I did not bring to you from God, …’”

**Later Muslim scholars** who mention this are:

1) Abu Ma’shar from Chorassan (787-885 A.H.)

2) Ibn Abi Hatim

3) Ibn al-Mundhir

4) Ibn Hajar from Asqalaan (773-852 A.H)

5) Ibn Mardauyah

6) Musa ibn ‘Uqba

7) Zamakhshari’s famous commentary, on Sura 22:52. (1070-1143 CE)

The first six are according to *The Book of the Major Classes*, translated by S. Moinul ‘Haq.

Earlier Muslims scholars who also mentioned this are:

Ka’b al-Qurazi, one of Islam’s greatest early Qur’anic scholars.

Urwah ibn al-Zubayr, an early Meccan scholar who’s known as the founder of the study of the life of Muhammad. He was also Aisha’s nephew and the son of Abu Bakr’s daughter Asma—one of the first twenty converts to Islam.

Abu Bakr ibn Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Harith, one of the top scholars in Islamic Law during the first century.

Abu al-Aliyah al-Basri, another of the greatest Qur’anic scholars of the first century. He studied the Qur’an with Caliph Umar, Ubayy ibn Ka’b, Zayd ibn Thabit, and Ibn Abbas.

al-Suddi, another early scholar who studied with Ibn Abbas.

Muhammad ibn al-Sa’ib al-Kalbi, an early commentator who composed the longest Tafsir that had been written up until his time.

Qatadah ibn Di’amah, one of Islam’s greatest early commentators.

al-Dahhak ibn Muzahim al-Balkhi, a first century expert in Tafsir.

Ikrimah, a slave of Ibn Abbas and an expert on the life of Muhammad.

Ibn Abbas himself, the founder of Qur’anic studies.

Sa’id ibn Jubayr, one of the leading Qur’anic scholars of his time and one of the top students of Ibn Abbas. Some of Ibn Abbas’s narratives go through Sa’id ibn Jubayr.

**Indirect Evidence of the Satanic Verses: The Qur’an and Bukhari Hadiths**

Bukhari died around 870 CE (even later than three of the four sources listed.) When Mohammed spoke the Star Sura, pagans as well as Muslims bowed. (*Bukhari* vol.3 book 19 no.173 p.100 vol.3 book 19 no.176 p.101; vol.6 book 60 no.385-386 p.364-365; *Abu Dawud* vol.1 book 2 ch.481 no.1401 p.369) Pagans were not said to bow for any of Mohammed’s other recitations, why would they be so agreeable to this Sura, especially since *Bukhari* and *Abu Dawud* do NOT say those pagans ever became Muslims, and this was prior to battles with these Meccan pagans!

Also, Sura 22:52 says, “Never did We send An apostle or a prophet Before thee, but, when he Framed a desire, Satan Threw some (vanity) Into his desire: but God Will cancel anything (vain) That Satan throws in, And God will confirm (And establish) His Signs;…”

Sura 17:73-75 says, “And their purpose was To tempt thee away From that which We Had revealed unto thee, To substitute in Our name Something quite different: (In that case), behold! They would certainly have Made thee (their) friend! And had We not Given thee strength, Thou wouldst nearly Have inclined to them A little. In that case We should Have made thee taste Double portion (of punishment) In this life, and an equal portion In death: and moreover Thou wouldst have found None to help thee against Us!”

Note that even though some claim Sura 17:73-75 was revealed at the time of the “Ascent of the Prophet”, Tabari and Ibn Sa’d wrote that Sura 17:73-75 was revealed about the time of the Satanic verses. Muslims even have a special term for the whisperings of Satan, roughly pronounced “*wiswas*”.

## 7.2.2 Other variants in the Qur’an

**Lost Sura of the Valley of Gold:** Abu Harb b. Abu al-Aswad reported on the authority of his father that Abu Musa al-Ash’ari said: “…We used to recite a Sura which resembled in length and severity to (Sura) *Bara’at*. I have, however, forgotten it with the exception of this which I remember out of it: ‘If there were two valleys full of riches for the son of Adam, he would long for a third valley, and nothing would fill the stomach of the son of Adam but dust.’ And we used to so recite a Sura which resembled one of the suras of *Musabbihat*, and I have forgotten it, but remember (this much) out of it: ‘O people who believe, why do you say that which you do not practice’ (lxi 2.) and ‘that is recorded in your necks as a witness (against you) and you would be asked about in on the Day of Resurrection’” (xvii. 13). *Sahih Muslim* vol.2 book 5 ch.391 no.2286 p.500,501

Likewise, *Bukhari* vol.8 book 76 ch.10 no.444-447 p.296-298 also recounts this. 444, 445, and 447 simply say that the prophet said this. 446 says that Ibn Az-Zubair said this in a sermon, and “We considered this as a saying from the Qur’an till the Sura … 102:1 was revealed.”

One Muslim reader pointed out *Bukhari* no.446 says they only considered it a verse of the Qur’an, so some Muslims might have mistakenly said it was part of the Qur’an for a time. So, does that mean these some Muslims mistakenly included this in the Qur’an as *Bukhari* no.446 suggests, or that it really was a part of the Qur’an, but was taken out later as *Sahih Muslim* states? To answer this, we should ask if there are any [other] verses that were in the Qur’an but “cancelled” (quietly deleted) with no evidence they were improperly in the Qur’an. The answer is that the

re are.

**Sucklings:** “Yahya related to me from Malik from Abdullah ibn Abi Bakr ibn Hazm from Amra bint Abd ar-Rahman that A’isha, the wife of the Prophet [Mohammed],… said, ‘Amongst what was sent down of the Qur’an was ‘ten known sucklings make haram’ – then it was abrogated by ‘five known sucklings’. When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, died, it was what is now recited of the Qur’an.’” A man would go and have intercourse with his slave-girl and his wife went and suckled her. Afterwards his wife warned her he could no longer do that because of what she did. So the man went to ‘Umar, and ‘Umar told him to beat his wife and go to his slave-girl, because suckling only applied to the young.” *Muwatta’ Malik* 30.3.17

**A’isha said 127 verses lost.** In a document in 795 CE, (Abu ‘Ubaid’s *Kitab Fadail al Quran*), Aisha said one Sura had 200 verses. After ‘Uthman’s “standardization”, today it has 73 verses. That is 127 out of 200 verses just gone. Whether you take the data as when A’isha said this, (while the Qur’an was being standardized), or you take a date of 795 CE (around 150 years later.) that is strong evidence for the unreliability of the transmission of the Qur’an.

Sura 2:238: Abu Yunus the freed slave of ‘Aisha transcribed a copy of the Qur’an for ‘Aisha. This copy of the Qur’an was a somewhat different in Sura 2:238. “Abu Yunus, the freed slave of ‘A’isha said: ‘A’isha (Allah be pleased with her) ordered me to transcribe a copy of the Qur’an for her and said: When you reach this verse: ‘Guard the prayers and the middle prayer’ (2:238) inform me; so when I reached it, I informed her and she gave me dictation (like this): Guard the prayer and the middle prayer and the afternoon prayer, and stand up truly obedient to Allah. ‘A’isha (Allah be pleased with her) said: This is how I have heard from the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)” *Sunan Nasa’i* vol.1 no.475 p.340 (replacing the typo 2:208 with 2:238)

**Shortened today:** “It was narrated by ‘Abdullah the son of Imam Ahmad in Zawaa’id al-Musnad (21207), ‘Abd ar-Razzaaq in al-Musannaf (599), Ibn Hibbaan in his Saheeh (4428), al-Haakim in al-Mustadrak (8068), al-Bayhaqi in as-Sunan (16911), Ibn Hazm in al-Muhalla (12/175), via ‘Aasim ibn Bahdalah, from Zirr, who said: Ubayy ibn Ka‘b said to me: How long is Soorat al-Ahzaab when you read it? Or how many verses do you think it is? I said to him: Seventy-three verses. He said: Only? There was a time when it was a long as Soorat al-Baqarah, and we read in it: “The old man and the old woman, if they commit zina, then stone them both, a punishment from Allah, and Allah is Almighty, Most Wise.”

Ibn Hazm (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This is a clearly saheeh isnaad, as clear as the sun, in which there is no fault. End quote.

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This is a hasan isnaad. This implies that there were more verses in it, then the wording and ruling were both abrogated. And Allah knows best.

End quote from Tafseer Ibn Katheer (6/335)

There is a corroborating report that was narrated by ‘Abdullah ibn Ahmad in Zawaa’id al-Musnad (21206): Wahb ibn Baqiyyah told me: Khaalid ibn ‘Abdullah at-Tahhaan informed me, from Yazeed ibn Abi Ziyaad, from Zirr ibn Hubaysh, from Ubayy ibn Ka‘b, who said: How many (verses) do you recite in Soorat al-Ahzaab? He said: Seventy-odd verses. He said: We recited it with the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) like al-Baqarah, or more than that, and verily the verse of stoning was in it.

Yazeed ibn Abi Ziyaad is da‘eef (weak), but there is nothing wrong with the hadeeth, as there is corroborating evidence for it.

This indicates that Soorat al-Ahzaab was a lengthy soorah like Soorat al-Baqarah, but most of it was abrogated.” From <https://islamqa.info/amp/en/answers/197942>.

**‘Ubai bin Ka’b**, one of Mohammed’s secretaries, has extra suras, and omits about 12 suras in the Qur’an today (*The Fihrist* p.61 footnotes 43-48). Abu Musa, of Basra, also had a text that was the same as ‘Ubai’s. (Suyuti, *Itqan I*, p. 65; Ibn Abi Dawud, *Masahif*, pp. 180-181, also Noeldeke, *Geschichte des Quran's*, pp. 33-38.)

‘Ubai bin Ka’b and Ibn Abbas also have this extra sura:

O Allah, we seek your help and ask your forgiveness, and we praise you and do not disbelieve in you. We separate from and leave who sin against you. ([*al-Khal* of ‘Ubai bin Ka’b*'*](http://answering-islam.org.uk/Quran/Miracle/ubay.html#khal), `Separation')

‘Ubai bin Ka’b and Ibn Abbas have this extra sura:

O Allah, we worship you and to you we pray and prostrate and to you we run and hasten to serve you. We hope for your mercy and we fear your punishment. Your punishment will certainly reach the unbelievers ([*al-Hafd*](http://answering-islam.org.uk/Quran/Miracle/ubay.html), `Haste')

*Bukhari* vol.6 book 60 ch.9 no.8 p.10 “’Umar said, ‘Our best Qur’an reciter is Ubai and our best judge is ‘Ali; and in spite of this, we leave some of the statements of Ubai because Ubai says, ‘I do not leave anything that I have heard from Allah’s Apostle while Allah said, ‘What ever verse (Revelations) do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten but We bring a better one or similar, to it … (2: 106)” So this says Allah “abrogates” (removes) some suras, but adds better ones than Allah gave before.

**‘Abdallah ibn Mas’ud** was one of the four people Mohammed said to learn the Qur’an from. Yet Al-Nuri lists verses in Ibn Mas’ud’s version that are not in the Qur’an today.

“For surely God chose Adam, Noah, the house of Abraham, and the house of Muhammad above all beings.”

“Did We not expand thy breast from thee and lifted from thee thy burden? Did We not exalt thy fame by Ali thy son-in-law?”

[www.answering-islam.org/Quran/Text/distortion.html]

**All of Sura 1** is entirely absent in Ibn Mas’ud’s version (*The Fihrist* p.57). Ibn Mas’ud was a personal secretary of Mohammed’s. Mohammed told other people to learn the Qur’an from Ibn Mas’ud and three others. (*Bukhari* vol.6 book 60 ch.8 no.521 p.486-487). Another Early Muslim claimed that Ibn Mas’ud left it out deliberately, because if he had included it, he would have included it before every other Sura. Regardless though, he omitted it deliberately.

**We have met our Lord…** “Narrated Anas bin Malik: ... There was revealed about those who were killed at Bi’r-Ma’una a Qur’anic Verse we used to recite, but it was cancelled later on. The verse was: ‘Inform our people that we have met our Lord. He is pleased with us and He has made us pleased.’” *Bukhari* vol.4 book 52 ch.19 no.69 p.53.

See also the *History of al-Tabari* vol.7 p.156.

Other references to cancelled verses are *Bukhari* vol.4 book 52 ch.9 no.57 p.45, *Bukhari* vol.4 book 52 ch.184 no.299 p.191 and *Bukhari* vol.5 book 59 book 59 ch.27 no.421 p.293 all say similar things about the same verse.

"We used to read a verse of the Qur'an revealed in their connection, but later the verse was cancelled. it was: 'convey to our people on our behalf the information that we have met our lord, and He is pleased with us, and has made us pleased.'' *Bukhari* vol.5 book 59 no.416 p.288.

**Sura 98** once listed seventy persons from Kuraish, by their names and their fathers' names. It was also as long as Sura 2. [www.answering-islam.org/Quran/Text/distortion.html]

**Sura 103**, the entire sura. “By the time, verily man is in loss, except such as have faith, and do righteous deeds, and (join together) in the mutual enjoining of truth, and of patience and constancy.” vs. “And the afternoon. We have created man for loss in which he will remain until the end of time, except for those who believe, enjoining one another to piety and committing each other to endurance.” (Ibn Mas’ud) *The Fihrist* p.57

**Sura 113** is entirely absent in Ibn Mas’ud’s version (*The Fihrist* p.57). Ibn Mas’ud was a personal secretary of Mohammed’s. Mohammed told other people to learn the Qur’an from Ibn Mas’ud and three others. (*Bukhari* vol.6 book 61 ch.8 no.521 p.486-487)

**Sura 114** is entirely absent in the Ibn Mas’ud’ version (*The Fihrist* p.57). Ibn Mas’ud was a personal secretary of Mohammed’s. Mohammed told other people to learn the Qur’an from Ibn Mas’ud and three others. (*Bukhari* vol.6 no.521). The omission of Suras 113 and 114 was not accidental. It is reported that Ibn Mas’ud said, “The two charm-Suras [113, 114] are not of the Book of God!” [www.answering-islam.org/Quran/Text/distortion.html]

In *The Fihrist* p.72 the author, Ishaq al-Nadim, wrote, “It is said that he [Ibn Shanabudh] confessed all of this [variation]. Then he was moved to repentance and used his handwriting in contrition, so that he wrote: ‘Thus saith Muhammed ibn Ahmad ibn Ayyub [Ibn Shanabudh]: I used to read expressions differing from the version of ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan…” [Since ‘Uthman threatened those who had different versions, this confession likely had an element of coercion in it.]

**Fast or feed a poor person:** Narrated Nafi’: Ibn ‘Umar recited the verse: "They had a choice either to fast or to feed a poor person for every day", and said that the order of this Verse was cancelled.” *Bukhari* vol.3, book 31 ch.39 no.170 p.97

# 8. Conclusion

There are two aspects to the reliability of ancient literature: attestation and variation.

The large number of later copies of the New Testament, from Africa to Armenia to England, give abundant attestation, except that one can only infer what earlier copies said from them. Early Christian quotes alone of the New Testament are an even stronger attestation of what was said when they were alive and writing. Early New Testament manuscripts are an even strong attestation of the New Testament.

The Muslims hadiths, commentaries, and histories to the reliable copying of the Qur’an since ‘Uthman’s time. However early manuscripts, some less than a century after Mohammed, are the strongest attestation of all.

Most significantly, there is a “dead fly in the ointment”. Most of the existing copies of the Qur’an are from the time after ‘Uthman “standardized the “Qur’an” and burned the earlier ones. However, in 1972 about 12,000 fragments of the Qur’an were found in the Great Mosque in San’a. These have not been published yet, Nonetheless, the writings we have from early biographers show missing and added suras, Sura 53, and other major differences.

# Appendix 1: Partial List of Other Smaller Variants in the Qur’an

There are today very early copies of the Qur’an. However, an early manuscript does not help the case for reliability if there are too many variants. A manuscript was discovered in Samarkand, and over 15,000 pages of old Koran text were discovered in Yemen. According to an article by in the Jan. 1999 *Atlantic Monthly* (p.43-56)

“Some of the parchment pages in the Yemeni hoard seemed to date back to the seventh and eighth centuries CE, or Islam's first two centuries -- they were fragments, in other words, of perhaps the oldest Korans in existence. What's more, some of these fragments revealed small but intriguing aberrations from the standard Koranic text. Such aberrations, though not surprising to textual historians, are troublingly at odds with the orthodox Muslim belief that the Koran as it has reached us today is quite simply the perfect, timeless, and unchanging Word of God.”

You can see some of these differences at [www.QuranText.org](http://www.QuranText.org)

The *Bukhari Hadith* 6:509 says that when certain people died, parts of the Qur’an known only to them were lost. Other *Bukhari Hadiths* saying parts of the Qur’an were missing and/or abrogated are 4:57,62,69,229; 6:510,511. More than 1700 variant readings are attributed to Ibn Mas’ud alone according to Arthur Jeffery (editor), *Materials for the History of the Text of the Quran*, 1937. [www.isaalmasih.net/bible-isa/history.html]

Sura 1 is entirely absent in Ibn Mas’ud’s version (*The Fihrist* p.57). Ibn Mas’ud was a personal secretary of Mohammed’s. Mohammed told other people to learn the Qur’an from Ibn Mas’ud and three others. (*Bukhari* vol.6 book 60 ch.8 no.521 p.486-487)

Sura 1:5 **h**iyaka vs. iyaka

[http://answering-islam.org/Books/Jeffery/fatiha.htm]

Sura 1:6 irshadna vs. ihdina [www.Answering-islam.org]

Sura 2:10 y**a**kdh**i**buuna (Hafs) vs. Sura 2:9 y**u**k**a**dhibuuna (Warsh) [http://www.Answering-islam.org/Green/seven.htm] (vowels)

Sura 2:58 “**he** forgives” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**We** forgive” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 2:85 “**they** do” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**you** do” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 2:106: “And for whatever verse We abrogate or cast into oblivion, We bring a better or the like of it” did not originally have “or the like of it.”

[www.answering-islam.org/Quran/Text/distortion.html]

Sura 2:119 “**and do not ask!**” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “and you are not asked” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) ([www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html](http://www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html))

Sura 2:125 “**you shall take**” (Hafs) vs. “**they have taken**” (Warsh) one vowel difference

Sura 2:132 waw**a**s**s**aa (Hafs) vs. sura 2:131 wa**’a**wsaa (Warsh) [http://www.Answering-islam.org/Green/seven.htm] (consonant)

Sura 2:132 himu (Hafs) vs. Sura 131 hi**i**mu (Warsh) [http://www.Answering-islam.org/Green/seven.htm] (vowel)

Sura 2:140 **t**aquluna (Hafs) vs. Sura 2:139 **y**aguluna (Warsh) (only diacritical marks different) [http://www.Answering-islam.org/Green/seven.htm] (dots)

Sura 2:137 ‘if they believe **similarly to** that which you have believed” vs. ‘if they believe that which you have believed” but added later by a different hand in BnF arabe 331 (*CiEQM20* p.62)

Sura 2:184 ta’aam**u** m**i**skiin**in** (Hafs) vs. Sura 2:183 ta’aam**i** m**a**s**a**kiin**a** (Warsh) [http://www.Answering-islam.org/Green/seven.htm] (vowels)

Sura 2:184 “poor **people**” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “a poor **person**” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 2:193 “and **all of** the religion is for Allah” (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “and the religion is for Allah” (Mishaf al-Madinah) ([www.QuranText.org](http://www.QuranText.org))

Sura 2:196 “and do not shave until” (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “and do not shave **your heads** until” (Mishaf al-Madinah) (www.QuranText.org)

Sura 2:196 “and **if** there is **someone** sick from among you / should one of you be sick” (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “and **whoever** is sick from among you / if any of you be sick” (Mishaf al-Madinah) ([www.QuranText.org](http://www.QuranText.org) and https://bible-quran.com/quran-manuscripts-copyist-errors/#easy-footnote-bottom-8-12991)

Sura 2:196 “from fasting or sacrifice” (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “from fasting **or charity** or sacrifice” (Mishaf al-Madinah) (www.QuranText.org)

Sura 2:196 “**his** minor pilgrimage” (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “**the** minor pilgrimage” (Mishaf al-Madinah) (www.QuranText.org)

Sura 2:197 “what you do” [taʕmalu] (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “what you do” [tafʕalu] (Mishaf al-Madinah) ([www.QuranText.org](http://www.QuranText.org))

Sura 2:201 “in the world and in the hereafter, and” (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “in the world, **good,** and in the hereafter, **good**, and” (Mishaf al-Madinah) ([www.QuranText.org](http://www.QuranText.org) and https://bible-quran.com/quran-manuscripts-copyist-errors/#easy-footnote-bottom-8-12991)

Sura 2:210 “that Allah should come to **you**” (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “that Allah should come to **them**” (Mishaf al-Madinah) (www.QuranText.org)

Sura 2:213 [absent] (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “**envying one another**” (Mishaf al-Madinah) (www.QuranText.org)

Sura 2:214 yaguul**a** (Hafs) vs. Sura 2:212 yaguul**u** (Warsh)[http://www.Answering-islam.org/Green/seven.htm] (vowel)

Sura 2:220 “And **their** brothers” (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “And **your** brothers” (Mishaf al-Madinah) (www.QuranText.org)

Sura 2:221 [absent] (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “**by his permission**” (Mishaf al-Madinah) (www.QuranText.org)

Sura 2:238: Abu Yunus the freed slave of ‘Aisha transcribed a copy of the Qur’an for ‘Aisha. It was a somewhat different in Sura 2:238. “Abu Yunus, the freed slave of ‘A’isha said: ‘A’isha (Allah be pleased with her) ordered me to transcribe a copy of the Qur’an for her and said: When you reach this verse: ‘Guard the prayers and the middle prayer’ (2:238) inform me; so when I reached it, I informed her and she gave me dictation (like this): Guard the prayer and the middle prayer and the afternoon prayer, and stand up truly obedient to Allah. ‘A’isha (Allah be please with her) said: This is how I have heard from the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)” *Sunan Nasa’i* vol.1 no.475 p.340. (replacing the typo 2:208 with 2:238)

Sura 2:248 al-tub**ah** vs. al-tab**ut** (could not be confused based on diacritical marks) [http://www.Answering-islam.org/Responses/Menj/bravo\_r4bc.htm]

Sura 2:251 “And if Allah did not **defend**” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “And if Allah did not **repel**” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 2:259 nunshi**z**uhaa (Hafs) vs. Sura 2:258 nunshi**r**uhaa (Warsh) (different diacritical marks) [http://www.Answering-islam.org/Green/seven.htm] (dots)

Sura 3:57 “and **we** pay them” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “and **he** pays them” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 3:81 atay**tu**kum (Hafs) vs. Sura 3:80 atay**na**kum (Warsh)[http://www.Answering-islam.org/Green/seven.htm] (diacritical marks)

Sura 3:83 “**you** seek” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**they** seek” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 3:83 “**you** are returned” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**they** are returned” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 3:104 “**refraining** (different Arabic word) from what is wrong…” vs. **refraining (nahun)** from what is wrong, **and who seek the aid of Allah in what befalls them**…” (Ibn Shanabudh) *The Fihrist* p.72

Sura 3:133 **wa**saari’uu (Hafs) vs. saari’uu (Warsh) [http://www.Answering-islam.org/Green/seven.htm] (consonant)

Sura 3:146 “a prophet who **was killed**” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “a prophet who **fought**” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 3:157 “**you** amass” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**they** amass” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) ([www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html](http://www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html))

Sura 3:171 “bounty” vs erased over in BnF arabe 328a (*CiEQM20* p.66)

Sura 4:14 “**We** make him enter” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**He** makes them enter” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) ([www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html](http://www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html))

Sura 4:149 “Allah” vs. “Allah is” in BnF arabe 330 (No change in meaning) (*CiEQM20* p.58-59)

Sura 4:33 absent vs. “is” (no change in meaning) in both the NLR Marcel 17 and Cairo Musharef al-sharif (*CiEQM20* p.75-76)

Sura 4:167 “from the way **of Allah** have strayed” vs. “from the way **of Allah** have strayed” in the Topkapi codex but then “of Allah” was erased. (*CiEQM20* p.70-71)

Sura 4:168: Abi Hamza reported, on the strength of Abi Ja'far: Gabriel, peace be upon him, revealed this verse after this manner - “Surely the unbelievers, who have done evil (by depriving the house of Muhammad from their right), God will not forgive them, neither guide them on any road but the road to Gehenna, therein dwelling for ever and ever.” [www.answering-islam.org/Quran/Text/distortion.html]

Sura 5:42 [absent] (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “**And if they come to you**” (Mishaf al-Madinah) (www.QuranText.org)

Sura 5:42 “turn away and” (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “turn away **from them** and” (Mishaf al-Madinah) (www.QuranText.org)

Sura 5:44 “do not fear **them**” (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “And do not fear **people**” (Mishaf al-Madinah) (www.QuranText.org)

Sura 5:45 “upon **the sons of Israel**” (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “upon **them**” (Mishaf al-Madinah) (www.QuranText.org)

Sura 5:49 “what Allah **inspired**” (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “what Allah **sent down**” (Mishaf al-Madinah) (www.QuranText.org)

Sura 5:54 yartad**da** (Hafs) vs. Sura 5:56 yartad**id** (Warsh) [http://www.Answering-islam.org/Green/seven.htm] (consonant and vowel)

Surah 5:63 Nineteen alternate readings have been identified, some of which change the actual meaning of the verse. Fourteen changes were caused by changing the vowel combinations. In the remaining 5 cases one or two consonants were added (ibid, by A. Jeffery (ed.), pages 39, 129, 198, 216, 237).

Sura 5:67 “his message**s**” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “his message” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) ([www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html](http://www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html))

Sura 5:93 “they did” and “they believed” vs. absent in MS.67.2007.1 (*CiEQM20* p.52)

Sura 6:40 absent vs “the hour” as a superscript in Marcel 7. (*CiEQM20* p.79)

Sura 6:86 ‘we have favored” vs. erased over. (*CiEQM20* p.67)

Sura 6:91 “you **nor** your fathers” vs. “you **and** your fathers” MS.474.2003 (*CiEQM20* p.47-48)

Sura 6:92 “blessed and confirms” vs. “a blessed and confirming one” MS.474.2003 (CiEQM20 p.48)

Sura 6:92 “absent vs. “**that you may warn**” MS.474.2003 (*CiEQM20* p.48)

Sura 6:92 “around it those who” vs. “around it (two words erased) those who” MS.474.2003 (*CiEQM20* p.49)

Sura 6:92 “prayers” vs. “prayers” slightly different in Arabic, no change in meaning. MS.474.2003 (*CiEQM20* p.48)

Sura 6:93 “**or** [aw] vs. “**and** [wa] order of two letters. MS.474.2003 (*CiEQM20* p.48)

Sura 6:93 “**while**” vs. “**when**” MS.474.2003 (*CiEQM20* p.48)

Sura 6:93 [absent] vs. ‘they disbelieve in Allah and” MS.474.2003 (*CiEQM20* p.49-50)

Sura 6:93 [absent] vs. a long ‘alif ” MS.474.2003 (*CiEQM20* p.48)

Sura 6:94 “whom” vs. [absent] MS.474.2003 (*CiEQM20* p.50)

Sura 6:95 “That is Allah, how then” vs. “That is Allah **your Lord**, how then” MS.474.2003 (*CiEQM20* p.48-49)

Sura 6:160a (6:159a in Yusuf ‘Ali): “…sects, I am not of them in anything;” (in ‘Uthman’s time) vs. “…sects, thou hast No part in them in the least:” *al-Tabari* vol.15 p.181 and footnote 323.

Sura 7:34 “hour” vs overwritten over an erasure in E20 in St. Petersburg. (*CiEQM20* p.79-80)

Sura 8:3 erasure of an entire line in MIA.2014.491 in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha. (*CiEQM20* p.83)

Sura 8:73 “and **great (*kabir*)** corruption” vs. “and **widespread (*‘aird*)** corruption” (Ibn Shanabudh) *The Fihrist* p.71

Sura 9:30 part was abrogated (and does not appear in the Qur’an today)

Sura 9:72 “is greater, the great triumph” vs. “is greater, that is the great triumph’ Topkapi Qur’an. (*CiEQM20* p.29)

Sura 9:78 “that he knows fully” vs. “that Allah knows fully” Sana’ 01-20-04 (*CiEQM20* p.38)

Sura 9:80 “seven” vs. absent in a San’a manuscript. (*CiEQM20* p.56)

Sura 9:85 is absent in the Sana’a Quran. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanaa_manuscript>

Sura 9:93 “And **he** has placed a seal” vs. “and **Allah** has placed a seal” Marcel 21 (*CiEQM20* p.37)

Sura 9:100 “gardens under which rivers flow” vs. “gardens from under which rivers flow” (added the Arabic word *min*. [http://www.Answering-islam.org/Responses/Menj/bravo\_r4bc.htm]

Sura 9:105 Al-Husain Ibn Mubaah reported that a man recited in the presence of Ubayy Ibn Abdillaah “Say: ‘Work; and God will surely see your work, and His Messenger, and the believers.’” (9:105). For which Ubayy answered, “It is not so. it is rather ‘... and the trusted ones,’ which we are.” [www.answering-islam.org/Quran/Text/distortion.html]

Sura 9:128-129 are two false verses added to the Qur’an, according to the Islamic site www.submission.org.

Sura 10:45 “**We** gather them” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**He** gathers them” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 10:92 “**And** today we deliver you **with your body**…” vs. “Today we deliver you **by making you strong** …” (Ibn Shanabudh) *The Fihrist* p.71

Sura 11:46 *Abu Dawud* vol.3 footnote 3383 p.1116

Sura 12:23 due to vowels. Haita (people of Kufah and Basrah) or Hita (people of Medina and Syria. *Abu Dawud* vol.3 footnote 3411 p.1120

Sura 12:35 atta vs. **h**atta [http://www.Answering-islam.org/Responses/Menj/bravo\_r4bc.htm]

Sura 12:109 “**he** inspires” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**we** inspire” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 13:17 “**you** heat” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**they** heat” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 15:8 “**you** did not send down” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**they** did not send down” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) ([www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html](http://www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html))

Sura 15:85 “the hour” correction in BnF arabe 340 (*CiEQM20* p.79)

Sura 17:42 “**you** say” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**they** say” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 18:76 *Abu Dawud* vol.3 footnote 3384 p.1116

Sura 18:79 “there was **behind** them a king” vs. “there was **in front of** them a king” Ibn Shanabudh (*The Fihrist* p.71)

Sura 18:86 *Abu Dawud* vol.3 footnote 3385 p.1116

Sura 18:86 due to vowels. *Hami****ya*** with a long ‘a’ for warm water, or *hami****’ah*** meaning musky [murky?] water. *Abu Dawud* vol.3 footnote 3408 p.1120

Sura 20 verse 31 and 32 were swapped in the Sana’a Quran. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanaa_manuscript>

Sura 21:4,112 *q****ala*** - He will say (Hafs) vs. *q****ul*** - Say [Say thou] (Basra) [Abdullah’s Yusuf ‘Ali’s Translation of the Qur’an footnote 2666]

Sura 21:4 “**Say!**” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**he said**” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) ([www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html](http://www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html))

Sura 22:40 “where the name is mentioned frequently” vs. “where the name **of Allah** is mentioned frequently” Marcel 13 (*CiEQM20* p.37)

Sura 22:62 “**you** call” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**they** call” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 23:8 li-aman**a**tihim [long 2nd a] (trust) vs. li-aman**a**tihim [long 2nd and 3rd a] “trusts” [http://www.Answering-islam.org/Responses/Menj/bravo\_r4bc.htm]

Sura 23:86 “Lord of the heavens” vs. “Lord of the **seven** heavens” BnF arabe 327 (*CiEQM20* p.55)

Sura 23:87a “Allah’s” vs. “Allah” (*CiEQM20* p.56-57)

Sura 23:87b “heavens and earth” vs. “seven heavens” (*CiEQM20* p.57)

Sura 23:112 “Q**ala**” - He will say (Hafs and Kufa) vs. “Q**ul**” -Say (Basra) [Abdullah Yusuf ‘Ali’s Translation of the Qur’an footnote 2948.]

Sura 24:1 (missing or an extra “r” *faradnaha* (and which we have ordained) vs. the majority *farradnaha* (which we have described in detail) *Abu Dawud* vol.3 footnote 3414 p.1121

Sura 24:33 “and those who” vs. cannot see what was erased over in a fragmentary folio in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha. (*CiEQM20* p.73)

Sura 24:35 *Abu Dawud* vol.3 footnote 3387 p.1116

Sura 24:51 “they are called unto and his Messenger” (Allah is implied) vs. “they are called unto **Allah** and his Messenger” Marcel 13 (*CiEQM20* p.37)

Sura 25:77 “**You** have lied” vs. “**The unbelievers** have lied” (Ibn Shanabudh) *The Fihrist* p.71

Sura 27:25 “**they** hide” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**you** hide” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 27:25 “**they** proclaim” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**you** proclaim” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 28:48 s**i**hraani “two works of magic” (Hafs) vs. Sura 28:48 s**aa**h**i**raani “two magicians” (Warsh) (*Answering Islam* p.193) [http://www.Answering-islam.org/Green/seven.htm] (vowels)

Sura 28:57 “is brought **(feminine)**” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “is brought **(masculine)**” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) ([www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html](http://www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html))

Sura 30:9 “the fate” vs. “the fate **of those**” Marcel 2 (*CiEQM20* p.45)

Sura 33:6 “The Prophet is closer to the Believers than their own selves, and his wives are their mothers...” Some manuscripts including ‘Ubai bin Ka’b also have “ and he is a father to them..." (A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran*, 1975 edition, note 3674). [http://www.isaalmasih.net/bible-isa/history.html]

Sura 33:9 absent vs erased over, but perhaps “his favor” in the Qur’an manuscript marcel 11. (*CiEQM20* p.77)

Sura 33:18 “surely know those” (Allah is implied as the subject” vs. “**Allah** surely know those” Marcel 11 (*CiEQM20* p.36, 78)

Sura 33:24 “In order that might warn” vs. “in order that **Allah** might warn” Marcel 11 (*CiEQM20* p.36, 78)

Sura 33:68 “**multitudinous**” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**mighty**” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) ([www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html](http://www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html))

Sura 33:73 “that **he** might pardon” vs. “that **Allah** might pardon” Marcel 11 (*CiEQM20* p.36, 78)

Sura 34:14 “the jinn perceived if they had known the unseen, they would not have **remained in abject** **(mahin)** torment.“ vs. “the **people (al-ins) perceived that the** jinn, if they had known the unseen, would not have remained in a **state (hawl) of painful (alim)** torment.” (Ibn Shanabudh) *The Fihrist* p.71

Sura 34:23 Variants can exist due to vowels, but here is a case of a consonant. *Abu Dawud* vol.3 footnote 3392 p.1117

Sura 34:27 “he is Allah” vs. written by a different hand in different ink, over an erasure in Marcel 5. (*CiEQM20* p.81-82)

Sura 34:35 “they (masculine) said” vs, “he said” then later erased and replaced with “they said” in BnF arabe 340 (*CiEQM20* p.68)

Sura 34:40 “we say” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**he** says” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) ([www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html](http://www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html))

Sura 35:11 “an easy word for” vs. “an easy work for **Allah**” Marcel 13 (*CiEQM20* p.37)

Sura 36:68 “Do **you** not understand?” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “Do **they** not understand?” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 39:59. This form of the sura quotes with a feminine pronoun for soul, while the well-known readings have a masculine pronoun. *Abu Dawud* vol.3:3979 footnote 3393 p.1117

Sura 40:58 “**they** remember” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**you** remember” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) ([www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html](http://www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html))

Sura 41:21 “**he** who gave everyone speech” vs. “**Allah** who gave everyone speech” Marcel 11 (*CiEQM20* p.36-37, 78)

Sura 42:1 Arabic letters “HMAS” vs. “HMSQ” in Ibn Mas’ud’s version. *The Fihrist* p.57

Sura 42:5 “Allah the forgiving, the merciful” vs. “Allah the forgiving” BnF arabe 327 (*CiEQM20* p.60)

Sura 42:21 “to him” vs. “to them” BnF arabe 328b erasure and over-writing by someone else. (*CiEQM20* p.32)

Sura 42:25 “**they** do” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**you** do” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 42:30 “it is what” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**then** it is what” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 43:89 “**you** will know” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**they** will know” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 48:17 “**we** punish him” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**he** punishes him” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 50:30 “**he** says” (Warsh Narration. Approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments of Algeria) vs. “**we** say” (Hafs narration. King Fahd Complex .. Saudi Arabia) (www.QuranText.org/qiraat.html)

Sura 53:19 original *turtaia* (hoped for) vs. *turtada* (is accepted with approval) Alfred Guillaume’s translation of Ibn Ishaq’s *The Life of Mohammed* p.166. (This is sort of a variant upon a variant).

Sura 62:9 “hasten” vs. “pass on” Ibn Shanabudh (*The Fihrist* p.71)

Sura 63:7 “In order that they may disperse from around him” (Sana’a Codex 1) vs. “in order that they may disperse” (standard Qur’an) (https://bible-quran.com/quran-manuscripts-copyist-errors/#easy-footnote-bottom-8-12991)

Sura 65:1 of Ibn ‘Abbas *Abu Dawud* vol.2:2192 footnote 1520 p.591-592

Sura 66:8 “Allah” vs. absent but added much later in the Topkapi codex. (*CiEQM20* p.64-65)

Sura 74:30 “”tisa’ata ‘ashara” (19 angels) vs. “sab’ata ‘ashara” (17 angels) (Ibn Hisham, Kitab Seerat Rasooli Llah ed. Ferdinand Wuestenfeld, Goettingen 1860 reprint Frankfurt/Main 1961, II, 67, 4-16)

Sura 89:25-26 *Abu Dawud* vol.3 footnote 3408 p.1119

Sura 89:86 *Abu Dawud* vol.3 footnote 3399 p.1118

Sura 91:15 **w**a-laa-yakhaafu (Hafs) vs. **f**a-laa-yakhaafu (Warsh) [http://www.Answering-islam.org/Green/seven.htm] (consonant)

Sura 92:1 “bright, and **what created** the male and female.” vs. “bright, and the male and the female.” (Ibn Shanabudh) *The Fihrist* p.71

Sura 98 once listed seventy persons from Kuraish, by their names and their fathers' names. It was also as long as Sura 2. [www.answering-islam.org/Quran/Text/distortion.html]

Sura 101:5 ‘ka-**l**-**‘ihni**-l-manfush’ vs. ‘ka-**s**-**sufi**-l-manfush (both words mean like carded wool) (Ibn Shanabudh) [*The Fihrist* p.71; http://www.Answering-islam.org/Responses/Menj/bravo\_r4bc.htm]

Sura 103 (all): “By the time, verily man is in loss, except such as have faith, and do righteous deeds, and (join together) in the mutual enjoining of truth, and of patience and constancy.” vs. “And the afternoon. We have created man for loss in which he will remain until the end of time, except for those who believe, enjoining one another to piety and committing each other to endurance.” (Ibn Mas’ud) *The Fihrist* p.57

Sura 111:2 “**he will** perish” vs. “**they have** perished. (Ibn Shanabudh) *The Fihrist* p.71

Sura 113 - Absent in Ibn Mas’ud’s version (*The Fihrist* p.57). Ibn Mas’ud was a personal secretary of Mohammed’s. Mohammed told other people to learn the Qur’an from Ibn Mas’ud and three others. (*Bukhari* vol.6 book 61 ch.8 no.521 p.486-487)

Sura 114 - Absent in Ibn Mas’ud’ version (*The Fihrist* p.57). Ibn Mas’ud was a personal secretary of Mohammed’s. Mohammed told other people to learn the Qur’an from Ibn Mas’ud and three others. (*Bukhari* vol.6 no.521). The omission of Suras 113 and 114 was not accidental. It is reported that Ibn Mas’ud said, “The two charm-Suras [113, 114] are not of the Book of God!” [www.answering-islam.org/Quran/Text/distortion.html]

“It is said that he [Ibn Shanabudh] confessed all of this [variation]. Then he was moved to repentance and used his handwriting in contrition, so that he wrote: ‘Thus saith Muhammed ibn Ahmad ibn Ayyub [Ibn Shanabudh]: I used to read expressions differing from the version of ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan…” (Since ‘Uthman threatened those who had different versions, this confession likely had an element of coercion in it.) *The Fihrist* p.72

# Appendix 2: How I Arrived at the 97% for manuscript uncertainties?

I found the total number of Greek words in the New Testament to be 137,986 according to both the third and fourth editions of *The Greek New Testament (Aland et al.)* by the United Bible Societies. This count includes words in question that were in brackets. It uses the longer ending of Mark, not the shorter ending.

The total number of words of manuscript variations I have seen are 3,920 words. These were determined by looking through *The Greek New Testament* (3rd ed. and 4th rev. ed.); Metzger’s *A Textual Commentary on the New Testament*; Barry; and footnotes from the NASB, NIV, NKJV, and NRSV.

**I excluded at least 441 words in 82 places** listed below, because most of the following criteria were met:

1. There was no disagreement between the Alexandrian and Byzantine manuscript families,

2. The earliest manuscripts were unanimous

3. Aland et al. in 3rd or 4th revised edition called it “A – virtually certain”

4. The variant was only in one manuscript or else only in some late manuscripts.

**I had the following assumptions.**

1. Generally to pay more attention to early manuscripts,

2. Pay less attention to church writings for one and two word differences, because they could have paraphrased,

3. Not to discount either the Alexandrian or the Byzantine manuscript families.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Other places** | **Places** | **Words** |
| Miscellaneous | 27 | 89 |
| p75 (=Bodmer 14/15) | 4 | 4 |
| Sinaiticus | 2 | 3 |
| 2nd corrector of Sinaiticus | 1 | 4 |
| Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus | 1 | 1 (1 letter spelling difference) |
| Bezae Cantabrigiensis, sometimes some Italic | 15 | 116 |
| Bezae Cantabrigiensis + Sahidic Coptic | 1 | 5 |
| Vaticanus | 2 | 5 |
| Bezae Cantabrigiensis Italic, Mid Egyptian Coptic | 1 | 44 |
| Bezae Cantabrigiensis, Priscillian | 1 | 2 |
| Sahidic Coptic | 1 | 15 |
| Bezae Cantabrigiensis, Syriac | 1 | ? |
| Syriac | 1 | 2 |
| Ephraemi Rescriptus | 1 | 1 |
| p15 (3rd century) | 1 | 1 |
| p72, Georgian | 1 | 1 |
| Bezae Cantabrigiensis + Alexandrinus | 1 | 1 |
| Alexandrinus | 2 | 2 |
| Slavonic, Armenian, Clementine Vulgate | 1 | 4 |
| Corrected Alexandrinus, Middle Egyptian Coptic | 1 | 7 |
| Order of Philippians 1:16 and 17 | 1 |  |
| Tertullian and F (9th century) | 1 | 2 |
| Bezae Cantabrigiensis Some Syriac, Italic | 1 | 2 |
| Bezae Cantabrigiensis Italic, some Syriac Mid Egyptian Coptic | 1 | 23 |
| Bezae Cantabrigiensis, Athanasius | 1 | 1 |
| Bezae Cantabrigiensis Syriac | 4 | 56 |
| Bezae Cantabrigiensis Italic, Syriac | 1 | 2 |
| Bezae Cantabrigiensis Syriac, p38 (300 CE) | 1 | 21 |
| Italic, Middle Egyptian Coptic | 1 | 1 |
| Ethiopic | 1 | 2 |
| **Total** | **76** | **389** |

This left 3,920 uncertain words out of 137,986 total words, or 3,920 / 137,986 = 3%.

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