

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

- More evidence exists for the Bible's authenticity than for any literature of antiquity.
- Textual analysis begins with historical investigation of the ancient NT manuscripts, beginning with the latest documents and working backward.
- As evidence develops, the data is evaluated against other sources. The record is then checked for consistency of information, and the claims are analyzed as if it were a legal case, looking for credible testimony with cross-examination.
- There is an enormous amount of evidence for authenticity of the biblical manuscripts
- The New Testament was given by God through the act of inspiration (2 Pet 1:20-21) in the first century A.D. There are roughly 5,800 Greek manuscripts (the original language of the NT).
- The earliest textual evidence we have was copied not long after the original. In contrast:
  - Caesar's *Gallic Wars* was written in the first century B.C. There are only 10 manuscripts in existence. The earliest textual evidence we have was copied 1,000 years after the original.
  - Aristotle's *Poetics* was written in the fourth century B.C. There are only 5 manuscripts in existence. The earliest textual evidence we have was copied 1,400 years after the original.
  - There are many more writings of the Church Fathers quoting sections of Scripture; we could reconstruct the entire New Testament from their writings alone. There were millions of man-hours spent in cross-checking the manuscripts.
- To anyone's knowledge, we do not have the original NT documents (autographa). How do we know that what we have is accurate to the original?

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<sup>1</sup> Sources: The Master's Seminary NTI Course (Robert Thomas), <https://www.icr.org/bible-manuscripts>, <https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/what-is-the-most-recent-manuscript-count-for-the-new-testament>

- Determine the textual variant
  - By comparing each of the manuscripts
  - Where there are differences, the earliest manuscripts are typically taken
- External evidence is evaluated
  - The date of the witness
  - The geographical distribution
  - The genealogical relationship of texts and families of witnesses
- Internal evidence involving two kinds of probabilities
  - Transcriptional probabilities are determined by paleography details and the habits of scribes
    - A more difficult reading to be preferred (because a scribe would tend to smooth it out)
    - Shorter reading is to be preferred (because the tendency is not to take away, but add to)
    - The reading that stands in verbal dissidence with the other is to be preferred
    - Scribes would sometimes replace an unfamiliar word with a familiar word
  - Intrinsic probabilities consider what the author was more likely to have written
    - Style, vocabulary, and theology
    - Immediate context
    - Harmony with the usage of the author elsewhere
    - Influence of the Christian community upon the formulation and transmission of the passage in question
- When the roughly 5,800 Greek NT manuscripts are compared, there is less than 1% discrepancy (words that differ). However, the discrepancies do not concern any significant doctrinal issue (e.g. the deity of Christ, justification by faith alone, the reality of heaven and hell, the return of Jesus Christ).
  - For example, in P<sup>75</sup>, Luke 8:21 reads αὐτον instead of αὐτους (context: “answering him” instead of “them”)

1. NT Papyri (See Bruce Metzger and Bart Ehrman's book, *Text of the NT*)
  - "Text of the NT" – Metzger: not an inerrantist, would allow for some NT miracles. Ehrman: liberal
  - Between 5000 & 6000 total Greek mss
    - Scholars use different sources, such as the Leuven Database or the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts.
    - One recent estimate puts it at over 5800.  
(<https://seanmcdowell.org/blog/what-is-the-most-recent-manuscript-count-for-the-new-testament>)
    - Many Greek manuscripts and texts can be viewed at:  
<https://www.csntm.org/>
    - The Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts

### Various Greek Texts

a. P<sup>47</sup>



([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus\\_47#/media/File:Papyrus\\_47\\_Rev\\_13,16-14.4.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus_47#/media/File:Papyrus_47_Rev_13,16-14.4.jpg))

Middle or latter part of 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

Revelation, estimated to have been 32 leaves in length, though only 9:10-17:2 remains. More often agrees w/ Sinaiticus though some independence.

Revelation is completed by the church Fathers quotations and Sinaiticus (4<sup>th</sup> century).

b. P<sup>52</sup>

Contains portions of John 18:31-33, 37-38 on papyri about 3.5 x 2.5 in

Dates from AD 100-150

Likely originally discovered in Egypt at a rich archaeological site, Oxyrhynchus (about 100 mi south of Cairo). Many ancient manuscripts from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century have been discovered here.

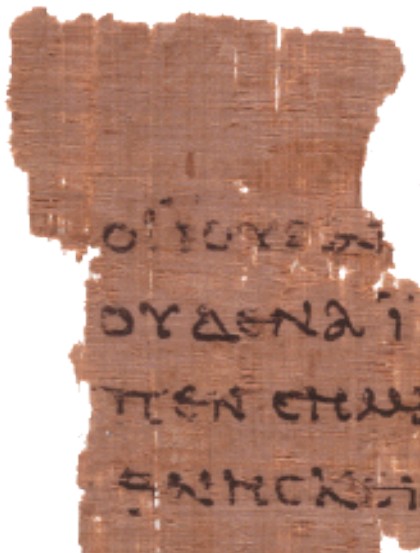
Now located in Manchester at the John Rylands University Library

Forced liberals to revise their view of Gospel of John

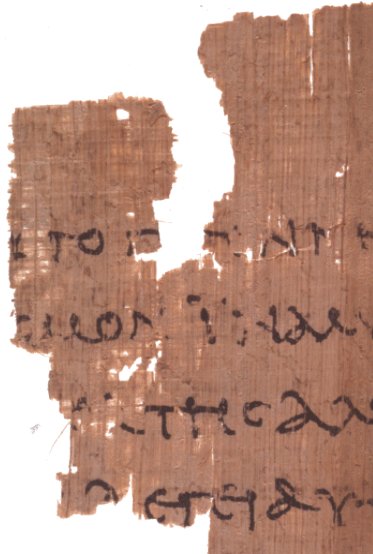
NT criticism and Ferdinand Christian Baur argued for a writing of John in AD 160. This papyri refutes that due to the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, thus, approximately 100-150 (later discovery discounts an earlier theory)

Remarkable: John's Gospel likely written in Ephesus, yet this mss discovered in Egypt south of Cairo (roughly 1500mi)

<http://rylibweb.man.ac.uk/data1/dg/text/fragment.htm>



P<sup>52</sup> – John 18:31-33 (recto – right hand of open book)



P<sup>52</sup> – John 18:37-38 (verso – left hand)

c. P<sup>66</sup>



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus\\_66#/media/File:Papyrus66.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus_66#/media/File:Papyrus66.jpg)

Gospel of John, AD 200

The manuscript was found in 1952 at Jabal Abu Mana near Dishna (Egypt).

The manuscript contains John 1:1-6:11, 6:35b-14:26, 29-30; 15:2-26; 16:2-4, 6-7; 16:10-20:20, 22-23; 20:25-21:9, 12, 17. It is one of the oldest well-preserved New Testament manuscripts known to exist.

Alexandrian text family

Does not contain John 7:53-8:11

d. P<sup>72</sup>



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus\\_72#/media/File:Papyrus\\_Bodmer\\_VIII.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus_72#/media/File:Papyrus_Bodmer_VIII.jpg)

3<sup>rd</sup> century

Jude, 1 & 2 Peter, very valuable establishing original text of these texts

Earliest known copies of Jude, 1 & 2 Peter

e. P<sup>74</sup>

Later text, 7<sup>th</sup> century.

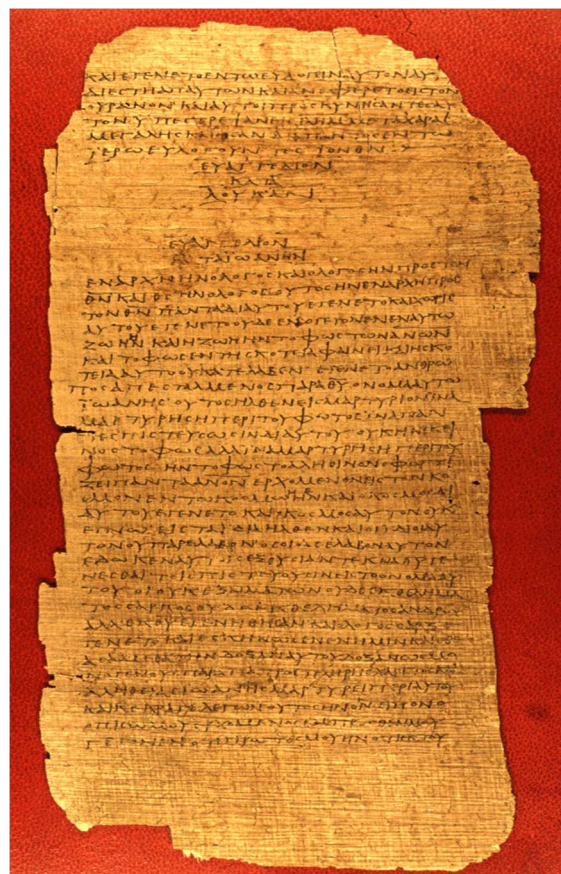
Published in 1961. valuable b/c type of text – Alexandrian text type.

Voluminous: acts, James, 1, 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3, John, Jude. Ps 33, 34, and other non-canonical texts thus you cannot do much arguing for canonicity from it.





f. P<sup>75</sup>



Luke & John

between 175 & 225 AD

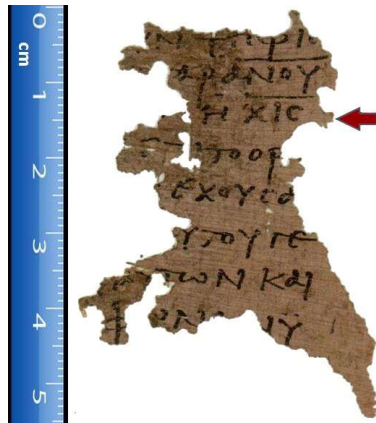
Likely discovered in the 1950s

Contained roughly 144 pages of which 102 exist

Very similar to Codex Vaticanus (AD 350)

Similarity of 2 indicates they had common mother text.

g. P<sup>115</sup>



Fragmentary text of Revelation

26 fragments from 9 different pages, may have included other text

Paleographically (date documents by their handwriting) – late 3<sup>rd</sup> or early 4<sup>th</sup> century (225-275 AD)

It is older than Sinaiticus but not older than P<sup>47</sup>

Rev. 13:18 – instead of “666,” has “616,” which is easier to argue for Nero

## 2. Codex

a. Ⲛ





Matt. 6:4-32

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex\\_Sinaiticus#/media/File:Codex\\_Sinaiticus\\_Matthew\\_6,4-32.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Sinaiticus#/media/File:Codex_Sinaiticus_Matthew_6,4-32.JPG)

Codex Sinaiticus, middle 4<sup>th</sup> century (AD 350)

Entire NT, much of the OT

Discovered at Saint Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai Peninsula 1844

Perhaps one of the 50 Bibles decreed by Constantine in 331 AD (with the help of Eusebius), but not certain

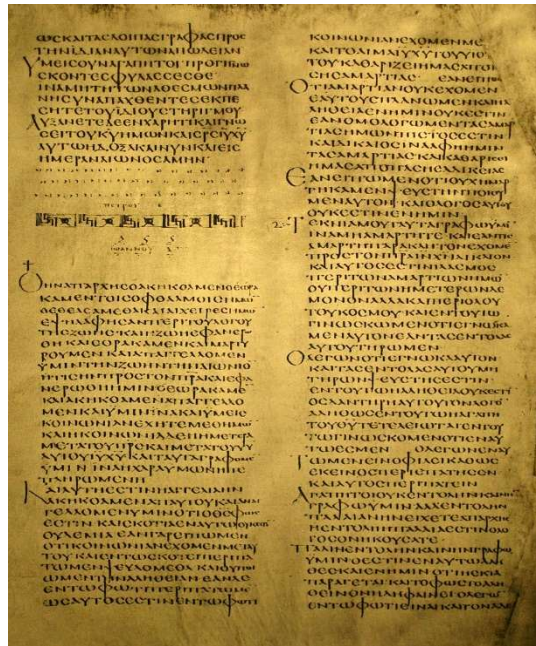
Entire NT, much of OT. Tischendorf story (see pp. 62-65, Metzger).

Due to the Tischendorf incident, it is nearly impossible to enter.

Now held in British Library in London.

Mostly Alexandrian though some Western text types. 7 editors. See <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/themes/asianafricanman/codex.html>

b. A



End of 2 Peter, beginning of 1 John

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex\\_Alexandrinus#/media/File:End\\_of\\_2\\_Peter\\_and\\_Beginning\\_of\\_1\\_John\\_in\\_Alexandrinus.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Alexandrinus#/media/File:End_of_2_Peter_and_Beginning_of_1_John_in_Alexandrinus.JPG)

Codex Alexandrinus

Mid-5<sup>th</sup> century, both testaments

Byzantine in gospels

Some of best manuscript of Revelation.

c. B



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex\\_Vaticanus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Vaticanus)

## Codex Vaticanus

Dates from middle 4<sup>th</sup> century, excellent quality (accuracy)

Small and delicate majuscules. Originated likely in Egypt, has been in Vatican library since at least 1481, though for many years Vatican authorities would let no one look at it.

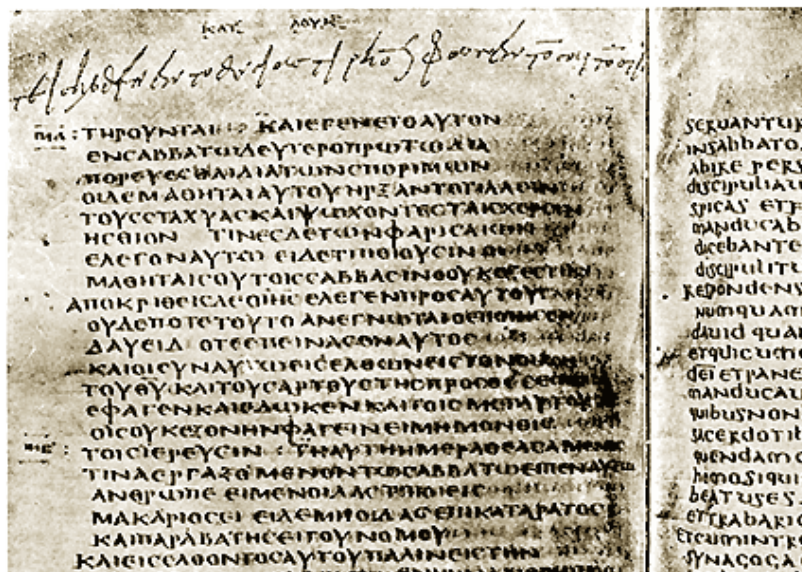
Napoleon took it to Paris for a short time, but by public sentiment, he returned it to Rome in 1815.

Tischendorf was allowed to study it for 6 hours, and again for 42 hours in 1866 and might have been allowed to stay longer. He said he wouldn't copy it, but when the guard looked at him, he was copying. He was a great manuscripter, but perhaps not the best ethics. Best representation of Alexandrian type for gospels, acts, and some Paul (though some western readings).

## d. D - 05

### Codex Bezae

Origin unknown, located at University of Cambridge. Bilingual. Greek on one side, Latin on the other. 4 gospels, Acts, 3<sup>rd</sup> John. Earliest and best witness to Western text type. Assigned to 5<sup>th</sup> century.





- e. D – Codex Claramontanus – belonged to Bezae at one time. Only Pauline epistles, bilingual, from 6<sup>th</sup> century. Leading Western authority for Greek text of epistles.

### 3. Minuscule Manuscripts

- a. Came into use 10<sup>th</sup> century. Letter smaller allowing greater speed
- b. Extremely numerous, nearly 3000. W/ lectionaries, almost 6000.
- c. 2 Families
  - i. Family 1 & 13 – take us back to type of text current in Caesarea.
    - 1. Family 1: 4 manuscripts, 12-14<sup>th</sup> century, important b/c witness to Caesarean text type
    - 2. 13: closely related in variants, which is what usually characterizes a family. Copied between 11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century. John 7:53-8:11 in Luke in every text. Caesarean text type.
    - 3. Manuscript 32 – queen of cursive, entire NT except Rev. 9<sup>th</sup> century, good representative of Alexandrian. Alex. Started dwindling after early centuries of 1<sup>st</sup> millennium.
    - 4. #61 – entire NT, early 16<sup>th</sup> century. 1<sup>st</sup> Greek mss having passage of 3 witnesses in 1 John 5:7-8. Rival projects (Erasmus in Great Britain and Spanish scholars in Spain, all under the hospices of RCC). Erasmus finished first. Spanish group tried to persuade Erasmus to put 1 John 5:7-8, but he refused pending an early Greek witness. Therefore, this Spanish group produced a group w/ 1 John 5:7-8. This text is in no Greek mss, only in Latin/RCC. They produced a handwritten mss.

### 4. Other Versions

- a. Syriac – likely in existence by 150.
  - i. Disadvantages: No tenses in Syriac language
  - ii. Christianity came to Antioch & Syria very early. Antioch almost 2<sup>nd</sup> capital in Roman Empire.
  - iii. Was Syriac NT by AD 150.
  - iv. Several versions
    - 1. Diatessaron written by Tatian. Harmony of gospels. Assyrian by birth, Greek by culture. Leader in Syrian church. Harmony 1<sup>st</sup> written in Greek then translated into Syriac. Circulated in Syria until 4<sup>th</sup> century. Presently, only have 2 Arabic mss from 11<sup>th</sup> century. Western text type.

2. Old Syriac Version – Curatonian. Discovered in 19<sup>th</sup> century. Translation of NT. A bit earlier than Diatessaron. Couldn't have a harmony before individuals. Known in 2 forms – Sinaitic (4<sup>th</sup> century), discovered in St. Catherine's monastery. Was a polempsist (written over). Wouldn't let it go b/c of Tischendorf's. Usually classified as Western text type.
  - a. Curatonian Syriac – Discovered in Egypt. 5<sup>th</sup> century. Gospels, Western text type
  - b. Peshitta ("simple") – common version like our Authorized Version, the Vulgate of the Syriac language. 22 NT books except 2 Pet, 2, 3 John, Jude, Apocalypse ... don't know much of origin. Byzantine text type. Previously thought to be oldest before discovery of Old Syriacs.
  - c. Philoxinian Syriac– Peshitta revised by Polycarp. Contains 5 books not in Peshitta
  - d. Harclian Syriac – revised Philoxinian. AD 616. Extremely literal. Used 2 or 3 Greek mss, Western family (earlier type than Peshitta and Philoxinian.
  - e. Palestinian Syriac – Casarean type, 5<sup>th</sup> century. Independent of other Syriac versions.
3. Egyptian/Coptic – found its way in very early. Acts 18:24-25. Lower Egypt (northern, b/c its lower in elevation). Libraries of Alexandria contained many volumes of Greece. Egypt was a country well-suited to preserve the texts b/c of their strong literary interest. Generally agreed that some of best preserved, not perfect, come from Egypt.
  - a. Sahidic – "Upper Egypt" (Southern), 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century. Sinaiticus and Vaticanus very closely w/ some Western
  - b. Boharic – Lower/Northern Egypt. Still version of Coptic church to present day. Alexandrian and BEST of Egyptian text. AD 200-250.
4. Latin Versions: Rome was a bilingual city for several centuries (Greek used until 4<sup>th</sup> century when Eastern empire set up by Constantine, then gradually faded and used only by educated class, perhaps like Latin in earlier America). Latin was the language of state and society from a very early date.
  - a. Old Latin – designated by "IT<sup>a</sup>"
    - i. African Old Latin– earlier, Tertullian (2<sup>nd</sup> century father) and Cyprian



1. Bobiensis or “k” – AD 400, half of Matthew & Mark. Best witness. Paleographical marks show was copied from 2<sup>nd</sup> century papyrus
- ii. European Old Latin – grew out of African. 3<sup>rd</sup> century.
  1. Vercullensis or “a” . next to k, most important of Old Latin
- b. Latin Vulgate – many diff versions floating around. Damasus (not pope) maybe a Bishop, commissioned Sophronius Eusebius Hieronymus (Jerome) to revise the Latin Bible. Consulted Alexandrian Greek text. 386 AD. Vulgate is more Alexandrian than Old Latin but it is still considered Western. Much opposition. His work did not gain supremacy until 9<sup>th</sup> century, and received the name Vulgate at Council of Trent in 1546.
  - i. Codex Amiatinus – whole Bible, 7<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> century, given as a gift to the 1<sup>st</sup> pope, Gregory in AD 716.
- v. How did Western type get into Syria (in the East), for would expect Casaerean type?
  1. Perhaps Tatian’s influence. He was saved in Rome under ministry of Justin Martyr. Took the text back to Syria
- b. Coptic – AD 200. Can learn a lot about early Greek NT by these mss. No greek voice. Important in Egypt
  - i.
- c. Latin Vulgate – approx. 8000 mss. No article
- d. Need to use text criticism to determine what was written in each version – don’t know what was originally written
- e. Often translator had fair knowledge of Greek.

Excursus:

1. The problem of the canon
  - a. Tests of Canonicity
    - i. Why were some recognized as canonical and not others? Three tests/considerations to accept and reject certain books. They relate to the early church

1. Test of Authorship: some say author must have been an apostle Eliminates Shepherd of Hermas. But not all NT books were written by an apostle. Christ was only one whom could appoint apostles; limited # w/ the gift of apostleship (Mark, Luke, Acts, Hebrews, James, Jude not authored by an apostle). Written by someone close to an apostle, then could classify as canonical book. Mark wrote under guidance of Peter. James & Jude – half brothers of Jesus. Luke – close to Paul; traveling and ministry companion. Luke, Mark, James, & Jude likely had gift of prophecy. Even this not enough b/c nobody knows who wrote Hebrews. Only book earned canonicity strictly by content.
2. Test of Universal Christian Acceptance: basis for limiting a # of books. Were they used everywhere? Some letters were helpful, but may have been localized, with specific instructions for a church.
3. Test of Inspiration: 2 Tim 3:16-17 applies here. What is given by inspiration of God for permanent value for the church = Scripture.
  - a. How is inspiration demonstrated? 3 ways:
    - i. Intrinsic Content- central subject must be the person and work of Jesus Christ. Gospels are biographical. Acts – historic effects of his person. Epistles – practical teaching from considering him. Revelation – the future of his person.
      1. Unique – certain distinctive characteristics. Precision of narrative and depth of teaching are not matched in other letters, nor in degree in concentration on person of Christ. i.e. Gospel of Thomas: apocryphal writing/Gnostic gospel. When Jesus, as a boy was helping his father in the carpentry shop, when his father cut a board too short b/c they didn't have money to waste lumber. The boy Jesus reached over and stretched it to its

proper length. What was the purpose of this? Magical acts like this generally characterize apocryphal writings.

2. Outside the NT – no natural reason why literature about Jesus would have survived just as literature about false Messiah's in Christ's day died out. In eyes of contemporaries he meant no more than others. Existence and survival.

- ii. Moral and Spiritual Effect – all literature influences human thought to some extent but there is nothing like the NT that transforms human thought. Has proven itself through the centuries to win people. Voltaire was wrong – speaking in 1700's, "the Bible shall be obsolete in 100 years..." 1 Pet 1.

- iii. Historic Testimony of the Christian Church: from the 4<sup>th</sup> century to present there has been no material significantly contested in the canon though Christianity has been attacked in every other possible way.

1. Jesus Seminar: the 2 primary documents of Christianity are the Gospel of Thomas and Q.

## 2. The Close of the Canon

### a. Reasons

- i. Jude 3 – "faith once for all delivered to the saints." Refers to a body of truth – God's intention to communicate a body of truth. Jude written about AD 72.

- ii. Rev 22:18-19

1. Pronouncement of additional plagues on those who add to or take away from words of the prophecy of this book. Primarily, speaks of Revelation itself. But when you examine the nature of Revelation, it is a prophecy. What span does it cover? Time of John the Apostle to the eternal state, thus,

anyone that adds a prophecy to what is found in the book of Revelation is dooming themselves to additional curses and plagues.

2. This is a statement from Deut. 4. Various Jewish writers make a similar statement later on in reference towards the OT.
  3. Indicates a termination of the gift of prophecy with the death of the apostle John. 2 witnesses from Revelation – We're talking about to the body of Christ.
- iii. Theological Reason: he will not only provide for the writing of Scripture but also the collection, recognition, and preservation. This is an argument from the providence of God.