Evidence Between
Homer, Julius Caesar and Jesus Christ

*Commentarii de Bello Gallico* (English: *Commentaries on the Gallic War*) is Julius Caesar's firsthand account of the Gallic Wars from 58-49 BC, written as a third-person narrative.

The earliest extant manuscripts of the text belong to the Middle Ages. http://www.vanhamel.nl/codecs/De_bello_Gallico

There are about **46 different existing manuscripts** describing this war.

**There is more evidence for the Bible’s authenticity than for any literature of antiquity**. Textual analysis begins with **historical investigation**, beginning with the latest documents and working backward.

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 written in first century AD. There are some **20,000 manuscripts in existence**. The **earliest textual evidence we currently have was copied 100 years after the original**. In contrast:

- Caesar’s *Gallic Wars* was written in the first century BC. 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 BC. 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.

The Old Testament has been more accurately transmitted to us than any other ancient writing of comparable age. The textual evidence is greater for both the Old and New Testaments than any other historically reliable ancient document. The ancient scribes were very meticulous.

The Masoretes produced an official text between 550 AD and 1000 AD. There are other versions that confirm the accuracy of the Masoretic Text.

- Samaritan Pentateuch: 400 BC
- Septuagint Greek: 280 BC
- Dead Sea Scrolls: 0 AD
- Latin Vulgate: 400 AD

The authors of the New Testament accepted the Old Testament as authentic, confirming the traditional authors, quoting from at least 320 different passages, and confirming the supernatural events cited in the Old Testament. http://www.icr.org/bible-manuscripts/

It’s a popular Christian argument: historians have roughly 20,000 manuscripts of New Testament books, far more than any other book from ancient history. Compare that with 2000 copies of the Iliad, the second-most represented manuscript.
Consider the claim of 20,000 manuscripts. The **originals of every New Testament book were written in Greek**, but **three-quarters of these manuscripts are translations into other languages**.

We can avoid the extra layer of interpretation imposed by a translation by focusing on just the **5800 Greek manuscripts**.

Now consider when these manuscripts were written.

We have zero manuscripts from the first century and **eight from the second**. The **twelfth century has the most, with 1090 manuscripts**. The printing press was invented in the middle of the fifteenth century, which explains much of the drop on the right of the chart.

![Number of Known Greek NT Manuscripts](chart.png)

There are **one hundred manuscripts in the first four centuries**, and many of these are just tiny scraps.
Consider papyrus P52 above—yes, *that* is considered a “manuscript.” It is a tiny *fragment of John just 9cm long*. It is our oldest New Testament manuscript and dates to the first half of the second century. Three more manuscripts (P90, P98, and P104) are also scraps of a similar size and date to the second half of the second century.

Another handful of manuscripts date to around AD 200. Six of them (P4, P32, P64, P66, P77, and P103) are scraps, but in this group we get our first substantial manuscripts.

P46 (part of the Chester Beatty collection) has *much of nine epistles*. P66 contains *most of John*. P75 (the Bodmer Papyrus) has a substantial fraction of *Luke and John*.

The record looks fairly good when you look at the *dates of our earliest fragments of the various books in the New Testament*—John in the second century,
Matthew and Luke around 200, Mark around 250, and so on. But, again, the emphasis should be on the word *fragment*.

Only when you get to the oldest complete (or nearly complete) texts—the Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus from the fourth century—do you get all the missing pieces.

What matters are the *earliest* copies—perhaps the hundred from first four centuries. And the hundred dwindle down to just a relevant handful of copies that are larger than scraps.

**Iliad and the Odyssey**
Homer is best known as the author of the *Iliad and the Odyssey*.

The *Iliad* is an ancient *Greek epic poem* traditionally attributed to *Homer*. Set during the *Trojan War*, the ten-year siege of the city of Troy (Ilium), by a coalition of Greek states, it tells of the battles and events during the weeks of a quarrel between King Agamemnon and the warrior Achilles, c.1200 BC.

It is unknown exactly when Homer lived. Herodotus estimates that Homer lived no more than 400 years before his own time, *which would place him at around 850 BC* or later. Pseudo-Herodotus estimates that he was born 622 years before Xerxes I placed a pontoon bridge over the Hellespont in 480 BC, *which would place him at 1102 BC*, 168 years after the fall of Troy in 1270 BC.

The Iliad, written by Homer, is the second most reliable ancient writing. The Iliad was written c. 900 BC. But the earliest copy of this classic is dated 500 years afterwards c. 400 BC. There are 643 copies of this earliest writing.

Compare the New Testament, which is by far the most reliable of any ancient writing text. The New Testament was written between c. 50 AD and 95 AD. The
earliest copy we currently have (Papyrus P52 from the Book of John) was written within 100 years after the original text.

And we currently have over 100 copies within the first 400 years after the originals. There are over 5,600 Greek copies of the original Greek writings and over 19,000 additional copies in the local Syrian, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic languages totaling over 24,000 copies in the original Greek and local languages.

This is over 100 times more than the writings of the top 20 most popular authors combined, including Plato, Homer, Caesar, Aristotle, Socrates, and Pliny!