

Some Numbers Regarding the Reliability of our Scriptures

A friend asked me if I have any **numbers** regarding the reliability of the scriptures – so I did some calculations for the book of 1 John

There are 2143 Greek words in 1 John

When comparing all the available manuscripts of 1 John, there are 32 instances of variant readings

That is, there are 55 words which are 'disputed' or have at least 1 variant reading among the body of available manuscripts.

So, we could say that $(2143-55)/2143 = \mathbf{97.4\%}$ of 1 John is consistent across all the manuscripts.

Further, each variant is given a rating from A to D by a committee of scholars which corresponds to the uncertainty about the various options. That is, sometimes it's obvious which is the original reading of two variant options. These are rated 'A'. Specifically, 'A' indicates that the choice is certain. 'B' indicates that the choice is almost certain. 'C' indicates that the committee had difficulty in deciding on the variant to choose. 'D' indicates that the committee had great difficulty in arriving at a decision.

So, in 1 John, there are 0 variant options classified as a 'D', and 5 with a 'C' classification (these are- 2:6 [the Greek word for 'therefore' is omitted in some manuscripts]; 3:13 [the Greek word for 'and' is omitted in some manuscripts], 3:19 [the Greek word for 'this' is in the dative case in some manuscripts and in the genitive case in others], 3:21 [the Greek word for 'our' in the phrase 'our hearts' is omitted in some manuscripts], 5:1 [the Greek word for 'and' is omitted in some manuscripts]). These C rated variants make up 10 Greek words.

So if we recalculate the percentage with only the variants rated C or D in uncertainty, then we get $(2143-10)/2143 = \mathbf{99.5\%}$ of 1 John which is certain or almost certainly the original reading. And as you can see, those that are uncertain are pretty inconsequential.

I've never calculated that before. Pretty interesting.

If you want to do more reading about variants I can hook you up.

Also, a very interesting case study of an 'A' rated variant is in 1 John 5:7-8. See if you can compare an NIV with a NKJV! I'd love to chat this one thru.

Anyway, enjoy.

Alex.