

Intro:

Our lesson is called “Methods of Textual Criticism” There are four points and one section of “Concluding Observations”. We will deal with the first two points today.

Textual criticism: (1) “the scholarly study of manuscripts, esp of the Bible, in an effort to establish the original text”¹

(2) “the technique of restoring texts as nearly as possible to their original form. Texts in this connection are defined as writings other than formal documents, inscribed or printed on paper, parchment, papyrus, or similar materials.”²

I. The Wealth of Material**A. New Testament Manuscripts**

1. More than 1400 Greek manuscripts of the gospels, about 40 more than 1000 years old
2. 1300 lectionaries
3. 15 versions in ancient languages (including more than 8000 copies of the Vulgate)
4. Multitudes of quotes from the Church fathers
5. Oldest fragment dated about AD 125, only about 50 years **MAXIMUM** from the originals
6. Oldest almost complete manuscripts: about AD 300, only 225 years (approx) from originals

¹ textual criticism. Dictionary.com. *Collins English Dictionary - Complete and Unabridged 10th Edition* (HarperCollins Publishers, n.d.) [http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/textual criticism](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/textual%20criticism) (accessed: June 15, 2013).

² textual criticism. Dictionary.com. *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., n.d.) [http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/textual criticism](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/textual%20criticism) (accessed: June 15, 2013).

B. Compare the paucity of material for other ancient books

Author	When Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	No. of Copies
Caesar	100-44 BC	AD 900	<u>1000</u> yrs	<u>10</u>
Livy	59BC - AD 17			<u>20</u>
Plato (Tetralogies)	427-347 BC	AD 900	<u>1200</u> yrs	<u>7</u>
Tacitus (Annals)	AD 100	AD 1,100	<u>1000</u> yrs	<u>20</u>
also minor works	AD 100	AD 1000	<u>900</u> yrs	<u>1</u>
Pliny the Younger (History)	AD 61-113	AD 850	<u>750</u> yrs	<u>7</u>
Thucydides	460 - 400 BC	AD 900	<u>1300</u> yrs	<u>8</u>
Suetonius (De Vita Caesarum)	AD 75-160	AD 950	<u>800</u> yrs	<u>8</u>
Herodotus (History)	480 - 425 BC	AD 900	<u>1300</u> yrs	<u>8</u>
Sophocles	496 - 406 BC	AD 1,000	<u>1400</u> yrs	<u>100</u>
Lucretius	d. 55or 53 BC	AD 1,050	<u>1100</u> yrs	<u>2</u>
Catullus	54 BC	AD 1,550	<u>1600</u> yrs	<u>3</u>
Euripedes	480 - 406 BC	AD 1,100	<u>1500</u> yrs	<u>9</u>
Demosthenes	383 - 322 BC	AD 1,100	<u>1300</u> yrs	<u>200</u> (all copies of same original)
Aristotle	384 - 322 BC	AD 1,100	<u>1400</u> yrs	<u>5</u> (of any one work)
Aristophanes	450 - 385 BC	AD 900	<u>1200</u> yrs	<u>10</u>

Source: Josh McDowell, *Evidence...*³

³ Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, vol. 1 (Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1992), 43.

C. Certainty of text:

Given the wealth of materials available to textual critics of the New Testament, we can say that we have 100% of the originals exactly as they were written contained within the various copies.

1. However, no one copy is exactly correct.
2. No two major manuscripts agree completely. (Some fragments, obviously, would agree completely with one or more manuscripts.)
3. No English translation is 100% correct. Some are very, very good (99.9% perfect), some are very poor, none are without some error.

II. Types of Evidence

A. External evidence examines:

1. External facts about individual documents (location found, estimated date of mss., type of ink, writing material, style of writing)
2. Similarities with other documents that create large “groups” of documents
3. Identifiable peculiarities that indicate a “family” relationship between documents

B. Internal evidence examines:

1. Variant probability analysis: how likely is the development of each variation?
2. Original author's point of view, content, use of words, similar phrases, etc.
3. The scribe's point of view – revealed by marginal notes, similarities of copying errors, etc.