

## Intro:

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

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

(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.”<sup>2</sup>

## I. The Wealth of Material

## II. Types of Evidence

## III. Working with External Evidence

### A. General Principles of Use

1. Compares style of writing
2. Compares location of manuscript
3. Notes relationship to other manuscripts
4. Notes number and quality of manuscripts containing a reading
5. And... many other external factors about the manuscripts themselves
6. Key Benefit: more objective than internal evidence

### B. Limitations of External Evidence

1. One has to sift the weight of each type of external evidence

Example: the number of manuscripts in favor of a reading is not necessarily conclusive

2. Some subjectivity: weight of external evidence influenced by internal factors
  - a. Example: ‘purity’ of a reading relies on subjective factors:

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<sup>1</sup> 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).

<sup>2</sup> 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).

- 1) Internal evidence of purity of transcription
  - 2) Internal evidence of 'sense' of the passage
- b. Example: age of manuscript
- 1) Internal evidence
    - a) Compare readings with the early versions
    - b) Compare readings with the quotes of the Fathers
  - 2) Added to external factors, 'weighting' for date is assigned to a manuscript
  - 3) On dates, however, there appear to be few disputes about any particular manuscript

#### IV. Working with Internal Evidence

##### A. Unintentional errors of the eye

1. Caused by similarity of some Greek letters:  $\theta$  vs.  $\omicron$ , for example
2. Variety of abbreviations used:  $\theta\upsilon$  for  $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ , for example
3. Uncial issues: no spaces between words can cause misreadings
4. Identical/similar clauses in close proximity might cause copyist to miss words
5. Words written twice

##### B. Other unintentional errors

1. Ear: copying in a 'scriptorium', head scribe reads text, copyists may misspell
2. Memory: Use of a synonym or different word order because of familiarity with the text or similar texts

Example: Jesus Christ vs. Christ Jesus

3. Judgement: Scribes sometimes introduced marginal notes into the text itself
4. Speech: Scribes sometimes tended to write in their own speaking style in spite of what he was copying before him

##### C. Intentional errors

1. The 'Good' (majority)

- a. Scribe might try to “correct” grammar or linguistics to clear up supposed inaccuracies
  - b. Harmonistic corruptions, especially in the Gospels, scribes might try to make the events recorded to more easily appear to agree
2. The Bad: doctrinal
- a. Change text to fit view of scribe
  - b. Sometimes heretics charged with this offense
  - c. Wealth of evidence aids detection

D. Weighting Evidence: Rules of textual criticism

1. Prefer the reading which best explains the others
2. Accept the more difficult reading (scribes tended to simplify rather than complicate)
3. Shorter reading generally accepted
4. Adopt reading most characteristic of the author
5. Discount readings peculiar to a particular scribe

E. Examining authorial style

1. This method “seeks to determine which reading makes the best sense in the context and is most in harmony with the author’s known style and habits of speech.” Thiessen, p. 77
2. Must carefully and comprehensively study the author
3. Very subjective, must not allow what the student wants the text to say to override judgement