

In yesterday's post I mentioned some of the kinds of "**external**" evidence that textual scholars look at when trying to establish the "original" text of a document (that is, the wording of the text as the author originally wrote it) when different manuscripts have different wordings for this or that passage. In this post I'll talk about one kind of "**internal**" evidence that is used to assist in making this kind of decision. With internal evidence, instead of looking at what the *attestation* of a passage is in the surviving witnesses (i.e., manuscripts of various kinds) you look at the passage itself, to see what about it can suggest which of the different ways of wording it is probably the "original" and which are the changes made by scribes.

There are two kinds of internal evidence that are usually called (1) intrinsic probabilities and (2) transcriptional probabilities. For now, I'll focus on the first.

Intrinsic probabilities involve determining which of two (or more) forms of the text found in the manuscripts is the one that the author himself was more likely to have written. Suppose you have a verse worded in two different ways. If one of the ways uses the vocabulary and the writing style found elsewhere in the author, and presents ideas that he otherwise attests, whereas the other way includes words and grammatical constructions and ideas that are alien to the author, then the first is obviously more likely (though not certainly) the thing he wrote.

To determine such things requires the critic to have an intimate knowledge of the author's work - his vocabulary, grammatical style, and theology (ideas). And that requires exegesis - the literary interpretation of the author's work. That's why to be a decent textual critic a scholar has to be expert in exegesis.

I'll give just one example. The first article I ever published...

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