

INTRODUCTION TO
THE NEW TESTAMENT
IN THE ORIGINAL GREEK

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WITH NOTES ON SELECTED READINGS

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With Notes on Selected Readings

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INTRODUCTION

1. THIS edition is an attempt to present exactly the original words of the New Testament, so far as they can now be determined from surviving documents. Since the testimony delivered by the several documents or witnesses is full of complex variation, the original text cannot be elicited from it without the use of criticism, that is, of a process of distinguishing and setting aside those readings which have originated at some link in the chain of transmission. This Introduction is intended to be a succinct account (i) of the reasons why criticism is still necessary for the text of the New Testament; (ii) of what we hold to be the true grounds and methods of criticism generally; (iii) of the leading facts in the documentary history of the New Testament which appear to us to supply the textual critic with secure guidance; and (iv) of the manner in which we have ourselves endeavoured to embody the results of criticism in the present text.

2. The office of textual criticism, it cannot be too clearly understood at the outset, is always secondary and always negative. It is always secondary, since it comes into

play only where the text transmitted by the existing documents appears to be in error, either because they differ from each other in what they read, or for some other sufficient reason. With regard to the great bulk of the words of the New Testament, as of most other ancient writings, there is no variation or other ground of doubt, and therefore no room for textual criticism; and here therefore an editor is merely a transcriber. The same may be said with substantial truth respecting those various readings which have never been received, and in all probability never will be received, into any printed text. The proportion of words virtually accepted on all hands as raised above doubt is very great, not less, on a rough computation, than seven eighths of the whole. The remaining eighth therefore, formed in great part by changes of order and other comparative trivialities, constitutes the whole area of criticism. If the principles followed in the present edition are sound, this area may be very greatly reduced. Recognising to the full the duty of abstinence from peremptory decision in cases where the evidence leaves the judgement in suspense between two or more readings, we find that, setting aside differences of orthography, the words in our opinion still subject to doubt only make up about one sixtieth of the whole New Testament. In this second estimate the proportion of comparatively trivial variations is beyond measure larger than in the former; so that the amount of what can in any sense be called substantial variation is but a small fraction of the whole residuary variation, and can hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text. Since there is reason to suspect that an exaggerated impression prevails as to the extent of possible textual corruption in the New Testament, which might seem to be confirmed by language

used here and there in the following pages, we desire to make it clearly understood beforehand how much of the New Testament stands in no need of a textual critic's labours.

3. Again, textual criticism is always negative, because its final aim is virtually nothing more than the detection and rejection of error. Its progress consists not in the growing perfection of an ideal in the future, but in approximation towards complete ascertainment of definite facts of the past, that is, towards recovering an exact copy of what was actually written on parchment or papyrus by the author of the book or his amanuensis. Had all intervening transcriptions been perfectly accurate, there could be no error and no variation in existing documents. Where there is variation, there must be error in at least all variants but one; and the primary work of textual criticism is merely to discriminate the erroneous variants from the true.

4. In the case indeed of many ill preserved ancient writings textual criticism has a further and a much more difficult task, that of detecting and removing corruptions affecting the whole of the existing documentary evidence. But in the New Testament the abundance, variety, and comparative excellence of the documents confines this task of pure 'emendation' within so narrow limits that we may leave it out of sight for the present, and confine our attention to that principal operation of textual criticism which is required whenever we have to decide between the conflicting evidence of various documents.

PART I

THE NEED OF CRITICISM FOR THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

5. The answer to the question why criticism is still necessary for the text of the New Testament is contained in the history of its transmission, first by writing and then by printing, to the present time. For our purpose it will be enough to recapitulate first in general terms the elementary phenomena of transmission by writing generally, with some of the special conditions affecting the New Testament, and then the chief incidents in the history of the New Testament as a printed book which have determined the form in which it appears in existing editions. For fuller particulars, on this and other subjects not needing to be treated at any length here, we must refer the reader once for all to books that are professedly storehouses of information.

A. 6—14. *Transmission by writing*

6. No autograph of any book of the New Testament is known or believed to be still in existence. The originals must have been early lost, for they are mentioned by no ecclesiastical writer, although there were many motives for appealing to them, had they been forthcoming, in the second and third centuries: one or two passages have sometimes been supposed to refer to them, but certainly by a misinterpretation. The books of the New Testament have had to share the fate of other ancient writings in being copied again and again

during more than fourteen centuries down to the invention of printing and its application to Greek literature.

7. Every transcription of any kind of writing involves the chance of the introduction of some errors : and even if the transcript is revised by comparison with its exemplar or immediate original, there is no absolute security that all the errors will be corrected. When the transcript becomes itself the parent of other copies, one or more, its errors are for the most part reproduced. Those only are likely to be removed which at once strike the eye of a transcriber as mere blunders destructive of sense, and even in these cases he will often go astray in making what seems to him the obvious correction. In addition to inherited deviations from the original, each fresh transcript is liable to contain fresh errors, to be transmitted in like manner to its own descendants.

8. The nature and amount of the corruption of text thus generated and propagated depends to a great extent on the peculiarities of the book itself, the estimation in which it is held, and the uses to which it is applied. The rate cannot always be uniform : the professional training of scribes can rarely obliterate individual differences of accuracy and conscientiousness, and moreover the current standard of exactness will vary at different times and places and in different grades of cultivation. The number of transcriptions, and consequent opportunities of corruption, cannot be accurately measured by difference of date, for at any date a transcript might be made either from a contemporary manuscript or from one written any number of centuries before. But these inequalities do not render it less true that repeated transcription involves multiplication of error ; and the consequent presumption that a relatively late text is likely to be a relatively corrupt text

is found true on the application of all available tests in an overwhelming proportion of the extant MSS in which ancient literature has been preserved.

9. This general proposition respecting the average results of transcription requires to be at once qualified and extended by the statement of certain more limited conditions of transmission with which the New Testament is specially though by no means exclusively concerned. Their full bearing will not be apparent till they have been explained in some detail further on, but for the sake of clearness they must be mentioned here.

10. The act of transcription may under different circumstances involve different processes. In strictness it is the exact reproduction of a given series of words in a given order. Where this purpose is distinctly recognised or assumed, there can be no errors but those of workmanship, 'clerical errors', as they are called; and by sedulous cultivation, under the pressure of religious, literary, or professional motives, a high standard of immunity from even clerical errors has at times been attained. On the other hand, pure clerical errors, that is, mechanical confusions of ear or eye alone, pass imperceptibly into errors due to unconscious mental action, as any one may ascertain by registering and analysing his own mistakes in transcription; so that it is quite possible to intend nothing but faithful transcription, and yet to introduce changes due to interpretation of sense. Now, as these hidden intrusions of mental action are specially capable of being restrained by conscious vigilance, so on the other hand they are liable to multiply spontaneously where there is no distinct perception that a transcriber's duty is to transcribe and nothing more; and this perception is rarer and more dependent on

training than might be supposed. In its absence unconscious passes further into conscious mental action; and thus transcription may come to include tolerably free modification of language and even rearrangement of material. Transcription of this kind need involve no deliberate preference of sense to language; the intention is still to transcribe language: but, as there is no special concentration of regard upon the language as having an intrinsic sacredness of whatever kind, the instinctive feeling for sense cooperates largely in the result.

II. It was predominantly though not exclusively under such conditions as these last that the transcription of the New Testament was carried on during the earliest centuries, as a comparison of the texts of that period proves beyond doubt. The conception of new Scriptures standing on the same footing as the Scriptures of the Old Testament was slow and unequal in its growth, more especially while the traditions of the apostolic and immediately succeeding generations still lived; and the reverence paid to the apostolic writings, even to the most highly and most widely venerated among them, was not of a kind that exacted a scrupulous jealousy as to their text as distinguished from their substance. As was to be expected, the language of the historical books was treated with more freedom than the rest: but even the Epistles, and still more the Apocalypse, bear abundant traces of a similar type of transcription. After a while changed feelings and changed circumstances put an end to the early textual laxity, and thenceforward its occurrence is altogether exceptional; so that the later corruptions are almost wholly those incident to transcription in the proper sense, errors arising from careless performance of a scribe's work, not from an imperfect conception of it.

While therefore the greater literalness of later transcription arrested for the most part the progress of the bolder forms of alteration, on the other hand it could perpetuate only what it received. As witnesses to the apostolic text the later texts can be valuable or otherwise only according as their parent texts had or had not passed comparatively unscathed through the earlier times.

12. Again, in books widely read transmission ceases after a while to retain exclusively the form of diverging ramification. Manuscripts are written in which there is an eclectic fusion of the texts of different exemplars, either by the simultaneous use of more than one at the time of transcription, or by the incorporation of various readings noted in the margin of a single exemplar from other copies, or by a scribe's conscious or unconscious recollections of a text differing from that which lies before him. This mixture, as it may be conveniently called, of texts previously independent has taken place on a large scale in the New Testament. Within narrow geographical areas it was doubtless at work from a very early time, and it would naturally extend itself with the increase of communication between distant churches. There is reason to suspect that its greatest activity on a large scale began in the second half of the third century, the interval of peace between Gallienus's edict of toleration and the outbreak of the last persecution. At all events it was in full operation in the fourth century, the time which from various causes exercised the chief influence over the many centuries of comparatively simple transmission that followed.

13. The gain or loss to the intrinsic purity of texts from mixture with other texts is from the nature of the

case indeterminable. In most instances there would be both gain and loss ; but both would be fortuitous, and they might bear to each other every conceivable proportion. Textual purity, as far as can be judged from the extant literature, attracted hardly any interest. There is no evidence to shew that care was generally taken to choose out for transcription the exemplars having the highest claims to be regarded as authentic, if indeed the requisite knowledge and skill were forthcoming. Humanly speaking, the only influence which can have interfered to an appreciable extent with mere chance and convenience in the selection between existing readings, or in the combination of them, was supplied by the preferences of untrained popular taste, always an unsafe guide in the discrimination of relative originality of text. The complexity introduced into the transmission of ancient texts by mixture needs no comment. Where the mixture has been accompanied or preceded by such licence in transcription as we find in the New Testament, the complexity can evidently only increase the precariousness of printed texts formed without taking account of the variations of text which preceded mixture.

14. Various causes have interfered both with the preservation of ancient MSS and with their use as exemplars to any considerable extent. Multitudes of the MSS of the New Testament written in the first three centuries were destroyed at the beginning of the fourth, and there can be no doubt that multitudes of those written in the fourth and two following centuries met a similar fate in the various invasions of East and West. But violence was not the only agent of destruction. We know little about the external features of the MSS of the ages of

persecution: but what little we do know suggests that they were usually small, containing only single books or groups of books, and not seldom, there is reason to suspect, of comparatively coarse material; altogether shewing little similarity to the stately tomes of the early Christian empire, of which we possess specimens, and likely enough to be despised in comparison in an age which exulted in outward signs of the new order of things. Another cause of neglect at a later period was doubtless obsolescence of form. When once the separation of words had become habitual, the old continuous mode of writing would be found troublesome to the eye, and even the old 'uncial' or rounded capital letters would at length prove an obstacle to use. Had biblical manuscripts of the uncial ages been habitually treated with ordinary respect, much more invested with high authority, they could not have been so often turned into 'palimpsests', that is, had their ancient writing obliterated that the vellum might be employed for fresh writing, not always biblical. It must also be remembered that in the ordinary course of things the most recent manuscripts would at all times be the most numerous, and therefore the most generally accessible. Even if multiplication of transcripts were not always advancing, there would be a slow but continual substitution of new copies for old, partly to fill up gaps made by waste and casualties, partly by a natural impulse which could be reversed only by veneration or an archaic taste or a critical purpose. It is therefore no wonder that only a small fraction of the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament preserved to modern times were written in the uncial period, and but few of this number belong to the first five or six centuries, none

being earlier than the age of Constantine. Most uncial manuscripts are more or less fragmentary; and till lately not one was known which contained the whole New Testament unmutilated. A considerable proportion, in numbers and still more in value, have been brought to light only by the assiduous research of the last century and a half.

B. 15—18. *Transmission by printed editions*

15. These various conditions affecting the manuscript text of the New Testament must be borne in mind if we would understand what was possible to be accomplished in the early printed editions, the text of which exercises directly or indirectly a scarcely credible power to the present day. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, far more than now, the few ancient documents of the sacred text were lost in the crowd of later copies; and few even of the late MSS were employed, and that only as convenience dictated, without selection or deliberate criticism. The fundamental editions were those of Erasmus (Basel, 1516), and of Stunica in Cardinal Ximenes' Complutensian (Alcala) Polyglott, printed in 1514 but apparently not published till 1522. In his haste to be the first editor, Erasmus allowed himself to be guilty of strange carelessness: but neither he nor any other scholar then living could have produced a materially better text without enormous labour, the need of which was not as yet apparent. The numerous editions which followed during the next three or four generations varied much from one another in petty details, and occasionally adopted fresh readings from MSS, chiefly of a common

late type: but the foundation and an overwhelming proportion of the text remained always Erasmian, sometimes slightly modified on Complutensian authority; except in a few editions which had a Complutensian base. After a while this arbitrary and uncritical variation gave way to a comparative fixity equally fortuitous, having no more trustworthy basis than the external beauty of two editions brought out by famous printers, a Paris folio of 1550 edited and printed by R. Estienne, and an Elzevir (Leyden) 24mo of 1624, 1633, &c., repeating an unsatisfactory revision of Estienne's mainly Erasmian text made by the reformer Beza. The reader of the second Elzevir edition is informed that he has before him "the text now received by all"; and thus the name 'Received Text' arose. Reprints more or less accurate of one or other of these two typographical standards constitute the traditional printed text of the New Testament even now.

16. About the middle of the seventeenth century the preparation for effectual criticism began. The impulse proceeded from English scholars, such as Fell, Walton, and Mill; and seems to have originated in the gift of the Alexandrine MS to Charles I by Cyril Lucar, the Patriarch of Constantinople, in 1628. France contributed a powerful auxiliary in Simon, whose writings (1689—1695) had a large share in discrediting acquiescence in the accepted texts. The history of criticism from this time could hardly be made intelligible here: it will be briefly sketched further on, when explanations have been given of the task that had to be performed, and the problems that had to be solved. In the course of the eighteenth century several imperfect and halting attempts were made, chiefly in Germany, to apply evidence

to use by substantial correction of the text. Of these the greatest and most influential proceeded from J. A. Bengel at Tübingen in 1734. In the closing years of the century, and a little later, the process was carried many steps forward by Griesbach, on a double foundation of enriched resources and deeper study, not without important help from suggestions of Semler and finally of Hug. Yet even Griesbach was content to start from the traditional or revised Erasmusian basis, rather than from the MSS in which he himself reposed most confidence.

17. A new period began in 1831, when for the first time a text was constructed directly from the ancient documents without the intervention of any printed edition, and when the first systematic attempt was made to substitute scientific method for arbitrary choice in the discrimination of various readings. In both respects the editor, Lachmann, rejoiced to declare that he was carrying out the principles and unfulfilled intentions of Bentley, as set forth in 1716 and 1720. This great advance was however marred by too narrow a selection of documents to be taken into account and too artificially rigid an employment of them, and also by too little care in obtaining precise knowledge of some of their texts: and though these defects, partly due in the first instance to the unambitious purpose of the edition, have been in different ways avoided by Lachmann's two distinguished successors, Tischendorf and Tregelles, both of whom have produced texts substantially free from the later corruptions, neither of them can be said to have dealt consistently or on the whole successfully with the difficulties presented by the variations between the most ancient texts. On the other hand, their indefatigable labours in the discovery and exhibition

of fresh evidence, aided by similar researches on the part of others, provide all who come after them with invaluable resources not available half a century ago.

18. A just appreciation of the wealth of documentary evidence now accessible as compared with that enjoyed by any previous generation, and of the comparatively late times at which much even of what is not now new became available for criticism, is indeed indispensable for any one who would understand the present position of the textual criticism of the New Testament. The gain by the knowledge of the contents of important new documents is not to be measured by the direct evidence which they themselves contribute. Evidence is valuable only so far as it can be securely interpreted; and not the least advantage conferred by new documents is the new help which they give towards the better interpretation of old documents, and of documentary relations generally. By way of supplement to the preceding brief sketch of the history of criticism, we insert the following table, which shews the dates at which the extant Greek uncials of the sixth and earlier centuries, with five others of later age but comparatively ancient text, have become available as evidence by various forms of publication. The second column marks the very imperfect publication by selections of readings; the third, tolerably full collations; the fourth, continuous texts. The manuscript known as Δ in the Gospels and as G (G_s) in St Paul's Epistles requires two separate datings, as its two parts have found their way to different libraries. In other cases a plurality of dates is given where each publication has had some distinctive importance.

(fragg. = fragments)	Select Readings	Collations	Continuous Texts
ℵ all books complete	1860		1862
B all books exc. part of Heb., Epp. Past., and Apoc.	(1580)	1788, 1799	{ (1857,) 1859, 1867, 1868
A all books		1657	1786
C fragg. of nearly all books	1710	1751, 2	1843
Q fragg. Lc. Jo.	(? 1752)		1762, 1860
T fragg. Jo. [Lc.]			1789
D Evv. Act.	1550	1657	1793, 1864
D ₂ Paul	(1582)	1657	1852
N fragg. Evv.	{ (1751) + 1773 + (1830)		1846, 1876
P fragg. Evv.	(? 1752)		1762, 1869
R fragg. Lc.			1°57
Z fragg. Mt.			1801, 1880
[Σ Mt. Mc.]	(1880)		
L Evv.	1550	1751, 1785	1846
Σ fragg. Lc.			1861
{ Δ Evv.			1836}
{ G ₃ Paul exc. Heb.		1710	+ 1791}
E ₂ Act.			1715, 1870
P ₂ all books exc. Evv.			1865 + 1869

19. The foregoing outline may suffice to shew the manner in which repeated transcription tends to multiply corruption of texts, and the subsequent mixture of independent texts to confuse alike their sound and their corrupt readings; the reasons why ancient MSS in various ages have been for the most part little preserved and little copied; the disadvantages under which the Greek text of the New Testament was first printed, from late and inferior MSS; the long neglect to take serious measures for amending it; the slow process of the accumulation and study of evidence; the late date at which any considerable number of corrections on

ancient authority were admitted into the slightly modified Erasmian texts that reigned by an accidental prescription, and the very late date at which ancient authority was allowed to furnish not scattered retouchings but the whole body of text from beginning to end; and lastly the advantage enjoyed by the present generation in the possession of a store of evidence largely augmented in amount and still more in value, as well as in the ample instruction afforded by previous criticism and previous texts.

C. 20—22. *History of this edition*

20. These facts justify, we think, another attempt to determine the original words of the Apostles and writers of the New Testament. In the spring of 1853 we were led by the perplexities of reading encountered in our own study of Scripture to project the construction of a text such as is now published. At that time a student aware of the untrustworthiness of the 'Received' texts had no other guides than Lachmann's text and the second of the four widely different texts of Tischendorf. Finding it impossible to assure ourselves that either editor placed before us such an approximation to the apostolic words as we could accept with reasonable satisfaction, we agreed to commence at once the formation of a manual text for our own use, hoping at the same time that it might be of service to others. The task proved harder than we anticipated; and eventually many years have been required for its fulfilment. Engrossing occupations of other kinds have brought repeated delays and interruptions: but the work has never been laid more than partially aside, and the intervals during which it

has been intermitted have been short. We cannot on the whole regret the lapse of time before publication. Though we have not found reason to change any of the leading views with which we began to prepare for the task, they have gained much in clearness and comprehensiveness through the long interval, especially as regards the importance which we have been led to attach to the history of transmission. It would indeed be to our shame if we had failed to learn continually.

21. The mode of procedure adopted from the first was to work out our results independently of each other, and to hold no counsel together except upon results already provisionally obtained. Such differences as then appeared, usually bearing a very small proportion to the points of immediate agreement, were discussed on paper, and where necessary repeatedly discussed, till either agreement or final difference was reached. These ultimate differences have found expression among the alternative readings. No rule of precedence has been adopted; but documentary attestation has been in most cases allowed to confer the place of honour as against internal evidence, range of attestation being further taken into account as between one well attested reading and another. This combination of completely independent operations permits us to place far more confidence in the results than either of us could have presumed to cherish had they rested on his own sole responsibility. No individual mind can ever act with perfect uniformity, or free itself completely from its own idiosyncrasies: the danger of unconscious caprice is inseparable from personal judgement. We venture to hope that the present text has escaped some risks of this kind by being the production of two editors of different habits of mind, working

independently and to a great extent on different plans, and then giving and receiving free and full criticism wherever their first conclusions had not agreed together. For the principles, arguments, and conclusions set forth in the Introduction and Appendix both editors are alike responsible. It was however for various reasons expedient that their exposition and illustration should proceed throughout from a single hand; and the writing of this volume and the other accompaniments of the text has devolved on Dr Hort.

22. It may be well to state that the kindness of our publishers has already allowed us to place successive instalments of the Greek text privately in the hands of the members of the Company of Revisers of the English New Testament, and of a few other scholars. The Gospels, with a temporary preface of 28 pages, were thus issued in July 1871, the Acts in February 1873, the Catholic Epistles in December 1873, the Pauline Epistles in February 1875, and the Apocalypse in December 1876. The work to which this provisional issue was due has afforded opportunity for renewed consideration of many details, especially on the side of interpretation; and we have been thankful to include any fresh results thus or otherwise obtained, before printing off for publication. Accordingly many corrections dealing with punctuation or otherwise of a minute kind, together with occasional modifications of reading, have been introduced into the stereotype plates within the last few months.

PART II

THE METHODS OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM

23. Every method of textual criticism corresponds to some one class of textual facts: the best criticism is that which takes account of every class of textual facts, and assigns to each method its proper use and rank. The leading principles of textual criticism are identical for all writings whatever. Differences in application arise only from differences in the amount, variety, and quality of evidence: no method is ever inapplicable except through defectiveness of evidence. The more obvious facts naturally attract attention first; and it is only at a further stage of study that any one is likely spontaneously to grasp those more fundamental facts from which textual criticism must start if it is to reach comparative certainty. We propose to follow here this natural order, according to which the higher methods will come last into view.

SECTION I. INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF READINGS

24—37

24. Criticism arises out of the question what is to be received where a text is extant in two or more varying documents. The most rudimentary form of criticism consists in dealing with each variation independently, and adopting at once in each case out of two or more variants that which looks most probable. The evidence here taken into account is commonly called 'Internal Evidence': as other kinds of Internal Evidence will have

to be mentioned, we prefer to call it more precisely 'Internal Evidence of Readings'. Internal Evidence of Readings is of two kinds, which cannot be too sharply distinguished from each other; appealing respectively to Intrinsic Probability, having reference to the author, and what may be called Transcriptional Probability, having reference to the copyists. In appealing to the first, we ask what an author is likely to have written: in appealing to the second, we ask what copyists are likely to have made him seem to write. Both these kinds of evidence are alike in the strictest sense internal, since they are alike derived exclusively from comparison of the testimony delivered, no account being taken of any relative antecedent credibility of the actual witnesses.

A. 25—27. *Intrinsic Probability*

25. The first impulse in dealing with a variation is usually to lean on Intrinsic Probability, that is, to consider which of two readings makes the best sense, and to decide between them accordingly. The decision may be made either by an immediate and as it were intuitive judgement, or by weighing cautiously various elements which go to make up what is called sense, such as conformity to grammar and congruity to the purport of the rest of the sentence and of the larger context; to which may rightly be added congruity to the usual style of the author and to his matter in other passages. The process may take the form either of simply comparing two or more rival readings under these heads, and giving the preference to that which appears to have the advantage, or of rejecting a reading absolutely, for violation of one or more of the congruities, or of adopting a reading absolutely, for perfection of congruity.

26. These considerations evidently afford reasonable presumptions; presumptions which in some cases may attain such force on the negative side as to demand the rejection or qualify the acceptance of readings most highly commended by other kinds of evidence. But the uncertainty of the decision in ordinary cases is shown by the great diversity of judgement which is actually found to exist. The value of the Intrinsic Evidence of Readings should of course be estimated by its best and most cultivated form, for the extemporaneous surmises of an ordinary untrained reader will differ widely from the range of probabilities present to the mind of a scholar prepared both by general training in the analysis of texts and by special study of the facts bearing on the particular case. But in dealing with this kind of evidence equally competent critics often arrive at contradictory conclusions as to the same variations.

27. Nor indeed are the assumptions involved in Intrinsic Evidence of Readings to be implicitly trusted. There is much literature, ancient no less than modern, in which it is needful to remember that authors are not always grammatical, or clear, or consistent, or felicitous; so that not seldom an ordinary reader finds it easy to replace a feeble or half-appropriate word or phrase by an effective substitute; and thus the best words to express an author's meaning need not in all cases be those which he actually employed. But, without attempting to determine the limits within which such causes have given occasion to any variants in the New Testament, it concerns our own purpose more to urge that in the highest literature, and notably in the Bible, all readers are peculiarly liable to the fallacy of supposing that they understand the author's meaning and purpose because they under-

stand some part or some aspect of it, which they take for the whole; and hence, in judging variations of text, they are led unawares to disparage any word or phrase which owes its selection by the author to those elements of the thought present to his mind which they have failed to perceive or to feel.

B. 28—37. *Transcriptional Probability*

28. The next step in criticism is the discovery of Transcriptional Probability, and is suggested by the reflexion that what attracts ourselves is not on the average unlikely to have attracted transcribers. If one various reading appears to ourselves to give much better sense or in some other way to excel another, the same apparent superiority may have led to the introduction of the reading in the first instance. Mere blunders apart, no motive can be thought of which could lead a scribe to introduce consciously a worse reading in place of a better. We might thus seem to be landed in the paradoxical result that intrinsic inferiority is evidence of originality.

29. In reality however, although this is the form in which the considerations that make up Transcriptional Probability are likely in the first instance to present themselves to a student feeling his way onwards beyond Intrinsic Probability, the true nature of Transcriptional Probability can hardly be understood till it is approached from another side. Transcriptional Probability is not directly or properly concerned with the relative excellence of rival readings, but merely with the relative fitness of each for explaining the existence of the others. Every rival reading contributes an element to

the problem which has to be solved; for every rival reading is a fact which has to be accounted for, and no acceptance of any one reading as original can be satisfactory which leaves any other variant incapable of being traced to some known cause or causes of variation. If a variation is binary, as it may be called, consisting of two variants, *a* and *b*, the problem for Transcriptional Probability to decide is whether it is easier to derive *b* from *a*, through causes of corruption known to exist elsewhere, on the hypothesis that *a* is original, or to derive *a* from *b*, through similar agencies, on the hypothesis that *b* is original. If the variants are more numerous, making a ternary or yet more composite variation, each in its turn must be assumed as a hypothetical original, and an endeavour made to deduce from it all the others, either independently or consecutively; after which the relative facilities of the several experimental deductions must be compared together.

30. Hence the basis on which Transcriptional Probability rests consists of generalisations as to the causes of corruption incident to the process of transcription. A few of the broadest generalisations of this kind, singling out observed proclivities of average copyists, make up the bulk of what are not very happily called 'canons of criticism'. Many causes of corruption are independent of age and language, and their prevalence may be easily verified by a careful observer every day; while others are largely modified, or even brought into existence, by peculiar circumstances of the writings themselves, or of the conditions of their transmission. There is always an abundance of variations in which no practised scholar can possibly doubt which is the original reading, and which must therefore be derivative;