

**EVALUATION OF VARIOUS READINGS
ACCORDING TO THE THEORY OF RATIONAL ECLECTICISM¹**

EVALUATION OF EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

1. **Date.** Preference should be given to the reading having the earliest attestation.
2. **Geographical Distribution.** Preference should be given to the reading having the most widespread attestation, especially as seen in the versions and fathers which can more easily be located geographically than most Greek MSS.
3. **Textual Relationships.** Alexandrian witnesses have primary value. Byzantine witnesses have minimal value.

CLASSIFICATION OF WITNESSES²

	Alexandrian (Aland I-II)	Western (Aland IV)	Unclassified (Aland III)	Byzantine (Aland V)
G	p ⁴⁵ p ⁶⁶ p ⁷⁵ ⋈ B C L	D 0171 it syr ^{s?}	A W (formerly Caes. Mk. 5:31-16:20) Z	E F G H K M N O P Q R S U V X Y
O	T-0113-0125- 0139 33 892	syr ^{c?} Diatess Ir	Δ (Θ = Aland II) Ξ Ψ 070-0110-0124-	Γ Λ Π Σ Φ Ω 063 0135 0211 <u>28</u>
S	cop ^{sa} cop ^{bo} Clem Or	Tert Cyp Ephr	0178—0179-0180- 190-0191-0193-	(Mt, Lu; Jo?) 1010 1424 (Mt,
P	Did Ath Cyr-Alex		0194-0202 0141 0233 0250 f ¹	Lu; Jo?) goth Bas Greg-Nys
E			f ¹³ <u>28</u> (Mk) <u>565</u> 579 <u>700</u> 1009 1071	Chr
L			1079 1195 1216 1230 1241 1242 1253 1344	
S			1365 1424(Mk) 1546 1646 2148 2174 syr ^p syr ^h syr ^{pal} vg <u>arm</u> <u>geo</u> eth Hip <u>Or</u> ^{pt} Meth <u>Eus</u> <u>Lcf</u> <u>Cyr-Jer</u> Hier	
A	p ⁴⁵ p ⁷⁴ ⋈ A B C 048 33	p ²⁹ p ³⁸ p ⁴⁸ D E	Ψ 88 104 181 323 326 436 629 630	H K L P 049 330 451 1241 1877
C	81 1175 1739 cop ^{sa} cop ^{ba}	0165? (614 = Aland III) it	945 1505 2495 syr ^p syr ^h syr ^{pal}	2127 2412 2492? Bas Greg-Nys
T	Clem Or Did Ath Cyr-Alex	it cop ^s 67 Ir Tert Cyp Ephr	vg arm geo eth Hip Meth Eus Lcf	Chr
S			Cyr-Jer Hier	

P	p ⁴⁶ ⋈ A B C I 048 33 81	D (F G = Aland III) it	H P Ψ 88 104 181 323 326 436 629	K L 049 goth Bas Greg-Nys
A	1175 1506 1739 1881	Ir Tert Cyp Ephr	630 1241 1877 1962 1984 1985 2492	Chr
U	2127 2464 cop ^{sa} Clem		2495 syr ^p syr ^h syr ^{pal} vg cop ^{bo}	
L	Or Did Ath Cyr-Alex		arm geo eth Hip Meth Eus Lcf Cyr-Jer Hier	
C	P ⁷² P ⁷⁴ ⋈ A B C (Ψ=Aland	it Ir Tert Cyp Ephr	H P 88 104 181 326 436 614 629 630 945	L 049 330 451 1877 2127 Bas
A	II) 33 81 323 1241 1739		1505 2412 2492 2495 syr ^p syr ^h syr ^{pal}	Greg-Nys Chr
T	1881 cop ^{sa} Clem Or Did		syr ^{ph} vg cop ^{sa} cop ^{bo} arm geo eth	
H	Ath Cyr-Alex		Eus Hip Meth Lcf Cyr-Jer Hier	
R	p ⁴⁷ ⋈ A C 1006 1611		051 94 1828 1859 2020 2030 2042	P 046 052 2138
E	1841 1854 2050 2053		2065 2073 2081 2351 2377 2432	
V	2062 2329 2344 cop ^{sa}		syr ^h syr ^{ph} it vg cop ^{sa} cop ^{bo} arm geo eth	

EVALUATION OF THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE

1. Transcriptional Probabilities, i.e. what scribes likely did when copying the N.T.

- (1) Shorter/Longer Reading. Most textual critics give preference to the shorter reading where deliberate alteration seems to be involved on the assumption that scribes were more willing to add to the text in attempting to correct it than to remove anything from it. In fact scribes seem to have had a horror of omitting anything from the Word of God as can be seen in conflate readings. The shorter reading should not be preferred if accidental omission appears to have resulted from similar endings or beginnings of words or as the result of a whole line being skipped. (Rigorous eclectics make much of the latter and usually prefer the longer reading.)
- (2) Reading Different from Parallel. Preference should be given to the reading which is different from the one in a parallel passage because scribes could not tolerate inconsistencies and contradictions and tended to harmonize parallel passages. This is often a factor in the Synoptic Gospels, Ephesians/Colossians, II Peter/Jude and where a quotation from the O.T. is involved.

- (3) More Difficult Reading. Preference should be given to the more difficult reading, i.e. difficult for ancient and medieval scribes, because scribes often attempted to eliminate difficulties from the text on the assumption that they could not be original. This criterion is especially weighty if upon a more mature reflection the difficulty can be resolved. It does not apply if the difficulty is an impossibility, because accidental errors sometimes resulted in nonsense.
- (4) Reading Which Best Explains Origin of Other(s). Preference should be given to the reading which if assumed to be the original best explains the origin of the other(s). Each reading should be tested in this way, and if only one can explain the origin of the other(s) it is highly probable that it is the original. This is probably the single most important criterion.

2. Intrinsic Probabilities, i.e. what the author himself likely wrote.

One must study each author's vocabulary, grammar, style, theological concepts, etc. and then determine if a reading is in accord with such things. A concordance is indispensable in doing this. Except perhaps in such books as Hebrews, James, and I Peter, N.T. writers are more likely to have employed semitic constructions than later scribes, and N.T. writers are more likely to have employed a Koine than an Attic construction. It is often very difficult to determine intrinsic probabilities, and it should be recognized that good writers often express themselves in different and unexpected ways. (Nevertheless, rigorous eclectics make most of their textual decisions on the basis of intrinsic probabilities alone, and they especially emphasize the originality of semitic constructions and the secondary nature of Attic ones.)

CONCLUSION

It is not often that all of the above criteria will point toward the same reading. In such cases the textual critic must weigh the probabilities and decide which criterion or criteria is or are most relevant in the particular textual problem under consideration. Doing this is the essence of rational eclecticism.

¹Taken from system prepared and used by Dr. James A. Brooks. Used by permission.

²Adapted from Metzger, Textual Commentary, xxix-xxx; and Aland, Text of the New Testament. Underline = formerly classified Caesarean. **Bold** = Aland class II.