

*Studies in the
Textual Criticism
of the New Testament*

BART D. EHRMAN

Studies in the Textual Criticism
of the New Testament

New Testament Tools and Studies

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Cover: P⁵², a fragment of the Gospel of John discovered in a trash heap in the sands of Egypt. This credit-card sized scrap is the earliest surviving manuscript of the New Testament, dating from around 125–150 c.e.

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CHRIST IN EARLY CHRISTIAN TRADITION:
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FOREWORD

Already during my college days, before I learned Greek, I developed an interest in the textual criticism of the New Testament. I had discovered that not only do we not have the “original” texts of the New Testament (we spoke unproblematically of the originals in those days), we also do not have accurate copies of the originals. For me this was both a problem to contemplate and a puzzle to solve, and I was interested in learning all that I could about it. In the late 1970s I went to Princeton Theological Seminary to study with Bruce Metzger, then the dean of the discipline in America. After completing my MDiv, I stayed on to do my PhD under Prof. Metzger’s guidance (he retired at the age of 70 while I was completing my dissertation; David R. Adams then took over as the official chair of my committee, although Prof. Metzger continued to guide me as well).

While still a PhD student I began publishing articles in the field of New Testament textual criticism, and have continued doing so, intermittently, in the twenty years since receiving my degree. The present volume, in the Brill series *New Testament Tools and Studies*, which Prof. Metzger himself started and which we now co-edit, contains a number of the articles that I have published in the field—several introductory pieces for beginners, some highly technical pieces for fellow textual critics, and some articles for scholars of early Christianity who are interested in seeing how textual criticism can be important for exegesis and for understanding the formation of Christian doctrine and the social history of the early church. The volume also includes two sets of lectures on text-critical themes, one delivered at Duke University in 1997 (and previously published in electronic form), and the other at Yale University in 2004 (previously unpublished).

A lot has happened in the field of New Testament textual criticism in the twenty-two years covered by these essays and lectures. Developments can be seen in particular (a) in the progress made by the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung in Münster, until this past year under the direction of Barbara Aland, as it has begun to publish its *editio critica maior* of the Greek New Testament; (b)

in the work of the British and North American Committees of the International Greek New Testament Project, with David M. Parker of the University of Birmingham leading the way, as they produce an apparatus of the Fourth Gospel, and (c) in the offshoots of both projects, both in terms of publications and in advances in our methods—especially as these have involved the use of computers and the presentation of a critical apparatus. Although I do not describe these recent advances in detail, many of them will be recognized as relevant to the chapters found here, as I attempt to grapple with several of the key issues in the field.

Given the nature of this collection—which includes essays written for different occasions and different contexts, but sometimes on similar themes—there will necessarily be overlap among the chapters. As a collection, they explore several important matters that have occupied me in the course of my career so far: the relationship of textual criticism to exegesis, the interconnections between the transmission of the text on the one hand and the social and theological development of early Christianity on the other, the role of the church fathers in understanding early scribal practices, and certain issues of method.

I have organized the essays, roughly, by topic. After an essay originally designed as a general introduction to the field there are several articles written early in my career on aspects of text-critical method (especially in the classification of manuscripts); there then follow two articles on the history of the text, several articles on specific textual problems (the solution of which involves significant aspects of the history of early Christianity and the transmission of its texts), three articles on the importance and use of patristic evidence for text-critical purposes, and finally the two sets of lectures mentioned above, the Kenneth W. Clark Lectures delivered at Duke University in 1997 (“Text and Transmission: The Role of New Testament Manuscripts in Early Christian Studies”); and the Shaffer Lectures delivered at Yale University in 2004 (“Christ in the Early Christian Tradition: Texts Disputed and Apocryphal”). I am grateful to both institutions for their generous invitations to deliver these lectures and the hospitality they provided me while I was with them.

I would like to thank several people who have made this volume possible: my teacher, Bruce M. Metzger, who accepted the volume in the series; Loes Schouten of E. J. Brill Publishers who handled

editorial duties connected with its publication; and Carl Cosaert, my graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, who went to inordinate lengths to prepare the manuscript for the press. Thanks are also due to Jared Anderson, also a graduate student at Chapel Hill, for preparing the indexes.

Bart D. Ehrman
June, 2005

THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT¹

None of the autographs of the NT writings survives. The texts of these works must therefore be reconstructed on the basis of surviving evidence, which comprises (a) Greek manuscripts produced in later centuries, (b) copies of ancient translations into other languages (i.e., the Versions), such as Latin and Syriac, and (c) NT quotations found in Christian authors, especially Greek and Latin. The discipline of textual criticism works to establish the wording of the text as originally produced and to determine where, when, how, and why the text came to be changed over the course of its transmission.

History of the Discipline

The roots of the discipline lay in an important confluence of events at the beginning of the 16th century. Key figures of the Protestant Reformation insisted that the words of Scripture, interpreted literally, be the sole authority for Christian faith and practice. At the same time, a resurgence of interest in ancient texts emerged among Renaissance humanists, such as Desiderius Erasmus, who in 1516 published the first printed edition of the Greek NT, just a year before Martin Luther posted his 95 theses. The Greek Testament that Erasmus produced, however, was reconstructed from late manuscripts that were incomplete (his text of Revelation lacked the final six verses, which he himself had to translate from the Latin Vulgate into Greek) and did not always agree with one another. The Reformation's insistence on the importance of the words of Scripture and the concomitant recognition that these words do not survive intact eventually drove scholars to devise methods of establishing the original text of the NT.

Only scant progress was made along these lines through the 16th and 17th centuries, which saw little more than the republication of Erasmus' edition of the text in slightly altered form. Since this basic

¹ Originally published as "The Text of the New Testament," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000, pp. 361–79. Used with permission.

form of the text became so widely used, it was eventually dubbed the Textus Receptus (TR), or Received Text. The end of the 17th century and beginning of the 18th, however, marked a significant shift, as scholars began assiduously to collect and compare manuscript copies of the NT. A milestone came in 1707, when John Mill published his *Novum Testamentum Graece*, which printed the TR but included an apparatus indicating some 30 thousand places of variation among the hundred or so Greek manuscripts, early Versions, and Patristic quotations that he had examined. The publication sparked immediate and widespread controversy, especially among those concerned about divine authority residing in a text which was evidently no longer available.

The debates that ensued brought some of the most brilliant minds and assiduous workers of the 18th and 19th centuries to bear on the problems of the text (principally in England and Germany), including such eminent names as Richard Bentley, J. A. Bengel, J. J. Wettstein, J. J. Griesbach, Karl Lachmann, Constantin von Tischendorf, B. F. Westcott, and F. J. A. Hort. Some of these scholars worked principally on collecting, analyzing, and compiling manuscript evidence for the original text (e.g., Wettstein and Tischendorf); others focused on devising methods for reconstructing the text on the basis of the surviving witnesses (Bengel, Griesbach, and esp. Westcott and Hort). Their labors have informed the discipline to this day, as evident both in methods of evaluating variant readings and in the most widely accepted form of the Greek text.

The State of the Text

Due to extensive manuscript discoveries of the 20th century, the amount of evidence available today completely dwarfs what was available to John Mill in the early 18th century, and even that known to Westcott and Hort at the end of the 19th. The official tabulation of Greek manuscripts is maintained by the Institute for New Testament Textual Research in Münster, Germany, founded by Kurt Aland and now headed by Barbara Aland. As of 1994, the Institute recorded a total of 5664 known Greek manuscripts, ranging in date from the 2nd to the 16th centuries and in size from credit-card sized fragments discovered in trash heaps in Egypt to massive tomes housed in the libraries of Europe. These are normally categorized under

four rubrics: (1) papyri manuscripts, written on papyrus in “uncial” letters (somewhat like our “capitals”); these are the oldest available witnesses, dating from the 2nd–8th centuries (99 are known at present); (2) majuscule manuscripts, also written in uncial, but on parchment or vellum; these date from 3rd–10th centuries (306 known); (3) minuscule manuscripts, written in a kind of “cursive” script, which became popular in the Middle Ages, possibly because it was faster and more convenient to write; these date from the 9th–16th centuries (2856 known); and (4) lectionary manuscripts, selections from the NT compiled for liturgical reading, whether written in uncial or minuscule script; these date from the 4th to the 16th centuries (2403 known).

In addition to these Greek witnesses are manuscripts of the early Versions of the NT; by the end of the 2nd century, the NT had already been translated into Latin (of which we have thousands of copies through the Middle Ages) and Syriac, somewhat later into Coptic, and eventually into Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, and other languages. These versions can indicate the form of the text in the time and place the translations were originally made. So too, the quotations of the church fathers can be used to reconstruct the forms of the text available to them. Such Patristic sources are particularly useful for understanding how the text was transmitted regionally, since in many instances we know exactly when and where the fathers were living.

From this mass of evidence scholars work to determine both the original form of the text and the alterations made in the course of its transmission. The difficulty of the task, in part, is that none of our primary witnesses, the Greek manuscripts, is in complete agreement with another. Sometimes the disagreements are extremely minor and of very little moment, involving such things as differences of spelling. But at times they are of supreme importance: today there is widespread agreement, e.g., that the story of the woman taken in adultery (John 7:52–8:11) was not originally part of the Fourth Gospel but was added by later scribes; the same can be said of the final 12 verses of the Gospel of Mark (Mark 16:9–20). In many instances, however, the surviving witnesses are so significantly divided that scholars cannot agree concerning the original form of the text. Did the voice at Jesus’ baptism in Luke originally say “You are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased,” or did it say “You are my son; today I have begotten you” (Luke 3:22)? In Luke, did Jesus pray for

his enemies' forgiveness during his crucifixion (Luke 23:34) or not? Did the Prologue of John's Gospel end by calling Jesus the "unique Son who is in the bosom of the Father" or the unique God who is in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18)? Scholars continue to debate scores of such differences among our manuscripts.

Methods of Textual Criticism

In deciding which form of the text is original, most scholars apply an "eclectic" method, which appeals, on a case-by-case basis, to a number of different criteria that are traditionally categorized either as "external" (those based on the kinds of manuscripts that support one reading or another) or "internal" (those based on the likelihood that a reading goes back either to the original author or to an error introduced by a scribe). To be sure, there continue to be proponents of the "Majority text," who claim that the form of text found in the majority of surviving witnesses is always, or nearly always, to be preferred (an emphasis almost exclusively on one kind of external evidence); and there are others who maintain that since all of the manuscripts contain mistakes, it is wrong to consider the manuscripts at all when deciding what the authors originally wrote (emphasizing "internal" evidence). The majority of scholars, however, continue to adjudicate the differences among manuscripts by considering the whole range of surviving evidence.

External Evidence

The following are among the most important "external" principles that are sometimes invoked in deciding one textual reading over another.

Number of Supporting Witnesses. A reading found more frequently among our manuscripts may, theoretically, have a superior claim to being the original. Although widely favored by advocates of the "Majority text," this principle is nonetheless discounted by most other scholars, and for fairly compelling reasons. For if, hypothetically, one manuscript of the 2nd century was copied three times, and another was copied 300 times, this would not mean that the latter was more accurate (and its copyists would have no way of knowing); it would

simply mean that it was copied more often. The number of surviving witnesses, therefore, actually tells us little about the original text.

Age of Supporting Witnesses. More important, obviously, than the number of surviving witnesses for any particular reading is the age of its supporting manuscripts. In general, earlier manuscripts will be less likely to contain errors, since they have not passed through as many hands. This criterion is not foolproof either, however, since a 7th-century manuscript could, conceivably, have been copied from an exemplar of the 2nd century, whereas a 6th-century manuscript (which is therefore older) could have been copied from one of the 5th century.

Geographical Diversity of the Witnesses. Less problematic is an appeal to the widespread distribution of a reading: any form of the text that is found in witnesses scattered over a wide geographical range, as opposed to one found in manuscripts located, e.g., in only one city or region, has a greater chance of being ancient.

“Quality” of the Supporting Witnesses. As in a court of law, some textual witnesses are more reliable than others. Witnesses *known* to produce an inferior text when the case can be decided with a high degree of certainty (on the “internal” grounds discussed below), are also more likely to produce an inferior text where the internal evidence is more ambiguous.

Quality of the Supporting “Groups” of Witnesses. Since the 17th century, scholars have recognized that some manuscripts are closely related to one another, in the sense that they typically support the same wording of the text in a large number of passages. Witnesses can thus be “grouped” together in light of their resemblances. Today there are three major groups that are widely accepted: (1) “Alexandrian” witnesses, which include most of the earliest and “best” manuscripts, as judged by their overall quality (e.g., Codex Vaticanus); these may ultimately go back to the form of text preserved among scholars in Alexandria, Egypt; (2) “Western” witnesses (a misnomer, since some of these witnesses were produced in Eastern Christendom), which include manuscripts associated with the famous Codex Bezae in the Gospels and Acts; these appear to preserve an early but

generally unreliable form of the text; and (3) “Byzantine” witnesses, which include the vast majority of later manuscripts, and are judged by a preponderance of scholars to preserve an inferior form of the text. The general rule of thumb for most critics is that readings attested only in Byzantine or only in Western witnesses are highly suspect; readings found among the Alexandrian witnesses, on the other hand, are more likely to be given the benefit of the doubt, especially when these are also attested by witnesses of the other two groups.

By way of summary, most scholars maintain that the sheer number of witnesses supporting one reading or another rarely matters for determining the original text. More significant are the age, geographical diversity, general quality, and textual grouping of external support; that is, readings found in the oldest, most widespread, and “best” manuscripts are most likely to be original.

Internal Evidence

Internal evidence is concerned not with the witnesses that support one reading or another, but with the competing merits of the variant readings in and of themselves. Two kinds of issues are involved: “transcriptional probabilities,” i.e., arguments concerned with readings that would have most appealed to the interests and concerns of scribes, and thus are likely to have been created by them in their transcriptions (and occasional alterations) of the text; and “intrinsic probabilities,” i.e., arguments concerned with readings that conform most closely with the language, style, and theology of the author in question, and are thus intrinsically most likely to be original.

Transcriptional Probabilities. A study of our earliest manuscripts confirms several commonsense assumptions about the kinds of readings scribes would create when they altered the text they copied. For example, scribes appear to have been more likely to harmonize two passages that stood at apparent odds with one another than to make them differ; they were more likely to improve the grammar of a passage than to make it worse; they were more likely to bring a passage into conformity with their own theological views than to make it “unorthodox.” As a result, the critic can employ a general rule of thumb when considering transcriptional probabilities, a rule that may at first

sound backwards, even though it is established on sound principles: the more difficult reading—i.e., the reading that is less harmonized, grammatical, and theologically “correct”—is more likely to be original.

Intrinsic Probabilities

Whereas transcriptional probabilities look for readings that were most likely to have been created by scribes in the process of transcription, intrinsic probabilities look for the reading that is most likely to have been created by the author of the NT book himself. At issue here is the language, style, and theology of the author who originally produced the text. Readings that conform most closely with the author’s own thought and way of expressing it are most likely to be his own. Making this determination, of course, requires a sophisticated application of traditional forms of exegesis and a substantial knowledge of the author in question.

The Text at the End of the Twentieth Century

Significant progress has been made in the study of the NT text over the past two centuries. Instead of poorly edited Greek texts, scholars and students now have ready access to carefully edited versions filled with textual information (e.g., apparatuses that indicate differences among the surviving witnesses), the two most popular of which are the United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament* (principally for Bible translators and beginning students; now in its 4th edition) and the 26th edition of the “Nestle-Aland” *Novum Testamentum Graece*, which contains exactly the same Greek text as the UBS edition, but with a far more extensive apparatus.

Moreover, the industrious labors of present-day scholars and the momentous opportunities opened up by the computer have led to a burst of productivity in this field, including a spate of invaluable publications from the Institute of New Testament Textual Research, probably the most important of which is the much-anticipated *Editio Critica Maior*, an edition that will include an impressive apparatus of textual evidence which should eclipse any now available (presently at work on the General Epistles). Significant projects are under way outside of the Institute as well, such as the International Greek New Testament Project, whose British and American committees have

already published an extensive apparatus of the Gospel of Luke and are now at work on one for John.

Probably the single greatest desideratum in the field at present is a viable history of the text—i.e., an account of where, when, how, and why the text came to be changed over the course of its long and varied transmission. This history is of crucial importance both for reconstructing the text's earliest stage (i.e., its "original" form) and for establishing the close relationship between the text and the social world within which it was transcribed. This latter issue—the socio-historical context of scribal transmission—has become particularly significant for scholars in recent years, as they have come to recognize that the alterations of the text may reflect the theological concerns and social worlds of the scribes who changed it. A full history of the text, however, will require substantial preliminary work to be done on the early Versions and, especially, individual church fathers, a significant beginning on which can be found in the series, *The New Testament in the Greek Fathers* (Atlanta, 1991–).

METHODOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ANALYSIS
AND CLASSIFICATION OF NEW TESTAMENT
DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE¹

NT scholars agree that it is impractical to consult every textual witness when analyzing a variant reading.² A primary task of NT textual criticism, therefore, is to organize the sheer mass of NT documents into large groups and to ascertain subgroups within each. Since these documentary groupings must be made on the basis of textual consanguinity, the process of analyzing and classifying textual witnesses serves as the prerequisite of all text-critical work.³

Only in recent years have accurate methods of documentary analysis and classification been devised. Since these methods are now becoming firmly entrenched in the discipline, it may prove helpful to understand their advent in light of the impasses reached by earlier methods. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to discuss the newer methods of textual analysis and to show their superiority by

¹ Originally published as "Methodological Developments in the Analysis and Classification of New Testament Documentary Evidence," in *Novum Testamentum* 29 (1987), 22–45. This article is a revision of the first chapter of my Ph.D. dissertation "The Gospel Text of Didymus: A Contribution to the Study of the Alexandrian Text" (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1985). Used with permission.

² This is due, of course, to the extent and diversity of the documentary evidence. Greek MSS of all or part of the NT now number 5366 (Bruce M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Greek Palaeography* [New York: Oxford Press, 1981] 54). With the exception of the smallest fragments, none of these MSS has a text identical to any other. The situation is the same with the early versions and Patristic sources. All of these witnesses preserve numerous variations both among themselves and with all the Greek MSS. See the discussion of Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (2nd ed.; New York: Oxford Press, 1968) 36–94, 186–206.

³ Textual scholars are generally agreed on three advantages of determining textual groups. First, although such a determination does not obviate a consideration of the texts of important individual witnesses, it does save the critic from the nearly impossible task of consulting each and every NT document before coming to a textual decision. Readings attested by groups of witnesses can be ascertained simply by consulting the group's best representatives. Next, establishing textual alignments naturally leads to an assessment of the relative quality of each group text. That it to say, the kinds of variant readings that characterize textual groups are frequently those that are judged, on other grounds, to be more likely authentic or corrupt. Finally, most scholars agree that the combined support of certain textual groups frequently indicates true rather than corrupt readings (as, e.g., when Western and early Alexandrian witnesses agree against all others).

sketching the rise and decline of earlier approaches. It should be noted at the outset that no attempt will be made to rehearse the history of textual criticism *per se*.⁴ Our only concern will be with significant methodological developments in analyzing and classifying documentary evidence from the inception of NT textual criticism to the present day.

Early Methods of Analysis and Classification

As is true of many disciplines, methodological advances in NT textual criticism were born of a despair generated by complications arising from the available data. In this case the problems derived from the pervasive corruption of the entire MS tradition of the NT. Although the phenomenon of textual variation had been known from the earliest of times,⁵ scholars did not perceive the magnitude of the problem until the eighteenth century. The floodgates opened in 1707, when John Mill, Fellow of the Queen's College, Oxford, published his *Novum Testamentum Graece*.⁶ Mill had spent the final thirty years of his life analyzing and collating Greek, versional, and Patristic sources in preparation for this edition. In it he chose to print the received text (Stephanus' 1550 edition), but attached a critical apparatus of variant readings uncovered during the course of his research. To the shock and dismay of many of his contemporaries, these variants numbered some 30,000. Despite the outcries over Mill's work,⁷ textual scholars soon realized that he had barely scratched the sur-

⁴ For older surveys of the history of the discipline, see esp. Caspar René Gregory, *Textkritik des Neuen Testaments*, 11 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1902) 906–93; Frederic G. Kenyon, *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (2nd ed.; London: Macmillan & Co., 1912) 265–313; Frederick H. Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, & Co., 1874) 374–432; Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text of the New Testament* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1854). The following recent surveys are also significant: Barbara and Kurt Aland, *Der Text des Neuen Testaments* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1982) 13–46; Eldon J. Epp, “The Eclectic Method in New Testament Textual Criticism,” *HTR* 69 (1972) 216–57; Metzger, *Text*, 95–185.

⁵ Eusebius, e.g., mentions the second-century Theodotians who were excommunicated by Pope Victor, in part because they emended the text of the NT without MS support! (*Hist. Eccl.* v. xxxviii 13–19). See further, Metzger, *Text*, 149–54.

⁶ See Adam Fox, *John Mill and Richard Bentley, A Study in the Textual Criticism of the New Testament 1675–1729* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1954).

⁷ Among Mill's outspoken critics was the English cleric, Daniel Whitby, who decried Mill's efforts “to prove the text of Scripture precarious.” See his *Examen Variantium Lectionum J. Millii* (London, 1710).

face. His 30,000 variants were culled from only 103 Greek MSS, from an indirect examination of the early versions based on the Latin translations in Walton's Polyglot Bible, and from uncritical editions of the early church Fathers. Furthermore, Mill cited only variants he considered significant, overlooking such matters as changes in word order, the presence or absence of the article, and omissions due to homoeoteleuton. As more extensive collations were made, and as they were made more rigorously, the number of variants discovered in the NT documents increased at a fantastic rate. Within a century, Mill's 30,000 variants had been multiplied by a factor of five.⁸

In view of such extensive variation, scholars were compelled to devise methods for distinguishing genuine from corrupt readings. As is well known, the pioneers in the field—principally Richard Bentley,⁹ Johann Albrecht Bengel,¹⁰ and Johann Jacob Griesbach¹¹—developed two kinds of criteria for ascertaining genuine readings, one based on “internal” evidence (concerned with readings that had the greatest claims to authenticity), the other on “external” evidence (concerned with documents that were most likely to preserve such readings). The

⁸ See Richard Laurence, *Remarks on the Systematic Classification of Manuscripts adopted by Griesbach in his Edition of the New Testament* (Oxford, 1814), reprinted in the *Biblical Repertory* 2 (1826) 33–95.

⁹ See the authoritative biography by James H. Monk, *The Life of Richard Bentley D.D.*, 2 vols. (2nd ed.; London: J. G. Rivington, 1833). See also Fox, *Mill and Bentley*. For a brief statement of Bentley's critical procedures, see his *Proposals for Printing a New Edition of the Greek Testament and St. Hierom's Latin Version. With a Full Answer to All the Remarks of a Late Pamphleteer*. (London: J. Knapton, 1721) 16–27.

¹⁰ See Johann Christian Frederich Burk, *Dr. Johann Albrecht Bengel's Leben und Wirken*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Johann Friedrich Steinkopf, 1831); Karl Hermann, *Johann Albrecht Bengel: Der Klosterprästor von Denkendorf* (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1938); and Gottfried Mälzer, *Johann Albrecht Bengel: Leben und Werk* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1970), esp. ch. 6. Bengel's text-critical principles are stated at length in the compendium on textual criticism in his *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Tübingen: George Cotta, 1734) 369–449, later revised and reprinted by Philip David Burke, *Apparatus Criticus ad Novum Testamentum* (2nd ed.; Tübingen: George Cotta, 1763) 4–86. A more succinct statement is presented in Bengel's *Gnomon of the New Testament*, tr. M. Ernest Bengel (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1873) 12–20.

¹¹ On the life and work of J. J. Griesbach see John McClintock and James Strong, “Johann Jacob Griesbach,” in the *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1871) III. 1008–10. For Griesbach's view of textual groupings, see his *Novum Testamentum Graece* (2nd ed. London, 1794) I. LXXIII–LXXV. On his actual use of these groupings, see G. D. Kilpatrick, “Griesbach and the Development of Textual Criticism,” in *J. J. Griesbach: Synoptic and Text-Critical Studies 1776–1976*, ed. Bernard Orchard and Thomas R. W. Longstaff (Cambridge: University Press, 1978) 136–53.

second set of criteria rested on theories that explained why certain unusual NT witnesses were superior to the great bulk of documents that attest a common textual heritage. These theories in turn depended on the discernment of textual affinities among NT documents. Thus was born the need to organize all available textual witnesses into groups on the basis of general textual similarities.¹²

For the purposes of this survey, more important than the textual histories sketched by these scholars and the precise contours of the textual groups they proposed is the methodological issue of how they went about assigning NT witnesses to one textual grouping or another. It was understood, of course, that witnesses are to be grouped on the basis of textual consanguinity. But how consanguinity can be recognized is by no means transparent. And a misclassification of witnesses would obviously vitiate the critical process altogether.

These early textual critics unfortunately did not exercise an adequate concern for rigorous methodology. Their normal procedure for classifying witnesses entailed collating a document against the printed text (i.e. the *Textus Receptus*) and noting significant variants. When broad-based similarities emerged in the mutual support of variants from the TR, and when these similarities were judged numerous, they were taken as indications of basic textual affinity.

This simple approach to the task made relatively good sense when the TR was understood to be the standard from which all other texts diverged. In such a case, all agreements in variation from the TR must stem from the same sources of corruption. These sources could be reconstructed, theoretically, by comparing the corruptions shared by entire groups of witnesses. Regrettably, the pioneers in the field did not realize that their advances in other areas undercut the validity of this method. First, starting with Bentley, and Mill before him, many critics recognized that the TR was printed out of convenience rather than conviction, that in fact it did not represent the standard text from which other texts deviate at their points of variation. This recognition inevitably raises the question of how an

¹² The labors of these eighteenth-century scholars yielded a consensus concerning the NT documentary evidence: most textual witnesses could be classified in terms of two or three major textual groupings, with one of these groups most frequently preserving the authentic text of the NT. In particular, Griesbach's conception of a late Constantinopolitan group, a relatively corrupt Western group, and a relatively pure Alexandrian group has proved influential even to the present day. See Metzger, *Text*, 119–21.

artificial and extrinsic standard of comparison (the TR) can be used to determine the textual affiliations of other witnesses. Secondly, with time there came refined methods of collation. As already noted, Mill limited himself to variants he considered significant. But textual groupings depend on objective comparisons of texts rather than subjective judgments of what appears to be important. Notably, when Bentley compared the ancient Latin and Greek witnesses, he found their frequent agreement in word order a matter of paramount significance. Mill had chosen to overlook word order in his collations.¹³

Early Movements Away from the Traditional System of Classification

Not everyone was oblivious to the methodological flaws in the traditional system of classification. As early as 1814, Archbishop Richard Laurence delineated its inadequacies in a critique of Griesbach's work.¹⁴ For purposes of illustration, Laurence noted Griesbach's classification of codex A in the Pauline epistles. In his *Symbolae criticae* Griesbach showed that of the 170 variants of A from the TR in Paul, 110 agree with the text found in Origen. This led him to conclude that A is very close to Origen, that is, strongly Alexandrian. But Griesbach also observed that Origen varies from the TR an additional 96 times when A does not. This means that if Origen were considered the standard text against which both the TR and A were collated, A would be classified as strongly Byzantine, since in its 156 variants from Origen it would agree with the TR in 96!¹⁵ Thus the classification of witnesses depends entirely on the extrinsic standard of comparison.¹⁶

¹³ Cf. Bentley's letter to William Wake, Archbishop of Canterbury, dated April 15, 1716: "Upon some points of' curiosity, I collated one or two of St. Paul's Epistles with the Alexandrian MS. the oldest and best now in the world; I was surprised to find several transpositions of words, that Mills [sic] and the other collators took no notice of; but I soon found their way was to mark nothing but change of words; the collocation and order they entirely neglected; and yet at sight I discerned what a new force and beauty this new order added to the sentence. Monk, *Life of Richard Bentley*, I. 399.

¹⁴ "Remarks," 49–61. See also the demur of Frederick Nolan, *An Inquiry into the Integrity of the Greek Vulgate or Received Text of the New Testament* (London: F. C. & J. Rivington, 1815) 4–43.

¹⁵ Laurence, "Remarks," 52, with reference to Griesbach, *Symbolae criticae*, I. CXXIV.

¹⁶ This approach may account for some of Griesbach's erroneous assignments of documents. Thus, for example, in the Prolegomena to his *Novum Testamentum Graece*

Laurence's protests fell on virtually deaf ears. But had his caveats been more closely attended, scholars would have moved sooner to consider textual consanguinity apart from the text of an external norm. As will be seen momentarily, the older method of establishing textual relationships by collating documents against the TR was perpetuated in part because of a shift in theory concerning the history of the NT text, a shift that found its classical expression in the labors of Brooke Foss Westcott¹⁷ and Fenton John Anthony Hort.¹⁸ The curious historical irony is that these scholars did not themselves use the common method of analysis.

The publication of Westcott and Hort's Greek text in 1881 marked a watershed in the history of NT textual criticism.¹⁹ In the second volume of this work, Hort set forth the critical principles that had guided the labors of the two Cambridge professors for twenty-eight years. These critical principles and the resultant history of the text are now well known to all students of the discipline. Quite apart from the validity of their conclusions, Westcott and Hort's work can be assessed in terms of its critical methodology. How did they go about assigning the textual witnesses to the appropriate groups?

It must be conceded that, strictly speaking, Westcott and Hort were not primarily concerned with the relationships of textual witnesses, but with the relationships of sets of readings or text-types. Documents were significant only insofar as they contain certain readings in combination. Westcott and Hort thus saw clearly the dilemma facing the critic who attempts to establish textual groupings. Witnesses can be grouped only on the basis of mutual attestation of readings, but readings can be classified only on the basis of mutual support of documents. To say, therefore, that a document is Syrian because it contains Syrian readings can appear tautologous. One can just as well call readings Syrian because they occur in Syrian sources.

This apparent circularity notwithstanding, Westcott and Hort recognized that certain kinds of readings do tend to occur frequently in some witnesses but not in others. Most of the late Greek MSS,

he names the Sahidic version and MSS B, 1, 13, and 69 as leading members of the Western text (I. LXXIV)!

¹⁷ See the biography by his son, Arthur Westcott, *The Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1903).

¹⁸ Hort's biography was also written by his own son, Arthur Fenton Hort, *The Life and Letters of Fenton John Anthony Hort*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1896).

¹⁹ 2 vols. (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1881).

for example, preserve a number of conflated readings drawn from elements of the texts found in earlier documents. Westcott and Hort reasoned that if a document preserves a text created from earlier sources in some of its readings (e.g., in its confections) it very likely used the same sources for all of its readings (i.e. even for those that are not conflate).²⁰ Notably, those witnesses with a relatively high number of confections also betray a tendency toward more harmonized and less difficult readings. Thus the documents which contain numerous confections, harmonizations, and easy readings can all be grouped together. Westcott and Hort labeled this group “Syrian” and discounted its members as corrupt representatives of the genuine text.²¹ Witnesses not preserving this kind of text were then grouped together on the basis of their own textual affinities, and were categorized as Western, Alexandrian, or Neutral.²²

The significance of Westcott and Hort’s approach to classifying witnesses lies in their conclusion that since the Syrian editors utilized the earlier types of text, readings found in, say, both Western and Syrian witnesses are Western, their support not being improved by Syrian attestation (which is not independent).²³ In this respect Westcott and Hort made a significant methodological advance over their predecessors. Although they never stated this conclusion explicitly, Westcott and Hort saw that textual consanguinity cannot be established merely by considering agreements in variation from the TR. Such a consideration does not take into account any of the readings taken from earlier sources into the Syrian text (the TR being understood as a representative).

Only variations from a *distinctively* Syrian text could be used when establishing the physiognomy of the other text-types. Since the TR does not preserve such a text, it cannot be used as a standard of textual comparison. Thus for Westcott and Hort, textual consanguinity can be established only by comparing all the documents in their mutual attestation of readings that are distinctive to each of the textual groups.

Interestingly, this methodological breakthrough made virtually no impact on English-speaking scholars, either because Westcott and

²⁰ *The New Testament . . .* [11], *Introduction*, 106–07.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 132–35.

²² *Ibid.*, 119–32, 148–62.

²³ *Ibid.*, 118–119.

Hort never explicated their method or because the task of making detailed comparisons of all witnesses to one another proved a practical impossibility.²⁴

In essential conformity with Westcott and Hort's dissatisfaction with the prevailing method of textual classification was the discordant note struck by the textual researches of Hermann von Soden. Von Soden's magisterial publication *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (Teil I, 1902–10; Teil II, 1913) culminated a life-long endeavor to write a comprehensive history of the transmission of the Greek New Testament. He began his three-volume *Untersuchungen* by detailing the inadequacies of prior attempts to establish the NT text.²⁵ In his view, these attempts failed to take account of the entire history of textual transmission, either because the data were unavailable (as in Bengel's case), or because they were not all used (as in Westcott and Hort's). Von Soden was not content to isolate major textual groups on the basis of general affinities of text. He wanted to determine the precise relationships of all known documents to one another, from the smallest subgroups to the major text-types. At this point he went beyond Westcott and Hort.²⁶ But because his objective was broader than theirs, he could not follow their simple procedure of consulting critical apparatuses so as to ascertain the textual character of the documents under consideration. He had to work with detailed comparisons of all the known witnesses.

No one can doubt the desirability of a methodological shift in this direction. Nevertheless, it was precisely this shift that effected the undoing of von Soden's project. Since the available textual evidence is far too massive for any one critic to master, von Soden was forced to rely on the collations made by others, collations later shown to

²⁴ Westcott and Hort collated no MSS themselves, but instead applied themselves to the study of collations and apparatuses made by other scholars (see, for example, *Introduction*, 144). As a result, their knowledge of the documents was second-hand and partial. It is difficult to conceive how they could have proceeded otherwise—their text took twenty-eight years to produce as it was! But at the same time, one is struck by their imprecise descriptions of textual affinities, phrases such as “a large share of Alexandrian readings,” “a larger proportion of Western readings,” “predominantly but not exclusively Syrian,” occurring on nearly every page of Hort's analysis (see especially pp. 148–62).

²⁵ *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (Berlin: Alexander Druckner, 1902) I.1: 1–17.

²⁶ Cf. Westcott and Hort's refusal to establish subgroups within their Syrian Text. *Introduction*, 43–45.

be incomplete and/or inaccurate.²⁷ Furthermore, even having hired a corps of collators, von Soden could not manage all the existing data. He was consequently compelled to take several shortcuts toward isolating groups of witnesses.

Since von Soden made only scant reference to his procedure for determining the textual consanguinity of the various witnesses, it is somewhat difficult to reconstruct the general course of his project, and impossible to determine many of the critical details.²⁸ What is clear is that he followed Westcott and Hort in foregoing the established practice of ascertaining textual groupings merely by comparing mutual agreements in variation from the TR. Von Soden did indicate three factors which he considered in textual groups: the general affinities of text, the forms of the *pericope adulterae* (he isolated seven), and the textual "equipment" of the MSS (Eusebian canons, Euthalian apparatus, etc.).²⁹ The final two factors contributed very little to the overall analysis despite the enormous amount of labor devoted to them, as F. Wisse has recently shown.³⁰ In order to ascertain general textual affinities, von Soden apparently began by postulating three major text-types, one represented most clearly by \aleph B (A C), another by D, the Old Latin, and the Sinaitic Syriac, and the last by K and H.³¹ With the objectives of confirming these text-types, discovering other major groups, and classifying subgroups, von Soden had documents collated against each of the main texts, noting both agreements and disagreements. At this point a necessary but fateful shortcut was taken. Time and expense would not allow a complete collation of every witness against each group, let alone against every other witness. So certain key passages (*Stichkapitel*) were selected for the collations. Von Soden never divulged which chapters were selected or why.³²

²⁷ See H. C. Hoskier, "Von Soden's Text of the New Testament," *JTS* 15 (1914) 307–26, and Alexander Souter, "Von Soden's Text of the Greek New Testament Examined in Selected Passages," *The Expositor*, 8th Series, 10 (1915) 429–44.

²⁸ See Frederick Wisse, *The Profile Method for the Classification and Evaluation of Manuscript Evidence* (SD, 44; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 11–12. Von Soden's brief description of his method is found in *Die Schriften*, 17–19.

²⁹ See Kirsopp Lake's discussion, "Professor von Soden's Treatment of the Text of the Gospels," *RThPh* 4 (1908–09) 204–17.

³⁰ Wisse, *Profile Method*, 10–12.

³¹ *Die Schriften*, I: 1, 17–18.

³² As test passages to isolate K's MSS, von Soden used Matt. 21–22, Mark 10–11, Luke 7–8, and John 6–7 (*Die Schriften*, I.2: 775). In Wisse's words, "whether these are the *Stichkapitel* is anybody's guess." *Profile Method*, 11, n. 9.

Since later research could not confirm many of von Soden's textual groupings,³³ one can only conclude that his selection of *Stichkapitel* was not altogether judicious. A striking example of the failures of his system is his I^a group, which comprises most of the Caesarean text. Curiously the group includes codex Bezae but not family 1 or family 13.³⁴ Nonetheless, von Soden had made an insightful shift away from determining textual consanguinity on the basis of mutual variation from the TR. Presumably the failure of subsequent scholars to follow this methodological lead was due, in large measure, to von Soden's failure to explicate his procedure.

While von Soden's text and apparatus were in the process of being published, a British scholar of lesser stature developed a similar approach to establishing textual groupings, but without the trappings of von Soden's incredibly complex system of classification. In 1911 E. A. Hutton published a slim volume entitled *Atlas of Textual Criticism*.³⁵ In this work, Hutton proposed to establish textual relationships through "Triple Readings"—readings in which the Alexandrian, Western, and Byzantine traditions all preserve distinctive variants. In easily accessible tables, Hutton set forth 312 such "Triple Readings" of the NT. By tabulating a documents' support for each text-type in these readings, one can readily discern its essential textual alignments.

It was unfortunate, though not surprising, that Hutton's proposal never received extensive support. Not only did his work appear in an era anticipating ultimate answers from von Soden's unpublished volumes; his program itself was obviously inadequate. Hutton named only the three major text-types, no smaller subgroups; he never stated what criteria he used to assign variants to one text-type or another; and he did not supply a critical apparatus for the readings. In short, his tables did not provide a means for making a detailed textual analysis, but only allowed the critic to acquire an overview of the NT documents.

³³ See the discussions of K. Lake on von Soden's I and K texts: "The Ecclesiastical Text," Excursus I of K. Lake, Robert P. Blake, and Silva New, "The Caesarean Text of Mark," *HTR* 21 (1928) 338–57; K. Lake and R. P. Blake "The Koridethi Codex." On the other hand, certain of von Soden's groups were confirmed by later analysis. See, e.g., E. C. Colwell, *The Four Gospels of Karahissar I: History and Text* (Chicago: University Press, 1936) 170–77, and David O. Voss, "Is von Soden's K^r a Distinct Type of Text?" *JBL* 57 (1938) 311–18.

³⁴ For a helpful summary of von Soden's textual groupings, see Lake, "Von Soden's Treatment," 205–17.

³⁵ (Cambridge: University Press, 1911).

A New Warrant for the Early Method of Classification

As already noted, Westcott and Hort's understanding of the history of the NT text itself came to be used, ironically, to justify the older and earlier method of establishing textual affinities by comparing variation from the TR. Early in the history of the discipline it was thought that the TR could be used as an adequate basis of comparing MSS, since it was considered the original text from which all others departed. But eventually scholars determined that the TR could also function as a base of comparison if just the opposite were assumed, namely that it represents the standard later text, departures from which indicate primitive forms of the textual tradition. Thus the earlier method of textual classification received new theoretical support when Westcott and Hort popularized the dictum earlier advocated by the classicist Karl Lachmann:³⁶ "community of error demonstrates community of origin."

Nearly half a century before Westcott and Hort, Lachmann had recognized that deviations from the TR indicate antiquity of text. But it was not until 1902 that Lachmann's conception, enhanced by Westcott and Hort's understanding of the history of transmission, was used to justify the older method of textual analysis.

In that year, Edgar Goodspeed and Kirsopp Lake independently argued that the history of the Syrian text provides an adequate rationale for establishing the textual affinities of documents by using the TR as an extrinsic standard of comparison.³⁷ The argument can be outlined as follows. Because the Byzantine text came to dominate the textual tradition in the Middle Ages, the earlier text-types were preserved only in fragmentary form, that is, in documents not conformed completely to the Byzantine standard. For this reason, to ascertain the true lineage of a witness one need only remove the Byzantine corruptions and compare the remaining portions of text. This is readily done by collating against the TR and comparing variants. In his analysis of family 1, Kirsopp Lake justified the approach in the following terms:

³⁶ See Martin Hertz, *Karl Lachmann: Eine Biographie* (Berlin: Verlag von Wilhelm Hertz, 1851). For a brief statement of Lachmann's text-critical principles, particularly as they affected his famous 1831 edition of the Greek NT, see his "Rechenschaft über seine Ausgabe des Neuen Testaments," *TSK* 3 (1830) 817–45.

³⁷ Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Newberry Gospels* (Chicago: University Press, 1902); Kirsopp Lake, *Codex 1 of the Gospels and Its Allies* (Cambridge: University Press, 1902).

The genealogical relations which subsist between any given mss can be deduced, in the absence of direct information, by studying the variations from the standard text which they share in common. This is another and slightly more accurate way of enunciating the old rule that “community of error implies unity of origin”. It is slightly more accurate because in dealing with late mss, the familiar text, the presence of which calls for no explanation, is not the true text, but the late ecclesiastical or Syrian text, . . . and it is deviation from this in any considerable degree which indicates community of origin.³⁸

Following this procedure, Lake demonstrated the close relationships of MSS 1, 118, 131, and 209, discussed the character of their common archetype, and showed the affinities of the family text with other groups.

This approach received its most elaborate development in 1924 by the British scholar, Burnett Hillman Streeter.³⁹ Behind Streeter’s method of grouping textual witnesses lay his creative reconstruction of the history of the transmission of the New Testament.⁴⁰ Streeter argued that local churches began standardizing their Biblical texts in the early fourth century. Most churches could not afford to replace older copies of the Scriptures with newer ones, and so they appointed professional or amateur scribes to correct the texts on hand to the prevailing norm. Depending on time, expense, and expertise, these corrections would be made more or less completely. The partially corrected texts would eventually be used themselves as exemplars. This led to local texts unevenly mixed with Byzantine standardizations. According to Streeter, most of the oldest extant MSS are of this mixed variety. For this reason, only the non-Byzantine elements of the tradition can be used to trace the history of the text from the extant documents to the local texts to the originals. In Streeter’s own words, this is “a canon of the first importance. *Of MSS, whether Greek or Latin, later than the fifth century, only those readings need be noted which differ from the standard text.*”⁴¹

Streeter’s most significant application of this canon involved the “Caesarean Text”, which had earlier been discovered and named the Θ -family by K. Lake. So convinced were both Lake and Streeter

³⁸ Lake, *Codex 1*, xxiii.

³⁹ *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (5th impression; London: MacMillan & Co., 1936) 25–76.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 39–45.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 44. Emphasis his.

of the theory of “standardization” that in reconstructing the archetype of this text they counted as family readings those preserved in only one family member when all the rest read with the TR (on the assumption that all the other family members had been standardized).⁴² Thus the use of the TR as a standard of comparison for the classification of the NT documents seemed firmly entrenched among leading textual scholars at the beginning of the present century.

The Quantitative Method of Textual Classification

Only within the past four decades have scholars become united in their disavowal of the age-old method of determining textual affinities by comparing agreement in variation from the Textus Receptus. In large measure the method collapsed upon itself. Nowhere was this seen more clearly than in its application to the Caesarean text. The death knell was sounded in 1945 by Bruce M. Metzger’s survey of research.⁴³ After observing that the discovery and analysis of P⁴⁵ had compelled scholars to split the Caesarean text into two distinct sub-groups, Metzger asked why the division of witnesses had not been anticipated before the discovery of the papyrus. He suggested that the error was methodological. In assessing the nature of the problem Metzger posed two fundamental questions: “Is it licit to reconstruct the ancient Caesarean text from what are frequently late documents merely by pooling the non-Byzantine variants?” and “Is it possible to analyze the textual complexion of a given document by utilizing all variants, large and small?”⁴⁴ To the first question Metzger made an unequivocal response:

The accepted method of determining the Caesarean text cannot but fail to discover all Caesarean readings, for certain Caesarean readings have undoubtedly passed into the Byzantine text and therefore are not disclosed when Caesarean manuscripts are collated against a Byzantine text.⁴⁵

⁴² Lake lists twenty-six such readings for Mark alone. Kirsopp Lake and Robert Blake, “The Text of the Gospels and the Koridethi Codex,” *HTR* 16 (1923) 274.

⁴³ “The Caesarean Text of the Gospels,” reprinted in *Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963) 42–72.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 70–71.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

On the second question Metzger expressed ambivalence. On the one hand, yes it is possible, and necessary, to consider all textual variation, rather than variation from the TR alone. Otherwise only part of the textual data is considered, possibly leading to distorted conclusions:

For obviously it is of slight value in determining family relationship to know only that in a certain area a given manuscript agrees with, say B and \aleph ten times in differing from Textus Receptus. If B and \aleph should differ from the Textus Receptus in ninety other instances, the Neutral element in the given manuscript would be slight indeed.⁴⁶

On the other hand, when genetically significant variation is not distinguished from insignificant, inadequate attention is paid to possible accidental agreement in error. Metzger therefore proposed that agreement in small variation, “involving *inter alia*, word order, common synonyms, the presence or absence of the article, the aorist for the imperfect or historical present,”⁴⁷ not be considered in determining textual relationships.

Subsequent research served to confirm Metzger’s suspicions about the older method.⁴⁸ But concrete proposals for a different approach did not appear for well over a decade. In the interim, textual scholars, some of them fully cognizant of the limitations of their method, continued to establish textual affiliation on the basis of agreements in variation from the TR.⁴⁹ Why a more adequate method was not proposed earlier is not altogether clear. To some extent the delay seems to have derived from an inability to cope with the magnitude of the problem. A new approach would have to provide for extensive comparisons of all witnesses with one another in variants significant for genetic relationships, with concrete proposals for assessing the

⁴⁶ Ibid., 71.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 72.

⁴⁸ See Ernest C. Colwell’s revised and updated essays found in his *Studies in Methodology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), esp. “Method in Locating a Newly-Discovered Manuscript,” 26–44; “Method in Establishing Quantitative Relationships Between Text-Types of New Testament Manuscripts,” (with Ernest W. Tune), 56–62; Gordon Fee, “Codex Sinaiticus in the Gospel of John,” *NTS* 15 (1968–9) 23–44; Idem, “The Text of John in Origen and Cyril of Alexandria: A Contribution to Method in the Recovery and Analysis of Patristic Citations,” *Biblica* 52 (1971) 357–94; Larry Hurtado, *Text-Critical Methodology and the Pre-Caesarean Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 5–13.

⁴⁹ An outstanding case in point is Harold Murphy’s study of Eusebius’ text of Matthew in the *Demonstratio Evangelica*, a study he himself discounted on methodological grounds! “Eusebius’ New Testament Text in the *Demonstratio Evangelica*,” *JBL* 78 (1954) 162–68.

proportional significance of agreements and disagreements. Yet how this could be achieved apart from the impossible enterprise of collating each document against thousands of others was not self-evident.

The breakthrough came in 1959 in the methodological proposals developed by Ernest C. Colwell, then professor of New Testament at the University of Chicago. Colwell had been impressed with the simplicity of Hutton's approach, yet was all too aware of its inadequacies. He refined Hutton's use of "Triple Readings," and made it the first of three steps for locating a manuscript in the textual tradition.⁵⁰ Colwell geared his comprehensive method toward speed and accuracy—speed in view of the overwhelming quantity of textual data, accuracy in view of previous errors of judgment deriving from faulty methods.

Colwell's first step was presented as a timesaver, designed simply to indicate which text-types and subgroups a document was likely to resemble. Here he proposed considering a document's characteristic alignments in "multiple" readings. These were narrowly defined as readings "in which the minimum support for each of at least three variant forms of the text is either one of the major strands of the tradition, or the support of a previously established group (such as Fam I, Fam II, the Ferrar Group, K¹, Kⁱ, K^r), or the support of some one of the ancient versions (such as sy^s, sy^c, bo, or sa), or the support of some single manuscript of admittedly distinctive character (such as D)."⁵¹ The second step involved demonstrating the relationship thus suggested. Here Colwell proposed considering the document's support of distinctive group readings. In his own words, "a group is not a group unless it has unique elements. . . . The newly-found manuscript cannot be related to a group without being related to the singular readings of the group."⁵²

Group affiliation indicated by multiple readings and demonstrated by distinctive readings is finally confirmed by the third step: a thoroughgoing quantitative analysis: "Members of a group must agree with one another in a large majority of the total number of existing

⁵⁰ Colwell, "Method in Locating," 27–30.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 27–28.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 30.

variant readings.”⁵³ On the basis of already established group relationships Colwell maintained that group identity can be determined only when group members agree in excess of 60–65% of the readings where variation occurs. To resolve the problem of quantifying these relationships without collating a new manuscript against thousands of others, Colwell proposed collations of portions of text among carefully selected representatives of each text-type and group.

Within several years Colwell collaborated with Ernest W. Tune to refine the method of establishing quantitative relationships.⁵⁴ Focusing on the relationships among text-types rather than on documents, they proposed that the following cross-section of representative manuscripts be used for collations: TR P¹⁵ P⁶⁶ P^{66c} P⁷⁵ \aleph \aleph^c A A^c B D W W^c Θ Ψ C^r 565. An accurate accounting of the inter-relationships of these documents requires that a substantial portion of text serve as the basis of comparison, one in which at least several hundred units of variation can be isolated. For their study, Colwell and Tune chose John 11. In this passage, the texts of all the manuscripts are collated against one another and all the variants are listed with their supporting documents. Since the method is intended to demonstrate genetic relationships—which by definition occur only when manuscripts share a common text—all singular readings and common scribal errors are eliminated from consideration. What remain are variants in which at least two witnesses agree against the rest in genetically significant readings. By tabulating the agreements of all the documents with one another and converting the numbers into percentages, the quantitative inter-relationships of all the documents and all the groups can be established and evaluated. Colwell and Tune maintained that group members will normally agree in approximately 70% of all variants, while being separated from non-group members by a margin of at least 10%.⁵⁵

Of Colwell’s three steps (“Multiple” readings, “Distinctive” readings, Quantitative Analysis), only the third has met with widespread approval in subsequent studies. The use of Multiple Readings would save time only if extensive lists of such readings were available, which they are not. And while a consideration of Distinctive readings will indicate primary group members, such readings are of little help in

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵⁴ Colwell and Tune, “Method in Establishing.”

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 59.

establishing secondary membership since they are typically the first to be assimilated by mixture with other groups. Furthermore, neither of these initial steps can indicate what must be established by a thorough quantitative analysis in any case—viz., how closely a document resembles all others in the textual tradition. Thus many analyses since Colwell have focused their attention on establishing the quantitative relationship among important textual witnesses.

The strongest advocate of this method is Gordon D. Fee, who has not only argued for its superiority in theory,⁵⁶ but has used it extensively, with only minor modifications,⁵⁷ in his analyses of P⁶⁶, Codex Sinaiticus, and the quotations of several significant church Fathers.⁵⁸ The quantitative method has also been applied by Larry Hurtado to Codex Washingtonianus, in a study which served to dispel the commonly held notion of a pre-Caesarean text in Mark,⁵⁹ by W. L. Richards in a comprehensive analysis of the MS tradition of the Johannine epistles,⁶⁰ and by other scholars, such as Carroll Osburn and myself, to such important Patristic sources as Hippolytus and Didymus the Blind.⁶¹ Since one of the overarching challenges of contemporary textual criticism is the accurate reconstruction of the history of the NT text, quantitative analyses of other significant links in the great chain of textual transmission remains a primary desideratum of the discipline.

⁵⁶ See esp. his "Codex Sinaiticus in the Gospel of John," 23–44, and "Text of John in Origen and Cyril," 364–66.

⁵⁷ Prior to their tabulations, Colwell and Tune eliminated minor variation that appeared to have resulted from accidental scribal agreements. Fee considers it better to tabulate all units of variation, irrespective of the possibility of accidental agreements in error. See his discussion of the problem in "Codex Sinaiticus in the Gospel of John."

⁵⁸ In addition to the works cited in n. 56 above, see also "Origen's New Testament and the Text of Egypt," *NTS* 28 (1982) 348–64; "P⁷⁵, P⁶⁶, and Origen: The Myth of Textual Recension in Alexandria," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974) 19–45; *Papyrus Bodmer II (P⁶⁶): Its Textual Relationships and Scribal Characteristics* (SD, 34; Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1968); and "The Text of John and Mark in the Writings of Chrysostom," *NTS* 26 (1979–80) 525–47.

⁵⁹ *Text-Critical Methodology*.

⁶⁰ *The Classification of the Greek Manuscripts of the Johannine Epistles* (SBLDS 35; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977).

⁶¹ Carroll D. Osburn, "The Text of the Pauline Epistles in Hippolytus of Rome," *Second Century* 2 (1982) 97–124; Bart D. Ehrman, "Gospel Text," revised in *Didymus the Blind and the Text of the Gospels* (*The New Testament in the Greek Fathers*, 1; Atlanta: Scholars Press, forthcoming).

Despite the advances that have been made through quantitative analyses, some drawbacks still exist. From the very beginning it has been recognized that even with this method, inevitable limitations of time and effort prevent the critic from ascertaining the precise quantified relationships of the thousands of textual witnesses. Thus, as has been seen, Colwell initially proposed two shortcuts for the analysis: (1) that representative portions of text be collated, and (2) that representative witnesses of the known textual groups be selected as standards of comparison. Colwell recognized that the first shortcut, the selection of representative portions of text, is particularly problematic. Since many witnesses were produced from more than one exemplar, a kind of “block mixture” of text-types often occurs in which alignments differ from book to book and even chapter to chapter. This problem virtually disallows Colwell’s first shortcut. It is now recognized that each witness must be analyzed completely, one portion of text at a time; final judgments concerning textual consanguinity must await the collation of the entire document. Interestingly, quantitative analyses of Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Washingtonianus, and the quotations of Didymus the Blind have revealed precisely the kind of block mixture which makes Colwell’s first shortcut so problematic.⁶²

Perhaps not enough attention has been paid to the problems of Colwell’s second shortcut, the use of representative textual witnesses (a shortcut which everyone concedes is nonetheless inevitable). Most analyses have chosen “leading” representatives of the various textual groups on the basis of prior analyses, analyses that did *not* follow the rigor of Colwell’s program.⁶³ But until these witnesses are themselves scrutinized by the quantitative method, how can we be certain that they are representative? I will give one example of the problem. In my analysis of the Gospel quotations of Didymus, I initially decided to use MS 1241 as a representative of the Late Alexandrian text. But after the collations were made, it became clear that in none of the four Gospels did 1241 bear a particularly close relationship either with Didymus or with the other Late Alexandrian representatives (MSS C L 33 579 892). As a result, including 1241

⁶² See Fee, “Codex Sinaiticus in the Gospel of John,” 38–44; Hurtado, *Text Critical Methodology*, 22–23; and Ehrman “The Gospel Text of Didymus,” 270–89.

⁶³ A standard listing of representative NT MSS can be found, e.g.; in Metzger, *Text*, 213–16.

in the analysis lowered the quantified relationship between Didymus and the Late Alexandrian group substantially. From the data collected for that particular study, I could find no rationale for classifying 1241 as a “leading” representative of the Late Alexandrian group in any sense, although to be sure, the MS does preserve some of the characteristically Late Alexandrian readings. The point is that the “representative” witnesses themselves must be subjected to quantitative analyses before they can be *used* as representative witnesses.

Finally, a word is in order concerning Colwell (and Tune’s) use of statistics to determine textual affinities. In his thorough testing of the quantitative method in the MS tradition of the Johannine Epistles, W. L. Richards demonstrated that no set rate of agreement among MSS of a group can be anticipated at the outset of an analysis. Thus it is not licit simply to appeal to the Colwell-Tune rule of thumb that MSS of the same group will agree in 70% of all genetically significant variation while being separated from MSS of other groups by a margin of 10%. The different textual groups must be allowed to set their own levels of agreement, and these will vary.⁶⁴

Classification of MSS According to Group Profiles

It has already been noted that Colwell’s proposal to consider Multiple and Distinctive Readings for determining textual affiliation failed to receive widespread support among subsequent researchers. All the same, it is now becoming increasingly apparent that Colwell’s instincts were right: by itself the quantitative method of analysis is an inadequate tool for measuring textual consanguinity.

This is so for two reasons. First, the quantitative method tabulates a document’s agreements only with individual representatives of known textual groups, but does not consider its attestation of readings known to characterize each group. Yet this other factor is equally important for establishing textual affinities: a witness cannot be classified as a member of a group unless it preserves primarily the group’s characteristic readings.

⁶⁴ Thus, for example, Richards showed that members of most of the Byzantine subgroups in the Johannine epistles agree in about 90% of all variation, while, interestingly, Alexandrian witnesses tend to conform to the Colwell-Tune rule of thumb, evidencing about 70% agreement in all instances of variation. *Classification*, 43–129.

Second, as shown by Fee in his study of the text of John in Origen and Cyril,⁶⁵ the quantified relationships of various witnesses is sometimes skewed by their accidental agreements in error. These kinds of agreement derive from factors unrelated to textual consanguinity. Thus, e.g., the predilection for harmonization occasionally led scribes independently to introduce the same error into MSS with radically different textual histories. Such a random occurrence brings unrelated documents into proportionally higher levels of agreement than warranted by their consanguinity. Agreements of this sort cannot be eliminated from consideration in a quantitative analysis without sacrificing the objectivity of the method.⁶⁶ But when the base of inquiry is expanded so as to assess not only a document's relationship to other individual witnesses but also to the readings known to characterize entire groups of witnesses, such agreements are automatically eliminated from consideration (since widespread attestation of a reading within a group of documents cannot be attributed to accident).

For these reasons, textual scholars have increasingly seen the need to classify a NT document not only by determining its proportional relationship to individual witnesses of known textual groups (the quantitative analysis), but also by considering its attestation of characteristic group readings. Here too an adequate method has been slow in coming. A good beginning was made by Gordon Fee in the study of Origen and Cyril just mentioned.⁶⁷ Fee decided to eliminate accidental agreements from consideration by classifying all variant readings uncovered in his collations according to their attestation in different combinations of group witnesses. By ascertaining Cyril and Origen's alignments in these mutually exclusive categories of group readings, Fee was able to draw decisive conclusions about their group affiliations.

This approach to group profiles is superior to other recent attempts which have either lacked the sophistication of the quantitative method or have not taken adequate account of the complexities of the textual tradition.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, the ad hoc character of Fee's profile

⁶⁵ See n. 48.

⁶⁶ Without, that is, making a priori judgments as to which agreements must have derived from accident and which from textual consanguinity.

⁶⁷ Fee, "Origen and Cyril," 367-69.

⁶⁸ This is true of the profile method used by Carroll Osburn in his otherwise valuable study "Text of the Pauline Epistles," and especially that used by Alexander

method has kept it from making a significant impact on subsequent research: his categories of group readings were determined by ascertaining group alignments in the portions of John quoted by Origen and Cyril. The same kinds of alignments do not necessarily appear elsewhere.

The most influential proposal to classify documents according to their attestation of group readings is the Claremont Profile Method. I have offered an extensive critique of this method elsewhere and so will only summarize my conclusions here.⁶⁹ Frederik Wisse and Paul McReynolds devised this approach as a rapid means of establishing a taxonomy of a large number of MSS. While graduate students at Claremont Graduate School, Wisse and McReynolds were responsible for analyzing and classifying 1385 MSS of Luke for the International Greek New Testament Project. Early on in their work they recognized that classifying this quantity of material by conventional methods would require far too much time and effort. But they also realized the possibilities of a newer method of textual analysis.

In the course of their collations, Wisse and McReynolds observed that closely related groups of MSS share readings in certain combinations. They concluded that groups of documents can be organized around noticeable patterns of attestation, patterns that can readily be displayed on graphs. Wisse and McReynolds decided that MSS should be assigned to the same group when they share 2/3 of all readings in question. Once the patterns of attestation are then established for each group, other documents need not be collated in full, but only in those readings that establish the pattern of each group.

Globe, "The Gospel Text of Serapion of Thmuis," *NovT* 26 (1984) 97–127. Globe's study is flawed on other grounds as well. See Bart D. Ehrman, "The Use of Group Profiles for the Classification of New Testament Documentary Evidence," *JBL* (forthcoming), n. 11. Below chap. 3.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* For initial statements concerning the rationale and application of the Claremont Profile Method, see Eldon Jay Epp, "The Claremont Profile Method for Grouping New Testament Minuscule Manuscripts," in *Studies in the History and Text of the New Testament* (ed. Boyd L. Daniels and Jack M. Suggs; SD, 29. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1967) 27–37; Ernest C. Colwell, Paul R. McReynolds, Irving A. Sparks, and Frederik Wisse, "The International Greek New Testament Project: A Status Report," *JBL* 87 (1968) 187–97. For fuller discussions, see the unpublished dissertations of Paul R. McReynolds ("The Claremont Profile Method and the Grouping of Byzantine New Testament Manuscripts" [Claremont Graduate School, 1968]) and Frederik Wisse ("The Claremont Profile Method for the Classification of the Byzantine New Testament Manuscripts: A Study in Method" [Claremont Graduate School, 1968]). Wisse has revised his dissertation and updated the discussion in his recent monograph, *The Profile Method*.

When a previously unclassified MS generally agrees with the profile of a previously established group, then it too can be assigned to the group.

This method has been used successfully in several recent studies.⁷⁰ It is most valuable, of course, when it is applied as was originally intended—to provide a rapid evaluation of a large number of MSS. But the method, at least as envisaged by Wisse in his recent monograph, cannot be used to make a detailed analysis of a NT document. This is so for three reasons:

- (1) Wisse proposes using only spot collations for the analysis. In Luke, e.g., he examined MSS only in chs. 1, 10, and 20. But this approach disallows a complete analysis and eliminates the possibility of detecting a shift in a MS's textual affinities due to the phenomenon of "block mixture."⁷¹
- (2) Wisse proposes using this method as a substitute for, rather than as a supplement to, the Colwell-Tune method of quantitative analysis. The result is that the critic can never be certain that group members have a satisfactorily high proportion of agreement in total variation. MSS of the same group must obviously be related in a large proportion of their total readings, not only in readings previously determined significant for group profiles. This shortcoming actually allowed Wisse to make some errors of classification, the most striking of which was his placing Codex Bezae and Codex Vaticanus in the same group, despite their wildly divergent texts!⁷²
- (3) The method considers only one kind of group reading—viz. readings shared by a large majority of MSS of a group (2/3 of the representatives of a group). But equally important for group classification are readings unique to a group, i.e. those found among witnesses of one group but among no others. Obviously groups cannot be established only on the basis of unique read-

⁷⁰ In addition to the studies of Wisse and McReynolds cited in n. 69, see Paul McReynolds, "The Value and Limitations of the Claremont Profile Method," *SBL Proceedings*, ed. L. C. McGaughey (Society of Biblical Literature, 1972) 1–8; Richards, *Classification*; and Joseph M. Alexanian, "The Claremont Profile Method and the Armenian Version," unpublished paper read at the annual meeting of the SBL, NT Textual Criticism Section, November 1985.

⁷¹ See Ehrman, "Group Profiles."

⁷² *Ibid.*, esp. n. 23.

ings. But since each group must maintain a distinctive contour, such readings are essential to a full analysis and classification of documents.

The inadequacies of these various earlier approaches to group profiles led to the development of the “Comprehensive Profile Method.”⁷³ The method was conceived as complementary to a quantitative analysis, i.e. it proposes to evaluate a MS’s support of group readings only after its proportional relationship to individual representatives of the known textual groups has been established. Furthermore, the method goes beyond the Claremont Profile Method in classifying MSS not only according to readings that occur extensively among members of the various textual groups but also according to those found uniquely in each of the groups. And unlike any of its predecessors, the Comprehensive Profile Method provides categories of group readings applicable to any set of textual witnesses for which complete collations are already available.

Three broad categories of readings are considered by this method.

- (1) An Inter-Group Profile tabulates a document’s attestation of readings preserved among representative witnesses of only one of the known textual groups (a category not considered by the Claremont Profile Method). Two sets of readings are profiled: those attested mainly in witnesses of only one group (labeled “primary” group readings) and those attested only in members of one group. The latter set of readings is divided into two subcategories: those attested by most group members, and no others (“distinctive” readings) and those attested only by a few group members, and no others (“exclusive” readings).⁷⁴
- (2) An Intra-Group Profile tabulates a document’s support of readings extensively among members of a textual group, irrespective of how well they are also attested by witnesses of other groups. Here again two sets of readings are profiled: those attested by all the representative witnesses of a group (“uniform” readings) and those supported by at least two-thirds of these representatives (“predominant” readings). To be included in this second

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid. This article provides a complete explication of these categories and a demonstration of their usefulness for textual analysis.

profile, a reading must vary from at least one other that is likewise supported by at least two representatives of any group. This delimitation serves to exclude from consideration instances of accidental agreement among otherwise unrelated mss.

- (3) A Combination Profile conflates the concerns of the previous two. This profile tabulates a document's attestation of readings found in all or most representatives of a group (as determined by the Intra-Group Profile) but in few or no other witnesses (as determined by the Inter-Group Profile).

There are drawbacks to each one of these profiles when used in isolation.⁷⁵ But the application of all three to a previously unclassified document can serve to clarify the findings of a quantitative analysis and, in some cases, to modify slightly the conclusions drawn there.

The past half-century has obviously witnessed important methodological advances in our methods of analyzing and classifying the documentary evidence of the NT. It is to be hoped that in the coming half-century these advances will bear fruit in intensified efforts to bring the wealth of textual data under control, as we continue to strive to understand the history of the transmission of the NT, and through that understanding to reconstruct even more accurately the text of the NT.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

THE USE OF GROUP PROFILES FOR THE
CLASSIFICATION OF NEW TESTAMENT
DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE¹

New Testament textual criticism has experienced a major methodological breakthrough during the past twenty-five years. As is well known, the earliest critics determined textual affinities by counting a document's agreements with other witnesses in their mutual variations from the *textus receptus*.² In the nineteenth century, Karl Lachmann provided a theoretical rationale for the practice.³ Some seventy years later, and on different theoretical grounds, E. J. Goodspeed and K. Lake independently urged the logic of the method,⁴ which was then given its most eloquent expression by B. H. Streeter.⁵ Nevertheless, the insurmountable deficiencies of this traditional system of analysis and classification were eventually recognized,⁶ and now, thanks largely

¹ Originally published in *JBL* 106 (1987) 465–86. Used with permission.

² Even in the earlier period of research, not everyone was oblivious to the methodological flaws in this traditional system of classification. See, e.g., the scathing assessment of J. J. Griesbach's *Symbolae criticae* (2 vols.: Halle, 1785) by Archbishop Richard Laurence, *Remarks on the Systematic Classification of Manuscripts adapted by Griesbach in his Edition of the New Testament* (Oxford, 1814, rpt. *Biblical Repertory* 2 [1826] 33–95).

³ Lachmann's dictum that "community of error demonstrates community of origin" led him to compare MS agreements in variation from the *textus receptus* on the assumption that departures from the standard ecclesiastical text indicate primitive forms of the textual tradition. For a statement of the principles underlying Lachmann's famous 1831 edition of the NT, see his "Rechenschaft über seine Ausgabe des Neuen Testaments," *TSK* 3 (1830) 817–45.

⁴ Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Newberry Gospels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1902); Kirsopp Lake, *Codex 1 of the Gospels and Acts* (Cambridge: University Press, 1902) xxiii. Both Goodspeed and Lake argued that since the Byzantine text came to dominate the textual tradition in the Middle Ages, the earlier forms of the text were partially preserved in documents not conformed completely to the Byzantine standard. For this reason, to ascertain the true lineage of a witness, one need only remove the Byzantine corruptions and compare the remaining portions of the text. This is readily done by collating against the *textus receptus* and comparing variants.

⁵ Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study or Origins* (5th impression; London: MacMillan, 1936) 25–76, esp. pp. 39–45. Streeter's straightforward statement of his working principle is worth citing: This "is a canon of first importance. Of MSS, whether Greek or Latin, later than the fifth century, only those readings need to be noted which differ from the standard text" (p. 44, emphasis his).

⁶ The death knell for the method was sounded by Bruce M. Metzger, "The Caesarean Text of the Gospels," in *Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual Criticism* (rpt., Leiden: Brill, 1963) 42–72. Subsequent research confirmed Metzger's

to the early labors of E. C. Colwell, it has been replaced by a thoroughgoing method of quantitative analysis.⁷ Instead of counting agreements in variation from an extrinsic standard, such as the *textus receptus*, the new approach tabulates a witness's proportional agreements with carefully selected textual representatives in *all* units of variation judged to be genetically significant. It is not necessary to rehearse here the details or superiority of the newer method of analysis. Suffice it to say that it has won virtually universal assent and has been applied with remarkable success in a number of important textual studies.⁸

Unfortunately, the major drawback of the quantitative method of analysis is frequently overlooked by those who use it. Although the method is able to determine a witness's agreements with individual representatives of the known textual groups, it cannot at all measure what is equally important: a witness's attestation of *readings* shared by the members of these groups. Gordon Fee rightly noted the problem in his pivotal study of the text of John 4 in Origen and Cyril: the occasional—sometimes frequent—occurrence of accidental agreements in error among otherwise unrelated MSS can artificially raise their proportional relationships, making them appear to be more

findings. In addition to the articles of E. C. Colwell cited in the following note, see esp. Harold Murphy, "Eusebius' New Testament Text in the *Demonstratio Evangelica*," *JBL* 78 (1954) 162–68; Gordon D. Fee, "Codex Sinaiticus in the Gospel of John: A Contribution to Methodology in Establishing Textual Relationships," *NTS* 15 (1968–69) 44; idem, "The Text of John in Origen and Cyril of Alexandria: A Contribution to Method in the Recovery and Analysis of Patristic Citations," *Bib* 52 (1971) 23–44; and Larry Hurtado, *Text-Critical Methodology and the Pre-Caesarean Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 5–13.

⁷ See Colwell's revised and updated essays in his *Studies in Methodology in Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), esp. "Method in Locating a Newly-Discovered Manuscript," 26–44; and "Method in Establishing Quantitative Relationships Between Text-Types of New Testament Manuscripts" (with Ernst W. Tune), 56–62.

⁸ Among other things, the method has been used to demonstrate the Western affinities of Codex Sinaiticus in the opening chapters of John (Fee, "Codex Sinaiticus in the Gospel of John"), to discount the notion of a pre-Caesarean text of Mark (Hurtado, *Text-Critical Methodology*), and to trace the rise and development of the Alexandrian text (Fee, "Origen's Text of the New Testament and the Text of Egypt," *NTS* 28 [1982] 348–64; idem, "P⁷⁵, P⁶⁶, and Origen: The Myth of Textual Recension in Alexandria," in *New Dimensions in New Testament Studies* [ed. Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974] 19–45; idem, "The Text of John in Origen and Cyril"; and Bart D. Ehrman, *Didymus the Blind and the Text of the Gospels* (The New Testament in the Greek Fathers 1; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986).

closely related than they actually are.⁹ Thus, a quantitative analysis that uses leading textual representatives must be supplemented with an analysis of characteristic group readings.

Although several proposals have been made for the analysis of group readings, beginning with Colwell himself,¹⁰ none has received widespread critical acceptance. Some proposals have failed to match the level of sophistication achieved by the quantitative analysis of individual MSS;¹¹ others have represented *ad hoc* creations not applicable

⁹ Fee, "The Text of John in Origen and Cyril," 367–69.

¹⁰ Before making a thoroughgoing quantitative analysis of individual MSS, Colwell proposed to analyze "multiple readings" in order to indicate the possibility of group affiliation. "Multiple readings" were narrowly defined as readings "in which the minimum support for each of at least three variant forms of the text is either one of the major strands of the tradition, or the support of a previously established group . . . , or the support of some one of the ancient versions . . . , or the support of some single manuscript of admittedly distinctive character" ("Method in Locating," 27–28). In order to demonstrate the relationship indicated by such an analysis, Colwell then proposed considering the document's support of singular readings of the group. Colwell then proposed considering the document's support of singular readings of the group. Colwell intended the initial consideration of multiple readings to save time in making a preliminary judgment of a document's textual affinities. But such an assessment would save time only if lists of multiple readings were readily available, which they are not. And while a consideration of singular readings will indicate primary group members, such readings are practically useless for establishing secondary membership since they are typically the first to be assimilated by mixture with readings of other groups. Furthermore, neither of these initial steps can indicate what must be established by a thorough quantitative analysis in any case—viz., how closely a document resembles all others in the textual tradition. It is for these reasons that many subsequent researchers bypassed Colwell's first two steps. Other researchers more wisely refrained from making an analysis of group readings until basic textual affiliation had been established by the clearest means possible, the quantitative analysis. This latter approach is to be preferred. An assessment of group readings will not save time, as Colwell anticipated, but it can serve to confirm and refine the findings of a purely quantitative analysis.

¹¹ This is true, e.g., of the profile method used by Carroll Osburn in his otherwise valuable study, "The Text of the Pauline Epistles in Hippolytus of Rome," *The Second Century* 2 (1982) 97–124. For this analysis Osburn used E. A. Hutton's earlier method of "Triple Readings," in which a document's support of readings attested uniquely by members of one of the three major text-types is tabulated. The problems of such an approach are now well known: it bases its judgments only on "distinctive" readings (which are never defined) and does not consider the group readings of any of the subgroups of the text-types. Thus, such an analysis can give a very basic picture of a document's textual affinities, but nothing more. For Osburn's study, the method was sufficient to show that Hippolytus cannot be used to establish the existence of a Byzantine tradition in the second century. Much worse is Alexander Globe's study, "The Gospel Text of Serapion of Thmuis," *Nov T* 26 (1984) 97–127. Globe's group profile method assumes the critic's ability to ascertain the provenance of textual corruption *prior* to the analysis! That is to say, Western variants are called Western, Caesarean variants Caesarean, not because they are supported

to a wide range of textual witnesses.¹² The most conscientious attempt to classify MSS on the basis of group readings is the Claremont Profile Method.¹³ This method was devised by two graduate students at Claremont, Frederick Wisse and Paul McReynolds, for their classification of the Byzantine MSS of Luke for the International Greek New Testament Project.¹⁴ A brief word concerning the shortcomings of the Claremont Profile Method, especially as envisaged and used by Wisse in his recent monograph, can demonstrate the need for a somewhat different approach to MS analysis through the use of group profiles.

The Claremont Profile Method

As is true of many methodological advances, the Claremont Profile Method was born of necessity. Wisse and McReynolds were confronted with the monstrous task of analyzing and classifying some 1,385 MSS of the Gospel of Luke, most of which were Byzantine. Early on in their work they decided not to rely on previous attempts

primarily by Western or Caesarean documents, but because in Globe's opinion, the variants originated in the West or in Caesarea. Not infrequently Globe makes such judgments quite independently of the extent and character of the MS support for the variants, on the slim basis of a reading's earliest extant representatives. In actuality, of course, the earliest occurrence of a variant tells us nothing of the place of its origin.

¹² This applies to Gordon Fee's groundbreaking study of the text of John in Origen and Cyril (see n. 5 above), where group profiles were formulated empirically rather than theoretically, that is, by considering the kinds of group alignments that occurred for the portion of text of John isolated in Origen's and Cyril's quotations and allusions. For this reason, the seventeen textual groups established by Fee in that study cannot be applied in the analysis of other witnesses for different portions of text.

¹³ For initial statements concerning the rationale and application of the Claremont Profile Method, see Eldon Jay Epp, "The Claremont Profile-Method for Grouping New Testament Minuscule Manuscripts," in *Studies in the History and Text of the New Testament* (ed. Boyd L. Daniels and M. Jack Suggs; SD 29; Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1967) 27-37; Ernest C. Colwell, Paul R. McReynolds, Irving A. Sparks, and Frederick Wisse, "The International Greek New Testament Project: A Status Report," *JBL* 87 (1968) 187-97.

¹⁴ Paul R. McReynolds, "The Claremont Profile Method and the Grouping of Byzantine New Testament Manuscripts" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1968); Frederick Wisse, "The Claremont Profile Method for the Classification of the Byzantine New Testament Manuscripts: A Study in Method" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1968). Wisse has revised his dissertation and updated the discussion in his recent monograph *The Profile Method for Classifying and Evaluating Manuscript Evidence* (SD 44; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

to classify these MSS. H. von Soden's was the only comprehensive attempt, and it was known to be woefully inaccurate.¹⁵ Thus, having to make a fresh beginning, Wisse and McReynolds felt compelled to devise a whole new method of analysis, one that would be both quick and efficient.¹⁶

In the course of their collations, Wisse and McReynolds observed that closely related groups of MSS share readings in certain combinations. That is to say, when a number of related MSS are collated, noticeable patterns of attestations are uncovered, patterns that can be readily displayed in graphic form. They conjectured that group affiliation can be established by determining the profile of readings generally supported by members of a group (that is, when two-thirds of all group members contain the readings in question). Once the patterns of attestation (= profiles) have been determined for each group, other documents need not be collated completely but only in readings that signify membership in one group or another. When a previously uncollated document generally agrees with the distinctive profile of an already established group, it can then be classified as a group member. This approach delivers the critic from the seemingly impossible task of collating all MSS against one another *in toto*. As a further time-saving measure, Wisse and McReynolds advocated applying the profile method only in sample passages, preferably at the beginning, middle, and end of a MS so as to detect possible shifts of consanguinity due to "block mixture."

There is no doubt that the Claremont Profile Method succeeds in accelerating the otherwise long and arduous process of analyzing and classifying NT MSS. Wisse repeatedly claims that with the method he can classify a previously unknown MS of Luke in only thirty minutes. But unfortunately this advantage exacts too great a toll: when used exclusively, the Claremont Profile Method leads to incomplete and even inaccurate classifications of MSS. It does this for two distinct reasons:

- (1) As already noted, the method calls for collations of sample passages to determine the textual affinities of an entire MS. For his

¹⁵ Wisse, *Profile Method*, 9–18.

¹⁶ The following summary of the method is based largely on Wisse's own description (*Profile Method*, 33–46).

analysis, Wisse chose Luke chaps. 1, 10, and 20. Not only does this choice make the method *totally inapplicable* to most of the papyri and fragmentary uncials of Luke, as Wisse himself admits;¹⁷ it also makes it impossible to determine where textual affinities shift in a MS due to block mixture. If, for example, a MS is Byzantine in most of Luke, but contains a pronounced Alexandrian element in, say, chaps. 3–8 and 12–19. Wisse’s analysis is not able to detect the mixture.

This problem, of course, could be overcome simply by applying the profile method to MSS in their entirety. W. L. Richards did exactly this in his thorough analysis of the Greek MSS of the Johannine epistles.¹⁸ Nevertheless, doing so requires considerably more time and effort, thereby undercutting somewhat the primary advantage of the method.

- (2) Even more damaging to the Claremont Profile Method are the problems that inhere in its use of *only one kind* of grouping pattern of readings. As already pointed out, the method classifies MSS according to their profiles of readings preserved in at least two-thirds of the members of a group, regardless of how well they are represented by members of other groups. Even a cursory examination of Wisse’s classifications shows that this restricted data base leads to some very obvious errors of classification. Wisse isolated fourteen distinct MS groups, twenty-two distinct MS clusters, and fourteen distinct MS pairs.¹⁹ Yet in the midst of all this complexity he was forced by his method to place Codex Vaticanus and Codex Bezae *in the same group!*²⁰ How could such disparate MSS be grouped together? And, if these previously analyzed texts are incorrectly classified, how can we be sure that other texts which we know much less about have not also been misclassified?

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁸ W. L. Richards, *The Classification of the Greek Manuscripts of the Johannine Epistles* (SBLDS 35; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977) esp. 43–71, 131–38; 206–9.

¹⁹ Wisse, *Profile Method*, 91–116. This figure does not include the subgroups within groups M and Π, nor twenty-nine MS clusters and seventeen MS pairs Wisse isolated within his K^s group.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 52, 91. The fact that Wisse was concerned in his analysis primarily with the Byzantine subgroups has no bearing on this objection. Wisse claims, in fact, that the profile of the B group is even more distinctive than those of his K subgroups.

The Claremont Profile Method cannot avoid occasional misjudgments of this kind because it does not consider enough data. In addition to considering the readings found among two-thirds of all group members, two other kinds of data must be considered for the accurate classification of the NT MSS: readings unique to each of the various textual groups, and the total amount of agreement of group witnesses in all units of genetically significant variation. Wisse himself acknowledged that his method compelled him to place MSS B and D in the same group (which did not include MS C!) because it could not consider and assess readings unique to the groups.²¹ Bezae shares virtually none of the readings distinctive of the Alexandrian group in Luke, just as the Alexandrian witnesses share virtually none of the distinctive Western readings. A *complete* analysis of group readings must therefore evaluate not only those found extensively among group members but also those found among members of one group but in no others.

Furthermore, Wisse refused to subject his MSS to a thoroughgoing quantitative analysis so as to ascertain their proportional relationship to one another in total variation. He strenuously objected, in fact, when Richards used the Claremont Profile Method only *after* making such an analysis in his study of the Johannine epistles.²² But Wisse's critique is incomprehensible given his method's inability, when used in isolation, to establish the relationship (or lack of one) between Vaticanus and Bezae. A quantitative analysis would have revealed this misclassification in no uncertain terms.²³

²¹ *Ibid.*, 91. Wisse, and especially W. L. Richards ("A Critique of a New Testament Text-Critical Methodology—The Claremont Profile Method," *JBL* 96 [1977] 555–56) repeatedly fault Colwell for relying on "distinctive" readings to determine textual groups. Anyone who has read Colwell closely knows that this is simply not true (see n. 9). The use of distinctive readings was only the second of these three steps used to establish textual affinities. By far the most important of these steps was the third, the full-blown quantitative analysis. Nonetheless, Colwell did rightly recognize that "a group is not a group unless it has unique elements. . . . The newly-found manuscript cannot be related to a group without being related to the singular readings of the group" ("Method in Locating," 30).

²² Wisse, *Profile Method*, 119.

²³ Although this judgment will be obvious to anyone familiar with the texts of these two MSS, I decided to confirm it by a quantitative analysis in Luke 1. It was not necessary to consult a whole slate of representative witnesses for this purpose—only enough to determine points of variation represented in broad streams of the textual tradition. I chose fourteen representative texts—Early Alexandrian \aleph , B; Late Alexandrian: C (?), 579, 892, 1241 (?); Byzantine: A (Wisse's Π^a group), E (K^s), Π (Π_a), Ω (K^s); Western: D (Wisse's B group), b, and e (Wisse did not include versional

Thus, the Claremont Profile Method may provide a quick means for establishing an initial judgment of a MS's textual consanguinity. But a complete and accurate analysis and classification requires (1) the collation of the full text of a MS, not sample passages; (2) a full quantitative analysis as developed and refined by Colwell, Fee, Hurtado, Richards, and others; and (3) a set of group profiles that considers not only readings found extensively within a known textual group but also those found *only* within any given group. The rest of this article will focus on the third step—the use of comprehensive group profiles for the analysis and classification of NT mss.

The Comprehensive Profile Method

The following methodological proposal was devised for an analysis of the Gospel quotations and allusions of Didymus,²⁴ the blind monk

evidence in his classification, which may have also contributed to his failure to detect the disparity between the texts of B and D); Caesarean (?) Θ. In addition I thought it would be instructive to consider the texts of *textus receptus* and UBS³ as Byzantine and Early Alexandrian respectively, although I did not use these to determine places of variation. Seventy-nine variation units were uncovered in Luke 1. Singular readings were not counted in this total, of course, nor were variants known to be genetically insignificant (nu-movable, itacism, nonsense, and the like). Table X shows the proportional relationship of all sixteen witnesses to one another in Luke 1 (the figures represent percentage agreements).

This analysis demonstrates that Bezae and Vaticanus are not at all related in Luke 1. They agree in fewer than *half* of all units of variation (35 or 78, 44.9%). B stands closer to nearly every other witness than to D (exceptions: Π, Ω) and D stands closer to all except A, Θ, Π, and 1241. In no way can these two witnesses be placed in the same group. It is of further interest that MS C, which Wisse does *not* place in the B group, agrees with every Alexandrian witness more extensively than does D. Clearly, a profile method, in and of itself, cannot adequately establish group membership.

²⁴ This study restricted itself to the NT quotations and allusions found in the works that can be ascribed with certainty to Didymus, viz., the OT commentaries discovered in Toura, Egypt in 1941. The rationale for this restricted corpus is given in Ehrman, *Didymus the Blind*, 22–29. The first notice of the Toura discovery was made by O. Guerand (“Note préliminaire sur les papyrus d’Origène découverts à Toura,” *RHR* 131 [1946] 85–108. Shortly thereafter a number of brief appraisals of the find were published: B. Altaner, “Ein grosser, aufstehen erregender patrologischer Papyrusfund,” *TQ* 127 (1927) 332–33; O. Cullman “Die neuesten Papyrusfunde von Origenestexten und gnostischer Schriften,” *TZ* 5 (1949) 153–57; J. de Ghellinck, “Récentes découvertes de littérature chrétienne antique,” *NRT* 71 (1949) 83–86; E. Klostermann “Der Papyrusfund von Tura,” *TLZ* 73 (1948) 47–50; H.-C. Puech, “Les nouveaux écrits d’Origène et de Didyme découverts à Toura,” *RHPR* 31 (1951)

who served as the headmaster of the Alexandrian catechetical school in the mid to late fourth century.²⁵ In the original study of Didymus's text, each Gospel was analyzed separately. In order to illustrate the system of group profiles advocated here, a simple composite of all the data collected from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John 1:1–6:46 will be provided.²⁶ Furthermore, although the method can be used to ascertain a witness's relationship to *any* known textual group, here it will be applied simply to Didymus's relationship to the four major text-types of the Gospels.

Quantitative Analysis of Individual Witnesses

An initial quantitative analysis showed that Didymus's Gospel text has strong Alexandrian affinities and that he seems to stand closer to the early than to the later form of that tradition (Tables I–IV).²⁷ (Fractions represent the number of Didymus's agreements over the total number of readings).

293–329. The best discussion of the find prior to the publication of any of the texts was by Louis Doutreleau, "Que savons-nous aujourd'hui des Papyrus de Toura," *RSR* 43 (1955) 161–93. Doutreleau updated this discussion twelve years later with the assistance of Ludwig Koenen, "Nouvelle inventaire des papyrus de Toura," *RSR* 55 (1967) 547–64.

²⁵ Didymus's life, work, and teachings have been the subject of three monographs in modern times: G. Bardy, *Didyme l'Aveugle* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1910); J. Leipoldt *Didymus des Blinde von Alexandria* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1905); and William J. Gauche, *Didymus the Blind: An Educator of the Fourth Century* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1934). Other helpful sketches include Wolfgang A. Bienert, "Allegoria" und "Anagoge" bei Didymos dem Blinden von Alexandrien (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972) 1–31; Louis Doutreleau, ed., *Suz Zacharie, Texte inédit d'après un papyrus de Toura: Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes* (SC 244; Paris, Cerf, 1978) 2. 1–128; Bärbel Kramer, "Didymus von Alexandrien," *Theologische Realencyclopädie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1981) 8. 85–100; and Frances Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 83–91.

²⁶ In the complete analysis of Didymus's Gospel text, it was discovered by the quantitative analysis and confirmed by the Group Profiles that the character of Didymus's text shifts drastically beginning with John 6:47.

²⁷ Space does not allow me to include a list of the relevant quotations and allusions. These are set forth in full, along with a complete critical apparatus, in Ehrman, *Didymus the Blind*. Here it can only be noted that within the full corpus of Didymus's text of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John 1:1–6:46 are 338 genetically significant units of variation.

Table I
 Witnesses Ranked According to Proportional Agreement with
 Didymus in Genetically Significant Variation in Matthew
 (163 units of variation)

1. A	16/20	80.0%
2. UBS ³	111/163	68.1%
3. 33	108/163	66.3%
4. L	104/157	66.2%
5. 892	106/161	65.8%
6. \aleph	106/162	65.4%
7. C	80/123	65.0%
8. B	105/163	65.4%
9. Π	102/163	62.6%
10. Ω	100/162	61.7%
11. fam 13	100/163	61.3%
12. E	100/163	61.3%
13. TR	99/163	60.7%
14. fam 1	98/163	60.1%
15. Δ	97/163	59.5%
16. Θ	88/159	55.3%
17. W	88/161	54.7%
18. 1241	72/134	53.7%
19. e	24/46	52.2%
20. D	62/132	47.0%
21. a	60/130	46.2%
22. b	54/127	42.5%
23. k	32/76	42.1%

Table II
 Witnesses Ranked According to Proportional Agreement with
 Didymus in Genetically Significant Variation in Mark
 (10 units of variation)

1. Ψ	10/10	100.0%
2. B	9/10	90.0%
3. 892	9/10	90.0%
4. L	9/10	90.0%
5. C	6/7	85.7%
6. UBS ³	8/10	80.0%
7. Δ	8/10	80.0%
8. \aleph	7/10	70.0%
9. Θ	7/10	70.0%
10. Π	6/10	60.0%
11. fam 13	6/10	60.0%
12. 579	6/10	60.0%

Table II (*cont.*)

13. TR	5/10	50.0%
14. A	5/10	50.0%
15. E	5/10	50.0%
16. Ω	5/10	50.0%
17. 33	5/10	50.0%
18. 1241	5/10	50.0%
19. b	5/10	50.0%
20. D	4/10	40.0%
21. W	4/10	40.0%
22. fam 1	4/10	40.0%
23. a	3/9	33.3%
24. k	1/3	33.3%
25. e	0/1	00.0%

Table III
Witnesses Ranked According to Proportional Agreement with
Didymus in Genetically Significant Variation in Luke
(125 units of variation)

1. UBS ³	91/125	72.8%
2. Ⓢ	88/123	71.5%
3. B	89/125	71.2%
4. L	88/125	70.4%
5. fam 1	87/124	70.2%
6. 579	85/122	69.7%
7. P ⁷⁵	56/81	69.1%
8. 892	85/125	68.0%
9. 33	83/124	66.9%
10. Ψ	80/125	64.0%
11. fam 13	80/125	64.0%
12. Θ	79/124	63.7%
13. Π	78/125	62.4%
14. A	77/124	62.1%
15. C	27/45	60.0%
16. 1241	75/125	60.0%
17. Δ	74/124	59.7%
18. W	72/124	58.1%
19. TR	71/125	56.8%
20. Ω	69/122	56.6%
21. b	36/86	41.9%
22. a	39/94	41.5%
23. D	46/120	38.3%
24. e	30/92	32.6%

Table IV
Witnesses Ranked According to Proportional Agreement with
Didymus in Genetically Significant Variation in John 1:1–6:46
(40 units of variation)

1. C	14/17	82.4%
2. UBS ³	31/40	77.5%
3. B	30/40	75.0%
4. 33	30/40	75.0%
5. P ⁶⁶	28/38	73.7%
6. Ψ	29/40	72.5%
7. P ⁷⁵	26/37	70.3%
8. L	28/40	70.0%
9. 579	27/40	67.5%
10. fam 13	27/40	67.5%
11. fam 1	26/40	65.0%
12. Θ	26/40	65.0%
13. A	25/40	62.5%
14. Ω	24/39	61.5%
15. TR	24/40	60.0%
16. Δ	24/40	60.0%
17. 892	24/40	60.0%
18. Π	23/40	57.5%
19. ⚭	23/40	57.5%
20. W	12/21	57.1%
21. 1241	21/37	56.8%
22. b	16/30	53.3%
23. e	14/32	43.8%
24. D	12/30	40.0%
25. a	12/31	38.7%

When the various witnesses are arranged according to textual group Didymus's textual affinities become especially clear (Table V).

Table V
Proportional Agreement with Didymus Arranged According to
Text Group in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John 1:1–6:46
(Numbers represent agreements over units of variation)

<i>Early Alexandrian</i> : P ⁶⁶ (Jn.), P ⁷⁵ (Lk., Jn.), ⚭ (Mt., Mk., Lk.), B		
Matthew	211/325	64.9%
Mark	16/26	61.5%
Luke	233/329	70.8%
Jn. 1:1–6:46	84/115	73.0%
Totals	544/795	68.4%

Table V (cont.)

<i>Late Alexandrian:</i> C, L, Δ (Mk.), Ψ (Mk., Lk., Jn.), 33, 579 (Mk., Lk., Jn.), 892		
Matthew	398/604	65.9%
Mark	53/67	79.1%
Luke	448/666	67.3%
Jn. 1:1–6:46	152/217	70.0%
Totals	1051/1554	67.6%
<i>Average Alexandrian</i>	1595/2349	67.9%
<i>Caesarean:</i> Θ; fam 1; fam 13		
Matthew	286/485	59.0%
Mark	17/30	56.7%
Luke	246/373	66.0%
Jn. 1:1–6:46	79/120	65.8%
Totals	628/1008	62.3%
<i>Byzantine:</i> A; E (Mt., Mk.); Δ (Mt., Lk., Jn.); Π; Ω		
Matthew	415/671	61.8%
Mark	21/40	52.5%
Luke	298/495	60.2%
Jn. 1:1–6:46	96/159	60.4%
Totals	830/1365	60.8%
<i>Western:</i> Ⓝ (Jn.); D; W (Mk.); a; b; e; k (Mt., Mk.)		
Matthew	232/511	45.4%
Mark	13/33	39.4%
Luke	151/392	38.5%
Jn. 1:1–6:46	81/163	49.7%
Totals	477/1099	43.4%

The quantitative analysis clearly demonstrates Didymus's Alexandrian affinities.²⁸ And since his closest neighbors appear to be the leading representatives of this group, one could classify him as an early Alexandrian witness. This was done, in fact, in the only other analysis

²⁸ This is especially the case for Luke and John 1:1–6:46, where Didymus agrees with the Alexandrian witnesses in over 70% of all variation (Colwell and Tune had determined that a document must agree approximately 70% with leading representatives of an established group to be considered a primary group member ["Method in Establishing Quantitative Relationships," 91]. Richards takes issue with this arbitrary figure but goes on to demonstrate that it does apply to members of the Alexandrian text [*Classification*, 43–69]). Even in Matthew and Mark (the latter of which, of course, lacks sufficient data to allow assured judgments) Didymus stands markedly closer to Alexandrian witnesses than any others, which justifies the initial classification of Alexandrian.

of the quotations found in the Toura commentaries.²⁹ Nevertheless, such a classification would be premature. Although an analysis of Didymus's attestation of characteristic group readings serves to confirm his essentially Alexandrian consanguinity, it also suggests that his text actually derives from a later strand of that tradition.³⁰

Three preliminary profiles were devised to establish with greater certainty the textual character of Didymus's Gospel quotations and allusions. The profiles tabulate Didymus's alignments of group readings wherever variation occurs among the representative witnesses. As previously noted, these profiles can be applied to any textual witness whose text has been fully collated. It should be observed that, following the principles commonly used for the quantitative analyses of individual witnesses, all categories of group readings apply only to units of genetically significant variation in which two or more of the representative witnesses agree against the rest.

Profile One: Inter-Group Readings

The first profile ascertains the extent and strength of a reading's attestation among previously isolated textual groups (a category not considered by the Claremont Profile Method). Two sets of readings are profiled: those whose support derives *mainly* from the members of only one group ("primary" group readings) and those supported *only* by members of one group. The latter group of readings can itself be divided into two categories: readings supported by most group members ("distinctive" group readings) and those supported only by a few ("exclusive" readings). This results then in three kinds of readings to be profiled: "Distinctive Readings"—readings shared by most group members and found in no other witnesses;³¹ "Exclusive

²⁹ Carlo Martini, "Is There a Late Alexandrian Text of the Gospels?" *NTS* 24 (1977–78) 285–96.

³⁰ For a fuller analysis, not restricted to the four main text-types, see the *fourth* profile used in Ehrman, *Didymus the Blind*, 243–53.

³¹ For this particular analysis of Didymus, distinctive group readings have been defined as follows:

- Distinctively Alexandrian: Readings found in at least two Early Alexandrian witnesses, half of the Late Alexandrian, and no others.
- Distinctively Western: Readings found in at least one Greek witness and two Old Latin MSS (when their witnesses can be adduced) and no others. When the Old Latin cannot be used readings found in two Greek witnesses.
- Distinctively Caesarean: Readings found in all the Caesarean witnesses and no others.
- Distinctively Byzantine: Readings found in all but one of the Byzantine witnesses and no others.

Readings”—readings shared by at least two group members and no others (excluding distinctive readings); and “Primary Readings”—readings shared by at least two group members and with greater group than non-group support.³²

The following table shows the frequency with which Didymus supports the distinctive, exclusive, and primary readings of the four major control groups.

Table VI
Didymus’s Attestation of Inter-Group Readings in
Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John 1:1–6:46

	<i>Distinctive</i>	<i>Exclusive</i>	<i>Primary</i>	<i>Totals</i>
<i>Matthew</i>				
Alexandrian:	1/2	4/8	9/20	14/30
Byzantine:	0/0	0/1	5/23	5/24
Caesarean:	0/0	0/7	6/18	6/25
Western:	0/13	3/19	12/28	15/60
<i>Mark</i>				
Alexandrian:	1/1	0/1	3/3	4/5
Byzantine:	0/0	0/0	0/2	0/2
Caesarean:	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0
Western:	0/2	0/2	1/2	1/6
<i>Luke</i>				
Alexandrian:	1/1	2/8	14/23	17/32
Byzantine:	0/0	0/0	2/13	2/13
Caesarean:	0/0	0/0	6/9	6/9
Western:	0/15	0/18	7/17	7/50
<i>John 1:1–6:46</i>				
Alexandrian:	0/0	0/5	4/4	4/9
Byzantine:	0/0	0/0	0/2	0/2
Caesarean:	0/0	0/0	0/2	0/2
Western:	0/4	0/5	2/9	2/18

³² “Greater group support” is defined as follows: (a) in the case of “uniform” primary readings (see the intra-group profile below), as readings supported neither uniformly by another group nor predominantly by more than one other group, nor by more than two other groups when one of them supports it predominantly; (b) in the case of “predominant” primary readings, as readings supported neither uniformly nor predominantly by another group; and (c) in all other cases, as readings supported by more group than non-group witnesses.

Table VI (*cont.*)

<i>Totals</i>				
Alexandrian:	3/4	6/22	30/50	39/76
	75.0%	27.3%	60.0%	51.6%
Byzantine:	0/0	0/1	7/40	7/41
	—	0.0%	17.5%	17.1%
Caesarean:	0/0	0/7	12/29	12/36
	—	0.0%	41.4%	33.3%
Western:	0/34	3/44	22/56	25/134
	0.0%	6.8%	39.3%	18.7%

Before evaluating these data, it may prove helpful to consider the significance of the inter-group profile in general terms. For a witness to be classified as a group member, it obviously must support a high proportion of *distinctive* group readings. The category “distinctive” itself, of course, can be useful only when representative witnesses have been chosen—scarcely ever do all witnesses of any text-type agree on a given variant reading. For this reason, a newly analyzed witness cannot be expected to agree in *every* case with readings found exclusively among the majority of already selected group representatives. But what can be expected is that Alexandrian witnesses outside the control group of MSS will *frequently* preserve such distinctive readings and that rarely will they preserve readings distinctive to other groups.

Furthermore, one would expect any group witness to contain a relatively high proportion of exclusive and primary group readings. Here a special degree of caution must be applied. Because these latter kinds of inter-group readings involve group splits, with the majority of group members sometimes opposing the exclusive or primary text, one should not be overly sanguine about establishing the same proportion of agreement in such readings as obtains in a quantitative analysis of the individual witnesses. That is to say, a 65–70% agreement with exclusive or primary readings is far more than can be anticipated, since this would inevitably involve a frequent opposition to the group’s majority text. What *can* be expected is a strikingly higher attestation of the exclusive and primary readings of one group than of those of the others.

On the basis of these theoretical observations, it should be clear that Didymus’s profile conforms to what one would expect of a good Alexandrian witness. He preserves a high proportion of distinctively

Alexandrian readings—varying in only one of four instances. No distinctive readings are found among the Caesarean and Byzantine control groups. But there is an impressive number of distinctive Western readings (thirty-four) of which Didymus preserves *none*. This statistic confirms what had already been shown by the quantitative analysis: Didymus was basically unaffected by the Western tradition.

Furthermore, Didymus preserves a markedly higher proportion of Alexandrian exclusive and primary readings than of any other group. Didymus does not preserve the sole Byzantine exclusive reading, nor any of the seven Caesarean exclusive readings, and only three of the forty-four Western. By contrast, he agrees with Alexandrian exclusive readings in more than one out of every four instances. In addition, Didymus's 60% agreement with Alexandrian primary readings contrasts sharply with his support for all the other groups: Caesarean, 41.4% agreement; Western, 39.3%; and Byzantine, 17.5%.

When Didymus's support of the three different kinds of inter-group readings is tabulated together (the Totals column), one can see with particular clarity his comparative proximity to the Alexandrian text. He agrees with over half of the Alexandrian group readings, but with only a third of the Caesarean and with less than a fifth of the Byzantine and Western.

Two major drawbacks to this first profile can be noted. First, it is based on relatively few data, which tend to be unevenly distributed among the textual groups. When no distinctive Byzantine or Caesarean readings are found among a Father's biblical quotations and allusions, the profile cannot very well illuminate his affinities with the Byzantine or Caesarean texts. With other documentary sources, of course, the data will be more numerous. Second, as previously indicated, a witness's failure to support a group's exclusive or primary readings may result from its preservation of the variant found in the majority of the group's witnesses. This in fact often proves to be the case for Didymus. These two drawbacks suggest the need to corroborate the findings of the inter-group profile with a profile that considers purely intra-group relationships.

Profile Two: Intra-Group Readings

The second profile is concerned with the extent and strength of a reading's attestation within a given group without regard to the distribution of readings found among various groups. Here two sets

of readings are profiled: those supported by *all* the representative witnesses of a group (“uniform” readings) and those supported by at least *two-thirds* of these representatives (“predominant” readings). To be included in the profile, a reading must vary from at least one other reading that is attested by at least two representatives of any group. This delimitation serves to exclude from consideration instances of accidental agreement among otherwise unrelated MSS.

The following table profiles Didymus’s attestation of uniform and predominant readings.

Table VII
Didymus’s Attestation of Intra-Group Readings in
Matthew, Mark, Luke and John 1:1–6:46

	<i>Uniform</i>	<i>Predominant</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Matthew</i>			
Alexandrian:	49/57 (86.0%)	29/45 (64.4%)	78/102 (76.5%)
Byzantine:	60/87 (69.0%)	9/16 (56.3%)	69/103 (67.0%)
Caesarean:	45/59 (76.3%)	26/56 (46.4%)	71/115 (61.7%)
Western:	25/52 (48.1%)	12/29 (41.4%)	37/81 (45.7%)
<i>Mark</i>			
Alexandrian:	4/4 (100%)	3/5 (60.0%)	7/9 (77.8%)
Byzantine:	4/8 (50.0%)	0/0	4/8 (50.0%)
Caesarean:	4/5 (80.0%)	0/4 (0.0%)	4/9 (44.4%)
Western:	1/4 (25.0%)	2/4 (50.0%)	3/8 (37.5%)
<i>Luke</i>			
Alexandrian:	33/37 (89.2%)	28/35 (80.0%)	61/72 (84.7%)
Byzantine:	39/61 (63.9%)	10/18 (55.6%)	49/79 (62.0%)
Caesarean:	47/55 (85.5%)	17/33 (51.5%)	64/88 (72.7%)
Western:	8/30 (26.6%)	7/18 (38.9%)	15/48 (31.3%)
<i>John 1:1–6:46</i>			
Alexandrian:	11/11 (100%)	13/14 (92.9%)	24/25 (96.0%)
Byzantine:	17/23 (73.9%)	0/3 (0.0%)	17/26 (65.4%)
Caesarean:	19/23 (82.6%)	3/6 (50.0%)	22/29 (75.9%)
Western:	5/10 (50.0%)	1/6 (16.7%)	6/16 (37.5%)
<i>Totals</i>			
Alexandrian:	97/109 (89.0%)	73/99 (73.7%)	170/208 (81.7%)
Byzantine:	120/179 (67.0%)	19/37 (51.4%)	139/216 (64.4%)
Caesarean:	115/142 (81.0%)	46/99 (46.5%)	161/241 (66.8%)
Western:	39/96 (40.6%)	22/57 (38.6%)	61/153 (39.9%)

Once again, some preliminary remarks about the profile may be helpful. A witness obviously cannot be classified as a *bona fide* member of a group unless it contains a high proportion of the readings shared by all or most group members. One would expect a higher attestation of uniform readings than predominant, since failure to support a predominant reading of a group occurs whenever a witness attests a primary or exclusive reading of the group's minority. Furthermore, since the predominant reading of one group will often also be that of another, this profile will not reveal the kind of radical disparities among groups as those seen in the first profile, where two of the three categories of group readings were mutually exclusive. What it does demonstrate is a witness's significantly higher support for readings of one group than for those of the others, in approximately the same proportion as was attained in the quantitative analysis of individual witnesses.

In view of these considerations, it can be seen that the intra-group profile demonstrates beyond reasonable doubt that Didymus's closest affinities lie with the Alexandrian text. Most significant is the tabulation of *uniform* readings. Didymus supports all of the Alexandrian uniform readings in Mark and John 1:1–6:46, all but eight of fifty-seven in Matthew, and all but four of thirty-seven in Luke. This 89.0% agreement contrasts sharply with his support of the other groups, particularly the Byzantine (67.0% agreement) and Western (40.6% agreement).³³

A similar profile emerges in the tabulation of *predominant* readings. Before John 6:47, Didymus is again shown to be a strong witness to the Alexandrian text, which he supports in 73.7% of all instances. He agrees with the next closest group, the Byzantine, in only 51.4% of all instances, with the Caesarean in 46.5%, and with the Western

³³ That a good group witness could vary from representative witnesses in about 10% of all uniform readings should not be surprising. The representative witnesses themselves serve to define "uniformity": these automatically agree in 100% of such readings. Any extraneous witness will naturally preserve some variation. This can be demonstrated by considering Didymus's eight variations from the uniform Alexandrian text of Matthew. It is interesting to note that if codex L were removed from the group of Alexandrian witnesses and collated against the other five representatives in Matthew, it too would preserve eight places of variation (57/65, 87.7% agreement). Thus Didymus's overall agreement of $\pm 90\%$ in Alexandrian uniform readings is not only significantly higher than his support of other groups, it is also significantly high in and of itself.

in a scant 38.6%. As already noted, Didymus supports fewer Alexandrian predominant readings than uniform because he often attests the variant of the group's minority in primary and exclusive readings.

When Didymus's support of predominant group readings is combined with that of the uniform, the profile of intra-group relationships becomes clear. Up to John 6:47, Didymus is a strong supporter of the Alexandrian text (81.7% agreement), a rather mediocre witness to the Caesarean and Byzantine groups (66.8% and 64.4% agreement respectively), and a poor representative of the Western group (39.9%).

The major drawback of this second profile is that the proportion of Didymus's agreements with the Alexandrian, Byzantine, and Caesarean groups is inevitably raised by the common occurrence of exclusive and distinctive Western readings—that is, by instances of two or three Western witnesses agreeing against all others. The distinctive and exclusive readings of the other groups, though less frequent, have a similar effect on the profile. Readings of this kind reveal less about a witness's overall affinities with the different text-types than about its failure to support a particularly aberrant form of one of the textual groups. But this negative kind of relationship was already tabulated under the categories of the first profile. Obviously what is needed is a profile that can combine the concerns of the first profile with those of the second, so as to ascertain a witness's agreements with the uniform and predominant readings of a group which happen also to be distinctive, exclusive, or primary.

Profile Three: Combination of Inter- and Intra-Group Readings

The relationship of an individual witness to a group can best be gauged by tabulating its support for readings found uniformly or predominantly among group members, but among no or few other witnesses. Naturally there will be fewer data in a profile of this sort. Nonetheless, enough exist in Didymus's case to provide a clear portrait of his group affinities.

Table VIII
 Didymus's Support of Uniform and Predominant Readings
 That Are Also Distinctive, Exclusive, or Primary
 in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John 1:1-6:46

	<i>Uniform</i>	<i>Predominant</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Matthew:</i>			
Alexandrian:	4/7	5/8	9/15
Byzantine:	3/13	0/3	3/16
Caesarean:	4/5	2/19	6/24
Western:	9/30	4/18	13/48
<i>Mark</i>			
Alexandrian:	1/1	2/2	3/3
Byzantine:	0/2	0/0	0/2
Caesarean:	0/0	0/0	0/0
Western:	0/3	1/2	1/5
<i>Luke</i>			
Alexandrian:	3/4	8/11	11/15
Byzantine:	2/11	0/1	2/12
Caesarean:	3/5	3/4	6/9
Western:	2/17	3/12	5/29
<i>John 1:1-6:46</i>			
Alexandrian:	1/1	2/2	3/3
Byzantine:	0/1	0/1	0/2
Caesarean:	0/2	0/0	0/2
Western:	2/7	0/4	2/11
<i>Totals</i>			
Alexandrian:	9/13 (69.2%)	17/23 (73.9%)	25/36 (72.2%)
Byzantine:	5/27 (18.5%)	0/5 (0.0%)	5/32 (15.6%)
Caesarean:	7/12 (58.3%)	5/23 (21.7%)	12/35 (34.3%)
Western:	13/57 (22.8%)	8/36 (22.2%)	21.93 (22.6%)

Once again the profile up to John 6:47 shows Didymus to be a good Alexandrian witness. By far his strongest affinities lie with the Alexandrian group, with which he agrees in nine of thirteen uniform readings and seventeen of twenty-three predominant. As the third profile indicates, this 72.2% agreement with Alexandrian readings is substantially greater than Didymus's support of any other

group; he attests only 34.3% of the Caesarean readings, 22.6% of the Western, and 15.6% of the Byzantine.

One way to put this profile of Didymus into perspective is by contrasting Didymus with all other witnesses with respect to their support of these Alexandrian group readings. Here we need to consider only a rank-ordering of witnesses in *predominant* Alexandrian readings that are also distinctive, exclusive, or primary (when the MSS are ranked according to uniform Alexandrian readings, the Alexandrian witnesses all stand in 100% agreement by definition). Witnesses closest to the Alexandrian text will naturally preserve these group readings with the greatest frequency. Furthermore, group members outside the control group will normally contain fewer group readings than those inside, since they were not used to establish the boundaries of the category. This consideration makes the position of Didymus in the rank-ordering of Table IX all the more remarkable.

Table IX
Witnesses Ranked According to Support of Predominant Alexandrian
Readings That Are Also Distinctive, Exclusive, or Primary
(Matthew, Mark, Luke, John 1:1–6:46)

1. P ⁷⁵	10/10	(100%)
2. P ⁶⁶	2/2	(100%)
3. \aleph	20/23	(86.9%)
4. B	20/23	(86.9%)
5. L	20/23	(86.9%)
6. C	14/18	(77.8%)
7. Didymus	17/23	(73.9%)
8. 579	10/14	(71.4%)
9. 33	14/22	(63.6%)
10. 1241	11/18	(61.1%)
11. Ψ	8/14	(57.1%)
12. 892	13/23	(56.5%)
13. e	5/10	(50.0%)
14. fam 1	11/23	(47.8%)
15. W	7/21	(33.3%)
16. D	6/22	(27.3%)
17. Δ	6/23	(26.1%)
18. b	3/12	(25.0%)
19. E	2/10	(20.0%)
20. Π	3/23	(13.0%)

21. fam 13	3/23	(13.0%)
22. A	2/16	(12.5%)
23. Ø	2/23	(8.7%)
24. Ω	2/23	(8.7%)
25. a	1/12	(8.3%)
26. k	0/2	(0.0%)

As this rank ordering demonstrates, the third profile not only indicates that Didymus preserves the Alexandrian text—it shows that he does so even better than some members of the Alexandrian control group. Didymus is obviously not a primary representative of the text-type (cf. his standing in relationship to the Early Alexandrian witnesses P⁶⁶ P⁷⁵ **8** and B). But just as obviously, he must be considered a strong secondary witness to it, at least as strong as, or perhaps somewhat stronger than, the minuscule MSS of the “Late” Alexandrian subgroups (MSS 33, 579, 892, 1241). In this sense the analysis of group profiles confirms and slightly refines the findings of the quantitative analysis—Didymus is actually a leading representative of the Late, not the Early, Alexandrian text.

Two points should be reiterated by way of conclusion: (1) this kind of group profile analysis can be applied to any witness that has already been subjected to a quantitative analysis; and (2) the profiles can be set up for any of the text groups already known to exist, all the way from the large text-types to the most narrowly defined text families. Only by applying some such supplementary analysis to the NT witnesses will we be able to ascertain accurately their position in the various streams of textual transmission.³⁴

³⁴ This article is a revised version of a paper read at the NT textual criticism section of the Society of Biblical Literature at its annual meeting, Nov. 25, 1985.

Table X
 Proportional Relationship of Representative Witnesses to One Another in Luke 1
 (79 units of variation)

	UBS ³	TR	8	A	B	C	D	E	Θ	Π	Ω	579	892	1241	b	c
UBS ³	—															
TR	48.1	—														
8	87.3	50.6	—													
A	48.1	79.7	53.2	—												
B	96.2	49.4	84.8	46.8	—											
C	48.7	68.4	59.2	64.5	50.0	—										
D	48.7	48.7	48.7	41.0	44.9	48.0	—									
E	49.4	93.7	51.9	78.5	48.1	60.5	47.4	—								
Θ	46.8	78.5	46.8	73.4	48.1	60.5	39.7	77.2	—							
Π	43.0	86.1	48.1	88.6	44.3	63.2	38.5	82.3	73.4	—						
Ω	50.8	92.3	55.4	84.6	33.8	62.9	42.2	96.9	73.8	84.6	—					
579	71.8	57.5	66.7	56.4	70.5	56.0	54.5	60.3	55.1	53.8	62.5	—				
892	65.8	67.1	65.8	60.8	67.1	57.9	48.7	65.8	63.3	62.0	64.6	62.8	—			
1241	51.9	67.1	51.9	60.8	53.2	64.5	39.7	68.4	64.6	64.6	70.8	65.4	73.4	—		
b	56.8	63.6	52.3	63.6	52.3	41.5	61.4	63.6	47.7	59.1	63.2	44.2	50.0	43.2	—	
c	54.5	50.0	47.7	56.8	50.0	36.6	59.1	56.8	43.2	52.3	57.9	46.5	45.5	40.9	69.0	—

A PROBLEM OF TEXTUAL CIRCULARITY: THE ALANDS
ON THE CLASSIFICATION OF NEW TESTAMENT
MANUSCRIPTS¹

A milestone of NT textual research was reached in 1982 when Barbara and Kurt Aland published a textbook designed, for the most part, to serve as an introduction to textual criticism. *Der Text des Neuen Testaments* represents some of the fruit of the ongoing labor at the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung at Münster. It is an impressive book in scope and detail, one that will serve the interests of beginning and advanced scholar alike. The purpose of this short article is not to review the work *per se*.² It is instead to take the opportunity afforded by the recent publication of its English translation³ to consider one of the critical issues it raises: the methodology used to classify NT MSS in terms of their textual affinities.

This is an issue raised not so much *in* the Alands' work as *by* it. Although they engage in none of the current debates about method, they devote a substantial portion of their book exclusively to providing concise descriptions and textual classifications of NT MSS. Indeed, the Alands describe and categorize *all* the known NT papyri (88 total),⁴ *all* the known NT uncials (257 total),⁵ and over 150 of the NT minuscule MSS determined to be of particular importance by the researchers at the Institute for NT Textual Research.⁶ For such a thorough and detailed collection of important data, all students of the Greek NT must be exceedingly grateful. At the same time, since this work is certain to become a standard reference tool for scholars who wish to learn the textual character of one or another

¹ Originally published as "A Problem of Textual Circularity: The Alands on the Classification of New Testament Manuscripts," in *Biblica* 70 (1989), 377–88. Used with permission.

² The following reviews of the first German edition can be noted: C. Amphoux, *ETR* 58 (1983) 405–406; J. K. Elliott, *TZ* 39 (1983) 247–249; J. Karavidopoulos, *BT* 34 (1983) 344–345; G. D. Kilpatrick, *NT* 25 (1983) 89–90; F. Neirynek, *ETL* 58 (1982) 388–391; S. Pisano, *Bib* 66 (1985) 265–266.

³ By Erroll Rhodes of the American Bible Society. *The Text of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids-Leiden 1987).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 83–102.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 102–125.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 125–155.

MS, it is extremely important to consider both how the Alands have proceeded in their analysis and what their system of classification entails.

At the outset it may be helpful to provide some context for these remarks by sketching the two methods of MS analysis and classification normally employed by scholars not associated with the Institute at Münster. Since a detailed history of these methods is available elsewhere,⁷ this sketch can be kept very brief.

The Quantitative Method of Textual Analysis and Classification

About the middle of this century scholars became disenchanted with the age-old method of classifying NT MSS by counting the number of times they agree in their variations from the Textus Receptus. This method had made sense in the early eighteenth century, when most scholars considered the TR to represent the original text of the NT fairly reliably, so that (1) departures from it represented corruptions and (2) similarly corrupted texts could be grouped together by tabulating their agreements in such departures.⁸ And the method continued to make sense even into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the TR itself was understood to represent a corrupted, later form of NT text. For then departures from TR were seen to represent vestiges of earlier textual forms, so that MSS with widespread agreements in variations from the TR could be grouped together and taken to embody non-Byzantine text types.⁹ But it came to be realized that this approach to MS classification was inherently flawed, for it grouped MSS only on the basis of some of the evidence, overlooking instances in which MSS agree with one another in places where they do not diverge from the TR.¹⁰

After several abortive attempts at developing a more adequate approach to classification, a decisive breakthrough came when Ernest

⁷ See B. D. Ehrman, “Methodological Developments in the Analysis and Classification of New Testament Documentary Evidence”, *NT* 29 (1987) 22–45 (Chapter 2, above).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 23–26.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 32–34.

¹⁰ This was first pointed out in 1945 in B. M. Metzger’s survey of research on the Caesarean text, “The Caesarean Text of the Gospels”, reprinted in *Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Leiden 1963) 42–72. See Ehrman, “Methodological Developments”, 34–36.

C. Colwell, then professor of NT at the University of Chicago, devised the so-called “Quantitative Method” of textual analysis.¹¹ In *nuce*, the quantitative method entails collating a number of MSS and establishing their proportional relationships to one another (expressed as a percentage) in all units of variation in which at least two of the MSS agree against all the others. The method works best when several of the leading representatives of previously known textual groups (e.g. Early Alexandrian, Late Alexandrian, Western, the various Byzantine subgroups) are included in the collations, and when the complete text of a NT book is analyzed rather than test passages.¹² Textual groups, then, are established on the grounds of textual consanguinity by ascertaining which witnesses have a high proportion of their texts in common, irrespective of their distance from or proximity to an external norm (e.g. the TR). After such groupings are determined the textual critic can then proceed to evaluate the significance of the groups for understanding how the NT text was transmitted over the centuries, and for reconstructing the original text of the NT—that elusive goal of the entire discipline.¹³ And in fact the method has been used with remarkable success in both these areas.¹⁴

¹¹ See his revised and updated essays, found in *Studies in Methodology in the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (Leiden 1969), esp. “Method in Locating a Newly-Discovered Manuscript”, 26–44; and “Method in Establishing Quantitative Relationships Between Text-Types of New Testament Manuscripts”, (with Ernest W. Tune) 56–62. The method was subsequently refined somewhat by other critics, notably G. D. Fee, “Codex Sinaiticus in the Gospel of John”, *NTS* 15 (1968–69) 23–44; and “The Text of John in Origen and Cyril of Alexandria: A Contribution to Method in the Recovery and Analysis of Patristic Citations”, *Bib* 52 (1971) 357–394; and L. Hurtado, *Text-Critical Methodology and the Pre-Caesarean Text* (Grand Rapids 1981) 5–13. See Ehrman, “Methodological Developments”, 34–40.

¹² Cf. e.g., Larry Richards’ analysis of the entire text of the Johannine epistles: *The Classification of the MSS of the Johannine Epistles* (SBLDS 35; Missoula 1975). See Ehrman, “Methodological Developments”, 39.

¹³ On the use of textual groupings for making textual decisions, see further pp. 66–69 below.

¹⁴ It has been used, e.g., to establish a complete taxonomy of the MSS of the Johannine epistles (Richards, *Classification*), to show the fallacy of the notions of a pre-Caesarean text (Hurtado, *Text-Critical Methodology*), to ascertain the true relationship of the Early and Late Alexandrian texts of the Gospels (B. D. Ehrman, *Didymus the Blind and the Text of the Gospels* [The New Testament in the Greek Fathers, 1; Atlanta 1986]), and to demonstrate once and for all the textual character of a host of significant textual witnesses: in addition to the works cited here and in note 10, see G. D. Fee, “Origen’s New Testament and the Text of Egypt”, *NTS* 28 (1982) 348–364; id., “P⁵, P⁶, and Origen: The Myth of Textual Recension in Alexandria”, *New Dimensions in New Testament Study* (ed. R. N. Longenecker—M. C.

It is somewhat surprising that despite the advances made by the use of this method, and indeed without even acknowledging them, the Alands go their own way in classifying NT MSS. But before detailing their approach, it would be well to mention the other method commonly employed by textual critics today, a method also bypassed by the Alands in their work.

The Claremont Profile Method

The Claremont Profile Method was devised by Frederick Wisse and Paul McReynolds for the evaluation of the Greek MSS of the Gospel of Luke for the International Greek New Testament Project.¹⁵ The committee working on this project envisaged an apparatus that would cite representative MSS of every known group and subgroup, including all of the numerous Byzantine subgroups. But there was considerable question concerning the integrity of many of the previously established groupings, particularly within the Byzantine tradition. Many of them had been established at the beginning of the century by Hermann von Soden, in his magisterial but error-ridden edition of the Greek NT.¹⁶ And a large number of MSS had never been fully classified at all. This left Wisse and McReynolds with the monstrous task of collating and classifying some 1385 MSS of the Gospel of Luke.

In the beginning stages of their work they realized that a thoroughgoing quantitative method was absolutely impracticable for a

Tenney) (Grand Rapids 1974) 19–45; id., *Papyrus Bodmer II (P⁶⁶); Its Textual Relationships and Scribal Characteristics* (SD 34; Salt Lake City 1968); id., “The Text of John and Mark in the Writings of Chrysostom”, *NTS* 26 (1979–80) 525–547; and C. D. Osburn, “The Text of the Pauline Epistles in Hippolytus of Rome”, *Second Century* 2 (1982) 97–124.

¹⁵ A full statement concerning the origin and logic of the Claremont Profile Method is provided by Frederick Wisse in an updated and revised version of his dissertation, *The Profile Method for the Classification and Evaluation of Manuscript Evidence* (SD 44; Grand Rapids 1982). For an assessment of the method, with particular attention to its shortcomings for making a thorough analysis of textual affinities, see B. D. Ehrman, “The Use of Group Profiles for the Analysis and Classification of New Testament Documentary Evidence”, *JBL* 106 (1987) 465–486 (chap. 3 above). A briefer treatment can be found in Ehrman, “Methodological Developments”, 40–44 (chap. 2 above).

¹⁶ *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, 4 vols. (Berlin 1902–11). For early assessments of the accuracy of von Soden’s work, see H. C. Hoskier, “Von Soden’s Text of the New Testament”, *JTS* 15 (1914) 307–326; and A. Souter, “Von Soden’s Text of the Greek New Testament Examined in Selected Passages”, *The Expositor*, 8th Series, 10 (1915) 429–444. More recently see Wisse, *Profile Method*, 11–12.

task of this magnitude, since it requires such time-consuming and detailed collations and statistical computations. It was their great fortune, then, that a faster and essentially reliable method¹⁷ of determining a MS's basic consanguinity emerged in the course of their work. Wisse and McReynolds came to see that MSS of the same groups and subgroups share entire sets or patterns of readings in common. Once a hundred or so MSS of a NT book have been collated in full, these patterns are fairly distinctive, so that other MSS need be collated only for the verses that contain variant readings characteristic of one or another pattern. Rather than engaging, therefore, in a statistical analysis of all the MSS in their total variation, McReynolds and Wisse proceeded to ascertain the "profiles" (i.e. the patterns of variation) of the various textual groups, and to collate other MSS so as to situate them in this or that profile.

In some respects the Claremont Profile Method has proved remarkably successful. Certainly it proved an immense aid to the International Greek New Testament Project, a project notoriously (if understandably) slow in publishing its apparatus: Wisse now claims to be able to ascertain the essential consanguinity of an unknown MS of Luke in no more than thirty minutes. And like the Quantitative Method—which is obviously a more surefire way of determining consanguinity when one is not confronted with the overwhelming task of assigning over a thousand MSS to textual groups—it has been used successfully in subsequent studies.¹⁸

But also like the Quantitative Method, the Claremont Profile Method receives no discernible attention in the Alands' book nor, apparently, in their work at the Institute. What method then do the Alands use to classify NT MSS?

¹⁷ With emphasis on the word "essentially". See the criticisms of the method in Ehrman, "Group Profiles", 468–471.

¹⁸ Apart from the International Greek New Testament Project, for example, Wisse, *Profile Method*, has published the results of his labors on the MS tradition of Luke, not only confirming in some instances the widespread assumption of the inaccuracy of von Soden's classifications, but also presenting a viable taxonomy of the Lucan MSS. Other noteworthy analyses using the method include: J. M. Alexanian, "The Claremont Profile Method and the Armenian Version", unpublished paper read at the annual meeting of 'the Society of 'Biblical Literature, New Testament Textual Criticism Section, November 1985; P. McReynolds "The Value and Limitations of the Claremont Profile Method", *SBL Proceedings* (ed. L. C. McGaughey) (n.p. 1972) 1–8; and Richards, *Classification*.

The Alands' System of MS Classification

Unlike scholars who use the Quantitative Method and the Claremont Profile Method, the Alands are not primarily concerned to locate MSS in the traditional textual groupings (e.g. Neutral/Alexandrian, Caesarean, Western) on the basis of their textual consanguinity. In part this is due to the Alands' misgivings concerning the labels given these groups: they rightly find, for example, the terms "Neutral" and "Western" to be inappropriate.¹⁹ And in part it derives from their own conception of the development of the NT MS tradition, in which they find no evidence of self-contained "Western" or "Caesarean" groups, and indeed no evidence of any clearly defined textual groups at all prior to the fourth century.²⁰ But for the most part the Alands do not classify MSS according to textual group and subgroup because their ultimate concern—ironically, as we shall see—is to determine which among the extant MSS are closest to the "original" text of the NT. In short, the Alands classify MSS according to their historical or textual proximity to the NT autographs, not strictly according to textual consanguinity.

The Alands' Five Categories

The Alands locate each NT papyrus and uncial MS, as well as some 150 minuscules, in five categories, differentiated from one another by their "usefulness" in determining the original text of the NT. Category I comprises MSS "of a very special quality which should always be considered in establishing the original text".²¹ This category includes all MSS of the (Early) Alexandrian text-type and all

¹⁹ *Text*, 50–71, esp. 67–71.

²⁰ *Ibid.* The Alands, in fact, base a great deal of their textual theory on the claim that our familiar "text-types" did not start to develop until the fourth century, making it inappropriate to classify MSS from earlier periods according to text-type. Particularly it is of no use to speak of "mixed" texts prior to the development of the "pure" texts (p. 59). But the Alands' own proposed categories for the "Early" text (i.e. prior to third-fourth centuries) present unique problems of their own. There are forty-one papyri and four or five uncials of this early period, none of whose exemplars, of course, have survived. Yet the Alands classify these MSS according to how closely they resemble their exemplars! Thus these early MSS are labeled "free" (= loose transcription of the exemplar), "normal" (= relatively faithful transcription), and "strict" (= meticulous transcription). How can a MS be known to be a strict copy of an exemplar that no critic has ever laid eyes on?

²¹ Aland, *Text*, 105.

papyri and uncials that antedate the third-fourth centuries, irrespective of their textual affinities.²² The Alands do not say whether Category I includes any *other* MSS—i.e. non-Alexandrian MSS produced after the fourth century.

Category II contains MSS “of a special quality, but distinguished from manuscripts of Category I by the presence of alien influences (particularly of the Byzantine text), and yet of importance for establishing the original text”.²³ MSS of the Egyptian text (= Late Alexandrian, i.e. less pure representatives of the Alexandrian tradition) are found here. Other MSS are found here as well,²⁴ but their textual affinities are never discussed. Of the five categories, these first two are obviously the most important. The Alands repeatedly urge beginning students to memorize their contents.

MSS located in Category III are said to have “a distinctive character with an independent text usually important for establishing the original text, but particularly important for the history of the text (e.g. f¹ f¹³)”.²⁵ This is the most amorphous of the five categories, because the Alands do not disclose how these MSS are important for establishing the original text,²⁶ nor why they are important for understanding the history of the text. Nor do they indicate what textual groupings are represented here, outside of f¹ and f¹³.

Category IV comprises MSS of the D text (i.e. those related to Codex Bezae). This is the only category established exclusively on the basis of textual affinities. Category V, however, is based largely on such considerations, containing MSS “with a purely or predominantly Byzantine text, or with a text too brief or colorless [?] to be of any real importance for establishing the original text”.²⁷

²² In their view these MSS were produced before various localities began standardizing their texts, a standardization that led to the development of text-types. See *Text*, 55–71 and the comments in note 19 above. Inexplicably, P¹¹ is not located in this category, even though it comes from the third century.

²³ *Ibid.*, 105–106.

²⁴ The Alands cite the Egyptian MSS as an *example* of what one can find in this category. But normally they do not state *why* a MS is located in Category II rather than Categories I or III. Thus, as just one of a number of peculiarities, Codex Koridethi (Θ) is found there, even though it is commonly cited as a leading representative of the “Caesarean” text, and in any case is certainly not “Egyptian” in its affinities.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

²⁶ They apparently are not as important as MSS of Categories I and II, but to what extent they are to be considered in making textual judgments is an issue that is never addressed. See further, p. 68 below.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

The Criteria for the Categories

Before evaluating the usefulness of this system of classifying MSS, in contrast, say, to the conventional system of establishing groups strictly on the basis of textual consanguinity, we would do well to consider the criteria the Alands have used to locate MSS in their appropriate categories. While the Alands do not provide all the details of this process—and indeed much of it is shrouded in mystery—they do indicate the general procedure employed at the Institute. Kurt Aland devised a list of “test passages” throughout the NT for which every MS was to be collated.²⁸ Although the Alands have not indicated which passages are involved, nor published the results of these collations, they have provided a compact summary of the statistical data considered to be crucial for locating a MS. This summary reveals the textual alignments of each MS (with sufficient text) in terms of four distinct categories: “1: agreements with the Byzantine text; 1/2: agreements with the Byzantine text where it has the same reading as the original text; 2: agreements with the original text; S: independent or distinctive readings (i.e., special readings, ‘Sonderlesarten’)”.²⁹

What do these statistical categories actually mean? Presumably “independent or distinctive” readings are readings unique or virtually unique to the witness (including accidental error? nonsense?), while Byzantine readings are those shared by the majority of witnesses of the various subgroups of the Byzantine tradition. But what are readings of the “original” text? It is here that one of the peculiar difficulties of the Alands’ system of classification begins to emerge. By “original text” the Alands mean the “Standard” text—i.e. the

²⁸ *Text*, 106, 128. In an earlier publication (“The Significance of the Papyri for Progress in New Testament Research”, *The Bible in Modern Scholarship* [ed. J. P. Hyatt] [Nashville 1965] 42–44) Aland refers to 1000 test passages drawn only from Mark, John chs. 1–10, Acts, Paul, and the Catholic epistles. Whether this is the actual number still being used at the Institute cannot be determined from the more recent publication. But since in the statistical summaries provided, several MSS are said to have from 900–950 readings (e.g., Codex \aleph with 940) that are either “original”, “Byzantine”, or “singular”, the number may be a close approximation, allowing for some readings that are not original or Byzantine but that are nonetheless shared with other MSS. If the statistical summaries provided here are drawn from this same set of test passages, it is surprising that the Alands can claim to classify MSS of the Gospels without considering any readings of Matthew, Luke, or the second half of John.

²⁹ *Text*, 106.

text reconstructed by the five editors of the UBS Greek NT (of which Kurt Aland was one) and used by the Alands for the NA²⁶ edition. This at least seems to be the position assumed throughout their discussion.³⁰ MSS with the highest incidence of readings of this “original text” are placed in Category I, as “most useful for determining the original text”, those with fewer such readings in Category II, etc.

The reader will now detect a curious bit of circularity in this proceeding. MSS are placed in Category I because they are most helpful for determining the “original text” of the NT. How do we know? Because these are the MSS that most frequently preserve the “original text” of the NT! If this reading of the Alands’ procedure is correct, then by equating the “original” text of the NT with the “Standard” text, and by using it as their basis of MS evaluation, they appear to have produced not so much a tool of MS classification as a tautology—at least for Categories I and II, which they intend to be of greatest service to their fellow-critics. These two categories will help to identify MSS that best attest the text of our two most popular editions of the Greek NT, but they will not assist us significantly in our quest to ascertain the textual nature of variant readings.

Here it should be noted that this trap of circularity is avoided by the traditional approach to classification, as devised but used imperfectly by the pioneers of the discipline such as Bentley, Bengel, and Griesbach, and developed on scientific principles by the Quantitative and Claremont Profile Methods discussed above. Even those critics who voice an absolute preference for one type of text or another (e.g. Early Alexandrian or Western) nonetheless *classify* MSS according to how extensively they relate to one *another*. Whatever their shortcomings, the traditional labels—e.g. Early Alexandrian, Late Alexandrian, Caesarean, Western, and Byzantine—imply neither value judgments nor proximity to the autographs.³¹ Within these categories, which could just as well be labeled A, B, C, and D, are located

³⁰ Consider, e.g., the following statement: “The editors of the ‘Standard text’ certainly do not claim infallibility. They do, however, recognize that to the best of their knowledge and abilities, and with resources unmatched for any manual edition of the New Testament in modern times, they have edited a text which comes as close as possible to the original form of the New Testament writings . . . It is now for translators to transmit these results to those who are unable to read the original texts of the New Testament” (306–307).

³¹ With this can be contrasted, of course, Westcott and Hort’s designation of the “Neutral” text.

MSS with wide-ranging textual similarities. In other words, establishing the textual classification of a MS, in the traditional approach, does not amount to passing a value judgment on it. It is only *after* the MSS have been classified that the groupings are considered in terms of their usefulness for determining original versus corrupt readings.

The Usefulness of the Alands' Categories

This leads now to a consideration of the practical usefulness of the Alands' five categories for evaluating textual readings. To this end it may be helpful first to review how textual groups are normally employed by critics seeking to establish the original reading of a text in the face of textual variation.

Normally textual critics find MS classification to be useful in two ways. The first has to do with the relative quality of each of the "group texts". From the earliest days of the discipline it has been recognized that MSS can be grouped together only because they share a common ancestry. Although this notion of common ancestry has led some critics down blind alleys, it is nonetheless true that MSS normally share readings in common because they ultimately derive from a common source—either from the original text or from an archetype that introduced a corruption of it. Once MSS are grouped together on the basis of their textual affinities, the textual groups can then be evaluated with respect to the kinds of readings they have in common in places in which MSS of other groups attest variation. On the basis of these evaluations, one group may be seen to approximate more closely than the others to the original text. Thus, for example, if one group typically attests readings that are harmonized with other passages or that are conflated from readings of other parts of the textual tradition, this group would typically be less valuable for determining the original text of the NT at any particular point of variation. Conversely a group that normally does not attest secondary harmonizations or conflations is more likely to preserve the original text. Thus in the traditional approach of classification, once MS categories have been established on the basis of textual consanguinity, they can be evaluated *qua* groups, and so be used in making textual decisions, the superior group(s) being given greater weight than the inferior at any given point.

The second way critics use textual groupings is by considering

groups not in terms of their individual superiority but in their patterns of combination with one another in support of a given reading. Without going into all the complexities of this procedure, it can be stated simply that certain combinations of group support, in the judgment of most critics, provide strong evidence for the genuineness of one variant reading over another. Thus, e.g., a reading found only in Early Alexandrian and Western texts is commonly judged original, given the early dates and apparent independence of these two textual groups. Similarly, but somewhat less expectedly, it has been impressively demonstrated by G. Zuntz (and to my knowledge his arguments have never been refuted) that Byzantine readings with Western support (understood here in a geographical sense) have a superior claim to being original.³²

Now quite apart from the validity of this or that particular detail in these two common applications of manuscript groupings, one should ask whether the categories proposed by the Alands can be used similarly, and if not, how they *are* practicable. An interesting irony here, as the careful reader will have already surmised, is that of the Alands' five categories, only the final two—the ones devaluated by the Alands as of almost no use for establishing the original text of the NT—can actually be used by the critic in evaluating a reading with respect to group support. For only these two categories are based entirely on considerations of textual consanguinity.³³ They can therefore be utilized in either of the ways just discussed: if for instance, the D and Byzantine texts are understood normally to preserve inferior readings wherever variation is present, then a reading found exclusively among the MSS of Categories IV or V is automatically suspect. And if a reading is found in both of these Categories, it could, at least in theory, have a claim to authenticity.³⁴

³² *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition on the Corpus Paulinum* (London 1953) esp. 55–56; 213–215.

³³ Even in Category V, however, there is some room for doubt, since the Alands admit that not only Byzantine but also MSS with too brief or “colorless” texts are included there.

³⁴ It must be pointed out, however, that since Zuntz really did mean Western in the geographical sense, not as a designation of the D text, he would not have argued for the authenticity of readings found jointly in Alands' Categories IV and V, but would have agreed with most critics who see such combinations as Western readings taken over by the Byzantine tradition.

What of the remaining three categories? Category III, at least as presented by the Alands here, is of little practical use to the textual critic. All we know of this group is that it includes the MSS of f^1 and f^{13} , along with a veritable host of others, and that these MSS, while somewhat useful for establishing the original text of the NT, are particularly important for reconstructing the history of the text. But we are not told how they can be used for either of these purposes, nor what the exact grounds were for placing MSS in this group—except, of course, that they do not attest the Byzantine, D, or “original” texts to as great an extent as MSS of the other categories. And since a MS is *not* placed here because it is textually similar to other MSS in the group, it could well share a higher number of readings with MSS of other categories than with those of Category III. Thus a list of MSS labeled Category III, when they are not further classified with respect to their individual textual affinities, is really of very limited practical use.

What now of the MSS in Categories I and II? Unfortunately, even though the Alands consider these categories to be most valuable for textual critics, their usefulness is seriously restricted by the way they have been established, i.e. apart from the strict consideration of textual consanguinity. As pointed out, MSS are located in these categories not because they necessarily bear a close relationship to one another, although in many instances this of course will be true as well, but because individually they stand in close (Category I) or relatively close (Category II) proximity to the “original” text. Thus the Alands tell us explicitly that Category I includes the oldest extant MSS, despite the fact that many of these are textually unrelated to the Alexandrian MSS that are also found here. And while one can know that the Alands consider the MSS of Category I to be superior to those of Category II—either because of their greater age or proximity to the Standard text—they do *not* reveal what is equally important to know: what scientific grounds have been used to distinguish between the MSS of the two categories. *How much* “foreign” influence requires a MS’s demotion to Category II? Apparently the “foreign influence” characteristic of these Category II MSS is not a *shared* influence—i.e. these MSS are not located in Category II because they have the same textual corruptions, but because they share a greater or lesser distance from that amorphous norm, the “original text”.

How then can these two categories be used? Not in either of the

ways scholars have traditionally used MS groupings. One cannot consider the *kinds* of variation attested in Category I or II and thereby ascertain the kind of text represented there, so as to evaluate its quality. The Alands have already told us that the groups are not based exclusively on the grounds of textual consanguinity. Nor can the critic speak of a convincing combination of group support for a variant reading, for the same reason.

How then are the classifications to be used in evaluating the external evidence for a set of variant readings? Apparently the critic is supposed to ascertain which reading is supported most extensively by the MSS that the Alands have prejudged to be “most useful”. Not only does this amount to little more than counting MSS—although to be sure it is now counting MSS in their pre-weighed categories—but it also involves the critic once again in a curious bit of circularity. For if the critic wants to determine which variant reading is original, and uses the Alands’ categories to decide, then the reading already found in today’s critical editions will in virtually every instance be given the palm. That is to say, by counting the support of Category I and II MSS for a reading—MSS that by definition stand closest to the “standard” text shared by the UBS³ and NA²⁶ editions—one will simply discover the reading of these editions.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The criticisms leveled at the Alands’ approach to MS classification here are not meant to detract from the other merits of their book. *The Text of the New Testament* is an otherwise impressive introduction to text-critical theory and to the modern critical editions. And as previously indicated, all NT scholars—textual specialists and non-specialists alike—are deeply in the Alands’ debt for such convenient summaries of such extensive and significant textual data. But the Alands’ classification of Greek MSS according to their “usefulness” in establishing the original text of the NT is circular and impracticable. If textual witnesses are to be used to reconstruct the original wording of the NT, and not simply evaluated in terms of their proximity to a pre-determined “original”, then a precise determination of their textual affinities *to one another* continues to be a *sine qua non*. How then are we to proceed?

The surest measure of a witness's textual consanguinity is its proportional relationship to other witnesses in total variation. Demonstrating such relationships is the sole aim of the "quantitative method" of analysis. As we have seen, this method operates totally without bias as to the superiority of one witness or group over another. And its sophisticated applications in recent years have repeatedly vindicated the method by providing clear and compelling results. Future work in MS classification will necessarily continue its systematic use.

At the same time, several recent studies have demonstrated a drawback to the use of the quantitative method when used in isolation.³⁵ Because it considers the relationships of individual witnesses only to one another, there are occasionally instances of otherwise unrelated MSS sharing a higher than expected proportion of their readings due to "accidental agreements in error". While the phenomenon is not so widespread as to skew the results of a quantitative analysis altogether, it is common enough to require a supplementary method to provide nuance to its findings. Just such a method is at hand in the Claremont Profile Method and the other profile methods that have been devised more recently to match the level of sophistication achieved by the quantitative method.³⁶ Rather than calculating the number of instances in which witnesses agree in total variation, these profile methods evaluate a witness's attestation of readings that are characteristic of known textual groups. In effect, the method minimizes the impact of "accidental agreements". The use of such profiles, then, serves to confirm and refine the results obtained by a quantitative analysis.

Consequently, the most accurate way to classify the witnesses of the NT text is to use the quantitative and profile methods in tandem.³⁷ As we have noted, only when such classifications have been made can the textual groups be evaluated in terms of their relative merits, both individually and in combination. And only then can we forge ahead with confidence to reconstruct the original text of the NT and the history of its subsequent transmission.

³⁵ See esp. Fee "Text of John in Origen and Cyril"; Richards, *Classification*; and Ehrman, *Didymus the Blind*.

³⁶ See Ehrman, "Group Profiles".

³⁷ As is done, for example, in the works cited in n. 14 above. One the problems of using the Claremont Profile Method in isolation, without a quantitative analysis, see Ehrman, "Group Profiles", 468–471.

THE TEXT OF THE GOSPELS AT THE END OF THE SECOND CENTURY¹

Introduction

Diversity in Second-Century Christianity

The end of the second century was a period of almost unparalleled diversity in early Christianity. Christian communities dotted the Mediterranean—some of them comprising hundreds of believers, others only a handful. These communities were in no way monolithic. In some localities, the chief Christian presence was Marcionite; in others it was Ebionite; in others it was Gnostic; in others Montanist. For many of these places, Marcionite Christianity, or Ebionite, or Gnostic, or Montanist was not an offshoot of a larger confession, but was the principal form of Christianity that was known. In these places, this was Christianity.²

Among other things, this means that people throughout the Empire who professed faith in one God, or two Gods, or thirty-two gods, or 365 gods, were all claiming adherence to the teachings of Jesus. Some of these groups taught that Jesus himself was a divine being, and therefore not human; others taught that he was human and therefore not divine; others taught that he was God the Father, who temporarily became human; others taught that he was eternally distinct from God the Father, a different divine being who had become human; others taught that he was himself two separate beings, one divine and one human. Some of these groups revered the Jewish Scriptures as the oracles of God; others rejected these Scriptures as inspired by an evil deity. Some of these groups maintained a sense of their Jewish identity as Jesus had before them; others rejected Judaism as a falsified religion and Jews as Christ killers. Some of

¹ Originally published as “The Text of the Gospels at the End of the Second Century,” in *Acta Colloquii Lunelii: Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis*, ed. C.-B. Amphoux and D. C. Parker. New Testament Tools and Studies; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996, pp. 95–122. Used with permission.

² For fuller discussion and documentation of the various points in this opening section, see Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption*, 1–46.

these groups proclaimed the equality of all persons in Christ, Jew and Gentile, slave and free, men and women, and implemented this equality in their church polity, men and women having an equal share in authority and office. Others taught a divinely sanctioned hierarchy, in which women were to be subjugated to men and not allowed to teach or exercise authority.

So far as we can tell, all of these groups appealed to written authorities for their views, texts that were allegedly penned by apostles. Some groups subscribed to Gospel accounts written in the names of Thomas or Philip or Peter, or attributed to Matthew or John or Mark. We know of Christians in the TransJordan who adopted a Hebrew Gospel similar to our own Gospel according to Matthew, of Christians in Egypt who used the Gospel of the Egyptians, of others there who accepted the Gospel of the Hebrews, of yet others who subscribed to the Gospel according to Thomas; there were Christians in Rhossus who revered the Gospel of Peter, Christians in Rome who read a synopsis of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Christians in Syria who read an expanded version of this that included John, Christians in Alexandria who read *only* John, and Christians in Asia Minor who read only Luke, and that in a somewhat truncated form.³ Some of these groups used only one Gospel as their text of Scripture; others appealed to a wide range of available texts as authoritative.

We know, of course, that these various Christian groups did not conduct their affairs in total isolation. There was constant interaction among them—often in the form of polemical confrontation. Moreover, each of the groups had to deal with the problems of existence in a hostile wider environment, that is, with the difficulties imposed by the social realities of the Roman world, where the pagan populace sometimes expressed suspicion and hatred, where civil authorities sometimes took measures of oppression, and where the religious community of the Jews from which most of these groups traced their religious lineage generally held them in contempt.

For a variety of historical reasons, not directly germane to this

³ The historian who looks at this wide-ranging diversity should probably think of the various perspectives held by a group and the religious authorities used to back them up as standing in a kind of symbiotic relationship. Certain documents were conducive to particular points of view; these documents were both produced in light of these views and accepted as authoritative because of them. Apostolic authorship proved to be a convenient resource in this question of authorization, and so far as we can tell was appealed to by all of the groups in question.

paper, one of these Christian groups eventually emerged as predominant.⁴ This is the group that established the creeds that became determinative of “true” Christianity from the fourth century on, and that produced revisionist histories of the church that continue to inform the way Christians, even Christian scholars, uncritically think of the earlier period. Eusebius, of course, was a chief spokesperson for this victorious party.

The Text Critic and Early Christian Diversity

For the historian of the period, there is much here that is of interest and intrigue. For the textual critic, the questions that emerge are necessarily restricted. The questions focus on the books held to be authoritative by the Christian groups of the period, and their manual transmission prior to the invention of machines capable of flawless reproduction.

It was the more highly educated members of these groups, of course, who reproduced this literature, one letter at a time. These Christians copied the texts over and over, by hand, for use in their communities and, in somewhat rarer instances, for the private use of some of their wealthier members. So far as we can tell, the copyists of the second century were not professional scribes; they happened to be the literate minority capable of doing the job of transcription. And, as we know beyond any reasonable doubt, when they copied their texts, they made changes in them.

Most of these changes appear to have been accidental—the misspelling of a word, the displacement of a phrase, the omission of a line. But others appear to have been the result of conscious effort. One of the questions that critics have occasionally asked (in fact, far too occasionally) is how the social and theological contexts within which these scribes worked affected these conscious changes.⁵ The question has not received a definitive answer, in part because our myopic concern to establish the *original* text of these documents has blinded our eyes to the value of our textual data—that is, the changes of the original texts—for helping us situate their transcriptions in the social world of early Christianity.

⁴ Ehrman, *op. cit.*, 1–46.

⁵ See the discussion in *ibid.*, 26–31 and *passim*, and *idem*, “The Text as Window: New Testament Manuscripts and the Social History of Early Christianity”, in Ehrman and Holmes, 361–379 (pp. 100–19 below).

The problem has not only been our myopia, however. Even scholars concerned to know about the transmission histories of the early Christian texts *in se* have been confronted with serious methodological problems. One of the most severe is beyond anyone's ability to resolve: outside of the books that had the good fortune to become part of the restricted canon of orthodox Scripture, we have very little evidence to indicate how early Christian scribes modified their texts. What would we give for a complete copy of the Gospel of Peter, or of the Egyptians, or of the Ebionites, let alone for multiple copies that we could compare with one another so as to determine the original text and the character of its subsequent corruption! Most of the extra-canonical documents that we have simply do not lend themselves to this kind of study.

But even those that made it into the canon are problematic for anyone interested in knowing how Christian scribes in the second century went about their task. The problem is not that we do not have abundant copies of these texts; in most instances, we do. The problem is that most of these copies are so late, centuries—sometimes many centuries—removed from this period of our concern. How can we speak of the transmission of documents of the second century when most of our evidence is centuries removed?

The Question of Method

There are in fact ways to proceed. Let me briefly mention three that have been used, with relatively good success, by scholars in the past, and then propose a related fourth, which I will then utilize throughout the remainder of this paper.

The most certain approach to establishing the transcriptional habits of early Christian scribes is to restrict the investigation to manuscripts that were actually produced in the period, insofar as this can be determined by the relatively imprecise science of palaeography. This was the procedure used by Colwell to establish early scribal habits, and now more recently by James Royse in a ground-breaking dissertation that is soon to be published and by Peter Head in a brief but useful article.⁶ The principal difficulty with this approach

⁶ James R. Royse, "Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri", (Th.D. Dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, 1981), and Peter Head, "Observations on Early Papyri of the Synoptic Gospels, especially on the 'Scribal Habits,'" *Bib* 71 (1990), 240–47.

is that the data are severely limited, particularly if one is specifically interested in the transmission of the text in the second century, to which not even such early manuscripts as P⁴⁵ and P⁶⁶ can be dated with confidence; moreover, even if one includes the early- or mid-third century papyri, these are all of Egyptian provenance, most of them attesting the Alexandrian form of text, remarkable not for the character of its variations so much as for its proximity to our reconstructed originals. These do not provide the best data, then, for understanding how the text was modified outside of the rigorously controlled conditions of transcription associated with Alexandria.

A second option is to focus the investigation on second-century Christian sources outside of the manuscripts—for example, by examining the writings of the early church fathers and, on the basis of their quotations, reconstructing the character of the manuscripts they had at their disposal, even though these no longer survive. The problem here, again, is the scarcity of our evidence. None of the so-called apostolic fathers presents us with clear and certain citations of the New Testament documents to any extent (if they cite these documents *at all*).⁷ And the problem does not much improve when we come to Justin, whose citations of the Christian Scriptures (as opposed to his Old Testament) yield very little of use for the textual critic. Hippolytus provides us with some information, portions of which have in fact been analyzed, as do Irenaeus and Tertullian.⁸ The analysis of the latter two, however, is aggravated by the problems involved in using Latin (in which Tertullian wrote and Irenaeus is by and large preserved) for reconstructing manuscripts transcribed in Greek. In short, not until Clement of Alexandria and Origen do we have church fathers whose abundant and consistent citations of our New Testament texts provide us with the kind of data we need; and at this point we are already at the end of the second century and beginning of the third, in the latter case, somewhat beyond the period of our concern.⁹

⁷ Helmut Koester argues that they do not. *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den apostolischen Vätern* (TU, 65; Berlin Akademie Verlag, 1957).

⁸ See Carroll Osburn, "The Text of the Pauline Epistles in Hippolytus of Rome", *Sec Cent 2* (1982), 97–124 and Sanday and Turner.

⁹ Although see my references to Heracleon, below. On Clement, see esp. Michael Mees, *Die Zitate aus dem Neuen Testament bei Clemens von Alexandrien*. Rome, 1970. For Origen, see now Bart D. Ehrman, Michael W. Holmes, and Gordon D. Fee, *The Text of the Fourth Gospel in the Writings of Origen* (SBLNTGF 3; Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), and the literature cited on p. 30, n. 13.

Perhaps the easiest way to bypass the difficulties posed by the scant remains of the second century is to argue—as a wide range of scholars have done, with considerable success—that variations preserved in manuscripts of later centuries accurately reflect changes effected in this early period.¹⁰ The most convincing demonstration of this thesis involves the remarkable circumstance that in virtually no instance has the discovery of a new papyrus provided us with a reading that was altogether unknown from already available evidence. This is one indication that, as Günther Zuntz recognized, later scribes, working in an age in which the words of the text themselves took on increasing theological importance, were less inclined to modify these words apart from their knowledge of an earlier precedent.¹¹ That is to say, later variations tend to reflect earlier ones, so that readings attested throughout the later tradition appear to represent changes made in the earliest stages of transmission.

As I have intimated, there is yet a fourth way to approach the text of the second century on the basis of later evidence. This is to take a solitary witness and establish that the basic form of its text was available in the period from which we have so few surviving remains. Needless to say, not every witness can serve this purpose. Codex Bezae, however, is a prime example of one that can.

Two recent studies have confirmed the opinion expressed by some of our predecessors of the nineteenth century that Bezae, an early-fifth century manuscript, attests a form of text that in its broad contours derived from at least the end of the second century. Without going into the complexities of these analyses, I can here simply refer to David Parker's detailed and incisive study of the bilingual character of Bezae's text, which appears to have derived from a tradition going back at the very latest to the start of the third century,¹² and my own analysis of the citations of the Fourth Gospel in the writings of Heracleon, as preserved in the quotations of Origen.¹³ The latter analysis showed that Heracleon, writing in Rome around the year 170, had access to Greek manuscripts of John that were in many respects similar to those underlying the Greek side of Codex Bezae. My conclusion was that something like this fifth-century man-

¹⁰ See Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption*, 28–29, and especially the bibliography cited in nn. 112 and 113.

¹¹ *Epistles*.

¹² Parker, *Codex Bezae*, 261–78.

¹³ “Heracleon and the Western Textual Tradition”, *NTS* 49 (1994), 465–86 (chap. 15 below).

uscript must have been already available by the mid-second century, at least in the city of Rome.

It is important to be quite clear concerning what these and related studies have, and have not, shown about the relationship of Codex Bezae to the textual tradition of the second century. On the one hand, they have *not* shown that the text of Codex Bezae represents an established text-type of the second century. This point cannot be emphasized too much. The only way to demonstrate the existence of a text-type is through a statistical model that quantifies the relationships among manuscripts at significantly high levels of agreement. It is not enough to show that certain manuscripts have a few, or several, or a number of agreements in interesting readings. Such individual readings may be important, but they do not establish the existence of a text-type. Text-types must refer to groups of manuscripts that agree in the *total number* of their variant readings at a statistically significant level.¹⁴ No one has been able to establish the existence of the so-called Western text on such grounds, and so we must continue to speak of it in inverted quotation marks.

At the same time, and at the other extreme, these studies *have* shown that our so-called Western witnesses do in fact share a number of significant variant readings, and that in these readings these witnesses have to be understood as genealogically related. This point as well needs to be stressed emphatically: Codex Bezae agrees with a range of Old Latin and Old Syriac manuscripts in a number of important readings, many of which are also attested by several church fathers of the second century (with Heracleon now being the best documented) and by codex Sinaiticus in the opening eight chapters of John and by several of our fragmentary papyri. The extent of these agreements may not be statistically significant in terms of text-type analysis, but they do exist, and must be taken into account.

They are *not* taken into account, however, by those who claim that the so-called Western witnesses agree not in their readings but only in their transcriptional tendencies—the compromise reached by David Parker, in his otherwise impressive study.¹⁵ The compromise

¹⁴ No one has been able to improve significantly on E. C. Colwell's discussion of these issues. See the essays in Colwell, *Studies*, esp. chs. 1–4.

¹⁵ *Codex Bezae*, "The apparent confederacy of what was once described as the 'Western text' is a similarity not in detail, but in character. We have not a text, but a genre. That is why the representatives of this free genre are distinct from all other types, but puzzlingly unlike each other" (p. 284).

is unhappy, however, because it overlooks the fact that Bezae not only agrees with other witnesses in the kinds of variation that it attests, but also in specific readings that manifest these tendencies. In these readings, Codex Bezae is necessarily related to the other witnesses that attest them.

What then are we left with? We have an early fifth-century manuscript that does indeed reflect the kinds of variation that we find in other witnesses, kinds of variation that intimate similar tendencies in the transmission of the text. Even more than that, however, we have specific manifestations of these tendencies in variant readings preserved throughout the tradition. The readings of Codex Bezae are not only like those found in other witnesses; often they are actually the same readings and can scarcely be explained apart from the existence of some kind of genealogical relation. These readings do not, however, occur with sufficient frequency to justify labeling these witnesses a text-type.

In sum, Codex Bezae must be like manuscripts that were available in the second century. But we cannot reconstruct the precise contours of these other witnesses. They would have shared many of the readings that we now have in Codex Bezae. And they would have had others that it does not preserve, but that are similar in tendency.

For the purposes of the present study, it is enough to know that by studying Bezae—even though it does not stand within an established text-type—we can get a fairly clear understanding of the kinds of changes that were being made in this earlier period. In the brief analysis that follows, I can do no more than highlight a few of these changes in light of the questions with which I began. I will focus my attention on Bezae's text of the Gospels. How do the variant readings of this manuscript relate to the social and theological contexts of the Christian scribes of the second century?

Since the surviving textual tradition has been preserved by the party that emerged victorious from the internecine conflicts of the period, we might expect it to attest principally the concerns of scribes sympathetic with the proto-orthodox cause. And in fact, this is largely what we do find. Specifically, variant readings of Codex Bezae—some unique and some shared with other witnesses—relate to such matters as the christological controversies of the second century, the rise of Christian anti-semitism in the period, the increasing oppres-

sion of women in the church, the impact of Christian *apologia*, and the rise of Christian asceticism.

Christological Changes in the Text

Some of the most extensively documented changes in the textual tradition of Codex Bezae involve variant readings that relate closely to the christological controversies of the second century. As I have already indicated, this was a period of intense debate, where the issues were larger and the consequences greater than in the nuanced discussions of the later third, fourth, and fifth centuries. This was a time when Christians could not agree whether Jesus was divine, or human, or both, and whether he was one being or two. These debates came to be reflected in our textual tradition, and that preserved by Codex Bezae was itself not exempt. Here I can do no more than provide several illustrative examples culled from the mass of surviving data.¹⁶

Among the Christians who were branded as “heretics” by the proto-orthodox of the second century were various docetists, of whom the followers of Marcion are perhaps the best known. Believing that Christ was totally divine, and therefore not true flesh and blood, Marcionites were castigated by those who insisted that if Jesus were not fully human, he could not have shed blood and died to bring about the salvation of the world. Thus proto-orthodox Christians of the second century, with thinkers like Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian as their literary representatives, insisted on Jesus’ full flesh and blood humanity, and correspondingly on his real death as a sacrifice for sins.

These views made their appearance in certain modifications of the texts of the Gospels. One of the most hotly disputed passages in this connection is the account of Jesus’ prayer on the Mount of Olives prior to his arrest, found in some manuscripts of Luke (22:43–44), where he is said to have “sweat great drops as if of blood”, and to have received an “angel from heaven” come to strengthen him in his time of trial.¹⁷

¹⁶ All of the important variations in question are discussed more fully in *Orthodox Corruption*.

¹⁷ The passage is located after Matthew 26:39 in the manuscripts of f¹³.

In 1983 Mark Plunkett and I published a full discussion of the passage which maintained that the disputed verses were not original to Luke's Gospel, but were added in the second century by scribes intent on demonstrating that Jesus was fully subject to the anxieties and distresses that plague the human condition.¹⁸ Here I need simply point out that even though the verses are not present in our only papyrus manuscript of Luke extant at this point (P⁷⁵), they are present in Codex Bezae and others of the so-called "Western" tradition. In this particular instance, however, the manuscript alignments are not sufficient to render a decision concerning the text: even though the earliest and best manuscripts do not have the verses, they are widely attested elsewhere. The decisive arguments instead involve intrinsic probabilities: this image of Jesus in agony prior to his arrest is altogether at odds with Luke's portrayal of Jesus everywhere else in the Passion narrative—where he is consistently shown to be calm and in total control of himself and his situation; moreover, the verses appear to intrude into an otherwise clear literary structure that highlights not Jesus' agony but the utility of his prayer.¹⁹

¹⁸ "The Angel and the Agony: The Textual Problem of Luke 22:43–44", *CBQ* 45 (1983), 401–16. I have extended and updated the argument in *Orthodox Corruption*, 187–94.

¹⁹ Raymond Brown has offered the most persuasive argument in favor of the verses, in his recently published work, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1. 179–84. He is not at all persuaded by the literary argument that Plunkett and I adduce, namely that the verses intrude into an otherwise clear chiasmus. He likens our proposed chiasmus to that which could readily be found in any number of passages in "a paperback thriller." In response I have to say that I find this argument more rhetorically effective than convincing. If this kind of chiasmus is so common that it can be found in any dime-store thriller, why is it, or something similar, not found in Matthew or Mark? (Brown cites no comparable instances in the parallel passages, in the Passion narratives as a whole, or indeed, elsewhere in the entire New Testament.) Moreover, since Luke has produced his account by remodeling the version he found in Mark (as Brown and I agree), are we to think that he accidentally created this chiasmus, unawares?

The real point is not whether there is a chiasmus here (Brown acknowledges that there is one, but thinks that it is trite); the point is that with the insertion of the verses the focus of attention shifts from the Lukan theme of Jesus at prayer to the otherwise non-Lukan theme of Jesus in agony. Nor will it do to claim that the visiting angel and sweaty blood constitute God's *answer* to Jesus' prayer, as Brown is forced to do by his inclusion of the verses. For if these are God's answer, why then would Jesus be compelled to "pray yet more fervently" *after* receiving this beneficent response? In these verses Jesus is not the calm and tranquil martyr we find elsewhere in the Third Gospel; here he fears for his life and struggles to face a destiny that he does not want and cannot avoid. This is not Luke's Jesus. For further discussion, see my treatment in *Orthodox Corruption*, 187–94.

Even though Codex Bezae is one of our earliest *manuscripts* to attest the reading, it is found yet earlier in several quotations of the Church Fathers. What is striking is that the three earliest authors to cite the passage—Justin, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus—all use it to show that Jesus’ bloody sweat proves that he must have been a real flesh and blood human being.²⁰ Since the verses do not appear to be original on internal grounds, and since they served such a clearcut purpose in the authors who initially cite them, we have good reason to suppose that their intrusion into the text of Luke at roughly the same period can be explained on similar grounds. At the very least we are safe to say that the verses *functioned* in this way, once they had been interpolated into Luke, that is, in the context of anti-docetic polemic.²¹

Other variants of Codex Bezae appear to have functioned similarly.²² Here I should emphasize, however, that neither this manuscript nor the tradition it represents should be thought of as uniquely “anti-docetic.” Quite the contrary, there are a number of anti-docetic modifications of the second-century text of the Gospels not found in Codex Bezae. This appears to be the case, for instance, with the infamous Western non-interpolations.²³ Over a century ago, Hort made a convincing case for every one of the nine instances that he judged, on internal grounds, to be shorter Western readings that preserve the original text against all other witnesses; and the addition of the papyri discovered since his brilliant *tour de force* has done nothing to alter the situation.²⁴

²⁰ References and discussion in *Orthodox Corruption*, 193.

²¹ It is less persuasive to argue, with Brown, that the verses were deleted by Christians concerned with their portrayal of a weak Jesus in the face of pagan assaults on Jesus’ divine character. Why do we need to speculate on how these verses would have struck writers of the second century, when we know how it struck them? Every author from the second century who cites the verses uses them to show that Jesus was a real human being. Interestingly, not even the apologist Justin appears to have feared the implications of the verses in the face of pagan opposition.

²² See my discussion in *Orthodox Corruption*, 221–23.

²³ The non-interpolations should *not* be re-labeled “Alexandrian interpolations”, as Bill Petersen and others have argued; what is distinctive about them is not that they happened to show up in Alexandria, but that they show up everywhere except in certain witnesses of the so-called Western tradition.

²⁴ See my extended discussion in *Orthodox Corruption*, 223–28. Here I might stress a point that I make there: it is nonsense to charge Hort (as some of his critics have done) with inconsistency for not considering every instance of a shorter Western reading original. Each case has to be decided on its own merits. I differ from Hort on his list of authentic “non-interpolations” only insofar as I think that he should have included John 12:8 among them.

Hort's discussion can be faulted on only one ground: it failed to provide an adequate historical accounting for these interpolations into the second-century text. In fact, every one of them appears to have functioned as a kind of anti-docetic polemic. This includes not only the spear thrust of Matthew 27:49, which serves to show that Jesus had a real body that could really bleed and die, and the longer narrative of the Institution of the Lord's Supper in Luke 22:19–20, which stresses that Jesus' actual death (blood and body) was necessary for salvation ("given for you"), and the longer account of Peter's visit to the tomb in Luke 24:12, which emphasizes that Jesus was buried and raised in the body, an actual physical resurrection attested by the chief of the apostles—it is also true of the relatively minor changes effected in the other non-interpolations of Luke 24.²⁵ Interestingly enough, Codex Bezae appears to preserve the original text against all other Greek manuscripts in these instances. Among other things, this shows that the tradition within which it stands was not unique in incorporating anti-docetic corruptions; the tendency appears to have infiltrated the traditions of the second century.

Something similar can be said of corruptions that functioned to combat a christological view of a quite contrary impulse. As opposed to docetists like Marcion, adoptionists like the Ebionites stressed that Jesus was fully human, that he was in fact so thoroughly human as to be in no sense divine. For them, he was a righteous man chosen by God to be his Son, adopted to sonship, at his baptism. In this the Ebionites differed not only from the Marcionites, of course, but also from the Valentinians, and the Montanists, the proto-orthodox, and virtually everyone else who maintained that Jesus was God.

The proto-orthodox who were by and large responsible for our manuscripts incorporated their views into the surviving texts at certain junctures; none of the early textual traditions can lay claim to them all. Indeed, as was the case with the anti-docetic variations, one of the most interesting anti-adoptionist changes of the text does not occur in Codex Bezae. This is the modification of the words spoken from heaven at Jesus' baptism in Luke, where Bezae and several of its versional allies stand alone in attesting the words that appear to have been original: "You are my Son, today I have begotten you" (Luke 3:22). Here again the grounds for establishing this

²⁵ All of this I have argued at length elsewhere. See note 24.

text are internal; once its earliest form is known, however, one can turn to consider the possible motivations for the change.²⁶ In this instance, an obvious theological incentive suggests itself: by intimating that Jesus became God's Son on the day of his baptism, the original text proved ripe for an Ebionite interpretation. The proto-orthodox scribes of the second century modified it into conformity with its closest synoptic parallel, the account in the Gospel according to Mark.

Other such variations, however, are attested in Codex Bezae. Later in Luke's account, a similar problem emerges in the voice from heaven at the transfiguration. Here the original text again appears to have spoken of Jesus' "election": "You are my Son, the one who has been chosen" (9:35). Codex Bezae is the earliest surviving manuscript to embody the anti-adoptionist reading deemed "safe" by the proto-orthodox: "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."²⁷ In light of this change, it is much to be regretted that Codex Bezae is not extant in John 1:34. For here, Bezae's closest textual allies stand alone against all other manuscripts in having John the Baptist identify Jesus not as the "Son of God", but as the "Elect of God."²⁸ Were this lacuna in Bezae ever to be (miraculously) restored, its reading would surely cause no surprise.

The christological controversies of the second century involved much more, of course, than isolated groups claiming that Jesus was God but not human, or human but not God. Particularly problematic were groups of Christian Gnostics, such as the Valentinians in their various guises, who claimed that whereas Christ was God, Jesus was human, and that the two were temporarily united for Jesus' public ministry but parted prior to his death. In this view, the divine aeon left Jesus to breathe his last alone.

This view too affected the textual tradition of the New Testament, as is evident in the change of Mark 15:34 in Codex Bezae and some of its Old Latin allies. For here, rather than crying out "My God, my God, why have you left me behind" (as the words appear to have been interpreted by the Gnostics, as evidenced in the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of Philip, and the rebuttal of the Valentinians

²⁶ See *Orthodox Corruption*, 62–67.

²⁷ See *Orthodox Corruption*, 67–68.

²⁸ These allies are Codex Sinaiticus (which is "Western" in this part of the Fourth Gospel) and several Old Latin and Syriac witnesses.

in Irenaeus), Jesus cries “My God, my God, why have you reviled me?” Again, I choose the example simply by way of illustration; for it appears that the words were modified by proto-orthodox Christians who objected to the way they had been construed by Gnostics, who used them to argue that the divine Christ had departed from Jesus prior to his death.²⁹

Enough has been said to establish the basic point. Codex Bezae represents a kind of text in circulation near the end of the second century; its variations indicate that Christian scribes who copied their authoritative writings occasionally changed them in light of the theological controversies of their own day. These changes were not implemented systematically, however; some of the outstanding examples of anti-docetic and anti-adoptionist corruptions involve instances in which Codex Bezae itself retains the original text. We cannot think, therefore, of any kind of official anti-heretical recensional activity. Changes were made here and there, by various scribes who shared the same broader context and many of the same theological concerns; many of these alterations of the text came to be reproduced in our later manuscripts.

Proto-orthodox scribes were not the only ones, of course, who changed the text for theological reasons. Those branded as heretics were roundly accused of tampering with their texts, and even though we lack hard evidence that they did so in any thoroughgoing way, there are vestiges of such activity that have survived the corrective procedures of their proto-orthodox counterparts.³⁰

I can illustrate through two brief variations found in Codex Bezae’s text of Luke. The first is the famous omission of Lk 5:39, which scholars have commonly linked to a Marcionite devaluation of the Hebrew Bible: “And no one who drinks the old [wine] wants the new, for he says, ‘The old is better.’” This is one instance in which it is hard to imagine Marcion simply taking over an available Western reading—if in fact he attests the shorter passage. On the contrary, it appears that this is an instance in which Marcion’s own construal of the importance of Christ made its impact on the text. Metzger has put the matter succinctly: “its omission from several Western

²⁹ See *Orthodox Corruption*, 143–45.

³⁰ On the nature of these charges, see my article, “The Theodotians as Corruptors of Scripture” (*Studia Patristica* 9; Louvain: Peeters, 1992), 46–51 (chap. 16 below).

witnesses may be due to the influence of Marcion, who rejected the statement because it seemed to give authority to the Old Testament.”³¹

Four chapters later Codex Bezae records a longer text that may well have served a useful function for Christian Gnostics. The shorter text, which has the superior external attestation, simply says of Jesus that “Turning, he rebuked them [i.e., the disciples].” A number of scribes have provided the terms of Jesus’ rebuke, however, the earliest form of which is preserved in the short addition of Codex Bezae, “Turning, he rebuked them and said, ‘You do not know what kind of spirit you are.’” Indeed, for the Christian Gnostic, the disciples did *not* know what kind of spirit they were at this stage; but they would soon learn, as Jesus progressively conveyed to them the gnosis necessary for the liberation of their spirit from its bodily incarceration, the gnosis that would then be conveyed by word of mouth to all of the elect. The longer text does not appear here to be original: given its evident Gnostic orientation, it may well have been generated by a scribe within, say, the Valentinian community of the late second century.

Regrettably, given my constraints of time and space, I have been able to do little more here than provide some suggestions about these intriguing readings. But enough has been said to establish my basic points. Whereas the texts of the Gospels were being modified by all sides in the early Christian circles, we are best informed concerning the changes made by the group that eventually established itself as dominant, which was ultimately responsible for canonizing these texts and preserving them through their own transcriptional activities. The changes incorporated into these texts were not restricted to Christological variations, of course. For there were many other concerns of our early scribes, and some of these are also reflected in our manuscript tradition, as embodied, for example, in the fifth-century Codex Bezae.

The Rise of Christian Anti-Semitism

A good deal of work, much of it controversial, has been done on the so-called anti-Judaic tendencies of Codex Bezae. Eldon J. Epp was not the first to recognize these tendencies, but he was certainly

³¹ Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 138–39.

the one to give them fullest expression in a detailed and exhaustive analysis of Bezae's text of Acts. His findings led to an evaluation of the Gospel of Luke by George E. Rice, and of the Gospel of Matthew by Michael W. Holmes;³² neither of these dissertations has been published, but several reactions to Epp's own investigation have.

On the basis of his study, Epp claimed that some 40% of Codex Bezae's variant readings can be attributed to anti-Judaic biases. Others, most recently David Parker, have demurred. Parker objects, for example, to labeling these variations "theological", on the ground that every modification of a theological document is necessarily theological.³³ This observation, however, is simply not true: most changes of our manuscripts (e.g., orthographic) are unrelated to questions of theology. One could, however, press Epp on what he means by calling the changes he isolates "theological." Indeed, they appear to be "theological" only in a particular sense of the term, for they do not represent ideational variations but rather ones that closely reflect the social conditions of the early scribes, who lived in communities that were engaged in active conflict with real flesh and blood Jews, often to their own disadvantage, and who occasionally incorporated their hatreds and fears into their transcriptions of their sacred texts.

Precisely here is the major drawback of Epp's fine study (along, perhaps, with his tendency to push his case too hard in individual instances): he failed to situate the textual corruptions he uncovered in a plausible *Sitz im Leben* of the scribes who effected them. Only when we establish a social context for the alteration of the text can we make sense of the textual situation.

I should hasten to add that the social context of second-century proto-orthodox scribes was similar in some respects to that of Luke himself, whoever he may have been, writing some seventy-five or hundred years earlier. But it was not identical. The point is important to stress because some have objected to Epp's study on the grounds that the so-called "anti-Judaic" tendencies of Codex Bezae

³² George E. Rice, "The Alteration of Luke's Tradition by the Textual Variants in Codex Bezae", (Ph.D. dissertation; Case Western Reserve University, 1974); Holmes, "Early Editorial Activity". In addition, see, e.g., Rice, "Western Non-Interpolations: A Defense of the Apostolate", in *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives from the SBL Seminar*, ed. Charles H. Talbert (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 1-16; *idem*, "Anti-Judaic Bias of the Western Text in Luke", *AUSS* 18 (1980), 51-57, 149-56.

³³ *Codex Bezae*, 190.

are simply a heightening of emphases already present in the Gospel of Luke.³⁴

With respect to the exegetical claim itself, there need be no serious disagreement; for it is true that Luke stresses that most Jews rejected the message of Christ (in accordance with the plan of God) allowing the message then to go to the Gentiles. The point, however, is that any heightening of Luke's own emphases is significant—especially when it comes to important social issues like the relationship of Jews and Christians. For indeed, the social context at the second century was far more serious in this regard than at the end of the first; and the scribes who obviously stood within Luke's tradition (why else would they be reproducing his text!?) had an additional century's worth of turmoil in which these relationships had degenerated beyond the point of no return. No wonder they found many of Luke's statements palatable, and worked to make them even more stringent. But to argue on these grounds that the changes of Codex Bezae are somehow not "anti-Judaic" or "theological" is really to miss the point, and to engage in special pleading on behalf of these anti-Jewish scribes.

If our literary sources are any guide at all (which is an ongoing and serious question, but at least among the literary elite—such as our anonymous scribes—they are surely of some significance), the end of the second century was a time of vitriolic polemic by Christians against the Jews and all they stood for. This was an age when literary attacks by Christians against Jews *qua* Jews had become *de rigueur*, when authors like "Barnabas" could claim that the Jews had professed a religion of error from the days of Moses, that they had always misinterpreted their own Scriptures and so had misconstrued their relationship with God, that the Old Testament was in fact not a Jewish book at all, but a Christian one; when polemicists like Justin could argue that circumcision was a sign not that God had chosen the Jews as his own people, but that he had set them apart for special punishment; and when preachers like Melito could devote entire sermons to inveighing against the Jews as killers of Christ, implicating them with the murder of God.

It was not, by and large, a happy time for Jewish-Christian relations. And the impact of the polemics made itself felt on the transcription

³⁴ For example, C. K. Barrett, "Is There a Theological Tendency in Codex Bezae?" *Text and Interpretation: Studies in the NT Presented to Matthew Black*. Ed. E. Best and R. McL. Wilson (Cambridge: University Press, 1979), 15–27.

of the early Christian texts. As several examples drawn from the Gospels, Codex Bezae is one of our earliest manuscripts to omit the prayer of Jesus from the cross in Luke 23:34: "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." There are indeed compelling reasons for thinking that the verse was original to Luke and that its exclusion came as a result of second-century polemic against Jews (the shorter text is already found in the early third-century P⁷⁵). The verse coincides perfectly with Luke's portrayal of Jesus as calm and in control in the face of his death, more concerned with the fate of others than himself;³⁵ it shows Jesus in prayer, a distinctive emphasis of Luke, long recognized; the prayer itself embodies the motif of "ignorance", a notion used throughout Luke-Acts to account for Jesus' unlawful execution.³⁶ Moreover, when one moves from intrinsic to transcriptional arguments, it becomes quite clear that here there is a nice coalescence of probabilities. The question to be asked, of course, is whether the verse would have been more likely to be added or omitted by scribes of the third Gospel. Those who would argue for an addition might point to Acts 7:60 as a clue. Could not the verse have been interpolated by scribes wanting to provide a closer parallel between Jesus and Stephen, the first of his followers to be martyred for his sake?

This position has the appearance of plausibility, but it should be pointed out that Luke himself has gone out of his way to create parallels between Jesus in Luke and the apostles in Acts, as any careful literary analysis will show. Indeed, the remarkable similarities between Jesus and Stephen are themselves from Luke's pen. What is particularly striking in this connection, and telling for the textual problem of Luke 23, is that when Luke creates parallels between Jesus in the Gospel and his apostles in Acts, he does so obliquely, without drawing undue attention to it. Contrast this with how scribes are known to work. Scribal harmonizations are rarely (ever?) oblique; they involve word for word, verbal agreements. The prayer in Luke 23:34, however, is no such thing. If a scribe created the text to harmonize it more closely with Acts 7:60, would not the correspondence be verbal?

³⁵ Cf. the portrayal of Jesus on the way to the cross in 23:28–31, and his words to the penitent robber soon thereafter (23:39–43).

³⁶ Cf. Acts 3:17; 13:27–28. On this, see especially Eldon Jay Epp, "The Ignorance Motif in Acts and Anti-Judaic Tendencies in Codex Bezae", *HTR* 55 (1962), 51–62.

If it is difficult to imagine the verse being invented by second-century scribes, can we posit reasons for them wanting to omit it? In its Lukan context, the prayer appears to refer to the Jewish leaders who in their ignorance have caused Jesus to be crucified.³⁷ But the original meaning of the verse is of little importance for understanding the activities of scribes; the transcriptional question involves not what the text meant for Luke, but what it meant for the scribes who tampered with the text. And here we are on even better grounds. For we know from patristic discussions that the verse was normally taken to be Jesus' prayer for the Jews. At least it is understood that way in the earliest accounts of its exposition that we have, already at the beginning of the third century by Origen and the author of the *Didascalia*.³⁸

Many Christians in the second century were convinced, however, that God had *not* forgiven the Jews for what they did to Jesus. This is evident, for instance, not only in the polemic of Melito mentioned above, but also in the widespread notion that the destruction of Jerusalem some forty years after Jesus' death was a manifestation of God's anger against them: the Jews' rejection of Jesus led to their own rejection by God.³⁹ For scribes who shared this opinion, one can well imagine the puzzlement created by Jesus' prayer in Luke 23:34. How could the Savior have possibly asked God to forgive the Jews? And if he had, why was he not heard? Much better to excise the verse—as Christian scribes appear to have done, beginning at least at the end of the second century.

I will not be able to document this same tendency throughout all of Codex Bezae's text of the Gospels; but I can indicate several of the minor variant readings that are relevant, drawn from the Synoptic Passion narratives. One instance occurs in Matthew 27:26, where the original text indicates that after hearing the Jewish crowd declare "his blood be upon us and our children" (a verse of no little significance for anti-semitic fervor in the early Christian movement), Pilate "flogged Jesus and delivered him over in order to be crucified." The variant

³⁷ Given the use of the ignorance motif throughout Acts. See Epp, "Ignorance Motif".

³⁸ I owe this information to my graduate student, Kim Haines-Eitzen. Origen, *Peri Pascha* 43. 33–36; *Didascalia*, ch. VI and especially ch. XV. See further, David Daube, "For They Know Not What They Do: Luke 23, 34", *Studia Patristica* 4 (1961), 58–70.

³⁹ See, for example, Origen, *Contra Celsum* IV, 22.

preserved in Codex Bezae and several later witnesses is striking: by adding a personal pronoun and modifying the purpose clause, we are now told who was finally responsible for killing Jesus: Pilate “flogged Jesus and delivered him over to *them* (i.e., to the Jewish crowd) so that *they might crucify him.*”

Somewhat less graphic is a change of Mark 15:8, in the context of Pilate’s attempt to release Jesus, when “the crowd” begins to make their demands for his execution. Bezae makes the text more emphatic, and the Jews thereby more culpable: here it is “all the crowd” that demands Jesus’ death. This coincides to some extent with Bezae’s text of 15:12, in which the phrase “whom you call” is omitted: now the Jewish crowd orders Pilate to crucify not the one who is *called* the “King of the Jews”, but the one who really *is* their king.

A similar tendency can be seen at work in Luke’s passion narrative, not only in the prayer from the cross. As an isolated example, I can cite the change of the scene in 23:37, where Jesus is no longer taunted with the question of whether or not he is the king of the Jews, but is openly acclaimed king (in mockery): “Hail King of the Jews.” The function of such changes in the context of anti-Jewish polemic should be clear: Jews can be implicated in the death of their own king, who did nothing to deserve his fate.

As I have already indicated, each of these changes could be construed as standing in basic continuity with Luke’s own emphases. But the emphases are now heightened, evidently in proportion to the heightening of tensions between the communities of the Christian scribes and their enemies, the Jews. In the second century, when these changes of the text are being made, Christians are accusing Jews not simply of executing Christ in ignorance, but of being ignorant of God himself. As those who had formerly been God’s people, they are therefore without excuse and without pardon; now they are fully implicated in the death of Jesus, their own king whom they ought to have known but instead have rejected and killed, leading to their own rejection and destruction by God.

The Early Christian Oppression of Women

One other area of social conflict that has been previously examined in relationship to the text of Codex Bezae has been the oppression of women in early Christianity. Once again, most of the work has

been restricted to the book of Acts; but in this case, scholars have done a better job of locating the textual situation in a broader social context.

Even though women were given roles of authority in the earliest Christian movement, reflecting their prominence in the ministry of the historical Jesus, by the end of the first century their voices were being suppressed and their roles severely curtailed by the men who controlled the majority of the proto-orthodox churches.⁴⁰ I emphasize the proto-orthodox character of this suppression, because one of the most intriguing features of other Christian groups—for example, the Montanists and various groups of Christian Gnostics—is their continued emphasis on the equality of men and women and their implementation of this ideal in the social realities of their communities.⁴¹

It is interesting to contrast this with what appears to have happened in the proto-orthodox contexts, for example, in circles associated with the followers of Paul. Whereas Paul himself preached an equality of male and female in Christ, allowed women to participate actively in worship services, and had a number of women co-workers, some of whom he designated as deacons and apostles, the men who controlled his churches in the second and third generation stifled the involvement of women in the affairs of the church, denying them authoritative roles and disallowing their involvement in public ministries such as teaching.⁴² This oppression intensified in some proto-orthodox circles of the second century, culminating in the misogyny of such authors as Tertullian.

The effect of this clash of the genders on the textual tradition of the New Testament has been variously assessed, particularly in

⁴⁰ Most significantly, see Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983). More recently, see Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) and Karen Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993). For a specific case-study, see Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Polemic* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

⁴¹ In addition to the works cited in note 40, see the more popular discussion, somewhat less rooted in feminist theory, of Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979), 57–83.

⁴² Contrast, for example, Gal. 3:28 with 1 Tim. 2:11–15, and see Paul's comments on such women as the deacon Phoebe, his fellow workers Prisca and Mary, and the apostle Junia in Rom. 16:1–7. See further Dennis MacDonald, *The Legend and the Legend: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983).

relationship to individual textual problems. The best known instance involves the text of 1 Cor. 14:34–35, a passage that on internal grounds has been widely thought to represent a non-Pauline interpolation. The standard objection to this view has been the lack of manuscript evidence in its support. The objection has been answered by Gordon Fee, who stresses the text-critical grounds for considering the passage secondary, given its relocation in manuscripts of the Western tradition, and yet more recently by Philip Payne, who finds palaeographic evidence in Codex Vaticanus that the original scribe recognized the passage as an interpolation.⁴³

None of this discussion is directly germane to the text of Codex Bezae in the Gospels, of course, except insofar as it establishes the problems and illustrates how they may have manifested themselves more broadly in the textual tradition. With respect to Bezae itself, Ben Witherington has argued for evidence of this proto-orthodox tendency in the book of Acts, pointing out such readings as Acts 17:14, where Paul's converts in Thessalonica are unambiguously called "wives of prominent men" rather than "women of prominence", and Acts 1:14 where the independent importance of women among Jesus' followers is compromised by the mention of their children in tow, and the regular transposition of the names of "Priscilla and Aquilla" so as to provide the man with priority at every stage.⁴⁴

Changes of this sort are more rare in the Gospels, but several instances can be mentioned. An example occurs in Jesus' teaching on divorce in Matthew 5:32, where split marriages originally made men as well as women open to charges of adultery: "and whoever marries a woman who has been divorced commits adultery." Codex Bezae omits the entire clause, so that Jesus now speaks only of the woman as potentially adulterous in such cases. A second example occurs in the disputed text of Luke 8:3, where Codex Bezae along with a number of other witnesses modifies the role of women in the ministry of Jesus. Already in the mid-second century Marcion attests the reading that appears to have been original: the women that Luke mentions as Jesus' companions "were providing for him out of their

⁴³ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 699–708; Philip Barton Payne, "Fuldensis, Sigla for Variants in Vaticanus, and 1 Cor. 15:34–35", paper read at the New Testament Textual Criticism Section of the Society of Biblical Literature meeting, November 1994, Chicago, IL.

⁴⁴ Ben Witherington, "The Anti-Feminist Tendencies of the 'Western' Text in Acts", *JBL* 103 (1984), 82–84. See also Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 51–52.

own means.” By the simple change of the pronoun, however, this labor of love is altered in Codex Bezae. Now the women are said to have provided “*for them*” out of their own means. Now, that is to say, these women followers of Jesus are said to have served the menfolk.

A full study would naturally examine all such variations in Codex Bezae; it is distinctly possible, in this instance, that there are not many more such cases to be found.

Christian Apologia

Something similar may be said about the impact of the Christian apologetic movement on the textual tradition embodied in Codex Bezae: it had some effect, but not so great as the early theological controversies or the rise of anti-Semitism. This may be because the texts of the New Testament Scriptures played a less significant role in the disputes with paganism and the reasoned defense of the faith than in the disagreements over doctrine. There is one area, however, where the texts of the New Testament did come into play in Christian apologia, and the transmission of these texts may have been indirectly affected as a result.

By the late second century, virtually the only resource for learning about the actions and words of Jesus were the Christian Gospels. We know that by 180 C.E. or so, some of the better informed pagan opponents of Christianity, such as the Middle-Platonist Celsus, had read the Gospels and used their portrayals of Jesus as weapons against the Christians. A heated debate commenced—in literary circles, at least—over whether the things Jesus said and did were in fact appropriate to one who was revered as the Son of God. The background to these debates lay in the widespread notion throughout the Mediterranean that divine men occasionally roamed the earth. There were, of course, numerous stories about other super-human individuals, who like Jesus were also said to have been supernaturally born, done miracles, healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, and to have been exalted to heaven to live with the gods. These other individuals were also sometimes called “sons” of God.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ For an insightful study of this question from the perspective of early Christian apologia, see Eugene Gallagher, *Divine Man or Magician: Celsus and Origen on Jesus* (SBLDS 64; Chico, CA: Scholars, 1982).

Based on the fragmentary evidence at our disposal, it appears that there were general expectations of what such a person would be like within the broader culture of the Greco-Roman world. Part of the confrontation between pagans and Christians, at least in the rarified atmosphere of the apologetic literature, involved determining whether Jesus carried himself with the dignity and deportment of a son of God. Pagan critics like Celsus argued on the contrary that Jesus was a fraud who did not benefit the human race, and that as a consequence he was not a true son of God, but a deceiver, a worker of dark craft, a magician.

Did the debates over Jesus' identity and the appropriateness of his designation as the son of God make any impact on the texts of the New Testament? One of the best candidates is another passage in which Bezae appears to represent the original text, whereas some of the earlier papyri attest a corruption. This is the account in Mark 6:3, where in Bezae and most other witnesses, the townspeople of Nazareth identify Jesus as the "carpenter, the son of Mary." We know that Celsus himself found this identification significant, possibly (though not certainly) because it situated Jesus among the lower classes and thereby showed him not to be worthy of divine stature. Origen's response may have been disingenuous, although there is no way to know for certain; he claims that there is no manuscript of the Gospels that provides this identification. Possibly all of Origen's texts agreed with P⁴⁵, f¹³, and 33 in changing the verse to identify Jesus as "the son of the carpenter", rather than "the carpenter"; or possibly he had forgotten the passage in Mark. In any event, given the second-century modification of the text—that is, its change precisely in the period when Jesus' own socio-economic status and employment history had become an issue for apologists—we might be inclined to think that it was precisely the apologetic impulse that led to the corruption.⁴⁶

Can the same be said of any of the changes reflected in Codex Bezae itself? Perhaps the most intriguing possibility involves the famous modification of Mark 1:41. In every Greek manuscript except Codex Bezae, and in most other witnesses, Jesus responds sympathetically to a leper's request for healing: "and feeling compassion, he reached out his hand and touched him." Somewhat more strik-

⁴⁶ This has to be inferred from Origen's reference to Celsus's work, in light of his overall polemic (on which, see Gallagher, *op. cit.*); see *Contra Celsum* V1, 36.

ing—shocking even—is the response recorded in Codex D (along with several Latin allies), where Jesus’ compassion is turned into wrath: “and becoming angry, he reached out his hand and touched him.”

The reading is obviously not well attested, and for this reason it has been rejected over the years by the majority of critics and commentators.⁴⁷ But perhaps this decision has been too hasty. To be sure, the more commonly preserved reading is comfortable and in basic continuity with other Gospel accounts of Jesus. But precisely herein lies the problem; if the original text had indicated that Jesus reacted to this poor soul with compassion, why would any scribe modify it to say that he became angry? On the other hand, if the text had originally mentioned Jesus’ wrath, it is quite easy to imagine scribes taking offense and modifying the text accordingly. Indeed, the scribal offense may not have involved so much a general puzzlement as a specific fear, namely that the pagan opponents of Christianity like Celsus, who were known to be perusing the Gospels for incriminating evidence against the divine founder of the faith, might find here ammunition for their charges.

Is there, though, evidence besides a hypothetical transcriptional probability that might suggest that the reading found in all of the earliest and best manuscripts (not to mention almost all of the latest and worst) is in error? In this particular instance we do well to recall that the scribes of our surviving manuscripts were not the first copyists of Mark’s Gospel. Strictly speaking, the earliest surviving copies were made by Matthew and Luke (even though these copies were modified far beyond what later scribes would dare to do). If one accepts any form of Markan priority, as most scholars continue to be inclined to do (despite some renewed attacks in recent years), it may be profitable in an instance such as this to see what the other Synoptics do with the passage.

It is striking that both Matthew and Luke retain the story for their own accounts, by and large reproducing it verbatim. But they both also omit the participle in question (σπλαγχνισθείς or ὀργισθείς). It must be conceded that Matthew and Luke each modifies this story of Mark to their own ends in other ways as well—as they do with

⁴⁷ For an insightful discussion of the problem, and a persuasive argument for the more difficult reading, see Joel Marcus’s commentary on Mark, forthcoming in the *Anchor Bible*, ad loc. See further pp. 120–41 below.

most of Mark's other stories. Rarely, however, do they change their Markan source in the same ways. The so-called "minor agreements" between Matthew and Luke have traditionally caused the largest headaches for the proponents of Markan priority. What is remarkable is that the majority of these minor agreements appear to be agreements in omission; and most of them can be explained by positing something offensive or puzzling in Mark's account—that is, something that may have appeared offensive or puzzling independently to more than one redactor.⁴⁸

It must be pointed out, in this connection, that in no other instance in which Jesus is said to feel compassion (*σπλαγχνίζεσθαι*) in Mark's Gospel, do *both* Matthew and Luke change it. Why would the participle be omitted here? It would make sense if in fact Mark's text, as both Matthew and Luke had it, did not indicate that Jesus felt compassion (*σπλαγχνισθείς*) but wrath (*ὀργισθείς*). Does it make sense in Mark's own narrative, though, for Jesus to become angry prior to healing the man?⁴⁹ In fact, as several commentators have suggested, it is difficult to explain the severity of v. 43 apart from some such intimation earlier: "and censuring him, he immediately cast him out" (*καὶ ἐμβριμησάμενος αὐτῷ εὐθὺς ἐξέβαλεν αὐτόν*).⁵⁰ At what though could Jesus have been angry? A number of possibilities, of greater or lesser plausibility, have been suggested over the years. Perhaps on the lower end of this scale would be anger at the man for causing a disturbance or for having doubts, and at the upper end anger at the social conventions that disallowed physical contact with those in need, such as lepers, or at the demonic forces responsible for the man's condition in the first place.

I should emphasize that the circumstance that Matthew and Luke—working prior to the defense of Jesus' divine claims in the face of pagan opposition—both changed the text might suggest that it caused difficulties quite apart from any apologetic concerns. At the same time, I might point out that the later scribes chose not to follow the earlier path of modification through omission; those who effected the

⁴⁸ As one example among many, cf. the omission of "You shall not defraud" from the list of the commandments in Mark 10:19.

⁴⁹ See the discussion in Marcus, cited in n. 47.

⁵⁰ I should point out that it would make much less sense for scribes to change v. 41 in light of v. 43, which they would have copied *afterwards*.

change present in our manuscripts *mollified* the text, making Jesus look kindly and beneficent. This kind of change does in fact coincide closely with the apologetic efforts reflected in later authors such as Origen, one of whose major burdens was to show not only that Jesus caused no real offense, but that his presence among humans wrought great benefits.

The same can be said of emphases found in the textual tradition of Codex Bezae where it does not preserve the original text, but where it preserves corruptions that appear to serve apologetic ends. Certainly on some fairly unsophisticated level, this is the impulse behind the changed word order of Luke 23:32, where the original statement that Jesus was crucified with “two other evildoers” is modified in D to read “two others, who were evildoers.” For the scribes who effected the change, there was evidently no reason to allow the text to be misread as saying that Jesus was to be numbered among the ranks of the miscreants. I might point out that the change was yet more effective in some of Bezae’s versional allies (c e sy^s), where the offensive word “others” is omitted altogether, so that Jesus is crucified along with “two evildoers.”

Apologetic impulses may also lie behind several changes in Bezae’s text of the Gospels that appear to prevent Jesus, the all knowing Son of God of Christian circles, from making factual mistakes in what he says. Here I have in mind the deletion of the problematic statement in Mark 2:26 that David’s entry into the temple to partake of the showbread took place “while Abiathar was the high priest” (which in fact he was not), and the change of Jesus’ statement to the high priest in 14:62 that he, the high priest, would see the son of man “coming” on the clouds of heaven (since, in fact, he died long before this event to end all events).

Christian Asceticism

I conclude this brief study by saying a few words about the impact made by the rise of Christian asceticism on the text of the New Testament. Indeed, a few words is nearly all that *can* be said; for the impact of ascetic Christianity on the copyists of Scripture appears to have been relatively slight. At the same time, since no one has pursued this question with any rigor, there may be data that have not yet come to light.

With respect to Codex Bezae, the most famous instance of an ascetically-oriented corruption of the text comes in Mark's account of Jesus' words to his disciples, after they proved unable to cast out a particularly difficult demon: "This kind comes out only by prayer" (Mark 9:29). As is well known, Bezae joins a host of witnesses, early and late, in adding the familiar phrase "and fasting", indicating that the ascetic life is necessary for one to overcome the Satanic forces of evil unleashed on this world.

Not in Bezae, but in a witness closely related to it, I might also mention two readings whose perdurance in Syriac was earlier in this century attributed to the Encratitic tendencies of Tatian's Diatesseron. The first comes in Luke 2:36, where in the Sinaitic Syriac we learn that the prophetess Anna enjoyed marital bliss not for "seven years" but only for "seven days"; the other comes in Matthew 22:4 where the same manuscript leaves the oxen and fatted calves off the menu of the divine marriage feast. One is reminded of the diet of John the Baptist described by the author of the Gospel of the Ebionites; by changing one letter and adding another this proponent of vegetarian cuisine served the Baptist pancakes (εγκριδες) rather than locusts (ακριδες). Scribes who changed the text in this way appear to have been intent on the renunciatory Christian life, in which rich food and active sex lives have little place. But a full study of their impact on the text of the New Testament is yet to be made.

Conclusion

My goal in this study has been less to persuade with detailed argumentation than to titillate with possibilities. In no instance have I been able to devote sustained attention to any of the variant readings I have examined, although in a number of instances full discussions are readily available elsewhere. I have tried, however, to suggest one of the ways Codex Bezae and other manuscripts from roughly the same period might be studied, viz., to understand better the symbiotic relationship that existed between the surviving texts of early Christianity and the social worlds within which they were transmitted. My overarching thesis has been that scribes who knew of, or were personally involved with, the social conflicts of their day brought their concerns to bear on their transcriptions of the authoritative texts that were so central to many of the debates and con-

troversies. The late second century was a period of intense theological debate, of rising anti-semitic sentiment, of widespread Christian oppression of women, of apologetic activities in the face of pagan opposition, of withdrawals from society and its norms into the life of the ascetic. These various social phenomena were the stuff of everyday existence for many Christians, including those who reproduced our surviving texts.

As scholars of the text, it is incumbent upon us not only to move behind the variations in the textual tradition of the early Christian writings so as to reconstruct the autographs, but now, perhaps even more (as we are as close to these autographs as we are ever likely to get) to begin examining these kinds of variations in their own right, to see what they can tell us about the social worlds of the scribes who produced them.

THE TEXT AS WINDOW: NEW TESTAMENT
MANUSCRIPTS AND THE SOCIAL HISTORY
OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY¹

The ultimate goal of textual criticism, in the judgment of most of its practitioners, is to reconstruct the original text of the NT.² As the other essays in this volume make abundantly clear, we need the discipline because we lack the autographs (and perfectly accurate reproductions of them); all surviving MSS are filled with mistakes, and it is the task of the critic to get behind these mistakes to reconstruct the text as it was originally written. This conception of the discipline is exemplified in the work of Fenton John Anthony Hort, one of the greatest minds to approach the task, who focused his labors on a solitary objective: “to present exactly the original words of the New Testament, so far as they can now be determined from surviving documents.” Hort construed this task in entirely negative terms: “nothing more than the detection and rejection of error.”³

No historian would deny the desirability of this objective; one must establish the words of an ancient author before they can be inter-

¹ Originally published as “The Text as Window: New Testament Manuscripts and the Social History of Early Christianity,” in *The New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes. (Studies and Documents; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 361–79. Used with permission.

² I should emphasize at the outset that it is by no means self-evident that this ought to be the ultimate goal of the discipline, even though most critics have typically, and somewhat unreflectively, held it to be. In recent years, however, some scholars have recognized that it is important to know not only what an author wrote (i.e., in the autograph), but also what a reader read (i.e., in its later transcriptions). Indeed, the history of exegesis is the history of readers interpreting different forms of the text, since throughout this history, virtually no one read the NT in its original form. Thus it is important for the historian of Christianity to know which form of the text was available to Christians in different times and places. In addition, as I will argue throughout this essay, it is important for social historians and historians of doctrine to identify the social and theological movements that affected the texts, through the scribes who modified them. Given these historical concerns, there may indeed be scant reason to privilege the “original” text over forms of the text that developed subsequently.

³ B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, [2,] *Introduction* [and] *Appendix* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1882; 2d ed., 1896; reprinted Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988) 1.4. Hort was responsible for writing the *Introduction*.

preted. At the same time, many textual critics have come to recognize that an exclusive concentration on the autographs can prove to be myopic, as it overlooks the value of variant forms of the text for historians interested in matters other than exegesis. Thus one of the significant breakthroughs of textual scholarship has been the recognition that the history of a text's transmission can contribute to the history of its interpretation: early Christian exegetes occasionally disagreed on the interpretation of a passage because they knew the text in different forms.⁴

Of yet greater interest to the present essay, some critics have come to recognize that variants in the textual tradition provide data for the social history of early Christianity, especially during the first three Christian centuries, when the majority of all textual corruptions were generated. Changes that scribes made in their texts frequently reflect their own sociohistorical contexts. By examining these changes, one can, theoretically, reconstruct the contexts within which they were created, contexts that are otherwise sparsely attested in our surviving sources. When viewed in this way, variant readings are not merely chaff to be discarded en route to the original text, as they were for Hort; they are instead valuable evidence for the history of the early Christian movement. The NT MSS can thus serve as a window into the social world of early Christianity.

Textual Variants and the Social History of Early Christianity

Recent study of textual variation has contributed to our understanding of a wide range of significant issues, including the ideological conflicts of early Christianity (i.e., struggles between "heresy" and "orthodoxy"), Jewish-Christian relations and the rise of anti-Semitism, and the early Christian suppression of women. Moreover, as we shall see, other peculiarities of our surviving MSS—for instance, their provenance, dates, and formal features—have deepened our knowledge of such diverse topics as the use of magic and fortune-telling among early Christians, the character and extent of the Christian mission

⁴ See, e.g., my article "Heracleon, Origen, and the Text of the Fourth Gospel," *VC* 47 (1993) 105–18 (chap. 14 below). For a methodological discussion of this issue, see my contribution to the Karlfried Froehlich *Festschrift*, "The Text of Mark in the Hands of the Orthodox," *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective* (ed. Mark Burrows and Paul Rorem; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 19–31; pp. 142–55 below.

in the empire, the extent and function of literacy in the early church, and the special role that texts played in this religion. Given the limitations of this essay, I cannot discuss any of these issues in great depth; I will, however, enumerate some of the more fruitful and interesting lines of research, and make some suggestions for further inquiry.

The Internecine Struggles of Early Christianity

Arguably the most significant study of early Christianity in modern times is Walter Bauer's 1934 classic, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*.⁵ The book has forced a rethinking of the nature of ideological disputes in Christian antiquity, as even scholars not persuaded by Bauer's view have had to contend with it. Bauer's thesis is that, contrary to the traditional claims of Christian apologists, "orthodoxy" was not an original and universally dominant form of Christianity in the second and third centuries, with "heresy" (in its multiple configurations) a distant and derivative second. Instead, early Christianity comprised a number of competing forms of belief and practice, one of which eventually attained dominance for a variety of social, economic, and political reasons. The victorious "orthodoxy" then rewrote the history of the church in the light of its final triumph. This orthodoxy was the form of the religion embraced by the faithful in Rome.

While many of the details remain in serious dispute, and demurals appear to be on the rise, Bauer's overarching conception continues to exert a wide influence, as does his insistence on the centrality of these ideological disputes to the early history of Christianity.⁶ What, though, do they have to do with the MS tradition of the NT?

⁵ Bauer, *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (BHT 10; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck]). ET of the 2d ed. (1964, ed. Georg Strecker): *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, (trans. Paul J. Achtemeier et al.; ed. Robert Kraft and Gerhard Krodel; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

⁶ For a useful discussion of its initial reception, see Georg Strecker's essay, "Die Aufnahme des Buches," 288–306 in the 2d German ed., expanded and revised by Robert Kraft, "The Reception of the Book," Appendix 2, pp. 286–316. The discussion was updated by Daniel Harrington, "The Reception of Walter Bauer's Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity During the Last Decade," *HTR* 73 (1980) 289–98. For additional bibliography, see the discussion in my book *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 33 n. 16.

For many critics of the twentieth century the answer had been unequivocal: nothing at all. In part this view has been based on the authoritative pronouncement of Hort: "It will not be out of place to add here a distinct expression of our belief that even among the numerous unquestionably spurious readings of the New Testament there are no signs of deliberate falsification of the text for dogmatic purposes."⁷ Consonant with this perception was A. Bludau's detailed study of the charge leveled against Christian heretics of intentionally falsifying the texts of Scripture, a charge that he traced from apostolic times to the Monophysite controversy.⁸ Bludau argued that in many instances, the accusation was directed not against heretical alterations of the text but heretical misconstruals; moreover, he maintained, in most of the remaining instances, the charges cannot be sustained. He concluded that the MSS of the NT were not easily susceptible of deliberate falsification, given the vigilance exercised over their production by all concerned parties.⁹

Despite its popularity, this view has never held universal sway. Even before World War II, individual scholars had isolated and discussed instances of theologically motivated corruption, with such eminent names as Kirsopp Lake, J. Rendell Harris, Adolph von Harnack, Donald Riddle, and, most extensively, Walter Bauer himself (in another, less-read but equally impressive, monograph), topping the list.¹⁰

Nonetheless, only since the 1960s have scholars begun to recognize the full extent to which early ideological conflicts affected the NT text. By all accounts, the impetus was provided by Eldon Jay

⁷ Hort, *Introduction*, 282. Hort specifies Marcion as the one exception to this rule, and goes on to say that non-Marcionite instances of variation that appear to be doctrinally motivated are due to scribal carelessness or laxity, not to malicious intent.

⁸ Bludau, *Die Schriftfälschungen der Häretiker: Ein Beitrag zur Textkritik der Bibel* (NTAbh 11; Münster: Aschendorf, 1925).

⁹ For an assessment, see my *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 43 n. 100.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Kirsopp Lake, *The Influence of Textual Criticism on the Exegesis of the New Testament* (Oxford: Parker & Son, 1904); J. Rendell Harris, "New Points of View in Textual Criticism," *Expositor*, 8th ser., 7 (1914) 316–34; idem, "Was the Diatesseron Anti-Judaic?" *HTR* 18 (1925) 103–9; Adolph von Harnack, "Zur Textkritik und Christologie der Schriften Johannes," in *Studien zur Geschichte des Neuen Testaments und der alten Kirche*, vol. 1: *Zur neutestamentlichen Textkritik* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1931) 115–27; idem, "Zwei alte dogmatische Korrekturen im Hebräerbrief," in *Studien zur Geschichte des Neuen Testaments* 1.235–52; Donald Wayne Riddle, "Textual Criticism as a Historical Discipline," *ATR* 18 (1936) 220–33; and Walter Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1907; reprinted, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967).

Epp's groundbreaking study, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts*, a study whose particular conclusions relate more to Jewish-Christian relations (discussed below) than to the internecine conflicts of the early Christian movement.¹¹ Nonetheless, Epp attacked the Hortian view head-on by pursuing the suggestion that some of the tendencies of the so-called Western text, as embedded in Codex Bezae, should be explained by the theological proclivities of its scribe.¹² Through a detailed and exhaustive analysis, Epp concluded that some 40 percent of Codex Bezae's variant readings in Acts point toward an anti-Judaic bias. The sensible inference is that the scribe himself, or his tradition, was anti-Jewish (in some way), and that this prejudice came to be embodied in the transcription of the text.¹³

Although Epp's study has been widely acclaimed and his conclusions widely accepted, his lead has been little followed.¹⁴ Codex Bezae is singularly suited to this kind of study, given the extraordinary character of its text of Acts; most other MSS lack such distinctiveness.¹⁵ Subsequent analyses of theological tendencies have therefore moved from the study of a specific MS to a panoramic view of the surviving witnesses. Among recent scholars to pursue such a line are Alexander Globe, Mark A. Plunkett, Mikeal Parsons, and Peter Head.¹⁶ My own work in this area has eventuated in the first full-

¹¹ Epp, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts* (SNTSMS 3; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966). For Epp's predecessors, see his discussion on pp. 12–26.

¹² A suggestion made earlier, for example, by P. H. Menoud, "The Western Text and the Theology of Acts," *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas Bulletin* 2 (1951) 27–28.

¹³ A conclusion that Epp himself does not draw, as pointed out below.

¹⁴ That is, for other MSS. On Codex Bezae itself, see, among the many studies, the unpublished dissertations by George E. Rice ("The Alteration of Luke's Tradition by the Textual Variants in Codex Bezae," Case Western Reserve University, 1974) and Michael W. Holmes ("Early Editorial Activity and the Text of Codex Bezae in Matthew," Princeton Theological Seminary, 1984). For a reappraisal of the matter with respect to Acts, see C. K. Barrett, "Is There a Theological Tendency in Codex Bezae?" in *Text and Interpretation: Studies in the New Testament Presented to Matthew Black* (ed. Ernest Best and R. McL. Wilson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 15–27.

¹⁵ As is commonly observed, the text of Acts in Codex Bezae is approximately 8 1/2% longer than that found among the Alexandrian witnesses.

¹⁶ Alexander Globe, "Some Doctrinal Variants in Matthew 1 and Luke 2 and the Authority of the Neutral Text," *CBQ* 42 (1980) 52–72; Bart D. Ehrman and Mark A. Plunkett, "The Angel and the Agony: The Textual Problem of Luke 22:43–44," *CBQ* 45 (1983) 401–16 (chap. 10 below); Mikeal Parsons, "A Christological Tendency in P⁷⁵," *JBL* 105 (1986) 463–79; Peter M. Head, "Christology and Textual Transmission: Reverential Alterations in the Synoptic Gospels," *NovT* 35 (1993) 107–29.

length analysis, entitled *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*.¹⁷ The study examines one area of ideological conflict—the christological controversies of the second and third centuries—and shows how it affected a number of textual witnesses produced in the period.¹⁸ While no one would claim that theological controversies caused the majority of the hundreds of thousands of textual variants, they clearly engendered several hundred. Nor are these variant readings, taken as a whole, of little consequence. On the contrary, many prove to be critical for questions relating to NT exegesis and theology.¹⁹

Of yet greater significance for the present essay, the study raises a number of issues concerning the relation of the MSS to the social world of the scribes who produced them, a world about which we are poorly informed by the other surviving sources.²⁰ For one thing, the textual data reveal the doctrinal proclivities of these scribes: their tendencies are uniformly proto-orthodox²¹—suggesting that the victors

¹⁷ See n. 6 above. Among my briefer studies of individual passages are the following: “1 John 4.3 and the Orthodox Corruption of Scripture,” *ZNW* 79 (1988) 221–43; “The Cup, the Bread, and the Salvific Effect of Jesus’ Death in Luke-Acts,” *SBLSP* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991) 576–91; “Text of Mark”; and (with Mark A. Plunkett), “The Angel and the Agony” (chaps. 8, 9, 10, and 12 below). Of book-length treatments that take a slightly different tack, in addition to Bauer, *Leben Jesu*, reference should esp. be made to Eric Fascher, *Textgeschichte als hermeneutische Problem* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1953).

¹⁸ I did not, of course, restrict myself to documents produced in this period, of which few remain, but to readings that could be shown to have been generated then, even when these survive only in later witnesses. For my rationale, see *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 28–29.

¹⁹ The interpretation of significant passages is sometimes affected by the textual decision. Just within the Gospels, reference can be made to the prologue of John (e.g., 1:18), the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke (e.g., Matt 1:16, 18; Luke 1:35), the baptism accounts (e.g., Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:34), and the various passion narratives (e.g., Mark 15:34; Luke 22:43–44; John 19:36). Moreover, a number of variants affect a range of issues that continue to interest historians and exegetes of the NT, including such questions as whether the Gospels could have been used to support either an “adoptionistic” Christology (e.g., Mark 1:1; Luke 3:22; John 1:34) or one that was “antidocetic” (e.g., the Western noninterpolations), whether Luke has a doctrine of the atonement (e.g., Luke 22:19–20), whether members of the Johannine community embraced a gnostic Christology (e.g., I John 4:3), and whether any of the authors of the NT characterizes Jesus as “God” (e.g., Heb 1:8).

²⁰ See the fuller discussion in my *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 274–83.

²¹ I use the term “proto-orthodox” to designate Christians of the ante-Nicene age who advocated views similar to those that at a later period came to dominate Christendom at large. These second- and third-century Christians were embraced by the “orthodox” of the 4th century as their own theological forebears and as

not only write the history but also reproduce (and preserve) the texts. Moreover, the proto-orthodox modifications of these texts demonstrate that the doctrinal and ideological issues involved were of concern not only to a handful of Christian intellectuals, the heresiological literati whose works happen to have outlived antiquity. They affected others as well—at least the scribes, who, while themselves among the intellectually advantaged (to the extent that they could read and write, unlike the vast majority of Christians; see below), were by no means at the top of the social scale even within Christian circles. These debates appear to have affected the rank and file as well as the Christian elite.

In addition, the textual data confirm that these struggles were, in part, directly related to divergent interpretations of early Christian texts, in an age before there was a hard-and-fast canon of Scripture—a finding that is significant not only for the nature of the emerging religion *in se* but also in its relation to other religions of the period: no other cult of the empire, with the partial exception of Judaism, shared this fixation on written texts and the doctrinal ideas they convey.²² The theological modification of these documents thus further demonstrates the concern for literary texts that is attested generally throughout the second and third Christian centuries: “official” Christianity had already begun to attach special importance to the written word and to the propositional “truths” that it contains.

Jewish-Christian Relations and the Rise of Anti-Semitism

One particularly fruitful area of research since the 1940s has been the study of early Jewish-Christian relations and the rise of Christian anti-Semitism. Rooted in the solid researches of Jules Isaac and Marcel Simon, and motivated in no small measure by the provocative thesis of Rosemary Ruether—that Christianity has by its very nature always been anti-Jewish—scholars of both the NT and later Christianity have produced a voluminous outpouring of literature that discusses the relation of Christianity to its Jewish matrix.²³

reliable traditions of the apostolic tradition. See my fuller discussion in *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 12–13.

²² See my *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 279.

²³ The literature is too extensive to detail here. For bibliography and informed discussion see John Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983)

How did the conflicts with Judaism that are evident throughout the first three Christian centuries affect scribes who reproduced the texts of Scripture? The question has regrettably not received the extended study it deserves. To be sure, even before World War II scholars had observed that some MSS preserve textual variants that are related to the conflicts. Particularly worthy of mention are Heinrich Joseph Vogels and J. Rendell Harris, both of whom argued that the anti-Judaic tendencies of Tatian's Diatessaron had influenced several of the surviving witnesses.²⁴ For instance, the Curetonian Syriac modifies the announcement that Jesus will save "his people" from their sins (Matt 1:21) to say that he will save "the world." So too, some Syriac and Latin witnesses of the Fourth Gospel change Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman in John 4:22 to indicate that salvation comes "from Judea" rather than "from the Jews." Among the most intriguing of the nearly two dozen examples that these (and other) scholars have discussed is the omission in some MSS of Jesus' prayer from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34)—an omission that makes particularly good sense if Jesus is understood to be asking God to forgive the Jews responsible for his crucifixion.²⁵

As already mentioned, the most significant study of anti-Jewish influences on the text of the NT has been Epp's evaluation of Codex Bezae in Acts. Following earlier suggestions that the Western tradition may preserve an "anti-Judaic" bias, Epp made a compelling case that many of the Bezan variants in Acts stand over against non-Christian Judaism.²⁶ Even though Epp did not pursue the question of *Sitz im Leben* for this kind of scribal activity, its social context in

11–34; and more briefly, idem, "Judaism as Seen by Outsiders," in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters* (ed. Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsburg; Philadelphia: Fortress; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 99–116. The foundational works include Jules Isaac, *Jesus and Israel* (trans. Sally Gran; ed. Claire Hachet Bishop; New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971; French original, 1948); Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (135–425)* (trans. H. McKeating; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986; French original, 1964); and Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury, 1974).

²⁴ Vogels, *Handbuch der Textkritik des Neuen Testaments* (2d ed.; Bonn: Hanstein, 1955; 1st ed., 1923) 178; Harris, "Was the Diatessaron Anti-Judaic?"

²⁵ For recent discussion and bibliography, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X–XXIV)* (AB 28A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985) 1503–4.

²⁶ For his predecessors, see Epp, *Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae*, 21–26; in particular, one might mention the study of Menoud, "Western Text."

early Christian polemics against the Jews is nonetheless manifest. Future studies could profitably explore in greater detail the significance of this polemical milieu for the textual tradition of the NT.²⁷

The Suppression of Women in Early Christianity

One of the most significant developments in NT studies since the 1970s has been the advent of feminist criticism. Most feminist historians have focused on the significant role that women played in the development of nascent Christianity and on how women, and their contributions, came to be suppressed early in the movement. Those who pursue the question are by no means unified in their methods or results; most notably, some have argued that the Christian tradition is so thoroughly and ineluctably patriarchalized that it must be jettisoned altogether, while others have sought to move beyond the biases of our sources to reclaim the tradition for themselves.²⁸

For the historian concerned with the role of women in earliest Christianity, one of the perennial issues relates to the status of 1 Cor 14:34–35, a passage that requires women “to be silent in the churches” and to “be subordinate.” Many scholars have claimed that the passage is not Pauline but represents an interpolation, made perhaps by the author of (the pseudepigraphic) 1 Timothy (cf. 2:11–15).²⁹ While one common objection to the interpolation theory has been the lack of MS attestation—the passage is present in all the witnesses—Gordon Fee has recently stressed the text-critical evidence

²⁷ On the positive effects of Judaism on the MS tradition of the NT (seen, e.g., in the predisposition among early Christians to dispose of texts rather than destroy them), see Colin H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (Schweich Lectures 1977; London: Oxford University Press, 1979).

²⁸ See, e.g., the provocative discussions of Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (2d ed.; Boston: Beacon, 1985); idem, *The Church and the Second Sex* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969). Most significantly, for the NT period, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983). A recent insightful example of feminist reconstruction is Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Polemic* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990). For the 2d century, see the more popular discussion, somewhat less rooted in feminist theory, of Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979).

²⁹ Mary Daly rightly objects to those who pursue the status of this passage for the sake of exonerating the apostle Paul: whether he wrote it or not, the passage has been used to suppress women, and will continue to be used in this way (*Beyond God the Father*, 5). At the same time, the question of authorship is important for historians, because if Paul did not write the verses, then the suppression that they sanction represents a later feature of Pauline Christianity.

in its support, observing that the verses in question occur in a different location in some of the Western witnesses, giving the passage the appearance of a marginal note incorporated at more or less appropriate junctures.³⁰ If Fee is correct concerning its secondary character, the interpolation may show that women came to be suppressed more severely in a later period of Pauline Christianity (perhaps around the end of the 1st century) than at the outset.³¹

In an attempt to cast the net somewhat more broadly, Ben Witherington has summarized some of the evidence that suggests that the scribe of Codex Bezae was intent on de-emphasizing the prominent role that women played in the early church, as recorded in the narrative of Acts.³² Labeling such alterations, somewhat inappropriately, as “anti-feminist” changes,³³ Witherington observes that in Bezae’s text of Acts 17:4, Paul’s Thessalonian converts are unambiguously “wives of prominent men” rather than “women of prominence,” that the high profile of women is occasionally compromised by the insertion of references to their children (1:14) or to men of high profile (17:12), and that the regular transposition of “Aquila” to precede “Priscilla” may intimate the scribe’s uneasiness with the woman’s implicit priority. While other scholars have also discussed, briefly, the significance of textual problems for assessing the suppression of women in early Christianity, we still await an extensive and rigorous analysis.³⁴

Space restrictions do not allow any consideration of the work that has been done—scant that it is—on the significance of other kinds of variation for assessing such issues as the influence of Christian

³⁰ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 699–708.

³¹ More severe because they were already treated differently from men in the early period; they were required, for example, to wear veils when praying or prophesying (11:2–10). Interestingly, Fee’s arguments have not been accepted by Antoinette Wire, the most recent feminist historian to attempt a reconstruction of the situation in Corinth (*Corinthian Women Prophets*, 229–32). On other developments in the Pauline communities, see, e.g., Jouette M. Bassler, “The Widows’ Tale: A Fresh Look at 1 Tim 5:3–16,” *JBL* 103 (1984) 23–41.

³² Witherington, “The Anti-Feminist Tendencies of the ‘Western’ Text in Acts,” *JBL* 103 (1984) 82–84.

³³ The label is anachronistic and misleading, since these changes are not directed against “feminists” (a modern intellectual category).

³⁴ See, e.g., Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (3d ed.; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 295–96.

apologetic concerns or of early ascetic movements on the textual tradition.³⁵ Suffice it to say that nothing in any way comprehensive has been published in these areas, even though the fields are white for harvest.

*Other Features of the Manuscripts and the
Social History of Early Christianity*

As already indicated, in addition to some kinds of textual variation, other peculiarities of the surviving NT MSS, such as their provenance, dates, and formal features, bear on the social history of early Christianity.³⁶ Here again, I can only mention several of the most fruitful and interesting areas of research.

The Use of Magic and Fortune-Telling in Early Christianity

The recent incursion of the social sciences into the study of early Christianity has produced as one of its salubrious results a resurgence of interest in the role of magic in the early church. Not everyone agrees even on the most basic of questions, such as the definitions of magic and religion and how, or whether, they can be neatly differentiated.³⁷ Nonetheless, a number of creative and insightful studies have been produced in recent years, some dealing with the role

³⁵ On both, so far as I know, only scattered examples have been identified. With respect to apologetic concerns, see, e.g., the discussion of Luke 22:43–44 in Raymond Brown's *Death of the Messiah* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1994) 1.184, where he argues that the account of Jesus in agony was excised to forestall arguments, such as those leveled by the pagan critic Celsus, that Jesus could not have been the Son of God because he was so weak. A full discussion would also consider variants that appear to mollify an otherwise apparently harsh portrayal of Jesus (e.g., the modification of ὀργισθεῖς in Mark 1:41 and the omission of ἕτεροι in Luke 23:32) and that magnify both his popularity (e.g., "all the crowds" in some MSS of Matt 7:28 and 8:18) and his abilities to do miracles (e.g., MS 69 in Luke 6:18). For interesting examples of ascetically oriented alterations, see the earlier study of J. Rendel Harris, *Side-Lights on New Testament Research* (London: Kingsgate, 1908).

³⁶ For a serious argument that the physical features of a MS can themselves be used to demonstrate its date and provenance, and on these grounds to establish something of the history of the textual tradition in a particular Christian community, see the detailed and compelling analysis of David C. Parker, *Codex Bezae: An Early Christian Manuscript and Its Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

³⁷ For useful discussion, see David E. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," *ANRW* 2.23.2 (ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase; Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1980) 1506–16.

of magic in the life of Jesus, others with its portrayal in the NT narratives, yet others with its popularity among the early Christians.³⁸

To my knowledge, none of the variant readings of our surviving MSS arose out of an interest in magic or a desire to portray it in a more positive light. This is not at all surprising, as magic was considered socially deviant (and theologically devilish) whereas the scribes of our surviving MSS, so far as we can tell, were by and large members of socially conservative (proto-) orthodox communities.³⁹ Nonetheless, textual evidence of the practice does survive, evidence that relates, however, less to the transcription of the words of the text per se than to the use of the texts once they were produced.

We know from literary sources of the fourth century and later that NT MSS were sometimes used for apotropaic magic—for example, worn around the neck or placed under a pillow to ward off evil spirits.⁴⁰ Among the papyri discovered and analyzed since the 1940s are several that were beyond any doubt made and used as amulets: they are small in size, often a single sheet folded over, sometimes provided with or tied together with a string, and normally inscribed with texts that could prove useful for warding off evil spirits or for effecting healings—the Lord’s Prayer, for instance, or a healing narrative.⁴¹ A full discussion of these scriptural amulets awaits further study.⁴²

³⁸ The best overview, with extensive bibliography, is Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity.” For the role of magic in the life of Jesus, see esp. the provocative studies of Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978); and, more extensively, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973). For an interesting assessment of the portrayal of magic in the NT, see Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke’s Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989). Most recent studies have been inspired by the publication of magical texts from the Greco-Roman world. For English translations, see Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

³⁹ On magic as socially deviant, see Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” 1510–16. On my characterization of scribes, see *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 274–80.

⁴⁰ For example, John Chrysostom, Hom. 19.4; see the discussion in R. Kaczynski, *Das Wort Gottes in Liturgie und Alltag der Gemeinden des Johannes Chrysostomus* (Freiburg: Herder, 1974).

⁴¹ For arguments and examples, see E. A. Judge, “The Magical Use of Scripture in the Papyri,” in *Perspectives on Language and Text: Essays and Poems in Honor of Francis I. Andersen’s Sixtieth Birthday* (ed. Edgar W. Conrad and Edward G. Newing; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987) 339–49; and Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief*, 82–83. In his original edition of the Greek magical papyri, K. Preisendanz classified 38 of the 107 available texts as Christian (*Papyri Graecae Magicae* [ed. A. Henrichs; 2d ed.; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1973]); according to Judge, 15 of these 38 “make conscious use of scriptural material” (p. 341).

⁴² See esp. Judge, “Magical Use of Scripture,” and the bibliography cited there.

Closely connected with the question of magic is the practice of fortune-telling in the ancient world, on which a number of interesting studies have been produced, particularly with respect to the *Sortes Astrampsychi* and others of the so-called Books of Fate.⁴³ Little, however, has been written about the use of fortune-telling in early Christianity, perhaps due to a dearth of evidence.⁴⁴ Indeed, some of the most intriguing evidence happens to derive from the MS tradition of the NT. In 1988 Bruce Metzger published an article that discussed a widely recognized, if wrongly construed, feature of the fifth-century Codex Bezae in its text of the Gospel according to Mark, which connects it closely to eight MSS of the Fourth Gospel ranging in date from about the third to the eighth century. Each of these MSS appears to have been used to tell fortunes.⁴⁵

At the bottom of some pages of these MSS occurs the word ἐρμηνεῖα, followed by a brief fortune, such as “Expect a great miracle,” “You will receive joy from God,” and “What you seek will be found.” That the “interpretation” (= ἐρμηνεῖα) does not relate directly to the passage on the top portion of the page is evident, Metzger claims, upon a careful comparison of their respective contents.⁴⁶ More likely, then, these MSS functioned like the non-Christian Books of Fate: one who had a question would roll a pair of dice and, by the use of a specially prepared table, be instructed to turn to a particular page of the text, on which would be provided the appropriate answer (fortune).

Thus, while Metzger does not draw the conclusion, it is evident that some Christians ascribed special powers to the MSS of Scripture themselves: they could be used not only for purposes of apotropaic

⁴³ For a brief description, see T. C. Skeat, “An Early Mediaeval ‘Book of Fate’: The *Sortes XII Patriarcharum*. With a Note on ‘Books of Fate’ in General,” *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* 3 (1954) 41–54. On the *Sortes Astrampsychi*, see the overview of G. M. Browne, “The Composition of the *Sortes Astrampsychi*,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 17 (1970) 95–100; for basic bibliography, see idem, “The *Sortes Astrampsychi* and the Egyptian Oracle,” in *Texte und Textkritik: Eine Aufsatzsammlung* (ed. Jürgen Dummer; TU 133; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1987) 71.

⁴⁴ On broader issues related to prophecy in early Christianity in conjunction with divination and oracles in the Greco-Roman world, see esp. David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

⁴⁵ Metzger, “Greek Manuscripts of John’s Gospel with ‘Hermeneiai,’” in *Text and Testimony: Essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature in Honour of A. F. J. Klijn* (ed. T. Baarda et al.; Kampen: Kok, 1988) 162–69.

⁴⁶ One might question, however, whether our “commonsense” evaluation of the passage can serve as a guide to what an ancient interpreter might have made of it.

magic (the amulets) but also to influence, or at least predict, one's future. This then is a unique kind of evidence for the historian of the period: it can tell us about the role of sacred texts in the ordinary lives of Christians—as opposed, that is, to the lives of the Christian elite who produced our literary evidence. Here again, however, a full study of the phenomenon remains a desideratum.

The Spread of Early Christianity

Adolph von Harnack's classic treatment, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, continues to provide scholars with a wealth of data concerning the spread of Christianity.⁴⁷ A number of the issues he addressed, however, have never been satisfactorily resolved, and recent years have witnessed a renewal of interest in such questions as the extent of the Christian mission throughout the Mediterranean, the *modus operandi* of Christian "evangelists" and "missionaries" prior to the conversion of Constantine (were there any?), and the nature of their message to adherents of other Greco-Roman cults.⁴⁸ Any additional evidence is surely welcome.

The textual tradition of the NT does provide evidence of both the extent and character of the Christian mission. Above all, the discovery of the papyri has contributed to our knowledge of the spread of Christianity, at least in Egypt, where due to climatic conditions virtually all of the papyri have been found and for which reliable sources are otherwise, for the most part, nonexistent.⁴⁹ To be sure, in the excitement of discovery some extravagant claims have been made on the basis of our early papyri. In particular, the recognition

⁴⁷ Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (trans. and ed. James Moffatt; 2 vols.; New York: Williams and Norgate, 1908; German original, 1902).

⁴⁸ For now-classic treatments, see Arthur Darby Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933); and E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (New York: Norton, 1965) 102–38. Among the best of the recent (burgeoning) literature are Ramsey MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire* (A.D. 100–400) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); and Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987).

⁴⁹ On the papyri, see Eldon Jay Epp, "The New Testament Papyrus Manuscripts in Historical Perspective," in *To Touch the Text: Biblical and Related Studies in Honor of Joseph A. Fitzmyer S. J.* (ed. M. P. Horgan and P. J. Kobelski; New York: Crossroad, 1989) 261–88; for a recent overview of our sources for Christianity in Egypt, and a proposed reconstruction, see C. Wilfred Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity: From Its Origins to 451 C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 1990) 3–79.

that the earliest specimen, P⁵², can be dated to the first half of the second century has led to sensational—or rather, sensationalistic—conclusions.⁵⁰ Fortunately, however, this small scrap does not stand in isolation, but is one of a number of NT MSS of the second and third centuries discovered in Middle and Upper Egypt. Were there but one or two such copies, one might argue that they had been brought to their final resting grounds—perhaps in later periods—from Alexandria or even from outside Egypt. Their sheer number, however, renders this view doubtful; these surviving remains, then, provide unique evidence that Christians spanned provincial Egypt at least by the end of the second century, and brought with them their sacred texts.⁵¹

At the same time, and perhaps paradoxically, the relative paucity of these Christian documents (in relation to the vast numbers of non-Christian papyri that have been unearthed)⁵² has been used by other scholars to argue that Christians did not make extensive use of the written word in their attempts to propagate the faith. This at least is the view advanced by William V. Harris in his astute and much acclaimed treatment of literacy in the ancient world.⁵³ Harris finds corroboration in the failure of early missionaries to translate the Greek NT into indigenous languages prior to the end of the second and the beginning of the third century; moreover, even then they

⁵⁰ The fragment was published by C. H. Roberts in a slim volume entitled *An Unpublished Fragment of the Fourth Gospel in the John Rylands Library* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1935). Once it was recognized that this credit-card sized fragment of John could be paleographically dated to the first half of the 2d century, scholars had a field day with the possible implications, some claiming that it demonstrates that the Fourth Gospel must have been penned by the end of the 1st century, others asserting that it documents the presence of Christians in Middle Egypt by 125 C.E., and yet others arguing for their presence already by 100 C.E. A number of scholars, none of whom, so far as I know, has actually examined the papyrus, have pushed the date further and further back toward the turn of the century. These sanguine appraisals notwithstanding, the fact is that we can only approximate the date of this fragment's production within fifty years at best (it could as easily have been transcribed in 160 as 110). Moreover, we do not know exactly where the fragment was discovered, let alone where it was written, or how it came to be discarded, or when it was. As a result, all extravagant claims notwithstanding, the papyrus in itself reveals nothing definite about the early history of Christianity in Egypt. One can only conclude that scholars have construed it as evidence because, in lieu of other evidence, they have chosen to do so.

⁵¹ See esp. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief*, 4–6.

⁵² As indicated below, we know of 871 pagan texts from the 2d century, but only 11 of the Christian Bible.

⁵³ Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989) 299.

made no concerted effort to render the Scriptures into any of the numerous local dialects spoken throughout Europe, Asia Minor, and Africa.⁵⁴

Harris's controversial position on these questions is not meant to gainsay the widely acknowledged view that texts played a singular role for Christians once they had converted.⁵⁵ Indeed, Harris himself admits that some features of the surviving remains confirm early Christianity as a uniquely "textual" religion. These features can now be considered under the final rubric of this investigation.

The Literary Character of Early Christianity

In one of the most penetrating and influential studies devoted to the subject, the eminent papyrologist C. H. Roberts has demonstrated how some physical characteristics of the early Christian papyri, including those of the NT, have influenced our understanding of Egyptian Christianity. I can summarize several of his conclusions as follows.⁵⁶ The papyri provide some indications that copies of the NT were produced for private reading—that is, that these texts did not always serve a purely liturgical function. In particular, Roberts observes that some biblical texts appear as pocket-sized codices (perhaps, though, after our period, in the 4th century) "far too small for public use." Perhaps more significantly, others were written on "scrap paper"—for example, on the backs of discarded documents—suggesting their use as private copies.⁵⁷

Nonetheless, most of the early Christian texts do appear to have been produced for public reading, as suggested, for instance, by their frequent employment of lectional aids: accents, breathing marks, and occasional separations of words. As another prominent palaeographer, E. G. Turner, has suggested, one may draw the same conclusion

⁵⁴ Harris's conclusion relates to his controversial claim that the vast majority of the inhabitants of the empire—up to 90% in this period, with higher numbers outside the major urban areas—were illiterate in any case; any attempt to spread the religion through written propaganda would therefore have had but little effect. One might ask, however, whether in drawing this conclusion Harris overlooks what he himself emphasizes throughout his study, that even the illiterate of the ancient world had regular access to the written word, insofar as it was read aloud to them.

⁵⁵ Even though one could probably argue that it should. See Harris's discussion, *ibid.*, 220–21, 300–306.

⁵⁶ All of these are drawn from Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief*, 1–25.

⁵⁷ Roberts acknowledges that this might equally be taken to suggest either a local shortage of writing materials or an impoverished church (*ibid.*, 9).

from the tendency of Christian scribes to produce fewer lines of text per page and fewer words per line than was customary.⁵⁸

Despite the ostensibly public character of most of these papyri, palaeographic considerations make it clear that they were not published as “literature”: as a rule, they were transcribed not in a “book-hand” but in a “reformed documentary” style.⁵⁹ Their copyists, therefore, appear to have construed the texts in pragmatic rather than aesthetic terms, and intended their reproductions to fulfill practical ends within their communities. Furthermore, the virtual absence of calligraphic skill indicates that these transcriptions were produced by private individuals rather than professionals; alternatively, if they *were* produced by professionals, we must conclude that their labors were personally, not professionally, motivated.⁶⁰

Perhaps most significantly, Roberts has taken up the question of the presence of the *nomina sacra* in the Christian papyri—a feature of our MSS that continues to intrigue scholars—and draws from them some interesting, if controversial, conclusions.⁶¹ The *nomina sacra* are fifteen words of special religious significance—chief among them “Jesus,” “Christ,” “God,” and “Lord”—which from the second century on were typically written in contracted form by Christian, and only Christian, scribes. Regrettably, we have no firm evidence to suggest when this practice originated or why it was followed. Most scholars have thought that it somehow relates to the refusal among Jews to pronounce the tetragrammaton, the four-lettered name of God in Hebrew; but a variety of opinions has emerged. Roberts argues that the use of the *nomina sacra* must have originated among Jewish Christians who espoused a theology of the “Name” (as found in other early Jewish-Christian circles) prior to the penning of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, which evidences some knowledge of the practice.⁶²

⁵⁸ The effect would be to make the texts easier to read in public. See Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977) 84–87. I owe this reference to Harry Gamble.

⁵⁹ That is, the scribe did not copy the texts in the style reserved for books, but rather in the style employed for receipts, legal documents, bank accounts, and governmental paperwork.

⁶⁰ That is, they were probably not paid for their work. Roberts does think it feasible, however, that already in the 2d century small scriptoria were in use for Christian communities in larger urban areas.

⁶¹ Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief*, 25–48.

⁶² The well-known *gematria* employed in Barnabas’s christological exegesis of Abraham’s 318 servants presupposes the abbreviated form of the name of Jesus,

He postulates that the convention was promulgated in Jerusalem already in the first century, and that its presence in early second-century papyri shows that Christianity in Egypt was launched by missionaries from Jerusalem in the subapostolic age—a conclusion that he has reasons to believe on other grounds.⁶³ Based in part on such speculation, Roberts is able to reconstruct the history of a church for which otherwise we are altogether lacking in sources.

The point of this summary is not to affirm Roberts's view, but to indicate how scholars of the period may use the papyri as evidence of the social history of early Christianity. One other area in which Roberts has exerted particular influence is in the study of the Christian use of the codex (i.e., the bound book, written on both sides of the page), as opposed to the scroll (i.e., the roll, written on only one side).⁶⁴ The discovery of the papyri has made it virtually certain that even if Christians did not invent the physical form of the codex, they exploited its possibilities and popularized its use. As Bruce Metzger has recently observed, whereas only 14 of the 871 pagan texts that can be dated to the second century are in codex form, all 11 of the Christian texts of the Bible are; moreover, of the 172 Christian biblical texts that survive from before the fifth century, 158 derive from codices.⁶⁵

Discussions of the Christians' preference of the codex to the roll are extensive, with most of the proposed explanations relating closely to questions of social history.⁶⁶ Some have suggested that the codex was used for reasons of economy: by allowing writing on both sides of the page, this form of book production proved less expensive.⁶⁷ If this does explain the practice, it may intimate something about the socioeconomic status of the early Christians. Others have argued

IH. It is somewhat unfortunate for Roberts's theory that, as he acknowledges (*ibid.*, 35–36), the *nomen sacrum* for Jesus is a contraction, ΙΣ, rather than an abbreviation.

⁶³ See his concluding sketch, *ibid.*, 49–73.

⁶⁴ See esp. Roberts's monograph, coauthored with T. C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (London: Oxford University Press, 1983), a revised and expanded version of his influential discussion, "The Codex," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 50 (1954) 169–204.

⁶⁵ In reliance on Roberts, See Metzger, *Text*, 260–61.

⁶⁶ I am obliged to Harry Gamble for his discussion of these theories. See the fuller treatment in his forthcoming monograph, *Books and Readers in Early Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press). Also see Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 294–97.

⁶⁷ The cost advantages are calculated by T. C. Skeat in "The Length of the Standard Papyrus Roll and the Cost-Advantage of the Codex," *ZPE* 45 (1982) 169–75.

that the codex made it less cumbersome to track down proof texts and to make cross-references, providing particular appeal for Christians who were accustomed to support their views from specific passages of Scripture. Yet others have urged that the codex differentiated Christian sacred books from those of the Jews, so that the change of format attests to the impact of Jewish-Christian polemic on scribal practices. Still others have pointed to the significant size advantage of the codex, and posited its special utility for Christians wanting a number of works within the same book (e.g., all of the Gospels or the letters of Paul). Above all, this format would facilitate the transportation of such collections for missionaries and other Christian travelers. Finally, other scholars, including Roberts himself, have proposed historical reasons for the use of the codex: that some early authority figure (e.g., Mark, the author of the second Gospel), utilized the codex for his work, providing some kind of apostolic approbation of the practice.⁶⁸ Perhaps most scholars, however, would allow for a confluence of several of these, and possibly other, factors as ultimately decisive for the Christian use of the codex.

Conclusions

What, in conclusion, can one say about the utility of the MS tradition of the NT for the scholar of Christian antiquity? Textual scholars have enjoyed reasonable success at establishing, to the best of their abilities, the original text of the NT. Indeed, barring extraordinary new discoveries (e.g., the autographs!) or phenomenal alterations of method, it is virtually inconceivable that the physiognomy of our printed Greek New Testaments is ever going to change significantly. At the same time, critics have only begun to prove as assiduous in pursuing the history of the text's subsequent transmission. Scholars have already used some of the available data to unpack some aspects of Christian social history: the nature of the early theological controversies, the polemical relations between Christians and Jews, the suppression of women in the church, the use of magic and

⁶⁸ This was Roberts's earlier view ("The Codex," 187–91), one that he retracted in *Birth of the Codex*, 57–61. For an intriguing argument that the codex was introduced as a vehicle for the Pauline corpus, see Gamble's forthcoming monograph, *Books and Readers*; and idem, "The Pauline Corpus and the Early Christian Book," in *Paul and the Legacies of Paul* (ed. W. J. Babcock, Dallas: SMU Press, 1990) 265–80.

fortune-telling among ordinary Christians, the extent and character of the early Christian mission, the use of Christian Scripture in public worship and private devotion. Much more, however, is left to be done, both on these issues and on others, as we move beyond a narrow concern for the autographs to an interest in the history of their transmission, a history that can serve as a window into the social world of early Christianity.

A LEPER IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY JESUS¹

I am very pleased to dedicate this article to my mentor and friend, Jerry Hawthorne. He first taught me Greek—more than twenty years ago now—and then exegesis. Even though, with characteristic modesty, he occasionally slights his expertise in the field, he also introduced me to the rigors and joys of textual criticism and the study of Greek MSS. No one was ever more patient with a more hard-headed student; and though he probably did not know it at the time, his commitment both to questioning what he thought and to remaining committed to what he believed has been an inspiration for a lifetime.

In those days—and still, I believe—Jerry was particularly interested in the human life of Jesus, when most of his students were far more interested in his divinity. But for Jerry, Jesus was human in every way (though, of course, also divine)—he participated in the human condition in all its fullness and, in particular, experienced the full range of human emotions. So it seems appropriate for me to discuss one of the most emotionally charged passages of the entire NT, where Jesus becomes irate with a poor leper who begs to be healed and, after cleansing him of his disease, rebukes him and drives him away.

This is not the Jesus one would expect to find in the Gospels. It is no wonder that early Christian scribes modified the passage to remove its offense and that modern commentators who accept the original reading have tried to explain it away. Most readers, though, are unaware of the problem, since the scribes who decided to alter the text were by and large successful, so that most Greek MSS—and the English translations that are based on them—indicate not that Jesus became angry but that he felt compassion. Originally, though, it was not that way at all. What follows is a discussion of

¹ Originally published as “A Leper in the Hands of an Angry Jesus,” in *New Testament Greek and Exegesis: Essays in honor of Gerald F. Hawthorne* (Amy M. Donaldson and Timothy B. Sailors, eds; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 77–98. Used with permission.

the text and interpretation of Mark 1:39–45, in which we find a leper in the hands of an angry Jesus.

Overview

I begin with a rather literal translation of the passage:

39 And he [Jesus] came preaching in their synagogues in all of Galilee and casting out the demons. **40** And a leper came to him beseeching him and saying to him, “If you will, you are able to cleanse me.” **41** And [feeling compassion (σπλαγχνισθείς) /becoming angry (ὀργισθείς)] reaching out his hand, he touched him and said to him, “I do will, be cleansed.” **42** And immediately the leprosy went out from him, and he was cleansed. **43** And rebuking him severely, immediately he cast him out **44** and said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing that which Moses commanded, as a witness to them.” **45** But when he went out he began to preach many things and to spread the word, so that he [Jesus] was no longer able to enter publicly into a city.²

This passage involves numerous complications that have exercised scholars over the years. What was the leper’s actual medical condition—are we to think of leprosy in the modern sense (Hansen’s disease) or some other skin disorder? Why was he publicly associating with Jesus, in evident violation of the Jewish law (Lev 13)? Why does Jesus first instruct the leper not to tell anyone what has happened but then instruct him to tell someone (the priest)? Is it possible that two different oral traditions have been combined in this account? Could one of the accounts have originally been an exorcism narrative? This at least would explain some of the story’s features—including the odd statement that Jesus “cast him out” (ἐκβάλλω), a term normally reserved for demons in Mark’s narrative. How does this story portray Jesus’ relationship to the law? Why, that is, does he explicitly break the law by touching the leper (see Lev 13) but then seem to affirm the law by telling him to do what Moses commanded? Is Jesus in favor of the law? Against the law? Above the law? And what does it mean that the leper’s healing will be a witness to *them*?

² All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

To whom? To the priests (only one is mentioned)? To the people (as in some translations)? But what people? The entire population of Israel? Is it to be a positive witness (*for* the priests/people), to show that salvation now has arrived? Or a negative witness (*against* the priests/people), to show that the one they reject brings salvation?³

The questions go on and on, but most of them, at least, are rooted in words that are secure in the text. Not so with the question on which I want to focus in this article, while bracketing all the rest: What was Jesus' emotional reaction to this poor leper—did he feel compassion, as in most of the MSS, or anger, as in several others? And if—as I have already intimated—it was anger, what exactly was he angry about?

Before dealing with the interpretive question, we must establish the text. The grounds for thinking that Mark originally spoke of an angry, rather than a compassionate, Jesus are compelling, as most recent commentators have realized.

The Text

External Evidence

It is true that the reading ὀργισθεῖς is not found in an abundance of MSS of Mark, only in the fifth-century Codex Bezae and several Old Latin MSS (a ff² r¹). But textual scholars have long recognized that readings attested in such “Western” witnesses almost certainly go back at least to the second century.⁴ Even Hort, the greatest champion of the “Alexandrian” text as “original,” had to concede that such Western readings were an obstacle to his argument; they could often claim the greatest antiquity in terms of external support, despite the paucity of their attestation, as they are frequently cited by church fathers of the earliest periods when MSS of any kind are virtually nonexistent.⁵ This view has been supported by additional

³ For discussion of these issues, see the critical commentaries. In my opinion, far and away the best discussion is Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 27A; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 205–11.

⁴ See D. C. Parker, *Codex Bezae: An Early Christian Manuscript and Its Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), 261–78; and, more briefly, B. D. Ehrman, “The Text of the Gospels at the End of the Second Century,” in *Codex Bezae: Studies from the Lunel Colloquium, June 1994* (ed. D. C. Parker and C.-B. Amphoux; NTTs 22; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 95–122; pp. 71–79 below.

⁵ See the introduction to *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (ed. F. J. A. Hort

research since Hort's day.⁶ Some hard evidence exists in the present case. From the fourth century, Ephrem's commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron (produced in the 2d century) suggests that when Jesus met the leper he "became angry." If the Diatessaron did have this reading, then it is the earliest witness that we have—no papyri survive for this portion of Mark, and our earliest surviving MS for the verse is Vaticanus, from the mid-fourth century, nearly three hundred years after Mark actually wrote the account.

So, even though the vast majority of MSS indicate that Jesus felt compassion for the leper, their number is not in itself persuasive. It is easy to imagine, as we will see more fully below, why scribes may have been offended by the notion of Jesus' anger in such a situation and so changed the text to make him appear compassionate instead (whereas it is difficult to see why any scribe would have changed the text the other way around). Once the change was made, it could easily have spread like wildfire, as scribes adopted this more comfortable reading instead of the more difficult one, until the original text came to be virtually lost except in a few surviving sources.

But fortunately we do not need to wait for the fourth or fifth century to find witnesses to the original text of Mark, for the scribes who produced our surviving MSS were not the first to reproduce Mark's text. Strictly speaking, the earliest surviving copyists of Mark were Matthew and Luke (assuming for the time being—safely I think—Markan priority), who, of course, modified the text they reproduced far more than any subsequent scribe would dare to do. Still, Matthew and Luke reproduced entire stories of Mark wholesale, changing them here and there when it suited their purposes. Luckily for us, both took over the story in question, and so we can get some sense of what *their* version(s) of Mark looked like. Did their copies indicate that Jesus felt compassion or anger?

In fact, the parallel accounts from Matthew and Luke ascribe neither emotion to Jesus, as can be seen in the following synopsis.⁷

and B. F. Westcott; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1882). See also B. D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993), 223–27.

⁶ See, e.g., B. D. Ehrman, "Heracleon and the 'Western' Textual Tradition," *NTS* 40 (1994): 161–79 (chap. 14 below).

⁷ K. Aland, ed., *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* (11th ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1976), 59.

Matt 8:2-3

καὶ ἰδοὺ λεπρὸς προσελθὼν
προσεκύνει αὐτῷ

λέγων· κύριε ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασάί με
καθαρίσαι. καὶ
ἐκτείνῃς τὴν χεῖρα ἤψατο αὐτοῦ
λέγων· θέλω,
καθαρίσθητι· καὶ
εὐθέως ἐκαθαρίσθη αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα.

Mark 1:40-42

Καὶ ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτὸν λεπρὸς
παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν [καὶ
γονυπετῶν]

καὶ λέγων αὐτῷ ὅτι ἐὰν θέλῃς
δύνασάί με καθαρίσαι. καὶ
σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐκτείνῃς τὴν χεῖρα
αὐτοῦ ἤψατο καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ·
θέλω, καθαρίσθητι· καὶ
εὐθέως ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἡ
λέπρα,
καὶ ἐκαθαρίσθη.

Luke 5:12-13

Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ εἶναι αὐτὸν ἐν
μιᾷ τῶν πόλεων καὶ ἰδοὺ ἀνὴρ
πλήρης λέπρας· ἰδὼν δὲ
τὸν Ἰησοῦν, πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον

ἐδεήθη αὐτοῦ λέγων· κύριε, ἐὰν
θέλῃς δύνασάί με καθαρίσαι. καὶ
ἐκτείνῃς τὴν χεῖρα ἤψατο αὐτοῦ

λέγων· θέλω, καθαρίσθητι· καὶ
εὐθέως ἡ λέπρα ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ'
αὐτοῦ.

Several points can be made about these Synoptic accounts. First, they are verbally identical up to and past the point at which the participle describing Jesus' emotion is given in Mark. Second, Matthew and Luke both omit the participle—whichever one it was—altogether.

This is commonly taken, quite rightly I think, as evidence both that Matthew and Luke had copies of Mark indicating that Jesus became angry (*ὀργισθεῖς*) and that they omitted the term because they both found it offensive. Before giving additional support for this view, I should point out that this is one of the “minor agreements” between Matthew and Luke (there are several others in the passage) that scholars have used to show the problems in the traditional understanding of Markan priority. But in most instances such agreements (which are often omissions, as in this case) can easily be explained as accidental agreements—that is, of the thousands of places where both Matthew and Luke changed Mark, some dozens of them happen to coincide. The accidental agreement in the present case is understandable if—and only if—the participle in question may have caused offense or dissatisfaction to both authors.

There are solid reasons for thinking that Jesus' anger would have offended Matthew and Luke but that his compassion would not. The data are these: on only two other occasions in Mark's Gospel is Jesus explicitly described as compassionate, 6:34 (the feeding of the five thousand) and 8:2 (the feeding of the four thousand).⁸ Luke completely recasts the first story and does not include the second. Matthew, however, has both stories and retains Mark's description of Jesus being compassionate on both occasions (14:14; 15:32). On two additional occasions in Matthew (9:36; 20:34), and yet one other occasion in Luke (7:13), Jesus is explicitly described as compassionate, using this term (*σπλαγγνίζομαι*). In other words, Matthew and Luke have no difficulty describing Jesus as compassionate. Why would they both, independently, have eliminated that description of Jesus here, in a story that they otherwise adopted verbatim?

On the other hand, we have good reason for thinking that Matthew and Luke would have each omitted *ὀργισθεῖς* if it were in their texts of Mark, for they did so in both of the other instances in Mark in which Jesus is explicitly said to become angry. In Mark 3:5 Jesus

⁸ On one other occasion he is *asked* to be compassionate (9:22). Strikingly, he replies by giving a rebuke (9:23). See the discussion of this passage below.

looks around “with anger” (μετ’ ὀργῆς) at those in the synagogue who were watching to see if he would heal the man with the withered hand. Luke has the verse almost the same as Mark, but removes the reference to Jesus’ anger (Luke 6:10). Matthew completely rewrites this section of the story and says nothing of Jesus’ wrath (Matt 12:12–13). Similarly, in Mark 10:14 Jesus is aggravated (ἀγανακτέω) at his disciples for not allowing people to bring their children to be blessed. Both Matthew and Luke have the story, often verbally the same, but both delete the reference to Jesus’ anger (Matt 19:14; Luke 18:16).

In sum, Matthew and Luke have no qualms about describing Jesus as compassionate. But they never describe him as angry. In fact, whenever one of their sources, Mark, did so, they both independently rewrite the term out of their stories. Thus it is hard to understand why they would have removed *σπλαγχνισθείς* from the account of Jesus healing the leper but easy to see why they might have removed *ὀργισθείς*.

My conclusion at this point is that even though most Greek MSS describe Jesus as feeling compassion for this leper, the earliest datable textual tradition (the Western witnesses, in this case) and the work of the oldest surviving “copyists” of Mark’s Gospel (Matthew and Luke) indicate that the older form of the text depicted him as becoming angry.

Transcriptional Probabilities

Corroborating evidence for this conclusion comes in the form of “transcriptional probabilities”—the technical term used by textual scholars to indicate which form of the text was the more likely to be changed by a scribe. The logic of the criterion is that scribes were more likely to make a text more grammatically correct than less, more internally consistent than less, more in harmony with other accounts than less, more theologically acceptable than less. Any text, therefore, that is less grammatical, consistent, harmonious, or orthodox, on these grounds, is correspondingly *more* likely to be original. Or, to give the traditional formulation, “the more difficult reading is to be preferred.”

In the present case there can be little question about which reading scribes would have been likely to prefer. It may be difficult to understand why Jesus would get angry under any circumstance; but

that he might become angry when approached by a poor soul like this leper is completely mystifying—especially to those (like ancient scribes and modern commentators) who assume that Jesus must have been compassionate at all times and reserved his anger only for his hardhearted and willful enemies. Confronted with a text such as this, it is no wonder that scribes would have wanted to change it.

Some modern critics, though, have argued otherwise. In his influential *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, for example, Bruce Metzger maintains that since scribes did not modify the two other passages in which Jesus is explicitly said to become angry in Mark (3:5; 10:14), it is unlikely that they would have modified this one either.⁹

The argument sounds convincing at first, but not when the passages themselves are actually examined. In the other two instances it makes perfect sense for Jesus to get angry: in one he is angry at his enemies who have hardened hearts and misinterpret God's law in a way that allows them to perpetuate suffering (3:5); in the other he becomes irritated with his disciples for not allowing children to come to him so that he can lay hands on them (10:14). But why would Jesus get angry in the story of the leper? The answer is far less obvious, and therefore far more open to misconstrual. Scribes would thus be likely to change this text, but not the others.

Moreover, Metzger's discussion of transcriptional probabilities (in which he is reporting the sentiment of the entire United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament Committee) leaves open the much larger question: if scribes were unlikely to change Jesus' anger to compassion, how is it that they were *likely* to change his compassion to anger? That is to say, one still has to account for the change. The committee proposes two solutions. First they suggest that a scribe may have been influenced by the harsh verb of v. 43, ἐμβριμάομαι ("severely rebuked him," literally something like "snorted at him"), and, to explain this subsequent emotionally charged language, modified the earlier description of Jesus' emotional state. This might work as a solution; but one wonders why, if the problem involved ἐμβριμάομαι from v. 43, the scribe would not have simply changed *that* text—especially since it (a) involves a rare word, (b) ascribes a confusing

⁹ B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 65.

emotion to Jesus, and (c) is the text that was copied *second* (i.e., would not a scribe be more likely to change what he was currently writing in light of what he had already written, rather than in light of what he was about to write?).

The second proposal is that a scribe changed *πλαγχισθείς* to *ὀργισθείς* because in Aramaic (Jesus' native tongue) the words for compassion and anger are spelled almost exactly alike.¹⁰ I have to say that arguments like this have always struck me as completely mystifying; I have never heard anyone explain how exactly they are supposed to work. Why, that is, would a Greek scribe proficient in Greek and copying a Greek text be confused by two words that look alike in Aramaic? We should not assume that Greek scribes spoke Aramaic (virtually none of them did), or that they copied Aramaic texts, or that they translated the Gospel from Aramaic to Greek. This Gospel was composed in Greek, transmitted in Greek, and copied in Greek by Greek-speaking scribes. So how does the accidental similarity of two Aramaic words relate to the issue? Moreover, even if this *were* the reason for the confusion between the two words, why would the change go in this direction (from compassion to anger) rather than the other?

We are left with no good explanation for why scribes might have wanted to change the text if it originally indicated that Jesus felt compassion. But we have plenty of reasons for thinking they may have changed the text to eliminate Jesus' anger. In fact, as we will see below, there are also less obvious reasons for early scribes wanting to make this change (less obvious to us, that is, but more obvious to them).

Before explaining these reasons, I should point out that there is evidence in the MSS themselves that scribes felt some consternation over the emotional response that Jesus has toward the leper. Several other textual witnesses (W b c [e])—all of which read “felt compassion” in v. 41—have modified his evident lack of compassion in the subsequent verses by omitting vv. 42b–43, where he rebukes the man and then casts him out as if he were a demon. True, these scribes may have done so because the verses are absent from Matthew and Luke (who may have omitted them for the same reason: the

¹⁰ “Compare Syriac *ethraham*, ‘he had pity,’ with *ethra‘em*, ‘he was enraged’” (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 65).

portrayal of Jesus as something less than compassionate). Nonetheless, the net affect is striking: now Jesus is not only said to be compassionate instead of angry, he also does nothing that might appear to compromise the emotion later!

Intrinsic Probabilities

We are now in a position to move beyond the question of what the MSS and the proclivities of scribes might suggest about the original text and ask which of the two readings—Jesus as angry or as compassionate—fits better with the portrayal of Jesus in Mark’s Gospel. This will lead us, then, at a later stage, to take on the task of interpreting the passage more closely, once we are still more confident of its original wording.

Which reading, then, makes better sense in the context of Mark’s broader narrative? This is a question that rarely gets asked, oddly enough; or perhaps it is not so odd, since even the commentators who realize that the text originally indicated that Jesus became angry are embarrassed by the idea and try to explain it away, so that the text no longer means what it says.¹¹

We might begin our exploration of intrinsic suitability by giving the benefit of the doubt to the other reading (σπλαγχνισθείς) and ask if indeed it does not make the better sense in context. Is it not more plausible that Jesus would respond to the pleas of this poor leper with compassion rather than anger?

That certainly does resonate with common sense—especially with a common sense that sees Jesus as the all-gentle Good Shepherd concerned above all for the well-being of all his children (and intent never to hurt their feelings). We need constantly to remember, though, that the question is not about which portrayal of Jesus we ourselves find most comfortable, but about which portrayal of Jesus was originally presented by the author of the Gospel of Mark. Even critical commentators sometimes fail to make this distinction. Evidently, few readers of Mark (including some of its commentators) have realized that Jesus is never described in this Gospel as exercising compassion when he heals. Instead, the emotion commonly associated with him—odd as this might seem—is anger.

¹¹ See the discussion of the commentators’ various interpretations below.

As I have already indicated, on two occasions Jesus is explicitly said to feel compassion in Mark. Interestingly enough, both are in the same context: Jesus is in a wilderness area and feels compassion for the crowds with him, because they are hungry. He then miraculously provides food for them by multiplying the loaves and fishes (6:41; 8:6–7). On only one occasion does the term “compassion” (σπλαγχνισθείς) occur in a story in which Jesus heals anyone with a disease or a demon; and in that instance the term is not used to describe him. Mark 9 presents the account of a man pleading with Jesus to cast an evil demon from his son, since the disciples have proved unable to do so: “Often,” he tells Jesus, “it casts him into the fire and into water to destroy him; but if you are able, show us compassion (σπλαγχνισθείς) and help us” (9:22). The man, in other words, asks for compassion. Strikingly enough, Jesus replies not with compassion but a rebuke: “*If* you are able?! All things are possible to the one who believes” (9:23). The man then continues to plead: “I do believe; help my unbelief!” (9:24).

One might be tempted to conclude that Jesus does after all show compassion by healing the boy. It should be noted, though, that Mark says no such thing. Instead, he indicates that Jesus healed the boy only because he saw that a crowd was starting to form (9:25a). It may be that interpreters have read compassion into the account rather than out of it (and that they do so with all the other healing stories in Mark, since Mark himself never ascribes the emotion to Jesus when he heals). In any event, Mark does not describe Jesus as compassionate in chapter 9 but shows him rebuking a man for doubting his ability to heal.

This leads us now to the other side of the coin. If Mark never indicates that Jesus heals out of compassion, what does he say about his anger? As we have seen, Jesus gets angry on several occasions in Mark’s Gospel; what is most interesting to note is that each account involves Jesus’ ability to perform miraculous deeds of healing.

One possible instance is much debated among scholars. In Mark 8:11–12 the Pharisees begin to argue with Jesus and demand that he show them a sign from heaven (evidently to prove who he is). Jesus “sighed deeply” (ἀναστενάζω) in his spirit and replied that he would give no sign to “this generation.” Commentators have commonly taken the term ἀναστενάζω to imply anger at his opponents for doubting his abilities, but the most recent and thorough lexical study of the term (it is fairly rare, even outside the NT) has main-

tained that it connotes dismay rather than indignation.¹² Thus we should probably leave it to one side. But if the majority of commentators is correct, that it suggests anger, the anger has come in the context of a request for a miracle.¹³

Among the explicit references already mentioned is the interesting passage of Mark 10, in which the disciples prevent unidentified people (“they,” 10:13) from bringing children to Jesus so that he might touch them. Jesus responds by becoming indignant (*ἀνανακτέω*), and tells his disciples: “allow the children to come to me, do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” He then takes the children in his arms, blesses them, and lays his hands on them (10:13–16).

Jesus’ actions here, of course, allow him to make some comments about children and the kingdom; but the actions themselves should not be so quickly overlooked. In our culture laying on hands may be simply a symbolic gesture of blessing; but in Mark’s Gospel it is usually a sign of healing, or at least the transmission of divine power (cf. 1:31, 41–42; 5:41–42; 6:5; 8:23–25; 9:27). When Jesus “blesses” these children and “lays his hands” on them, is he actually *doing* something that “heals” them or transmits his divine power to them (“such as these enter the kingdom of God”)?

If so, then not only in chapter 9 but also in chapter 10 Jesus’ anger has to do with his response to someone in a healing setting: in the first he rebukes a man for not having sufficient faith in his ability to heal (“*If* you are able?!”), in the second he rebuffs his disciples for not seeing that he wants to welcome the children and place his hands of healing on them.

The most explicit account of Jesus’ anger occurs earlier in Mark, in chapter 3. Here, at the climax of a cycle of five controversy stories,¹⁴ Jesus finds himself in a synagogue with a group of Pharisees and a man with a withered hand. The Pharisees are watching Jesus closely to see if he will heal the man on the Sabbath, in violation of (their interpretation of) the law of Moses. Jesus tells the man to come forward and asks his opponents the rhetorical question: “Is it

¹² J. B. Gibson, “Another Look at Why Jesus ‘Sighs Deeply’: ἀναστενάζω in Mark 8:12a,” *JTS* 47 (1996): 131–40.

¹³ One might note that in the Synoptic parallels the request comes as a response to a *healing* (of a demoniac): Matt 12:22–42; Luke 11:14–32.

¹⁴ Mark 2:1–12, 13–17, 18–22, 23–28; 3:1–6.

permitted to do good on the Sabbath, or to do evil? To save a life or destroy it?" (3:4). When they respond with silence he looks around at them "with anger" (μετ' ὀργῆς), grieving at the hardness of their hearts. He then tells the man to stretch out his hand, which is restored (3:5). This—coming after a series of other confrontations in rapid succession that take up all of Mark 2—proves to be too much for the Pharisees; they leave to make common cause against Jesus with the Herodians and plot from then on to have him killed (3:6).

Another healing narrative, another instance of Jesus' anger. In this instance, at least, the object and reason for his wrath are evident. The Pharisees are the object, and the reason is that they have hardened hearts, not realizing that it is right to do what is good on the Sabbath but wrong to do what is bad. As Jesus indicates earlier, in the first of the controversy accounts in chapter 2, the Sabbath was made for the sake of humans, not humans for the Sabbath (2:27). Thus his healing power is particularly appropriate on the Sabbath, the day given by God for the benefit of his people; how much better to provide real assistance on this day for someone in need? The Pharisees, though, are overly concerned with their scrupulous regulations of what is and is not permitted for the people of God (according to Mark at least [see 7:1–8]; the question of the *historical* Pharisees is another matter). Above all, they oppose Jesus' authority to do miracles on the Sabbath, seeking to kill him precisely because he stands over against their interpretations of the law and of God's will for his people. Mark, of course, takes the opposite stand and portrays Jesus as angered by his opponents' refusal to see that his ability to heal in fact comes from God.

To summarize: we have seen several instances of Jesus' anger in Mark. In one instance it is at least possible as an interpretation of his sighing over the request of his enemies for a miraculous sign from heaven (8:12); in another it is implicit in his rebuke of the man who seeks healing for his demon-possessed son (9:23); in another it comes in reaction to his disciples who refuse to allow children to enjoy his blessing, and possibly healing, through the laying on of hands (10:14); and in yet another it is in direct response to the Pharisees who refuse to acknowledge that his authority to heal comes from God and is a right understanding of the will of God (3:5).

We now can move to chapter 1 and the healing of the leper. Here too is another healing narrative. What is Jesus' emotion on this occasion? Never in the Gospel of Mark is the term "compas-

sion” associated with Jesus healing; on several occasions anger is. Which is more likely to be associated with him here? Apart from the question of consistency with the rest of Mark’s narrative as a whole, we may pursue the question by digging somewhat deeper into several aspects of the story itself and its literary context.

First, the story itself. As briefly noted above, it is hard to explain the subsequent actions of Jesus if a gentle sense of “compassion” was wafting over him, for after he heals the man he “sternly rebukes” (or “warns”) him and then “throws him out.” The first term, ἐμβριμάομαι, is rare and difficult to translate. It is sometimes used of “snorting” horses. In its other occurrence in Mark it almost certainly means “rebuke” or “reproach” (14:5, when the disciples react to the woman who anointed Jesus); that should probably determine its meaning here. The only other occurrence in the Synoptics is at Matt 9:30, which appears to be dependent on this passage in Mark. Otherwise in the NT it is used only in the Gospel of John (11:33, 38), and there somewhat idiosyncratically.¹⁵ John’s usage, of course, would not have been available to Mark, some thirty years earlier; the LXX, though, would have been, and interestingly enough, the term occurs there in contexts that also speak about “anger” (ὀργή; Lam 2:6; Dan 11:30). On balance it seems easier to understand that Jesus would severely rebuke the man if he were angry with him than if he felt sorry for him.

The other term in question points in the same direction. After Jesus rebuked the man, he “threw him out” (ἐκβάλλω), a term typically used in Mark when Jesus casts out demons (eleven of sixteen occurrences), but also of his driving out the money changers and merchants from the temple (11:15) and of the wicked tenants who cast out the “son” in the parable of the vineyard (12:8).¹⁶ In every instance in the Gospel, it is used of some kind of aggressive action.

¹⁵ In John ἐμβριμάομαι is used reflexively to refer to Jesus’ inner state. Some have solved the problem of Mark 1:43 by proposing that there too ἐμβριμάομαι should be understood similarly. But there is no reflexive here in Mark (the verb is used transitively; the ex-leper is the object)—a problem sometimes solved by appealing to a reputed discrepancy in translation from the Aramaic. So M. Wojciechowski, “The Touching of the Leper (Mark 1,40–45) as a Historical and Symbolic Act of Jesus,” *BZ* 33 (1989): 116. Again, one wonders how Aramaic confusions can have any bearing on *Greek* terms. See above.

¹⁶ Mark 1:34, 39, 43; 3:15, 22, 23; 6:13; 7:26; 9:18, 28, and 38 use ἐκβάλλω with reference to exorcism; additional uses for the verb occur in 1:12; 5:40; 9:47; 11:15; 12:8.

We still have not explored fully why Jesus might have acted so aggressively and angrily toward a leper who wanted, after all, simply to be healed. But first we should deal directly with the more common objection to the reading, that it just does not seem consistent with how one would expect Jesus to react in the Gospels.

Here again I need to emphasize that our personal sense of how Jesus should react or our unreflective notions of how he does react in the Gospels have very little bearing on exegesis. One of the most striking and interesting aspects of Mark's Gospel is precisely how contrary to expectations the portrayal of Jesus is. Any Jew who began to read that this was the story of "Jesus the Messiah" (1:1) would be completely shocked or confused by the story line. This is a messiah who gets crucified by the Romans as a political insurgent. On the macrolevel, that is a portrayal that simply makes no sense (unless you are a Christian and understand that the term "messiah" no longer means what it used to mean). But even on the microlevel of the immediate context, consider how Jesus is portrayed in the first part of this Gospel. John the Baptist announces that the one who comes after him will provide a baptism in the Holy Spirit. The reader might well then expect Jesus to do so. Instead, we are told the Spirit "drives him out" (ἐκβάλλω—the same aggressive word as above) into the wilderness for a bizarre encounter with the devil and the wild beasts. Jesus and the Spirit do not appear to be on friendly terms; in any event there is nothing here to suggest that Jesus has the power over the Spirit to bestow it.

Throughout these early chapters—and contrary to what one might expect or hope—Jesus is not portrayed as a proponent of what we might call "family values." He rips his would-be followers away from their homes and families, sometimes leaving their parents in the lurch (1:16–20). He rejects his own family, who think, as it turns out, that he has gone out of his mind (3:21); and when they come to see him, he publicly spurns them (3:31–35).

When people seek after Jesus for help, he refuses to see them (1:37–38). He fails to behave in recognizably religious ways (2:18–22); he condones lawless behavior (2:23–28); he defies religious authority (3:1–6). He associates with lowlifes (2:16–17); he drags his followers away from their livelihood (1:16–20; 2:13–14); he keeps to himself in the wilderness and refuses to be acknowledged for who he is, even by his enemies (1:25, 34; 3:7–12).

This, of course, is not the whole picture—but it is the predomi-

nant one. Jesus is not at all what we would expect him to be, and in none of these instances is “compassion” (or any related term) ascribed to Jesus.¹⁷ In any event it simply will not do to say that Jesus must not have gotten angry with the leper seeking healing since that would have been out of character. It may be out of character with popular portrayals and understandings of Jesus, but it would not be out of character with the Jesus we meet in the early chapters of Mark.

This brings us, then, to the key interpretive question. When a leper approached Jesus and said “If you will, you are able to make me clean,” why did he become angry?

Explaining Jesus’ Anger

Most commentators who accept ὀργισθεῖς as the original text have difficulties explaining it and either pass over it quickly or make it say something other than it does. Over the years numerous interpretations have been proposed; it seems odd that no one has thought to consider the other occasions on which Jesus gets angry in this Gospel. Still, one must admit that some of the explanations are highly creative.

Some interpreters have argued that the participle refers not to Jesus but to the leper, who in anger touched Jesus and so was healed (cf. the woman with a hemorrhage in 5:25–34).¹⁸ Unfortunately, this explanation cannot account for the next words, since the subject of λέγει is surely the same as that of ἤψατο. Others have thought that Jesus became angry because he knew that the man would disobey orders, spreading the news of his healing and making it difficult for Jesus to enter into the towns of Galilee because of the crowds.¹⁹ But it seems unlikely that Jesus would be angry about what the man would do later—before he actually did it! Others have suggested that he was angry because the man was intruding on his preaching

¹⁷ Of course, he does acquire a huge following by doing his miracles (1:45). And his early miracles have suggested to some a good dose of compassion. In chap. 1, after all, he does raise Simon Peter’s mother, bedridden with a fever. More than one wry observer has noted, though, that after he does so she gets up to feed them supper (1:30–31).

¹⁸ So K. Lake, “‘ΕΜΒΡΙΜΗΣΑΜΕΝΟΣ and ‘ΟΡΓΙΣΘΕΙΣ, Mark 1,40–43,” *HTR* 16 (1923):197–98.

¹⁹ So W. L. Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 87.

ministry, keeping him from his primary task.²⁰ Unfortunately, nothing in the text indicates this as a problem, and it seems odd as an interpretation in Mark's Gospel in particular, where healings and exorcisms play a much greater role than preaching.

Another suggestion is that Jesus was angry with the leper for breaking the law by coming up to him to be healed, instead of avoiding human contact and calling out "unclean, unclean," as the law commands (Lev 13:45).²¹ But this fails to explain why Jesus himself would then have broken the law by initiating physical contact with the person. Other interpreters have thought that the anger is not to be taken personally. For example, some scholars have maintained that anger was simply part of an exorcist's repertoire, used as part of the emotional energy needed to cast out demons.²² Even if that were true, it would not explain the situation here, in the final form of Mark's Gospel, since this is a healing story with no mention of any demons (the prehistory of the story notwithstanding).

Probably the most common argument, in one form or another, is that Jesus is not angry with the leper at all but with the state of the world that has caused him to suffer. What is most intriguing about this interpretation is its rhetorical effect—it turns out that the story is really about Jesus being compassionate, even though the text says he became angry! Thus Vincent Taylor can maintain that Jesus is angry that there is such suffering in the world; Eduard Schweizer can argue that Jesus is angry at the misery caused by such a disease; and John Painter, who prefers *σπλαγχνισθείς*, indicates that if *ὀργισθείς* were original, it would mean that Jesus is angry at the situation of the leper who has to be isolated from normal human contact because of the law of Moses.²³ This final interpretation, I should point out, would appear to suggest that the problem is the Jewish law—a dubious notion, since at the end of the story Jesus seems to affirm the law, by telling the healed leper to do what the law com-

²⁰ Suggested but not taken by V. Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1963), 189. See also G. Telford, "Mark 1:40–45," *Int* 36 (1982): 55.

²¹ So A. E. J. Rawlinson, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (Westminster Commentaries; London: Methuen, 1949), 22; Rawlinson accepts *σπλαγχνισθείς* as the reading in the text but sees Jesus' anger in his reaction to the leper after healing him.

²² The classic study is C. Bonner, "Traces of Thaumaturgic Technique in the Miracles," *HTR* 20 (1927):171–81.

²³ Taylor, *Mark*, 189; E. Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark* (trans. D. H. Madvig; Richmond: John Knox, 1970), 58; J. Painter, *Mark's Gospel: Worlds in Conflict* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 49.

mands. In any event all of these interpretations have two things in common: they avoid making Jesus appear angry with the man, and they avoid dealing directly with the words of the text in order to do so.

Somewhat better is the understanding of Morna Hooker, who situates Jesus' angry reaction in relation to his reaction to the world elsewhere in Mark's Gospel, where he is in constant conflict with the forces of evil in order to bring about the good kingdom of God here on earth. For Hooker, then, Jesus is angry not at the leper or at his disease or at the world in general, but at Satan, the one whose evil works have put people in bondage, as particularly evident in the case of the demon possessed.²⁴ This interpretation is moving in the right direction because, unlike the others, it has Mark's overarching message in mind. Unfortunately, there is not a word about Satan in this passage; moreover, the interpretation does not consider the more obvious question of where and why Jesus is said to become angry elsewhere in Mark.

The two key passages are the ones we have already considered at length (3:1–6; 9:20–25)—both of which have important parallels with the story of the leper. The first reference to anger comes in the account of 3:1–6, the man with the withered hand. It is striking, and probably worth noting, that 1:39–45 and 3:1–6 bracket the cycle of conflict stories in chapter 2. In some sense the conflicts begin with Jesus' heightened popularity at the end of chapter 1 (the result of the healing of the leper); they climax in 3:6 with the Pharisees' decision to seek Jesus' life (the result of the healing of the man with the withered hand). Both of these accounts describe a healing of a debilitating bodily ailment; both narrate a conflict involving Jesus' anger (with the leper, with the Pharisees); both appear to relate a violation of the law (Jesus touches the leper in one; he appears—to the Pharisees at least—to violate the Sabbath in the other). In other words, these two stories are placed around 2:1–3:6 for a reason—they serve as interpretive brackets for Jesus' conflicts with the Jewish authorities. Strikingly, in both he gets angry, and in both places the anger has to do with how people perceive his healing powers. This is especially clear, of course, in the second story, where the Pharisees do not believe that Jesus is authorized by God to heal

²⁴ M. D. Hooker, *The Message of Mark* (London: Epworth, 1983), 42; followed by Marcus, *Mark*, 209.

on the Sabbath. But what about the first? Why would Jesus become angry when the leper says to him, “If you will, you can make me clean”? Is it because the leper is not sure that Jesus (or God, whom Jesus represents) *wants* to heal him (“if you *will* . . .”)?

Consider the second story where Jesus appears to be angry. In 9:22–23 the man with the demon-possessed son entreats Jesus: “If you are able, have pity and help us.” Jesus replies angrily, “If you are able?!” Here again is a question about Jesus’ miracle-working power; but in this case it is not a question of authorization (as in 3:1–6) but of ability. When Jesus sees a crowd forming—and only then—he performs the miracle.

Jesus is angered when anyone questions his authority or ability to heal—or his desire to heal. Consider the other passage that explicitly mentions his anger, when the disciples prevent people from bringing their children to have Jesus “lay his hands” on them (10:13–16). Jesus not only *can* provide the healing touch that brings blessing, he *wants* to; and anyone who hinders him from doing so becomes the object of his wrath.

So too in our account, 1:39–45. Jesus is approached by a leper who says, “If you are willing, you are able to cleanse me.” But why would Jesus *not* be willing to heal him? Of course he is willing, just as he is authorized and able. Jesus is angered—not at the illness, or the world, or the law, or Satan—but at the very idea that anyone would question, even implicitly, his willingness to help one in need. He heals the man before rebuking him and throwing him out.

The Modification of the Text

Mark described Jesus as angry, and, at least in this instance, scribes took offense. This comes as no surprise: apart from a fuller understanding of Mark’s portrayal, Jesus’ anger is difficult to understand. Moreover, scribes never did think of Mark’s fuller portrayal of Jesus *per se*, in the way modern exegetes do. They thought instead about the Gospel narratives (all four of them) as one harmonious whole. Jesus’ anger in this instance did not seem to fit, and so the text was altered. It had been changed previously by the prescribal copyists, Matthew and Luke, who omitted his anger; and it was changed by the scribes themselves, who transformed his anger into compassion. But there may have been something more at stake in this scribal alteration than a simple offense at Jesus’ unexpected outburst.

Only in relatively recent years have textual scholars begun to explore fully the social world of Christian scribes to understand reasons they may have had for modifying the text. Even so, there have been only two major studies to date, one dealing with the effect of anti-Judaism on an important part of the textual tradition, the other with the effect of early christological controversies.²⁵ But other areas of interest could be pursued—for example, the ways scribes were affected by the attempts to silence women in early Christianity, the rise of asceticism, and the apologetic movement. The final matter, the effects of early Christian apologia on our anonymous scribes, has been comprehensively explored by Wayne Kannaday.²⁶ Here I might say just a few words about this as it relates to the text at hand.²⁷

By the late second century, virtually the only resource for learning about the actions and words of Jesus were the Christian Gospels (and later oral traditions that ultimately derived from them). We know that by 180 C.E. or so, some of the better-informed pagan opponents of Christianity, such as the Middle-Platonist Celsus, had read the Gospels and used their portrayals of Jesus as weapons against the Christians. A heated debate commenced—in literary circles, at least—over whether the things Jesus said and did were appropriate to one who was revered as the Son of God. The background to these debates lay in the widespread notion throughout the Mediterranean that divine beings occasionally roamed the earth. There were, of course, numerous stories about other superhuman individuals, who like Jesus were also said to have been supernaturally born, done miracles, healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, and been

²⁵ For the former see E. J. Epp, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts* (SNTSMS 3; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1966). The problem with Epp's otherwise excellent and groundbreaking study is that although he showed that Codex Bezae incorporates "anti-Jewish" tendencies, he did not situate these in a plausible *Sitz im Leben*—i.e., in the social setting of the scribes responsible for the alterations. This was a shortcoming I tried to overcome in my study of christologically motivated variations, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*. See the bibliography there. For shorter discussion of such issues, see my "Text of the Gospels," and "The Text as Window: New Testament Manuscripts and the Social History of Early Christianity," in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (ed. B. D. Ehrman and M. W. Holmes; SD 46; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 361–79; pp. 71–119 above.

²⁶ "Apologetic Discourse and the Scribal Tradition: Evidence of the Influence of Apologetic Interests on the Textual Tradition of the Canonical Gospels" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2002).

²⁷ The following paragraphs are based on my "Text of the Gospels."

exalted to heaven to live with the gods. These other individuals were also sometimes called “sons” of God.²⁸

Based on the fragmentary evidence at our disposal, it appears that there were general expectations of what such a person would be like within the broader culture of the Greco-Roman world. Part of the confrontation between pagans and Christians, at least in the rarified atmosphere of the apologetic literature, involved determining whether Jesus carried himself with the dignity and deportment of a son of God. Pagan critics like Celsus argued on the contrary that Jesus was a fraud who did not benefit the human race, and that as a consequence he was not a true son of God but a deceiver, a worker of dark craft, a magician.²⁹

It appears that the debates over Jesus’ identity and the appropriateness of his designation as the Son of God made an impact on the texts of the NT. One of the best candidates for “apologetic” variation of the text is in a passage that occurs somewhat later in the Gospel of Mark. This is the account in 6:3, where in most of our Greek and versional witnesses, the townspeople of Nazareth identify Jesus as the “carpenter, the son of Mary.” We know that Celsus himself found this identification of Jesus as a τέκτων significant, possibly (though not certainly) because it situated Jesus among the lower classes and thereby showed him not to be worthy of divine stature. The response of Celsus’s principal Christian opponent, Origen of Alexandria (whose quotations of Celsus are our main sources of information about him), may have been disingenuous, although there is no way to know for certain: he claims that there is no MS of the Gospels that provides this identification. Possibly all of Origen’s texts agreed with P⁴⁵, f¹³, and 33 in changing Mark 6:3 to identify Jesus as “the son of the carpenter,” rather than “the carpenter”; or possibly he had forgotten the passage in Mark. In any event, given the second-century modification of the text—that is, its change precisely in the period when Jesus’ own socioeconomic status and employment history had become an issue for apologists—we might be inclined

²⁸ A solid study of these issues from the perspective of the early Christian apologist Origen is E. V. Gallagher, *Divine Man or Magician? Celsus and Origen on Jesus* (SBLDS 64; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982). My comments here on these individuals are not dependent on the thorny question of the terminology (e.g., θεοὶ ἄνθρωποι) used to describe them.

²⁹ Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum*. See the full discussion by Gallagher, *Divine Man or Magician?*

to think that it was precisely the apologetic impulse that led to the corruption.³⁰

Or take a different, even simpler, example, drawn this time from the Gospel of Luke: a change of word order in 23:32, where the original statement that Jesus was crucified with “two other evildoers” is modified in Codex Bezae to read “two others, who were evildoers.” For the scribes who effected the change, there was evidently no reason to allow the text to be misread as saying that Jesus was to be numbered among the ranks of the miscreants. The change was yet more effective in some of Bezae’s versional allies (c e sy), where the offensive term is omitted altogether, so that Jesus is crucified along with “two evildoers.”

My point is that Christian scribes who wanted to defend Jesus’ character against the assaults of hostile pagan critics may have had real-life motivations for changing the texts of the Gospels in places where Jesus did not appear, at first glance at least, to be portrayed as one who merited the appellation “Son of God.” Is it possible that this is what lies behind the alteration of Mark 1:41? In this text Jesus becomes angry with a poor leper who begs to be healed. In the broader context of Mark’s account, the anger makes sense. Here is a man who questions Jesus’ willingness to heal those in need. Jesus similarly became angry when the Pharisees questioned his authorization to heal, when the father of a demon-possessed boy questioned his ability to heal, and when his own disciples questioned his desire to heal. But anyone not intimately familiar with Mark’s Gospel on its own terms—with concordance in hand—may not have understood why Jesus became angry. Matthew certainly did not; neither did Luke. Nor did later scribes, who may have been perplexed by this account of a leper in the hands of an angry Jesus and changed the text to make Jesus both more compassionate and more acceptable to the Christian claim, made in the face of pagan opposition, that “truly this man was the Son of God.”

³⁰ As can be inferred from Origen’s discussion; see *Contra Celsum* 6.36.

THE TEXT OF MARK IN THE HANDS OF THE ORTHODOX¹

The history of biblical interpretation cannot be understood as a field of investigation *sui generis*. For since it has as its subject matter literary texts, it is in fact a subfield of literary criticism. Developments within this wider discipline can naturally be expected to have some relevance to the history of scriptural exegesis. Furthermore, the texts studied by this particular subdiscipline are themselves uncertain: while we have literally thousands of biblical manuscripts (MSS), none of them is an autograph and all of them contain mistakes. This means, among other things, that the texts of the biblical books have to be reconstructed prior to exegesis, and, more significantly for our purposes here, that anyone interested in knowing how these books have been interpreted through the ages must know something about the forms of text prevalent in various times and places. This study will explore some of the ways these fields of literary criticism, textual criticism, and the history of interpretation—fields which on the surface may appear quite disparate—relate rather closely to one another.

Literary Criticism and the History of Interpretation

There have always been scholars who have studied the history of interpretation for narrowly exegetical reasons, viz., to assist in the determination of the “original meaning” of a text—whatever the term “original,” and even more problematic, the term “meaning,” might be understood to signify. Others of us, however, see these historical data as more than handmaidens of exegesis. For the history of interpretation is equally significant in providing insights into the act of interpretation itself, i.e., by showing us what actually has happened and does happen when texts are read and construed.

Of the numerous developments within the broader field of literary criticism, one of the most fruitful for approaching this matter of

¹ Originally published as “The Text of Mark in the Hands of the Orthodox,” in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective: Essays in Honor of Karlfried Froehlich*, ed. Mark Burrows and Paul Rorem. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, pp. 19–31. Used with permission.

the history of biblical interpretation is reader response criticism.² For unlike some of its predecessors in the field—one naturally thinks of new criticism and structuralism—reader response criticism is not narrowly concerned with the text per se, i.e., with a document as some kind of “objective” entity from which meanings can be culled like so many grapes from a vine. It is instead interested in the process of interpretation. For its more radical representatives, such as Stanley Fish, meaning does not at all inhere in a text, because texts in themselves simply do not mean anything. Meaning is something that results from reading the text; it is an event that occurs when the reader constructs an understanding from the linear arrangement of words on the page.³

This view represents a direct and conscientious challenge to one of the founding principles of the so-called new criticism, as laid out by W. K. Wimsatt and M. Beardsley some forty years ago in their seminal essay, “The Affective Fallacy.”⁴ Wimsatt and Beardsley insisted that a text’s meaning is independent of its effect, psychological or otherwise, on the reader; to tie a text’s meaning to its effect is to commit the affective fallacy. For them, meaning resides within the text, and it is the task of the critic to discover that meaning by applying objective interpretive criteria in the process of analysis.

Reader response critics object to this “myth of objectivity,” and argue on the contrary that meaning does not exist independently of readers who construe texts. For them, the words of a text do not in themselves determine the text’s meaning. This is shown by the fact that the same words can mean radically different things in

² Two recent anthologies can serve as a nice entrée into this field: Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman, eds., *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); and Jane Thompkins, ed., *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

³ See his two recent collections of essays, *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980); and *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989).

⁴ “The Affective Fallacy,” 1949; reprinted in Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), 21–39. The other guiding principle of the new criticism was the “intentional fallacy.” The new critics maintained that it was a fallacy to ask what an author intended his or her work to mean, both because such knowledge is generally unattainable and because texts take on a life of their own once they are written, so that they can mean something quite different from what an author might have intended.

different contexts, and by the related fact that readers with different assumptions typically assign different meanings to the same text. Even the same reader will frequently understand a text differently at different times. Thus, for reader response critics, every time a text is read its meaning is construed; every time it is reread it is reconstrued, and reconstrued more or less differently. In this sense, reading—the process of construing a text—differs not substantially from writing, so that every time we read a text, whether we know it or not, we re-create or rewrite the text.

One does not have to agree wholeheartedly with Stanley Fish and his devotees to see something useful in this understanding of readers and texts. For in some measure it represents a development of the conventional wisdom that there is no such thing as exegesis without presuppositions, and that one's presuppositions—indeed, all of one's dispositions, ideologies, and convictions, not only about the text but about life and meaning itself—cannot possibly be discarded, removed like so much excessive clothing, when coming to a text. The reader-response view goes beyond this exegetical commonplace in asserting that there is in fact no such thing as an “objective” text to which a reader brings his or her “subjective” predispositions: texts do not exist apart from those who read them, and meanings cannot be located anywhere outside those who bring them to the texts.⁵

The significance of these views for the history of biblical interpretation should be rather self-evident. In studying how the text of the Bible has been interpreted over the ages, we see how the process of constructing meaning has taken place among different readers in different contexts. And we ourselves can then reconstruct the hermeneutical process that has been at work, i.e., we can see how pre-understandings have shaped texts in such a way as to produce their meanings. What is not as self-evident is how these two fields relate to the third, New Testament textual criticism, and more specifically, to the study of the transmission of the texts of the New Testament.

⁵ See esp. Stanley Fish, “Normal Circumstances and Other Special Cases,” “Is There a Text in this Class?,” “How to Recognize a Poem When You See One,” “What Makes an Interpretation Acceptable?,” and “Demonstration vs. Persuasion: Two Models of Critical Activity,” all in *Is There a Text in this Class?*

Literary Criticism, Textual Criticism, and the History of Interpretation

If it is true that everyone who reads a text will understand it somewhat differently, i.e., that every rereading of a text is a re-creation of the text, or a rewriting of the text, then in textual criticism we have abundant evidence of precisely this phenomenon at our fingertips, although we have scarcely recognized it for what it is. All of us interpret our texts and ascribe meaning to them, and in that sense we “rewrite” them. The scribes, somewhat more literally, actually did rewrite them. And not infrequently it was precisely their understanding of their texts that led them to rewrite them—not only in their own minds, which all of us do, but actually on the page. When we rewrite a text in our mind so as to construe its meaning, we interpret the text; when scribes rewrite a text on the page so as to help fix its meaning, they modify the text. On the one hand, then, this scribal activity is very much like what all of us do every time we read a text; on the other hand, in taking this business of rewriting a text to its logical end, scribes have done something very different from what we do. For from the standpoint of posterity, they have unalterably changed the text, so that the text that is henceforth read is quite literally a different text. It is only from this historical perspective that one can apply the standard text-critical nomenclature to this scribal activity and call it the “corruption” of a text.⁶

The deliberate modification of the New Testament text is a widely attested phenomenon. It occurs, of course, in a somewhat innocuous way whenever a scribe tries to make sense of the grammar of a text that otherwise appears incorrect or needlessly obscure. But it also occurs when a scribe changes a text in order to make what it says coincide more closely with what, in the scribe’s view, it has to mean. The Gospel of Mark provides an interesting testing ground for the thesis that the pre-understandings of scribes—their “theology”—led them to read the text in certain ways and that their reading of the text led them to rewrite the text, or to use the text-critical term, to corrupt the text, at significant points. For unlike the other Gospels, Mark begins with Jesus’ baptism as an adult. It does not mention his birth, let alone a virgin birth, or anything about his

⁶ The terms “corrupt” and “corruption,” while problematic for the reasons I discuss here, are the standard designations used by biblical scholars and classicists to refer to the accidental or intentional modification of a literary text.

preexistence. Furthermore, the Gospel does not conclude with accounts of the bodily appearances of the resurrected Jesus, but only with the proclamation that Jesus has been raised. Given this beginning and this ending one can well imagine how Mark's story could be variously read by Christians of the early church, especially before orthodoxy finally established a normative reading. As far back as our earliest records we find Christians who claimed that Jesus was adopted to be the Son of God at his baptism, that his anointing by the Spirit at his baptism was the Christological moment par excellence.⁷ Mark's narrative does little to discourage such a view. And we know of other Christians, at least by the mid-second century, who maintained that Jesus and the Christ were two different entities, that at his baptism the man Jesus received the heavenly Christ, who indwelt Jesus and empowered him for his ministry, before leaving him at some time prior to his death on the cross.⁸ Irenaeus specifically tells us that some such persons used Mark's Gospel to the exclusion of all the others (*Adv. Haer.* 3.11.7).

As is well known, Christians of the orthodox persuasion recognized and denounced these adoptionistic and Gnostic Christologies.⁹

⁷ This is the view of the so-called Dynamic Monarchianists of the 2d and 3d centuries, including Theodotus the Cobbler, his disciple Theodotus the Banker, and Artemon. For these, Adolf von Harnack's treatment is still quite useful (*Dogmengeschichte*, ET, *History of Dogma*, 7 vols. in 4, trans. Neil Buchanan [New York: Dover, 1961], 3:1–50). A similar view was espoused earlier by the Ebionites, a Jewish-Christian sect. On these, see esp. A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (Leiden: Brill, 1973). Whether this view was intended by the author of Mark is difficult to say. It is striking, however, that both Matthew and Luke have gone to some lengths to eliminate the possibility by recording narratives of Jesus' virgin birth, narratives typically rejected by adoptionists. This makes it all the more interesting that in a significant portion of the textual tradition of Luke's account of Jesus' baptism (i.e., in the Western text), the voice from heaven quotes the words of Ps. 2 that proved so amenable to an adoptionistic construal: "You are my son, today [!] I have begotten you."

⁸ This is a typically Gnostic view, about which we have always known, e.g., from reports of the early heresiologists (see, e.g., Irenaeus *Adv. haer.* 1.7.2; 21.2; 25. 1; 26.1; and 3.16.8). Now we have independent access to these notions in the writings of the Gnostic library discovered near Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1946. See, e.g., the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 329–38.

⁹ The term "orthodoxy" is anachronistic for the ante-Nicene age, but is used here simply to designate the theological views espoused by Christians who were later claimed as forebears by the orthodox party of the 4th and following centuries. In the 2d and 3d centuries, such "orthodox" Christians did not at all constitute a monolithic group with a unified theology; but they did evidence certain clear tendencies and theological predilections. Prominent among the theological views they

And, as we shall see, it was precisely this orthodox opposition to heretical readings of Mark that led to some of the textual corruptions still evident in the manuscript tradition of this Gospel. It is striking that several of the most intriguing occur exactly where one might expect, at the beginning and near the end of the narrative.

Mark 15:34

One of the most interesting variant readings in Mark's Gospel occurs at a climactic point of the story, in Jesus' cry of dereliction from the cross (15:34). The reading of several Western witnesses has attracted considerable attention, especially since Adolf von Harnack championed it as original.¹⁰ In these MSS, rather than crying out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" the dying Jesus cries, "My God, my God, why have you reviled me?" The change makes some sense in the context, for as Harnack notes, everyone else—Jewish leaders, Roman soldiers, passersby, and even the two crucified robbers—has reviled or mocked Jesus. And now the scene ends with Jesus bearing the reproach of God himself for the sins of the world. Nonetheless, the overwhelming external support for the more common reading has led nearly all critics since Harnack to reject the Western variant as a corruption. It would probably be a mistake, however, to construe the change as a simple attempt to provide a consistent motif throughout the context. For the earlier form of the text, εἰς τί ἐγκατέλιπές με, normally translated "why have you forsaken me," could readily be construed in spatial terms: "why have you deserted me," or "why have you left me behind," a reading not at all unrelated to the Gnostic view that the man Jesus died alone after the divine Christ had left him in order to return into the Pleroma. Interestingly, the tradition of Jesus' last words was construed precisely in this way by the apocryphal Gospel of Peter, in which the dying Jesus cries out, "My power, Oh power, you have left me!" (Gos. Pet. 19). In addition, Irenaeus claims that certain

rejected, e.g., were Christologies that were perceived to be docetic (Christ was God, and only "appeared" to be a human), adoptionistic (Christ was a flesh-and-blood human being who was only "adopted" by God to be his Son, usually at the baptism), or Gnostic (Christ is the heavenly being who descended upon the man Jesus, usually at his baptism, and who left him sometime prior to his death).

¹⁰ "Probleme im Texte der Leidengeschichte Jesu," in *Studien zur Geschichte des Neuen Testaments und der alten Kirche*, vol. 1, *Zur neutestamentlichen Textkritik* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1931), 86–104.

Gnostics used Mark 15:34 to portray Sophia's irretrievable separation from the Pleroma (*Adv. haer.* 1.8.2). Orthodox scribes seem to have recognized the real possibility of a Gnostic reading of the text, and consequently changed it in line with their own reading by providing a paraphrastic rendering of the Hebrew of Ps. 22. The change was a real tour de force: it successfully maintained the allusion to the Psalm, while conforming the cry to the events ad loc and circumventing the possibility of a Gnostic misconstrual.

Mark 1:10

A similar kind of change occurs at the very outset of Mark's narrative. According to codices Vaticanus and Bezae, along with several other important witnesses, when the Spirit descends upon Jesus at his baptism in 1:10, it comes as a dove εἰς αὐτόν, "unto" or "to" him. But the preposition εἰς, of course, can also mean "into" him, which naturally coincides rather well with the Gnostic notion that the Christ came into Jesus at his baptism. Both Matthew and Luke give the preposition as ἐπί in their accounts, providing subsequent scribes just the grounds they needed to accommodate Mark's text to its Synoptic counterparts. But it would be a mistake to see this as a thoughtless harmonization when a historical explanation is ready to hand: without the change the Gnostics who were maligned by Irenaeus would indeed have had a convenient proof-text for their own reading of the Gospel accounts, a reading that asserts that the heavenly Christ came into Jesus in the form of a dove at his baptism.

Mark 1:3

Other variant readings serve to counter not the Gnostic but the adoptionistic reading of Mark's Gospel, i.e., the view that Jesus became God's Son only at his baptism. Scribes could circumvent this reading of Mark by making a variety of changes in the text. For example, any variant reading which affirms that Jesus himself was God would counter such a view, as would any reading suggesting that Jesus was already God's son prior to his baptism. Interestingly, both kinds of orthodox corruption occur within the first three verses of the Gospel.

When Mark put the words of Isa. 40:3 on the lips of the Baptist, he, or his source, somewhat modified the LXX text with an inter-

esting Christological result.¹¹ Whereas the LXX had said “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight the paths of *our God*,” Mark’s modification serves to identify more closely who “the Lord” is: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make *his* paths straight.” John is portrayed here as the forerunner of Jesus, who is understood in this Gospel to be the κύριος. But strikingly—and here Mark stands in good company with other early Christian writers—Jesus is not called God, either here or anywhere else throughout the narrative.

Later scribes, however, saw both the opportunity and the importance of reading Jesus’ divinity in this text. The opportunity was provided by the LXX, the importance by the controversy over Jesus’ divine status. And so the change represented by Codex Bezae and the early Latin witnesses is not merely a Septuagintalism: it is a theological statement that Jesus, even prior to his baptism, can rightly be called divine. “Prepare the way of the Lord [i.e., Jesus], make straight the paths of our God.”

Mark 1:1

One of the most frequently debated texts of the second Gospel occurs in its opening verse, which serves as something of a title over the whole. Given the importance of the textual issue, and its particular relevance to our problem, we would do well to consider this passage at somewhat greater length. The vast majority of MSS read: “The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” But the final phrase, “the Son of God,” is lacking in several important witnesses, including codices Sinaiticus and Koridethi, MSS 28^c and 1555, the Palestinian Syriac, Armenian, and Georgian versions, and Origen. In terms of numbers the support for this shorter text is slight. But in terms of antiquity and character, this is not a confluence of witnesses to be trifled with. It frequently is trifled with, however, and here is where one finds no little confusion in earlier discussions of the problem. Thus one scholar discounts the evidence as deriving entirely from Caesarea, and as therefore representing merely a local corruption—even though the supporting witnesses include the early Alexandrian Codex Sinaiticus and the part of Origen’s Commentary

¹¹ See the discussion of Erich Fascher, *Textgeschichte als hermeneutisches Problem* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1953), 17.

on John written in Alexandria.¹² Another scholar maintains that since Sinaiticus has some affinities with the so-called Western textual tradition (he must have in mind the opening chapters of John, which have no relevance to the issue here), it is to be grouped with the Western text, so that we have only secondary Western and Caesarean support for the reading.¹³ Other scholars argue that since Origen and Sinaiticus are otherwise so similar, their support must be counted as one witness instead of two, a solitary Alexandrian witness not to be given much weight.¹⁴ In point of fact, we have two of the three best Alexandrian witnesses supporting this text. Furthermore, Origen quotes it in this form not only in Alexandria but also in the *Contra Celsum*, which he wrote in Caesarea.¹⁵ He may, of course, simply have remembered or used his Alexandrian MSS after his move, but it is to be noted that the reading also occurs in other so-called Caesarean texts, including its best representative, Codex Koridethi, and the Palestinian, Armenian, and Georgian versions. Furthermore, the reading is found in a later witness that otherwise attests an essentially Western text (1555).¹⁶

This slate of witnesses is early and diverse in terms of both textual character and geography. It is this that poses the greatest difficulty for the normal explanation of the problem. Most commonly it is explained that the shorter reading was created by accident: because the words Χριστοῦ and θεοῦ end in the same letters (-ου), a scribe's eye accidentally skipped from one to the other, leading him inadvertently to leave out the intervening phrase.¹⁷ But the view short-

¹² Jan Slomp, "Are the Words 'Son of God' in Mark 1:1 Original?" *BT* 28 (1977): 143–50.

¹³ Alexander Globe, "The Caesarean Omission of the Phrase 'Son of God' in Mark 1:1," *HTR* 75 (1982): 209–18.

¹⁴ Thus C. H. Turner, "A Textual Commentary on Mark 1," *JTS* 28 (1926–27): 150, followed, e.g., by William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974); and Wolfgang Feneberg, *Der Markusprolog: Studien zur Formbestimmung des Evangeliums* (Munich: Kosel, 1974), 151–52.

¹⁵ *Comm. on John* 1.13 and 6.24; *Contra Celsum* 2.4.

¹⁶ Thus Globe, "Caesarean Omission," 216.

¹⁷ The technical terminology for this kind of error is that it occurred because of parablepsis (an "eye-skip") occasioned by homoeoteleuton (words "ending in the same way"). It is sometimes argued that this kind of mistake is particularly likely here, because the words Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ would have been abbreviated as *nomina sacra*, making the accidental skip of the eye from the word Χριστοῦ to the following θεοῦ more than understandable. See, however, n. 20 below. This explanation is given, e.g., by Feneberg, *Der Markusprolog*; Turner, "A Textual Commentary"; Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, vol. 1 (Zürich: Benziger,

circuits on several grounds. It is made somewhat unlikely by the occurrence of the shorter reading in a range of textual witnesses that are early, widespread, and unrelated.¹⁸ This means that the omission would have had to have been made independently by several scribes, in precisely the same way.¹⁹ The view is made even more difficult by the circumstance that the same error, so far as our evidence suggests, was not made by later scribes of the Byzantine tradition, many of whom are not known for their overly scrupulous habits of transcription.²⁰

Finally, and this is a consideration that to my knowledge no one has brought forth, it should strike us as somewhat odd that this kind of careless mistake, the omission of two rather important words, should have happened precisely where it does—within the first six words of the beginning of a book. It is certainly not too difficult to see how such carelessness might otherwise occur; indeed, its occurrence is virtually ubiquitous throughout the tradition. Copying texts was a long and arduous process, and fatigue could lead to carelessness and as a result to a host of readings that prove to be utterly nonsensical. But here is a reading that occurs at the outset of a text, independently attested in a number of witnesses, that makes perfectly good sense. This raises an interesting question: Is it less likely that a scribe—or rather that a number of scribes—would make this kind of careless error at the beginning of a book rather than in the

1978); Carl Kazmierski, *Jesus the Son of God: A Study of the Markan Tradition and Its Redaction by the Evangelist* (Wurzburg: Echter, 1979); and Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1953).

¹⁸ “Unrelated” in this context means that several of the witnesses belong to different textual families, so that the textual variants they have in common cannot be attributed simply to a corrupt exemplar that they all used. The precise agreement of otherwise unrelated MSS therefore indicates the antiquity of a variant reading.

¹⁹ The same can be said of the other reading as well, of course: a substantial addition to a text can never be purely accidental, and this variant likewise boasts early and widespread attestation. But this means that whoever made the change, whichever change was made, must have made it intentionally. Once that is conceded then the issue becomes, which of these two readings is better explained as a conscientious alteration? And here, as we will argue, there can be little doubt that the longer reading, which happens both to coincide with Mark’s account otherwise and to help circumvent a heretical construal of that account, is the more likely corruption.

²⁰ Yet more curiously, the words Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, which have the same potential for omission as *nomina sacra* ending in *omicron-epsilon*; are not omitted in the tradition, either individually or as a phrase, except in the first hand of 28, which has been corrected.

middle? It is a difficult question to answer, since we know so little about the mechanics of how scribes actually operated, especially in the early centuries.²¹ But it seems at least antecedently probable that a scribe would begin his work on Mark's Gospel only after having made a clean break, say, with Matthew, and that he would plunge into his work with renewed strength and vigor. So that this does not appear simply to be the romantic ramblings of a twentieth-century critic, it should be pointed out that the scribes of our two earliest MSS attesting the omission, Sinaiticus and Koridethi, have in fact gone to some lengths to decorate the end of the previous work on Matthew and to note afresh the beginning of the new work at hand.

For all these reasons, it appears that the textual problem of Mark 1:1 was not created by accident: whether the phrase "Son of God" was added to a text that originally lacked it or deleted from a text that originally had it, the change was apparently made intentionally.

This in itself makes it more likely that the earliest form of Mark's Gospel lacked the phrase. For one can understand why a scribe who did not read the phrase in the book's opening verse might want to add it—and indeed, as we shall see, there may have been more than one reason to do so. But it is very difficult to see why scribes who read the longer phrase might deliberately seek to shorten it.

A number of scholars have insisted, nonetheless, that the longer text (i.e., including the phrase "Son of God") must have been original, because it coincides so well with Mark's Christology otherwise. This is an interesting claim, since it assumes that if a scribe were to change the text of Mark, he would do so in a way that stands at odds with the rest of Mark's account. Needless to say, this assumption is not at all necessary: the way scribes understood Mark's Gospel in antiquity naturally coincides at a number of points with the way it is commonly construed today. Thus even if the variant reading does evince Mark's understanding of Jesus, it still may not be original.

Other scholars have claimed that since Mark ends his story of Jesus, for all practical purposes, with the centurion's proclamation that Jesus is the Son of God (15:39), he likely would have begun

²¹ On this issue, see E. C. Colwell, "Method in Evaluating Scribal Habits: A Study of P⁴⁵, P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵," in *Studies in Methodology in Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, NTS 91 (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 106–24; and James A. Royse, "Scribal Habits in the Transmission of New Testament Texts," in *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts*, ed. Wendy D. O'Flaherty, Berkeley Religious Studies Series, 2 (Berkeley, CA: Graduate Theological Union, 1979), 139–61.

the Gospel on the same note in 1:1. This also is not persuasive, because the opening bracket for which 15:39 provides the closing is not 1:1 but 1:10, where, as in 15:38–39, there is a “ripping” (σχίζομαι, only in these two verses in Mark: of the heavens and of the temple veil), a “voice” (from heaven, from the centurion), and the affirmation of Jesus’ divine sonship, (by God, by a Gentile).²²

Thus while most interpreters agree on the importance of the phrase “Son of God” to Mark’s narrative otherwise, this in itself provides no evidence for the text of 1:1. On the contrary, the centrality of the phrase actually highlights the hermeneutical problem confronted by early interpreters of the narrative. For Mark does not indicate explicitly what he means by calling Jesus the “Son of God,” nor does he indicate when this status was conferred upon him. This makes the interpretation of his Christology a somewhat precarious matter, as even the most recent investigations provide ample witness.²³ In the early church, this Gospel could be read by adoptionists

²² It could be pointed out in reply, however, that 1:1 and 15:39 are the only occurrences of υἱοῦ θεοῦ in Mark without the use of the article. This is of course true, but it scarcely counts as evidence for the longer reading in 1:1. On the one hand, it is somewhat difficult to conceive of an author indicating an *inclusio* simply by omitting an article at two points of his narrative, as opposed say to structuring two entire scenes around parallel motifs (such as in 1:9–11 and 15:38–39). And there may in fact have been other reasons for the phrase to be left anarthrous in both places. If it was not original in 1:1, a scribe who wanted to add it would no doubt have sought to make the insertion as unobtrusive as possible, and could have accomplished his goal simply by adding the four letters ΥΥΘΥ. It is to be noted that the name Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ which immediately precedes is anarthrous as well. With respect to the occurrence in 15:39, it may be of some significance that this is the only time in the Gospel that a pagan calls Jesus “Son of God,” and it may well be that the author left the phrase anarthrous to effect a nice ambiguity: it is not altogether clear whether the centurion is proclaiming Jesus to be “the Son of the only true God” (as it is normally taken), or a “Divine Man,” i.e., one of the sons of the gods. Furthermore, it should be noted that if an *inclusio* is formed by 1:1 and 15:39 it would be somewhat out of joint, since it begins at the very beginning of the story but concludes before its very end—before this Son of God has been raised! If on the other hand the *inclusio* is formed by 1:11 and 15:39, it brackets Jesus’ public life with proclamations of his divine sonship, first by God at his baptism, after the ripping of the heavens, then by the Gospel’s first real convert, the Gentile centurion, at Jesus’ execution after the ripping of the temple veil.

²³ The issues pertaining to Mark’s messianic secret have proved thorny since Wilhelm Wrede’s *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* was first published in 1901 (ET *The Messianic Secret*, trans. J. C. G. Grieg [London: T. & T. Clark 1981]). See James L. Blevins, *The Messianic Secret in Markan Research; 1901–1976* (Washington: University Press of America, 1981); and the essays collected in *The Messianic Secret*, ed. C. Tuckett (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). Furthermore, for nearly two decades many scholars have seen in Mark a kind of “corrective” Christology, i.e., a conscientious

who believed that it was at his baptism that Jesus became the Son of God, as well as by the orthodox, who believed that Jesus had always been the Son.

Since the textual situation in Mark 1:1 appears not to have been created by sheer accident, and since the longer text appears in relatively early, unrelated, and widespread witnesses, we can now draw a tentative conclusion concerning the status of the text. Scribes would have had little reason to delete the phrase "the Son of God" from Mark 1:1, but they would have had reasons to add it. Just as was the case in the other variant readings we have considered (Mark 13; 1:10; and 15:34), it may well have been precisely the orthodox construal of Mark's Gospel that led to the corruption of 1:1. Mark entitled his Gospel "The Gospel of Jesus Christ" (RSV), and proceeded to narrate that first significant event of Jesus' life, his baptism and the accompanying revelatory experience. In order to circumvent an adoptionistic reading of this inaugurating event, early orthodox Christian scribes made a slight modification of Mark's text so that it affirmed Jesus' status as the Son of God prior to his baptism, even prior to the mention of John the Baptist, his forerunner. Now even before he comes forward to be baptized, Jesus is understood by the reader to be the Christ, the Son of God.

Conclusion

The various changes we have examined in the MS tradition of Mark's Gospel evidence the orthodox tendency to read all four canonical Gospels in the light of each other and in the light of orthodox theological views. They thus represent milestones on the road to a complete orthodox harmonization of the Gospels, a harmonization in

attempt to rectify a flawed understanding of Jesus found otherwise in the Markan community, and probably represented in Mark's own Gospel sources. According to this view, these sources, which no longer survive, provided a glorified portrayal of Jesus as a Hellenistic divine man ("son of god") whose powers were evident particularly in his miracles and whose Passion was of little or no salvific significance. Mark then was written to oppose such a view by stressing the Christological importance of Jesus' death. This view, popularized by Theodore Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), has been challenged in more recent research. See, e.g., the balanced statement of Jack Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). For a more general account, see Frank Matera, *What Are They Saying About Mark?* (New York: Paulist, 1987).

which the Jesus who hears of his divine sonship at his baptism (in Mark) comes to be identified with the Jesus who is the Son of God by virtue of his virginal conception (in Luke), who is in turn identified with the Son of God in the bosom of the Father who has seen God from eternity past and now has made him known (in John).

This kind of scribal corruption, however, is not at all unlike what all readers do whenever they construe the meaning of their texts. On the contrary, as the reader response critics have argued, no one can give an “innocent” or “objective” reading of a text, because texts are never read in isolation but always in interpretive contexts, and the contexts within which interpreters live determine the meanings of the texts that they read. In this sense, the meanings readers derive from their texts are in fact responses determined by what they bring to these texts. This was no less true of scribes in antiquity than it is of exegetes today. Similar to the way we all “re-create” or “rewrite” texts whenever we construe them, the scribes, who reproduced their texts conscientiously by hand rather than mechanically by machine, actually did re-create them, so that their orthodox construals, their orthodox corruptions, actually determined the way these texts have been transmitted to us, their future readers.

THE CUP, THE BREAD, AND THE SALVIFIC EFFECT OF JESUS' DEATH IN LUKE-ACTS¹

No textual problem of Luke's two-volume work is more theologically significant than the variant accounts of the Last Supper in Luke 22:19–20.² Nor has any other generated such critical debate or, one might add, occasioned such scholarly confusion. The issues transcend the problems of the MSS, transcend even the problems of NT theology. For the theology of early Christianity did not come to an end with the completion of the canonical writings. Christian reflection and theological controversy continued, and the polemical situations that evolved came to affect the texts of "Scripture" that were in circulation. Luke's writings in particular proved vulnerable to the vicissitudes of transmission, as the theological proclivities of individual scribes made themselves known in the copies they produced.³ In this paper, I will argue that the text of Luke 22:19–20 was changed in just such a polemical milieu, that the text found in the vast majority of MSS represents a corruption effected by Christian scribes of the second century, scribes who wanted to stress, in the face of various kinds of docetic christologies, that Christ really did shed blood and die, and that this shed blood and death were themselves salvific. This passage, then, represents an instance of the "orthodox corruption of Scripture."⁴

¹ Originally published in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1991) 576–91. Used with permission.

² In addition to the works mentioned in note 6 below, useful discussions can be found in Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Gospel According to Luke (X–XXIV)* (AB 28A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1985) 1386–95; E. Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* (Century Bible; London: Marshall, Morgan, & Scott, 1974) 254–56; H. Schürmann, "Lk 22, 19b–20 als ursprüngliche Textüberlieferung," *Bib* 32 (1951) 364–92; 522–41; Martin Rese, "Zur Problematik von Kurz- und Langtext in Luk xxii.17ff," *NTS* 22 (1975) 15–31; J. H. Petzer, "Luke 22:19b–20 and the Structure of the Passage," *NovTest* 3 (1984) 249–52; and idem, "Style and Text in the Lucan Narrative of the Institution of the Lord's Supper," *NTS* 37 (1991) 113–29.

³ Especially, of course, in the Western text of Acts. See the convenient discussion of Bruce M. Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1971) 259–72. On theological character of the Western text in Acts, see Eldon Jay Epp, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts* (SNTSMS, 3; Cambridge: University Press, 1966).

⁴ For a justification of this designation and a discussion of several other examples drawn from the Gospel of Mark, see Bart D. Ehrman, "The Text of Mark in

Documentary Considerations

The NT MSS present Luke 22:19–21 in six different forms of text, four of which can readily be dismissed as altogether lacking adequate documentary support and internal claims to authenticity.⁵ Of the two remaining forms, one is conveniently labeled the “shorter text,” because it lacks vv. 19b–20, reading (19a, 21):

And taking bread, giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them saying, “This is my body. But behold, the hand of the one who betrays me is with me at the table.”

The longer text includes the familiar material (italicized) between these two sentences (vv. 19b–20):

And taking bread, giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them saying, “This is my body *that is given for you. Do this in my remembrance.*” *And the cup likewise after dining, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood that is poured out for you.* But behold, the hand of the one who betrays me is with me at the table.”

The shorter text is one of Westcott and Hort’s famous “Western non-interpolations.” As the ill-famed designation suggests, it is a text preserved only in Western witnesses (D a d ff² i l) that has (for Westcott and Hort) all the earmarks of originality, despite the attestation of a longer form in all other MSS, including those Westcott and Hort labeled—with equal disingenuousness—“Neutral.”⁶ The

the Hands of the Orthodox,” in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective*, ed. Mark Burrows and Paul Rorem (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming). I deal with other examples in “1 John 4:3 and the Orthodox Corruption of Scripture,” *ZNW* 79 (1988) 221–43, and with Mark A. Plunkett in “The Angel and the Agony: The Textual Problem of Luke 22:43–44,” *CBQ* 45 (1983) 401–16 (chaps. 8 above and 10 and 12 below).

⁵ See the convenient chart and discussion in Metzger *Textual Commentary*, 173–77. Three of the four readings are each attested by only one form of the Syriac, the fourth by two OL MSS (b e). All four are readily understood as derived from one or the other of the two remaining forms; all four circumvent the major stumbling block of the text by reversing the sequence of cup and bread.

⁶ See Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Cambridge: University Press, 1881) II. 175–77, and the general discussion of Metzger, *Textual Commentary* 191–93. Among those who call the entire theory of “Western non-interpolations” into question are Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, tr. A. Ehrhardt (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955) 84–106; Kurt Aland, “Die Bedeutung des P75 für den Text des Neuen Testaments: Ein Beitrag zur Frage des ‘Western non-interpolations,’” in *Studien zur Überlieferung des Neuen Testaments und seines Textes* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967) 155–72; and dependent upon these two, Klijn Snodgrass, “Western Non-Interpolations,” *JBL* 91 (1972) 369–79.

sparse support for the shorter reading has naturally led most other commentators and textual specialists to reject it virtually out of hand. To move too quickly in this direction, however, would be a mistake. For Westcott and Hort did not depart from their beloved Neutral witnesses without compelling reasons. For the present text, their reasons were rooted in intrinsic and transcriptional probabilities, about which I will be speaking momentarily. But here, as with all the Western non-interpolations, Westcott and Hort also found documentary reasons for thinking the Western tradition original, even though they understood it normally to be corrupt. This is because the shorter reading, which appears to be original on internal grounds, represents the opposite pattern of corruption evidenced elsewhere in its supporting documents. The “Western” text is almost invariably expansionistic, as opposed to the normally succinct attestations of its Alexandrian counterparts (including Westcott and Hort’s “Neutral” text). When Western witnesses, then, support an uncharacteristically shorter text in the face of an Alexandrian expansion, the reading in question must be given the most serious consideration. Westcott and Hort’s decision to accept several such readings as original (not all of them, since a case must be made for each) is commonly disparaged as tendentious. But in fact, it is the least tendentious aspect of their entire system: these few readings virtually proved their cherished notions about a “neutral” tradition mistaken.⁷

The upshot is that the nearly unconscious tendency to discount readings found “in only a few” witnesses must be laid aside when dealing with this kind of MS alignment, in which a shorter reading finds its chief support within the Western tradition. In such cases, both readings, the shorter and the longer, must have been available to scribes of the second century. But the external evidence can take us no earlier, cannot, that is, determine for us the reading of the

⁷ Here I should also point out that Westcott and Hort’s dependence on the text of Codex Vaticanus was not based on sheer prejudice for the oldest MS, as it is sometimes misunderstood to be; nor did they blindly follow the Neutral text without regard for other considerations. The text of Vaticanus was judged superior by a careful analysis of the *internal* quality of its readings: whenever clear textual decisions could be reached on the basis of intrinsic and transcriptional probabilities, Vaticanus was seen to attest the original text. For Westcott and Hort, this suggested that in ambiguous cases its text was also likely to be correct. As a whole, then, their system was not built simply on “external” or “documentary” evidence, but was based on a thorough assessment of the internal quality of textual variations and their supporting witnesses.

autograph. The investigation, then, must be moved to the realm of internal evidence. And here, in fact, is where a compelling case can be made for the originality of the shorter reading of Luke 22:19–20. The bottom line will be an argument from transcriptional probability: unlike the more commonly attested reading, there is simply no plausible way to explain the Western text if it is not original. Before reaching the bottom, however, we do well to turn our initial attention to the question of which reading is more intrinsically suited to the writings of Luke-Acts.

Intrinsic Probabilities

Vocabulary, Style, and Theology

It has sometimes been argued that the main difficulty with the longer text is its non-Lukan vocabulary and style.⁸ This is probably overstating the case, even though the concatenation of non-Lukan features should certainly give us pause.⁹ What is even more striking, however, is that precisely the non-Lukan features comprise the key elements of the longer text: the phrase ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν (“for you”) occurs twice in this passage, but nowhere else in all of Luke-Acts,¹⁰ the word for “remembrance,” ἀνάμνησιν, occurs only here in Luke-Acts,¹¹ and never elsewhere does Luke speak of the “new covenant,” let alone the new covenant “in my blood.” Were the Gospel of Luke our only base of comparison for this distinctive vocabulary, the evidence might not be so telling; but given the ample opportunity afforded the author to refer back to the momentous event of the Last Supper in his second volume, the absence of any subsequent allusions to these significant words and phrases must be seen as more than a little discomfiting for proponents of the longer text.¹²

⁸ Most recently by Joel Green “The Death of Jesus, God’s Servant,” in *Reimagining the Death of the Lukan Jesus*, ed. Dennis Sylva (Theologie Bonner biblische Beiträge 73; Frankfurt: Anton Hain, 1990) 4.

⁹ In addition to the stylistic features I cite here, see the list in Green, “The Death of Jesus,” 4. On the difficulties of basing a text-critical judgment strictly on such stylistic features, however, see Petzer, “Style and Text.”

¹⁰ Nor do the closely related phrases ἀντὶ ὑμῶν or ὑπὲρ πολλῶν.

¹¹ Nor, interestingly, does Luke preserve either of Mark’s two uses of the verbal form ἀναμνήσκω, omitting Mark 11:21 altogether for other reasons, and changing the word in Mark 14:72 to ὑπομνήσκω (22:61).

¹² Schürmann (“Lk 22,19b–20”) is followed by Ellis (*Gospel of Luke*) in arguing

But far more important than the mere absence of this vocabulary from the rest of Luke-Acts is the matter of its ideational content. It is surely significant that the understanding of Jesus' death expressed by these words and phrases is otherwise absent from Luke's two-volume work. When Jesus says in Luke 22:19b-20 that his body is given "for you" (ὕπερ ὑμῶν) and that his blood is shed "for you" (ὕπερ ὑμῶν), he is stating what Luke says nowhere else in his long narrative: in neither his Gospel nor Acts does he portray Jesus' death as an atonement for sins.¹³ Even more significantly, Luke has actually gone out of his way to eliminate just such a theology from the narrative he inherited from his predecessor, the Gospel of Mark. This is a key factor in recognizing the secondary character of the longer text, a factor that has been surprisingly underplayed by most previous studies of the problem.

The data are by now familiar and here I will simply mention those that are particularly germane to the textual problem. Never in his two volumes does Luke say that Jesus died "for your sins" or "for you." Significantly when he summarizes the significant features of the "Christ event" in the speeches of Acts, with remarkable consistency he portrays the death of Jesus not as an atoning sacrifice, but as a miscarriage of justice that God reversed by vindicating Jesus at the resurrection (Acts 2:22-36; 3:12-16; 4:8-12; 7:51-56; 13:26-41). The only apparent exception, and I will later argue that it is in fact only apparent, is the difficult text of Acts 20:28. Before turning our attention to the exceptional, however, we do well to stress the invariable. In none of these speeches is Jesus said to die "for" anyone, a surprising fact, given the number of opportunities Luke had to introduce the notion. In one passage in particular one might expect some

that backward glances to the longer text in the subsequent narrative demonstrate its presence in the original form of the text. But none of the proposed examples proves at all convincing: there is no reason to think that the πλὴν ἰδοῦ of v. 21 refers back to ὑπερ ὑμῶν, or that "this cup" of v. 42 alludes to "the cup" of v. 20 (why not v. 17!) or that the verbal form διατίθεμαι in v. 28 requires the establishment of the διαθήκη in v. 20.

¹³ Scholars traditionally have pointed to Luke 22:19-20 and Acts 20:28 as the only two exceptions to the rule. I will deal with the latter momentarily. In addition to the commentaries, see Richard Zehnle, "The Salvific Character of Jesus' Death in Lucan Soteriology," *TSt* 30 (1969) 420-44; Augustin George, "Le sens de la mort Jésus pour Luc," *RevBib* 80 (1973) 186-217; and the consensus that is reflected now in the collection of essays edited by Sylva, *Reimaging*, esp. Green, "The Death of Jesus," 1-28; Earl Richard, "Jesus' Passion and Death in Acts," 125-52; and above all John T. Carroll, "Luke's Crucifixion Scene," 108-24.

reference, however distant, to Jesus' atoning death, only to find the expectation altogether frustrated. In Acts 8 Luke introduces the Ethiopian eunuch reading the text of Scripture used most widely by early Christians to explain Jesus' death as a vicarious atonement: Isaiah 53. But somewhat remarkably, when Luke cites the passage, he includes not a word about the Servant of the Lord being "wounded for our transgressions" (Isa. 53:5), being "bruised for our iniquities" (53:5), or making himself "an offering for sin" (53:10). Luke has instead crafted his quotation to affirm his own view of Jesus' passion: he died as an innocent victim who was then vindicated (Acts 8:32–33). Particularly telling is Luke's decision to stop just short of the final statement of the Isaian text he quotes, a statement that does in fact intimate the vicarious nature of the Servant's suffering: he was "stricken for the transgression of my people" (53:8). It should not be overlooked, in this connection, that Luke's only other allusion to the Song of the Suffering Servant also supports his view that Jesus was unjustly killed but then glorified. In Acts 3:13 Peter states that the God of Israel "glorified his servant" Jesus (Isa. 52:13), but says nothing about Jesus' atoning sacrifice.

It is particularly important to stress that Luke has not simply overlooked or avoided making such references; he has in fact gone out of his way to *eliminate* notions of atonement from the one source we are virtually certain he had before him, the Gospel of Mark. Mark makes two poignant references to the salvific significance of Jesus' death and Luke changed them both. The first and most obvious comes in the famous words of Jesus in Mark 10:45: "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." If Luke found this theology acceptable, it is virtually impossible to explain why he omitted the verse altogether.¹⁴

The other reference is more subtle, but nonetheless forms a kind of linchpin for Mark's theology of the cross. It has to do with the events surrounding the moment of Jesus' death, and to recognize the significance of Luke's portrayal of the event we have to understand how it was presented in his source. As is well known, Mark

¹⁴ Joel Marcus has suggested to me that instead of deleting Mark 10:45, Luke has placed in its stead his characteristic understanding of Jesus: "But I am among you as one who serves" (22:27). See further Marion L. Soards, *The Passion according to Luke: The Special Material of Luke 22* (JSNTSup 14; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987) 30–31.

records that Jesus' death is immediately followed by two signs that demonstrate its meaning: the temple curtain is ripped in half and the Roman centurion confesses him to be "the Son of God" (15:38–39). The tearing of the curtain has been subject to two major interpretations over the years, depending on whether it was the outer or inner curtain of the Temple that was torn.¹⁵ Both interpretations are plausible within a Marcan context, the first probably indicating a divine judgment against the temple, the second a not unrelated notion that God now comes to humans (from the Holy of Holies behind the curtain) no longer through temple sacrifice but through the death of Jesus.¹⁶ The latter interpretation is perhaps to be preferred, since (a) the only other use of the verb σκίζω in Mark occurs at the baptism (1:10), where again the idea of an advent of God occurs (the heavens rip and the Spirit descends), and (b) the second event of 15:38–39—the centurion's confession—indicates a moment of salvation rather than, purely, of judgment. If this interpretation is correct, then Mark uses the ripping of the curtain to indicate that in the death of Jesus God has made himself available to human beings, who correspondingly now have direct access to him. And the confession of the centurion represents the first (and only) instance of a person in Mark's Gospel who fully recognizes who Jesus is:¹⁷ he is

¹⁵ In addition to the commentaries, see e.g. Frank J. Matera, *Passion Narratives and Gospel Theologies* (New York: Paulist, 1986) 47, and the literature that he cites. Most recently David Ulansey ("The Heavenly Veil Torn: Mark's Cosmic *Inclusio*," *JBL* 110 [1991] 123–25) has argued that Mark refers to the outer curtain, because on it was drawn a likeness of the cosmos (Josephus *Jewish Wars* 5.5.4) that would then correspond symbolically to the "the heavens" of Mark 1:10. It is an interesting theory, but it may be supposing too much of Mark's implied readers (that they would catch the allusion that most other interpreters have missed); these readers otherwise do not evidence any particular knowledge of Palestinian Judaism (cf. 7:1–31).

¹⁶ Or it may be that the emphasis is to be reversed, that with the ripping of the curtain humans now have access to God in his holy place.

¹⁷ Throughout Mark's Gospel Jesus is portrayed as the Son of God who must suffer and die, but who is universally misunderstood. His family thinks he has gone mad (3:21), the Jewish leadership thinks he is inspired by the Devil (3:22), his townspeople think that he is simply the local carpenter (6:1–6), and his own disciples are never able to understand either who he is or what he means (6:52; 8:1–14). When they do begin to understand, they understand only partially at best (8:27–38). When Jesus tells them he must go to Jerusalem to die, they object (8:31–32); when he describes his coming rejection by those in power, they argue among themselves concerning who is the greatest (9:30–37; cf. 10:33–45). At the end he is betrayed by one of his disciples, denied by another, and deserted by all the rest. He is crucified a lonely, forsaken man, crying out in his despair, "My God, my God,

the Son of God who had to die, whose death was not alien to his divine sonship but was instead constitutive of it. In short, the ripping of the curtain and the confession of the centurion reveal Mark's understanding of Jesus' death as an atoning sacrifice (in it God provides access to himself, cf. 10:45) and as the key to salvation (by the profession of faith in the Son of God who died).

Luke's account of Jesus' death is in no small measure dependent upon Mark's.¹⁸ Here too there is a tearing of the temple curtain and a confession of the centurion. But, strikingly, both events are modified so that their significance is transformed. The tearing of the curtain in the Temple no longer results from Jesus' death, because in Luke it occurs *before* Jesus dies (23:45). What the event might mean to Luke has been debated, but since it is now combined with the eerie darkness that has come over the land,¹⁹ it appears to represent a cosmic sign that accompanies the hour of darkness ("this is your hour and the power of darkness" 11:43). It may well, then, represent the judgment of God upon his people who have rejected his gift of "light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death" (1:79), a judgment that falls in particular on the religious institution which his people have perverted to their own ends (Luke 19:45–46).²⁰ In Luke's account the ripping of the temple curtain does not show that Jesus' death has opened up the path to God; it now symbolizes God's judgment upon his own people who prefer to dwell in darkness.

So too Luke has changed the confession of the centurion. No longer does it indicate a profession of faith in the Son of God who has died ("Truly this man was the Son of God," Mark 15:39); now

why have you forsaken me?" before breathing his last (15:34–37). Only then, in his death, does his identity become known (15:39).

¹⁸ The source questions are particularly difficult here. In addition to the commentaries, see esp. Franz Georg *Untergassmair, Kreuzweg und Kreuzigung Jesu: ein Beitrag zur lukanischen Redaktionsgeschichte und zur Frage nach der lukanischen "Kreuzestheologie"* (Paderborner theologische Studien 10; Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1980) 97–101.

¹⁹ Luke has added an explanation to Mark's terse notation "there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour," by indicating that it was because the sun had failed (τοῦ ἡλίου ἐκλιπόντος). On the textual problem and meaning of the phrase, see e.g. Fitzmyer *Gospel according to Luke*, 1517–18.

²⁰ In addition to the commentaries, see the diverging opinion of Dennis Sylva, "The Temple Curtain and Jesus' Death in the Gospel of Luke," *JBL* 105 (1986) 239–50 and the more popular treatment of Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1989).

it coincides with Luke's own understanding of Jesus' death: "Truly this man was innocent" (δικαίως, Luke 23:47).²¹ The death of Jesus in Luke-Acts is not a death that effects an atoning sacrifice. It is the death of a righteous martyr who has suffered from miscarried justice, whose death is vindicated by God at the resurrection.²² What matters chiefly for our purposes is not the theological adequacy of such a view, but rather the consistency with which Luke has set it forth: he was able to shift the focus away from the atoning significance of Jesus' death only by modifying the one account of that death which we are certain he had received. What has this to do with our textual problem? As we will stress momentarily, only one of our two textual variants, the shorter reading, coincides with the Lukan understanding of Jesus' death; the other attests precisely the theology that Luke has otherwise taken pains to suppress.

Before returning to this text-critical issue, however, we must first deal with Acts 20:28, the one passage that is frequently treated as an exception to Luke's understanding of the death of Jesus. In fact the passage is an exception only in appearance. For even here the notion of atonement does not derive from the text but has to be imported into it. In his farewell address to the Ephesian elders, the Apostle Paul exhorts them to "pastor the church of God, which he obtained through the blood of his Own" (τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου). The phrasing is enigmatic and has led to several interesting textual modifications.²³ Despite its ambiguity ("His own blood"? "The blood of his unique [Son]"?) the phrase almost certainly refers to Jesus, whose blood God used to acquire an *ekklesia*.²⁴ But even here, I must point out, the text does not speak of Jesus' self-giving act as an aton-

²¹ For a strong case that the text should be rendered "Truly this man was righteous," see Robert J. Karris, "Luke 23:47 and the Lucan View of Jesus' Death," in *Reimaging*, 68–78. In my judgment, Carroll ("Luke's Crucifixion Scene," 116–18 and notes) is more likely correct that one should not press too far the difference between "righteous" and "innocent," since if Jesus is one, he is also the other.

²² See esp. Carroll, "Luke's Crucifixion Scene," 116–20.

²³ Parts of the Byzantine tradition change the text to read τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος, which, when not accompanied by a preceding change of θεοῦ to κυρίου, results in the exchange of predicates familiar from the writings of second-century fathers from the time of Ignatius, "the church of God which he purchased with his own blood"!

²⁴ *Contra* Waldemar Schmeichel, "Does Luke Make a Soterological Statement in Acts 20:28," *Society of Biblical Literature 1982 Seminar Papers* (Chico CA: Scholars, 1982) 501–14 who argues that τοῦ ἰδίου refers to Paul, who establishes the church by his self-giving ministry and eventual death. But for Luke, the church was "obtained" well before Paul's ministry and sacrifice!

ing sacrifice for sin, but of God's use of Jesus' blood to acquire (NB, not "redeem") the church. And so the thrust of the allusion is not strictly speaking soteriological; the foci are God's prerogatives over the church which he obtained through blood, and the elders' corresponding need to exercise appropriate supervision over it. Only by inference can one find a word concerning the expiatory benefits of Christ's death; even here there is no word of atonement, no claim that Christ died "for your sake."

But what does it mean to say that God obtained the church through Christ's blood? The problem interpreters have typically had with the verse is that they have seen in it a remnant of Pauline soteriology, and thought then that Luke either *did* accept the notion of an atoning sacrifice or that he here unwittingly reproduced an undigested fragment of tradition.²⁵ In fact, neither conclusion is necessary, because the verse makes perfectly good sense if one suspends any previous knowledge of (or commitment to) Pauline thought, and allows it to draw its meaning from its Lukan context. On only one other occasion does Luke mention the "blood" of Jesus, and this should be the first place to turn in trying to understand the reference in 20:28. In Acts 5:28 the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem accuse the apostles of working to make them the culprits for "the blood of this man." When Peter hears this, he launches into one of his patented speeches, proclaiming that even though "You killed [Jesus] by hanging him on the tree," "God raised him from the dead, exalting him to his right hand as Ruler and Savior." He then ties Jesus' reversal of fortune to a typically Lukan notion of soteriology. God exalted the unjustly executed Jesus so that he could give "repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel" (5:31). How then, one might ask, does Luke understand that "God obtains the church through blood"? The blood of Jesus produces the church because it is his blood that brings the cognizance of guilt that leads to repentance.²⁶

²⁵ In addition to the commentaries, see the recent study of Lars Aejmelaes, *Die Rezeption der Paulusbrieve in der Miletrede (Apg 20:18–35)* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1987) 132–42, who goes yet further to claim an actual literary dependence of 20:28 on 1 Thess. 5:9–10 and Eph. 1:7. This is part of Aejmelaes' larger thesis that Pauline allusions in Acts are invariably due to Luke's knowledge of the Pauline letters.

²⁶ See Carroll, "Luke's Crucifixion Scene" for the Lukan emphasis on guilt and repentance.

I should point out that this understanding of Jesus' blood is perfectly consistent with Luke's soteriology otherwise, in which repentance and forgiveness of sins are the perennial keynotes. The constant refrain of the speeches of Acts is: "You killed Jesus, but God raised him from the dead." In each instance the claim represents an appeal to repentance, which brings forgiveness of sins.²⁷ Failure to repent, on the other hand, results in judgment.

Moreover, this construal is consistent with the other references to "blood" throughout Luke-Acts. While the word can certainly refer neutrally to such things as the blood of menstruation or of edible beasts (Luke 8:43-44, Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25), or to cosmic signs of the eschaton (Acts 2:19-20), it most frequently refers to the unjust and violent suffering of the people of God—especially prophets and martyrs (Luke 11:50; 13:1; Acts 22:20). Strikingly Luke sees Jesus himself as, above all, a prophet and martyr.²⁸ Somewhat ironically, the term "blood" can also symbolize the fate of those who refuse to repent when confronted with the apostolic preaching of Jesus (18:6). I should note that the term is used in just this way within the immediate context of 20:28: Paul states his relief at being guiltless of "the blood" of the Ephesian elders—meaning that he fulfilled his obligation to preach to them his message of salvation, a message that can save from the coming judgment.²⁹ Only when his hearers repent in the face of Jesus' blood can they be saved from spilling their own.

This contextual understanding of Acts 20:28 shows that at least for Luke, the tradition of God obtaining the church through Jesus' blood—if it is a tradition—has in fact nothing to do with the Pauline notion of atonement. One can only conclude that interpreters have read such a notion into the text because their knowledge of Paul (and of later developments) naturally leads them to see atonement whenever they see blood. Acts 20:28 neither requires nor intimates such a construal, however, so that it is not at all the exception to an otherwise consistent Lukan soteriology. Even this text makes good

²⁷ See e.g. Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 17:30; 11:18; 20:21; 26:20.

²⁸ See Carroll, "Luke's Crucifixion Scene," 113-20, and the literature he cites there.

²⁹ Interestingly, he also predicts that "fierce wolves" will be set loose upon the congregation who will not "spare the flock" (i.e., who will bring them to a violent end) unless the elders protect them (20:29). Blood is spilled when one does not repent and believe in the one God has vindicated.

sense within the narrative of Luke, and the sense it makes is not related to the idea of vicarious suffering.

What this means is that in no case does Luke understand Jesus' death as an atonement for sins. As I have already said, this is not at all to disparage Luke's own theology of the cross. It is simply to say that he understands the death of Jesus differently from both the predecessor of his Gospel (Mark) and the hero of his Acts (Paul).

How does this consistent reconstrual of the salvific importance of Christ's death affect our query into the original text of Luke 22:19–20? In fact only one of the two readings conforms with the theology of Luke otherwise, and specifically with his demonstrable handling of his Marcan source. The verses of the longer reading stress the atoning significance of Jesus' death for his disciples. How can they be original when they emphasize precisely what Luke has gone out of his way to *deemphasize* in his entire two-volume narrative? How could Luke have blatantly eliminated from the accounts of Mark any notion of Jesus' death as an atoning sacrifice (Mark 10:45; 15:39) only to assert such a notion here in yet stronger terms? The conclusion appears unavoidable: Luke has either constructed his narrative with blinding inconsistency, or he has provided us with a shortened version of Jesus' last meal with his disciples.

The Structure of the Passage

Before turning to the arguments of transcription that, in my judgment, serve to cinch the argument, we do well to consider one other matter of intrinsic probability, namely, the competing virtues of the passage's structure as presented in the two forms of the text. It is here that advocates of the longer text feel confident in the superiority of their claims. Most frequently it is simply noted that without the addition of vv. 19b–20 the text appears to end abruptly, so abruptly that it is difficult to imagine a Christian author not supplementing the account with additional material. As E. E. Ellis puts it, the reader naturally expects to find a word about the cup after the word about the bread.³⁰

One certainly does expect to find such a word, which is exactly what makes this argument so suspect. For as with most arguments of this kind, the expectation of a reader can cut both ways. Readers

³⁰ *Gospel of Luke*, 254–55.

who are thoroughly conversant with the eucharistic liturgy feel that something is “missing” when Jesus’ words over the bread are not followed by his passing of the cup. But of course this is not only the case for modern critics who assume that Luke could not have ended the passage with such abruptness, but also for ancient scribes who were equally accustomed to the traditions of Jesus’ Last Supper. How this proves decisive for the longer text of Luke 22, however, is more than a little perplexing. What would be more natural for scribes conversant with what “really happened” at Jesus’ last meal than to supplement Luke’s version with the words drawn from a tradition with which they were otherwise familiar?

Interestingly, this “other tradition” (i.e., vv. 19b–20 in the longer text) is not only anomalous within Luke’s Gospel itself, it also has very few connections with Luke’s *Vorlage*, the Gospel of Mark. Instead, as has been frequently noted, the additional words practically mirror the familiar form of the institution preserved in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians.³¹ The fact that the words of the longer text of Luke are not *precisely* those of Paul should not be used, as it sometimes is, to argue that they could not have been added secondarily to the text of the Gospel. No one need think that a scribe referred to his manuscript of 1 Corinthians to check the accuracy of his interpolation into Luke. Instead, the addition has all the marks of a familiar narrative based on or at least parallel to Paul’s account of Jesus’ Last Supper.

The question of whether the shorter text of Luke’s account is too truncated to be considered original has been treated with greater sophistication by J. H. Petzer in his recent study of the literary structure of the passage.³² Petzer notes that when one considers the broader context of vv. 15–20, the longer text preserves a number of literary parallelisms which speak in its favor as original. According to Petzer, the passage evidences a bipartite parallel structure, each part of which comprises two “signs” and their “explanations:” vv. 15–18 record a first “sign” (eating) and its “explanation” (it will be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God), then a second “sign” (drinking) and its comparable

³¹ Where again Jesus refers to τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, to “doing this in my remembrance” (τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν), to his taking “likewise the cup after dining” (ὡσαύτως καὶ τὸ ποτήριον μετὰ τὸ δειπνήκη), and to his pronouncing that “this cup is the new covenant in my blood” (τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη [ἐστίν] ἐν τῷ αἵματί μου).

³² J. H. Petzer, “Luke 22:19b–20.”

“explanation” (it too will be fulfilled in the Kingdom). Corresponding to this is the text of vv. 19–20 in its longer form, in which two “signs” (the bread v. 19a; the cup v. 20) receive appropriate explanations (“This is my body . . .”; “This cup is the new covenant in my blood”). The passage can then be structured as follows:

I	A	a' τὸ πάσχα φαγεῖν	sign: eating (bread)	(15, 16a)	a
		b τῇ βασιλείᾳ	explanation: Kingdom	(16b)	b
	B	a' τὸ ποτήριον, πίω	sign: drinking (cup)	(17, 18a)	a'
		b' ἡ βασιλεία	explanation: Kingdom	(18b)	b'
II	A'	a'' ἄρτον	sign: bread	(19a)	a''
		b'' τὸ σῶμά μου	explanation: body	(19b)	b''
	B'	a ⁺ ποτήριον	sign: cup	(20a)	a ⁺
		b ⁺ τὸ αἷμά μου	explanation: blood	(20b)	b ⁺

For Petzer this structure demonstrates that the longer text is original: removing vv. 19b–20 destroys the bipartite parallelism. His comments here are worth quoting:

The structure of the passage is thus very much inclined in favour of the long reading. This conclusion is not reached because of the mere fact that there is a structure in the passage. It is surely possible to identify *a* structure in almost any given New Testament passage. It is rather the nature of the structure which is convincing. Luke used a parallelism, a structure very well known to the authors of both the Old and New Testaments. Had any other structure, not as commonly used as the parallelism, been identified, the argument would have been much weaker.³³

Petzer is certainly right that one can find a structure wherever one looks; structural analyses are often as fascinating for what they reveal about the creativity of the critic as for what they reveal about the text. But to claim that the structure he uncovers is compelling *because* it is common is really rather hard to evaluate.³⁴ Here I cannot help

³³ Petzer, “Luke 22:19b–20,” 251, emphasis his.

³⁴ If parallelism is half again as common as some other structure in the NT, will this argument for the original text be half again as valid?

but note that if we simply accept Petzer's own categories of "sign" and "explanation," and modify his structure by removing the words of the longer text, we have not simply eliminated the bipartite parallelism, we have also uncovered a chiasmus (A—B—A), a structure that is vying with parallelism for most favored status among NT exegetes who look for such things.³⁵

I regret to say, however, that I do not think the passage is structured chiasmically, in part because Petzer's categories do *not* work very well, and in part because v. 19a is better seen as the beginning of the *following* pericope, rather than the conclusion of the preceding. Interestingly enough, *this* pericope (vv. 19a, 21–22) is shaped through a parallelism comparable to what one finds in vv. 15–18. Here again one may simply be finding a structure wherever one looks, but in this instance there are specific linguistic indicators of the structure, indicators that are missed when v. 19a is isolated from the verses that follow.

Before laying out the structure of vv. 19a–22, however, I should say something about Petzer's analysis of vv. 15–18. I think that he is right in claiming that they form a self-contained unit in which Jesus first expresses his desire to eat the passover with his disciples, describing his action in terms of the Kingdom of God; he then distributes the cup, again speaking of the Kingdom. The structure is suggested in part by the author's use of the phrase λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν to introduce the words of the kingdom in both vv. 16 and 18. But is the category of "explanation" really the most suitable for understanding these words? Are the disciples to distribute the cup because Jesus will drink no more wine until the kingdom comes? No, these words instead seem to provide a contrast between Jesus' eating and drinking with his disciples at this meal and his eating and drinking in the future kingdom. Or to put the matter differently, the contrast is between Jesus sharing food and drink with the faithful in the present, and his own eating and drinking in the eschatological future.³⁶

What would lead one to take v. 19a as the opening of the following pericope (vv. 19a–22, without vv. 19b–20)? In brief, because

³⁵ There are other problems with Petzer's structure. It requires, e.g., the phrase τὸ πᾶσχα φαγεῖν to be understood as a reference to eating "bread," (as in v. 19), when in fact it appears simply to mean "to celebrate the Passover."

³⁶ The γὰρ, then, does not function causally, but to express continuation or connection. See BAGD, 151.

doing so reveals a formally similar parallelism: Jesus makes a statement and then a contrast. But now the contrast does not involve his participation in the future Kingdom, implicitly related to the disciples who share his fellowship; it is now a contrast between Jesus' ignominious fate on earth and the one follower who is responsible for delivering him over to it. As was the case with the earlier pericope, so too here the linguistic indicator of the structure appears in the repetition of a key transitional term at the beginning of each contrast. Whereas the contrasts of vv. 16 and 18 were introduced with the words λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν, here they are indicated by the word πλὴν, one of Luke's favorite conjunctions.³⁷ Furthermore, Jesus' opening statement in each part concerns his coming fate, and in each case the contrast is made to the one who betrays him (παραδίδωμι both times):

- A And taking bread, giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them saying, This is my body (v. 19a)
- B But (πλὴν) behold, the hand of the one who betrays (τοῦ παραδιδόντος) me is with me at the table (v. 21)
- A1 For the Son of Man goes as it was ordained for him; (v. 22a)
- B1 But (πλὴν) woe to that man through whom he is betrayed (παραδίδοται; v. 22b)

This structure, as indicated, is able to account for the repetitions of πλὴν and παραδίδωμι in the passage, something left out of account in Petzer's analysis, and serves better to highlight the contrasting character of the two pericopes (vv. 15–18; 19–22) when considered together.³⁸ In the first Jesus discusses his fate in light of the coming Kingdom of God, a fate associated with his faithful followers who partake of his bread and cup (perhaps suggesting that they too will share his vindication as they continue to break bread with him; cf., e.g., Luke 24:35); in the second he focuses on his approaching martyrdom, in which his body will be broken because of the betrayal of an unfaithful follower, whose destiny is not the joys of the eschatological kingdom but the sufferings of the eschatological woes.

³⁷ Mark uses it once; Luke, in the Gospel alone, fifteen times.

³⁸ It should be noted that the sequence in which the followers are mentioned are reversed: the faithful who partake with him in his final meal are mentioned in the first element of each member of the first pericope (vv. 15, 17), the unfaithful one who betrays him is both times named second in the one that follows (vv. 21; 22b).

The plausibility of this structure is only heightened by the circumstance that it avoids the words and theology of the longer text that are found nowhere else in Luke-Acts.

It also avoids the problem of having to explain how the text came to be changed in the course of its transmission, a problem that proves insurmountable for all advocates of the longer text. Petzer's explanation of the omission is as typical as it is illuminating: "A scribe must have omitted these disputed words in order to avoid the difficult cup-bread-cup sequence so that Luke's account of the institution of the Lord's Supper could be harmonised with the other institution narratives."³⁹ A remarkable comment, this, for precisely here is the problem: the shorter text does not at all solve the problem of the sequence of the narrative nor effect a harmonization with the other three NT accounts of the institution. The order of cup-bread occurs in none of the other passages, and the closest verbal parallels with any of them occurs only in the *longer* text's similarities to 1 Cor. 11. The shorter text is by no means a harmonization to any of our other accounts. How then can one explain an omission if the longer text is original?

Transcriptional Probabilities

In point of fact, no one has been able to provide a convincing explanation for how the shorter text came into existence if the longer is original. One of the standard explanations is that a scribe who either could not understand or did not appreciate the appearance of two cups in Luke's narrative eliminated one of them to make the account coincide better with all the others. The explanation has proved popular because it has all the appearance of plausibility. But in fact it is only an appearance; Hort showed why the theory does not work over a century ago and nobody has been able to refute his arguments.⁴⁰ If a scribe was concerned with harmonizing the account to its parallels, why did he eliminate the *second* cup instead of the first? It is the first that is problematic, since it is distributed before the giving of the bread; and it is the second that is familiar, because the

³⁹ "Luke 22:19b-20," 252.

⁴⁰ Westcott and Hort, *New Testament in the Original Greek*, I. Appendix, "Notes on Selected Readings," 63-64.

words of institution parallel so closely those of Paul in 1 Corinthians. Anyone wanting to eliminate the problems of two cups and of sequence would have excised the earlier cup, not the latter. Still more damaging, this explanation cannot at all account for the omission of v. 19b, where the cup is not yet mentioned. Why did this alleged scribe, concerned to eliminate the second cup, take away with it the words of institution over the bread? Did he just happen to excise the words and theology that otherwise appear intrusive in Luke's Gospel but reflect the words of institution known from Paul? Whatever the motivation for the change, it was not simply to eliminate the mention of a second cup or to harmonize the account with the others.

The frustration scholars have had in explaining the shorter text is seen especially in a theory that for all its popularity represents little more than a counsel in despair. Advocated originally by Jeremias,⁴¹ it is the claim that the text was abbreviated by scribes concerned not to allow the sacred words of institution to become a part of the public domain, lest they be used by non-believers for insidious magical purposes. In Jeremias' hands this theory of the so-called *disciplina arcani* provided a panacea for all kinds of problems in the Gospels: it explained why, e.g., Mark refused to reveal the words Jesus spoke to the Devil in the wilderness during the days of his temptation in Mark 1:12–13, and why he ended his Gospel in 16:8 without disclosing the parting words of Jesus to his disciples. Apart from these curiosities, one must ask how well the theory resolves the textual problem of Luke 22:19–20. Whom exactly did these second-century scribes, fearful of the misuse of the text, envisage as their readers? Were they planning to sell their MSS at the local book mart? If the words of institution were problematic, why did the scribes in question not eliminate them in their entirety? Why, e.g., did they leave v. 19a intact? And, still more perplexing, why was the *same* motivation not operative in the transmission histories of Matthew, Mark, and 1 Corinthians, where the texts are liable to precisely the same abuse but nonetheless survived the penknives of the second-century scribes unscathed?⁴² Even most proponents of the longer text have failed to be convinced.

⁴¹ *Eucharistic Words*, 87–106.

⁴² Jeremias' solution to these problems is to say that a particular scribe was asked by a particular pagan for a copy of Luke's Gospel, which he produced leaving out

This leaves us, however, with our query concerning the origin of the shorter text if the longer is original. Virtually the only explanation that might account for it is that vv. 19b–20 dropped out by accident. Unfortunately, this proves to be as problematic as the theory that the text was cut on purpose. For it would be remarkable indeed for thirty-two words to drop out of a text for no apparent reason (such as homeoteleuton). Is it an accident that these thirty-two words just happen to supply precisely what is missing in the account otherwise, a notion that Jesus' body and blood would be given on behalf of his disciples? Is it an accident that this theological construal, found in this passage only in the disputed thirty-two words, is otherwise alien to Luke's entire two-volume work? Is it an accident that these words, and only these words, parallel the words found in 1 Corinthians? An intriguing accident indeed!

In short, it is well-nigh impossible to explain the shorter text of Luke 22:19–20 if the longer text is original.

But it is not at all difficult to explain for an *interpolation* of the disputed words into Luke's brief account of Jesus' last supper.⁴³ As we have seen, Luke's two-volume work otherwise avoids all mention of Jesus giving his body and shedding his blood *for* his followers (ὕπερ ὑμῶν); Luke eliminated or changed the Marcan references to Jesus' atoning sacrifice; he chose not to quote Isa 53 to depict Jesus dying for sins, even though he quoted the passage otherwise; he referred back to Jesus' death in the book of Acts simply as if it were a miscarriage of justice that God set right in raising Jesus from the dead. To be sure, this author's account of Jesus going to his death proved useful for proto-orthodox Christians of the second century who themselves emphasized the necessity of martyrdom and the need to emulate the tranquility of Jesus in the face of it.⁴⁴ But it was not at all

the words in question (19b–20). But he retained v. 19a as a hint to Christian insiders of what happened next at the meal. It is a creative solution, but is nonetheless entirely implausible. Where is the evidence of such an unlikely sequence of events (how many pagans asked scribes for copies of Scripture? what scribes were fearful of the magical abuse of their texts? if the text was for a pagan, why was the hint of v. 19a left in? etc.)? Furthermore, Jeremias can still not explain why similar motivations played no role in the transmission of other NT passages that reflect Christian liturgical passages, let alone the other narratives of institution.

⁴³ On the character of the Lukan redaction, in which he changes Mark's understanding of the meal as the Institution of the Lord's supper to depict it instead as Jesus' last Passover meal with his disciples, see Rese, "Zur Problematik."

⁴⁴ On different views of martyrdom in the period, see esp. Elaine Pagels, "Gnostic and Orthodox Views of Christ's Passion: Paradigms for the Christian's Response

useful when they wanted to stress, in direct opposition to certain groups of docetic opponents, that Christ experienced a real passion in which his body was broken and his blood was shed for the sins of the world.

We know of a number of Christians who embraced docetic christologies from at least the beginning of the second century onwards (i.e. from precisely the period in which the Lukan text must have been corrupted). Representatives of such views were found among the secessionists from the Johannine community and were known in the communities addressed by Ignatius.⁴⁵ Christians of this persuasion are known by name to second- and third-century heresiologists, with the arch-heretics Marcion, Saturninus, and Basilides heading the list. Despite the differences among their views, these Christians were unified in thinking that Christ did not have a real flesh and blood existence. He was a phantasm, a spectre. By implication, at least in the eyes of their proto-orthodox opponents, such a view necessarily devalued the salvific significance of Christ's death, indeed necessarily denied that Christ "really" died and shed real blood, let alone that he shed blood "for you."⁴⁶

For the proto-orthodox, on the other hand, it was precisely the sacrifice of Christ's flesh and the shedding of his blood that brought redemption to the fallen race of humans. For them, Jesus was a man not in appearance only but in reality; he had real flesh and real blood, he suffered real pain and died a real death. And most importantly for the textual history of this passage, Jesus' suffering and death were not incidental to salvation but constitutive of it. Jesus' body was given for believers, and it was his blood that established the new covenant.

It is no accident that Tertullian refers on one occasion to Christ's consecration of the wine as his blood to disparage Marcion's view that he was merely a phantom (*Treatise on the Soul*, 17), while on another occasion he cites the entire institution narrative as known from 1 Cor. 11 and the longer text of Luke to the same end:

to Persecution?" in *Rediscovering Gnosticism*, ed. Bentley Layton (Leiden: Brill, 1980) I. 262–83.

⁴⁵ See my comments on 1 John 4:3; 5:6; 1:1–3 in my article "1 John 4:3 and the Orthodox Corruption of Scripture," 233–41; also Ign. *Smyrn.* 1:1–2; 3:1–2; 4:1–2; 5:2; Ign. *Trall.* 9:1–2; 10:1.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* III, passim; *Came Christi* passim; Iren. *Adv. Haer.* IV, 22; V, 1–2.

[Jesus] declared plainly enough what He meant by the bread, when He called the bread His own body. He likewise, when mentioning the cup and making the new testament to be sealed “in His blood,” affirms the reality of His body. For no blood can belong to a body which is not a body of flesh. Thus from the evidence of the flesh, we get a proof of the body, and a proof of the flesh from the evidence of the blood. (*Adv. Marc.*, 40)

In using the text in this way, Tertullian is closely allied with other proto-orthodox authors of the second and third centuries. Somewhat earlier Irenaeus had also refuted Marcion by asking how his docetic christology could be reconciled with Jesus’ insistence that the bread represented his body and the cup his blood (*Adv. Haer.* IV, 33, 2). Yet more significantly, Irenaeus attacked other unnamed docetists for refusing to see that Christ’s shed blood alone is what brings the redemption of humans, and that for this blood to be efficacious it had to be real: real blood shed to bring real salvation, Christ’s real flesh given to redeem our human flesh (*Adv. Haer.* V, 2, 2).

It is precisely this emphasis on Jesus’ giving of his own flesh and blood for the salvation of believers, as represented in the physical elements of the bread broken “for you” and the cup given “for you,” that made the longer text of Luke 22:19–20 so attractive to the proto-orthodox heresiologists of the second century. And it is the same theological concern that can account for the genesis of the text, which as we have seen, cannot have come from the pen of Luke himself.

Conclusions

It would appear then that the interpolation of the familiar words of institution into Luke 22:19–20 represents the work of proto-orthodox scribes seeking to make the evangelist’s message even more applicable to the polemical context of their own day.⁴⁷ Here we need

⁴⁷ As examples of how similar motivations affected the text of the NT elsewhere, we can cite the scribal additions of *διδόμενου*, *κλόμενου*, and esp. *θρυπόμενου* to the tradition of 1 Cor 11:24; the change of *σώματος* to *αίματος* in MSS of Heb. 10:10; the later changes of *ὀνόματος* to *αίματος* in Acts 10:43; and the various amplifications of Mark 14:22, 24 that serve to emphasize Jesus’ body “broken for you” and “blood shed for you” for the remission/forgiveness of sins. See also Ehrman and Plunkett, “The Angel and the Agony,” for a discussion of the famous “bloody sweat” interpolation into Luke 22:43–44.

to remember what NT exegetes and textual critics have all too often been prone to forget: Christians of the second and third centuries were involved in a wide range of theological disputes about the nature of God, the disposition of the material world, the person of Christ, and the status of Scripture. Scribes were not isolated from the implications of these disputes. Theological polemics played a significant role in the texts of the “New” Testament that were circulating, particularly among Christians who represented views that were later to be championed by the victorious party, the so-called “orthodox” believers who determined the shape of the creed and established the contours of the canon. Especially in this early era, when the allegedly apostolic writings were just beginning to be seen as authoritative, scribes who reproduced them were not at all disinclined to modify what they had received so as to make them more serviceable in their polemical milieu. This is by all appearances what has happened to the text of Luke 22:19–20. Whereas it served Luke’s purposes well in portraying his understanding of Jesus’ last meal with his disciples and his view of Jesus’ death, it did not prove as serviceable to later Christians for whom the atoning death of Jesus, a death that involved the real shedding of real blood for the sins of the world, had taken on a special importance. And so the text was modified by means of a partial assimilation to the familiar institution narrative reflected in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. In changing the text in this way, these scribes were part of a much larger phenomenon that has left its abiding mark on the MS record of the NT, for they have provided us here with another instance of “the orthodox corruption of Scripture.”^{48, 49}

⁴⁸ See the works mentioned in n. 4 above.

⁴⁹ I would like to thank my graduate student Rod Mullen for commenting on an earlier draft of this article, and my friend Joel Marcus, whose critical insights and stylistic suggestions were, as always, extremely useful.

THE ANGEL AND THE AGONY:
THE TEXTUAL PROBLEM OF LUKE 22:43–44¹
(co-authored with Mark A. Plunkett)

Luke's account of Jesus' prayer on the Mount of Olives (22:39–46) contains a classical problem for textual critics: the genuineness of vv. 43–44. Was it Luke or a later scribe who wrote this portrayal of the agonized Jesus, strengthened by an angel from heaven, his sweat becoming like great drops of blood falling to the ground? The problem is important for textual criticism because it illustrates how readily text-critical arguments and counterarguments can bring the issue to an impasse.² But it is also important for understanding Luke's passion narrative and christology, since the inclusion and exclusion of these verses provide very different portrayals of Jesus facing his passion. This article will consider various aspects of the textual problem and will evaluate previous attempts to find a solution. The thesis is that the problem is best resolved by considering the verses an interpolation made early in the second century.

External Evidence

The witnesses to the text can be categorized as follows:³

Include vv. 43–44: **⳨***^b D K L X Θ Δ* Π* Ψ 0171 *f*¹ 565 700 892* 1009
1010 1071^{mg} 1230 1241 1242 1253 1344 1365 1546 1646 2148 2174
Byz it vg syr^{c, p, h, pal} arm eth Diatessaron^{a, c, aur, i, n} Justin Irenaeus Hippolytus
Ps-Dionysius Eusebius Didymus Jerome [many other church Fathers];

¹ Originally published in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45, 3 (1983) 401–16. Used with permission.

² Lists of scholars who support and exclude the verses can be found in L. Brun, "Engel and Blutschweiss: Lc 22; 43–44," *ZNW* 32 (1933) 265; and in I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (New International Greek New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 831–32.

³ Two notes concerning textual witnesses are in order:

(a) Dionysius. The fragment "On Luke 22" has long been cited as evidence for the inclusion of Luke 22:43–44 by Dionysius of Alexandria. Yet C. L. Feltoe, in his 1904 edition of Dionysius (*The Letters and Other Remains of Dionysius of Alexandria* [Cambridge Patristic Texts; Cambridge: University Press, 1904] 229–30), expresses little confidence in the authenticity of this fragment, especially the section containing vv. 43–44, since it is missing in one of the two extant MSS of the fragment.

Include vv. 43–44 with obeli or asterisks: Δ^c Π^c 892^{mg} 1079 1195 1216 bo^{pt};
 Transpose vv. 43–44 to follow Matt 26:39: f^{13} ;
 Transpose vv. 43–45a (καί . . . προσευχῆς) to follow Matt 26:39: *Lect*^{pt};
 Omit vv. 43–44: P^{69vid}, 75 \aleph^a A B N R T W 579 1071* *pc Lect*^{pt} *it*^f *syr*^s sa
 bo^{pt} arm^{ms} geo Marcion Clement Origen MSS^{acc.} to Hilary Athanasius Ambrose
 MSS^{acc.} to Epiphanius MSS^{acc.} to Jerome Cyril John-Damascus.

Generally speaking, the verses are found in Western witnesses, but not in Alexandrian. Notable exceptions are several secondary witnesses to the Western text—R, f, *syr*^s, lat MSS^{acc.} to Jerome—which omit the verses and, conversely, witnesses of mainly Alexandrian character— \aleph^{*b} , L, Didymus, bo^{pt}—which include them. Virtually all the so-called Caesarean witnesses contain the verses, the only exceptions being the tertiary witness 1071* and, if they should be considered Caesarean, arm^{ms} and geo. Notably, the Caesarean f^{13} transposes the verses to follow Matt 26:39. Finally, apart from A and W, which frequently retain Alexandrian readings, the entire Byzantine tradition includes the verses. In Δ^c , Π^c , and several minuscules, however, they are marked with an obelus or asterisk.

In evaluating this evidence, Westcott and Hort dubbed 22:43–44 “an early Western interpolation adopted in eclectic texts.”⁴ But research since then has questioned their contention that the Western text necessarily represents an aberration, and has shown that an exclusively Western, longer reading need not be considered secondary.⁵ Günther Zuntz, for example, has shown that any non-Alexandrian reading with both Western and Byzantine support has

Feltoe places the fragment in the seventh century, with the section on vv. 43–44 probably even later.

(b) P⁶⁹. The witness of P⁶⁹ is uncertain because it omits not only vv. 43–44 but v. 42 as well, presumably an omission by homoeoarchton—jumping from προσήχτεο (v. 41) to προσευχῆς (v. 45). The question is whether such an omission is plausible if vv. 43–44 were in the scribe’s exemplar. According to the editor of the papyrus, E. G. Turner, vv. 43–44 would have taken up eleven or twelve lines, and omission by homoeoarchton of such an interval seems unlikely (E. Lobel, E. G. Turner, J. W. E. Burns [eds.], *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, Part XXIV* [Graeco-Roman Memoirs no. 35; London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1951] 1–3). Thus P⁶⁹ probably agrees with the Alexandrian witnesses in omitting 22:43–44.

⁴ B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (London: Macmillan, 1896), 2.66.

⁵ Westcott and Hort concede that Western readings may on occasion preserve the genuine text. This is shown by their famous and question-begging designation, “Western Non-Interpolations.” But their very use of this term shows that in their judgment only *shorter* Western readings are genuine, and that only in exceptional cases.

a reasonable claim to genuineness.⁶ Several scholars have argued precisely this for 22:43–44, that the omission of the verses in the Alexandrian text merely represents an Egyptian aberration.⁷ Thus, boiled down to a minimum, the early external evidence forces a choice between an Alexandrian and a Western reading, providing no clear indication which was original. At the same time, these data do allow for conclusions to be drawn concerning the date of the first alteration of the text. It is readily seen that the verses are omitted in witnesses of the early third century (P^{69vid}, 75, Clement) and included as early as A.D. 160 (Justin, *Dial.* 103.8). Consequently, an omission must be dated before ca. A.D. 200–230 and an interpolation before A.D. 160.⁸

Transcriptional Probabilities

Accidental omission must always be considered possible in cases of longer and shorter variants. But because of the length of the reading in question (twenty-six words) few scholars have suggested that the verses fell out by accident. Albert C. Clark could do so only as part of his tendentious schematization of the principle *longior lectio potior*.⁹ But, in fact, there is nothing in the text, such as homoeoteleuton, which would occasion an error of this kind. Nor is it likely that

⁶ *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum* (London: Oxford University, 1953) 55–56, 213–15; similarly B. M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (2d ed.; New York/Oxford: Oxford University, 1968) 214.

⁷ J. Rendel Harris, “New Points of View in Textual Criticism,” *Expositor* 8/7 (1914) 323; M.-J. Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Luc* (2d ed.; Paris: Lecoffre, 1921) 562–63; Jean Duplacy, “La préhistoire du texte en Luc 22:43–44,” *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis: Essays in Honour of Bruce M. Metzger* (ed. E. J. Epp and G. D. Fee; Oxford: Clarendon, 1981) 81–83, 85–86.

⁸ The dating of a possible omission before A.D. 200–230 is important, since earlier A. von Harnack had offered as evidence for omission that we have no sources without the verses before A.D. 300 (“Probleme im Texte der Leidensgeschichte Jesu,” SPAW 1901, erster Halbband; reprinted in his *Studien zur Geschichte des Neuen Testaments und der alten Kirche: I. Zur neutestamentlichen Textkritik* [Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 19; Berlin/Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1931] 88; further references to this article will be to the later reprint). M.-J. Lagrange (*Saint Luc*, 563) also proposes a third-century omission. C. S. C. Williams, following M. Goguel, dates the omission to the time of the Athanasian orthodoxy (*Alterations to the Text of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1951] 7). The discovery of the Bodmer papyri and P⁶⁹ have made such theories impossible.

⁹ A. C. Clark, *The Primitive Text of the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1914) 60, 65.

an accidental omission of such a long and significant passage would find its way into a mainstream of the textual tradition without being corrected. The alteration is much better understood as deliberate.

Some scholars have suggested that the shorter text could be accounted for by Synoptic harmonization, that scribes deleted the verses in order to conform the text to the Gethsemane stories in Matthew 26 and Mark 14 which make no mention of Jesus' sweat or the angel's intervention.¹⁰ But such a procedure of omitting entire sentences for the sake of Gospel harmony has no plausible analogy; the only parallel case is Luke 23:34, a difficult text in its own right. Ultimately, the theory of harmonizing omission runs aground on the circumstance that Luke's account of Jesus' prayer on the Mount of Olives contains numerous unique features, all of which have been left intact by early copyists.¹¹ If harmonization were a motivating factor for the textual change, why did copyists not alter other unique features as well? Furthermore, it could just as easily be argued that later scribes considered Luke's account an abbreviated form of Matthew and Mark, and so added a piece of extant tradition to fill it out.¹² Martin Dibelius labeled as "trite" Luke's story without vv. 43–44,¹³ and some of the ancients may have felt the same way. It should be clear that such arguments based on Synoptic harmonization really lead nowhere.

Perhaps more fruitful are transcriptional probabilities based on doctrinal considerations. Most scholars solve the textual problem on just such grounds: the verses (it is alleged) were omitted by scribes who found them doctrinally offensive. This theory is, in fact, quite ancient, put forth as early as the fourth century by Epiphanius (*Ancoratus* 31.4–5):

κεῖται ἐν τῷ κατὰ Λουκᾶν εὐαγγελίῳ ἐν τοῖς ἀδιορθώτοις ἀντιγράφοις—
καὶ κέχρηται τῇ μαρτυρίᾳ ὁ ἅγιος Εἰρηναῖος ἐν τῷ κατὰ αἰρέσεων πρὸς

¹⁰ M.-J. Lagrange, *Saint Luc*, 563; L. Brun, "Engel und Blutschweiss," 276; J. Duplacy, "La préhistoire," 79.

¹¹ These unique features include the double occurrence of *προσεύχεσθε μὴ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς μειρασμόν* (vv. 40, 46) and the phrases *ὡσεὶ λίθου βολήν* (v. 41), *θεῖς τὰ γόνατα* (v. 41), *εἰ βούλει* (v. 42), *ἀναστάς ἀπὸ τῆς προσευχῆς* (v. 45), and *ἀπὸ τῆς λύπης* (v. 45).

¹² L. Brun ("Engel und Blutschweiss," 273) suggests this possibility.

¹³ M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (rev. 2d ed.; Cambridge: James & Clark, 1971) 201–2 n. Dibelius himself used this point to argue for the inclusion of 22:43–44, because "Luke could not have written in this way [i.e., the "trite" shorter text]." But Dibelius was merely begging the question.

τοὺς δοκῆσει τὸν Χριστὸν πεφηνέναι λεγόντες, ὀρθοδόξοι δὲ ἀφείλετο τὸ ῥητόν, φοβηθέντες καὶ μὴ νοήσαντες αὐτοῦ τὸ τέλος καὶ τὸ ἰσχυρότατον—καὶ “γενόμενος ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ ἰδρώσε, καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἰδρῶς αὐτοῦ ὡς θρόμβοι αἵματος, καὶ ὤφθη ἄγγελος ἐνισχύων αὐτόν.”

[This passage] is found in the unrevised copies of the Gospel of Luke, and Saint Irenaeus used its testimony in his work *Adversus Haereses* against those who say that Christ [only] seemed to be manifest [in the flesh]. But those who were orthodox omitted the saying out of fear, not understanding its purpose and great force. Thus, “when he was in agony, he sweated. And his sweat became like great drops of blood; and an angel appeared, strengthening him.”

Similarly, Anastasius Sinaita (seventh century) remarks in *Hodegos* 148:

... τινες ἐπεχείρησαν παρεπάραι τοὺς θρόμβους τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδρώτος Χριστοῦ ἐκ τοῦ κατὰ Λουκᾶν Εὐαγγελίου, καὶ οὐκ ἴσχυσαν. . . . Ἐν γὰρ πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνικοῖς Εὐαγγελίοις κεῖται, καὶ Ἑλληνικοῖς πλείστοις.

Some tried to remove the great drops of Christ’s sweaty blood from the Gospel of Luke, but were not able. . . . For it is found in all the translations of the Gospels, and in most of the Greek copies.

In the ninth century, Photius attributed the excision of the verses to “some of the Syrians” (*Ep. 138 to Theodore*):

μηκέτι οὖν σοι τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦτο τὸ χωρίον περικεκόφθαι, κἄν τισι τῶν Σύρων ὡς ἔφης δόκει, εὐπρεπὲς νόμιζε.

Therefore, no longer consider it fitting for you to excise this passage of the Gospel, as, you say, it has seemed [fitting] to some of the Syrians.

Many modern critics have agreed with this ancient solution of the problem. Three features of Luke 22:43–44 made it potentially offensive to ancient Christians: (1) Jesus’ being strengthened could imply his subordination to the angel, an idea that even NT writings (e.g., Colossians and Hebrews) took pains to counter;¹⁴ (2) Jesus’ being in agony and sweating great drops like blood could sound Arian;¹⁵

¹⁴ A. von Harnack, “Probleme,” 89; B. F. Streeter, *The Four Gospels* (London: Macmillan, 1924) 137; W. Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1909) 171; J. Duplacy, “La préhistoire,” 79–80. D. F. Strauss noted an ancient scholium which pointedly illustrates the problem—ὅτι τῆς ἰσχύος τοῦ ἀγγέλου οὐκ ἐπεδέετο ὁ ὑπὸ πάσης ἐπουρανίου δυνάμεως φόβῳ καὶ τρόμῳ προσκυνούμενος καὶ δοξαζόμενος, “For the one who is worshipped and glorified with fear and trembling by every heavenly power had no need of the angel’s strength” (*The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972] 638).

¹⁵ “Presumably it seemed beneath the dignity of the Uncreated Word Incarnate

(3) Jesus' agony over his approaching fate could discredit the view that he laid down his life freely and willingly.¹⁶ Thus, early Christian embarrassment over these verses, which is easily documented, could well have led to their omission.

At the same time, doctrinal tendencies could have led to the interpolation of 22:43–44 into the original text. As Epiphanius notes in the passage quoted above, these verses were well-suited for anti-docetic polemic. At least one ancient Christian accounted for the longer text precisely on such doctrinal grounds. The anonymous *Narratio de rebus Armeniae*, written ca. A.D. 700, records that when a certain monophysite Armenian named John Mayragomec'i was confronted with scriptural proofs of the two natures of Christ, he replied (pars. 132–33):

ταῦτα πάντα οἱ νεστοριανοὶ προσέθηκαν ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων, καθὼς καὶ ἐν ταῖς θείαις γραφαῖς ὁ τότε Σατορνίλος πολλὰς αἰρέσεις προσετίθει, ὡς καὶ εἰς τὸ κατὰ Λουκᾶν Εὐαγγέλιον, ὅτι . . . ἄφθῃ δὲ αὐτῷ ἄγγελος ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ, κτλ.

The Nestorians added all these things to the writings of the holy Fathers, just as also Saturnilus once added many heresies to the Divine Scriptures. So also [they added] to the Gospel of Luke that “and an angel appeared to him from heaven . . . etc.”

Some scholars have thought that in this passage John Mayragomec'i accused the second-century Gnostic Saturnilus of inserting 22:43–44. But as Gérard Garrite has argued, the text makes more sense if καθὼς καὶ . . . προσετίθει is taken as a parenthesis, placing the blame for the interpolation on the Nestorians (John's term for Chalcedonians).¹⁷

In this connection, Westcott and Hort cited as evidence of the interpolation of 22:43–44 their “suitability . . . for quotation in the controversies against Docetic and Apollinarist doctrine. . . .”¹⁸ Indeed,

to evince such a degree of πάθος . . .” (Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 137). Indeed, Epiphanius was constrained to explain 22:43–44 at length in his reply to the Arians in *Pan.* 69.62, arguing that, as in Deut 32:43 LXX, ἐνισχύω (“I strengthen”) means ἀποδόντες αὐτῷ τὸ ἴδιον τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ ὁμολογήσωσιν (“by giving back to him what is his, they confess his strength”). J. Duplacy (“La préhistoire,” 80–82) sees the πάθος as offensive because of its conflict with the Stoic ideal of ἀπαθεία, which Christian martyrology had adopted; but as we will see, ἀπαθεία is also a Lucan concern.

¹⁶ A. von Harnack, “Probleme,” 90; J. Duplacy, “La préhistoire,” 81.

¹⁷ G. Garrite (ed.), *La narratio de rebus Armeniae: Édition critique et commentaire* (CSCO 132, Subsidia, tome 4; Louvain: Orientaliste, 1952) 326–28.

¹⁸ B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament*, 2.64.

it cannot be overlooked that the three earliest preserved citations of these verses are all put forth against heretically high christologies: Justin against Docetists (*Dial.* 103:8),¹⁹ Irenaeus against Docetists (*Adv. Haer.* 3.22,2), and Hippolytus against a Patripassionist (*Contra Noetum* 18.2).²⁰

In weighing the doctrinal arguments for the omission or interpolation of these verses, it is essential to keep the established chronology in mind. As has been shown, the *terminus ante quem* for an omission is ca. A.D. 200–230 (p^{69vid, 75}, Clement), for an interpolation A.D. 160 (Justin). These early dates force us to distinguish between factors that caused the original alteration of the text from those that affected the transmission of the text in the centuries that followed. By the fourth or fifth century, Christians were confronted with a shorter and a longer reading at 22:43–44, and the problem was now centuries old; how was one to choose between them? These Christians had limited access to manuscripts and so, for the most part, preferred one text to another on the basis of local textual traditions and individual theological proclivities. Thus in the transmission of the text it is likely that some later scribes deleted the verses in question from exemplars that had them, while other scribes added them to exemplars that did not. Consequently, the ancient discussions of the textual problem of 22:43–44, dating as they do from the fourth century and later, are of little help in determining the original reading. The various polemicists may well have been correct about scribal tendencies of their own time, when the great christological controversies were racking the Christian church. But these later controversies tell us nothing about what led to the initial alteration of the text in the second century.

¹⁹ The immediate context of the citation is a christological exegesis of Ps 22:14–15, of which Justin claims that Luke 22:43–44 describes the fulfillment. But Justin appends the following comment: ὅπως εἰδῶμεν ὅτι ὁ πατήρ τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν καὶ ἐν τοιούτοις πάθεσιν ἀληθῶς γεγόνεναι δι’ ἡμᾶς βεβούλεται, καὶ μὴ λέγωμεν ὅτι ἐκεῖνος, τοῦ θεοῦ υἱὸς ὢν, οὐκ ἀντελαμβάνετο τῶν γινομένων καὶ συμβαινόντων αὐτῷ, “[This happened] in order that we may know that the Father wished his Son really to undergo such suffering for our sakes, and that we may not say that since he was the Son of God, he did not feel what was happening to him and inflicted upon him.” The emphatic ἀληθῶς shows that the comment is directed against Docetists.

²⁰ *Contra* W. Bauer (*Das Leben Jesu*, 171), that Docetists were unimpressed by orthodox arguments based on Luke 22:43–44 is not surprising and has no bearing on whether the orthodox inserted the verses for just such polemical purposes.

Thus there is only one pressing question to be answered: "Which reading is more readily explained as originating in the theological climate of the second century?" When the matter is put in these terms, the weight of transcriptional probability falls on the theory of interpolation. The theological preoccupation of "mainstream" Christianity in the second century was the affirmation of Jesus' real humanity in the face of various strands of the docetic heresy. This preoccupation can account for an increasingly popular acceptance of a piece of Jesus-tradition that had been interpolated into some MSS of Luke. It cannot be overlooked, in this connection, that the earliest sources for the reading are orthodox Fathers citing it in polemical works against heretics. The other possibility, that a suspiciously heterodox reading would gain a wide currency in the textual tradition, is manifestly less likely.²¹

It could be argued that early copyists deleted the passage because v. 43 was sometimes understood as implying Jesus' subordination to the ministering angel, as suggested above. Nevertheless, such an argument would at best account for the omission of v. 43, and leave unanswered why both verses are consistently absent in witnesses to the shorter text. The circumstance that vv. 43 and 44 are omitted or included as a unit suggests that the textual change was made for an entirely different doctrinal reason. This consideration contributes to the conclusion already set forth: the verses were interpolated into Luke's Gospel as an anti-docetic polemic.

Intrinsic Probabilities

In an article published in 1901, Adolf von Harnack argued for the genuineness of 22:43–44 on the basis of its characteristically Lucan conceptualizations and vocabulary.²² The following elements of the passage are central to his argument:

²¹ *Contra* J. R. Harris ("New Points of View," 323) and J. Duplacy ("La préhistoire," 82), who argue that the shorter reading ultimately derived from Alexandrian Docetists. The untenability of this position is also evident in two other respects. It leaves unresolved the internal theological and structural problems of the text (see below), and it creates a host of historical problems of its own: How is it that Docetists came to exercise such influence on the Alexandrian text? Why did these docetic tendencies not corrupt other passages that highlight the real humanity of Jesus? Why was this heretical corruption incorporated into texts not influenced by Alexandrian Docetism? See also n. 15 above on ἀπαθεία.

²² A. von Harnack, "Probleme," 88.

- (1) angelic appearances: Luke 1 and 2; 24:23; Acts 5:19; 8:26; 10:3, 7, 22; 11:13; 12:7, 23; 23:9; 27:23.
- (2) ὄφθη δὲ αὐτῷ ἄγγελος: Luke 1:11; ὄφθη (Luke-Acts, thirteen occurrences; Matthew, one occurrence; Mark, one occurrence).
- (3) ἐνισχύειν: Acts 9:19 (no other NT occurrence).
- (4) ἐκτενέστερον προσεύχομαι: Acts 12:5 (26:7).
- (5) constructions with γίνεσθαι: 133 occurrences in Luke, only 73 in Matthew; γίνεσθαι ἐν: characteristic of Luke.

Though many critics have been convinced by Harnack, Lyder Brun offered a compelling refutation:²³ (1) Luke often speaks of angels, but nowhere else uses the phrase ἄγγελος ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ.²⁴ Furthermore, elsewhere in the Gospel angels appear only in the birth and resurrection stories, and in no other appearance in Luke-Acts does an angel remain silent. (2) The use of ἐνισχύειν in 22:43 differs significantly from that in Acts 9:19. In the latter, the verb is intransitive and passive, referring to physical strengthening; in the former it is transitive and active, referring to spiritual or emotional support. (3) ἐκτενῶς and ἐν ἐκτενείᾳ were commonly used both in the LXX and in early Christian literature to describe the intensity of prayer (Joel 1:14; Jonah 3:8; Jdt 4:7, 12; *I Clem.* 34.7; 59.2). Hence the phrase in Luke 22:43 is not uniquely Lucan. (4) Only Acts 22:17 provides a real parallel to the γενόμενος ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ of Luke 22:44. Furthermore, this use of γίνομαι ἐν with the dative is found elsewhere in the NT and early Christian literature; so it too is hardly “Lucan” (cf. Rom 16:7; Phil 2:7; Rev 1:10; *Mart. Pol.* 5.2).

Brun noted another side of the vocabulary argument: Luke 22:43–44 contains three NT *hapax legomena*—ἀγωνία, ἰδρώς, and θρόμβος. The relatively high concentration of *hapax legomena* in these verses (11.5% of the total vocabulary, as opposed to the average concentration of 1.1% in Luke) seriously compromises Harnack’s claim that they are characteristically Lucan. But since several of Luke’s undisputed verses also contain high concentrations of *hapax legomena* (Luke 4:8, 13.6%; 6:38, 15%; 10:34, 16.1%), the most that can be said is that arguments of “characteristic vocabulary” do not lend probability to either side of the debate.

Another argument for the intrinsic probability of the genuineness of 22:43–44 concerns the compositional continuity of the Gospel. It

²³ L. Brun, “Engel und Blutschweiss,” 266–67.

²⁴ Luke’s favorite term is ἄγγελος κυρίου (seven occurrences), ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ with used twice and ἄγγελος ἅγιος once.

has been suggested that parallels between this account of Jesus' prayer on the Mount of Olives and the earlier story of Jesus' transfiguration (Luke 9:28–36) indicate that the verses in question are Lucan.²⁵ In both scenes, Jesus prays on a mountain concerning his passion, while the disciples are overcome with sleep. This paralleling of accounts is heightened when the appearance of Moses and Elijah in answer to Jesus' prayer in 9:30 is taken as analogous to the appearance of the angel in 22:43. Such an understanding of the relationship of the two stories in Luke would suggest that 22:43–44 formed a part of the original Gospel.

Nevertheless, apart from the presence of the typically Lucan motifs (mountain, prayer, Jesus' destiny), there are no precise parallels between the two accounts. In the transfiguration scene the disciples accompany Jesus; on the Mount of Olives Jesus leaves them behind. In the transfiguration scene Jesus appears ἐν δόξῃ; on the Mount of Olives he appears ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ. In the transfiguration scene the disciples' sleep explains their ignorance of Jesus' impending departure and fate; on the Mount of Olives it serves to emphasize their apathy.²⁶ In the transfiguration scene the heavenly visitors Moses and Elijah appear as OT witnesses to Jesus' fate; on the Mount of Olives the angel from heaven comes to strengthen Jesus in his weakness. The lack of precise parallels between the two accounts, and especially the dissimilar functions of Moses and Elijah, on the one hand, and of the angel, on the other, disallow the compositional argument for the inclusion of the verses.

Several scholars have argued for the genuineness of 22:43–44 on theological grounds. These verses, it is said, are not only consonant with Luke's theology; they are actually integral to it. The two main issues concern the Lucan depiction of Jesus as a martyr and of Jesus' anguish in the face of death.

Martin Dibelius maintained that Luke employed traditional motifs in order to portray Jesus' death as a martyrdom.²⁷ This judgment is now widely accepted. In Dibelius's view, 22:43–44 serves as the *Zielpunkt* of Luke's "Gethsemane" scene, depicting an experience

²⁵ L. Brun, "Engel und Blutschweiss," 270–71.

²⁶ At the same time, Luke qualifies their faithlessness with the phrase ἀπὸ τῆς λύπης.

²⁷ M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 201–3.

typical of a martyr.²⁸ Subsequent to Dibelius's study, Harmut Ascherman traced in detail the parallels in traditional martyrologies, claiming the following to be central: (1) being strengthened by an angel (1 and 2 Macc *passim*; 3 Macc 5:51; 6:18; Dan 3:49, 92 LXX; *Mart. Pol.* 9.1); (2) ἀγωνία (4 Macc 11:20; 13:15; 16:16; 17:11–16); (3) sweat and blood (4 Macc 6:6, 11; 7:8).²⁹

In this connection, it must be recognized that the theological content of these verses is not exhausted by the presence of several martyrological motifs. As will be seen, other elements of the passage are more critical in determining whether it is Lucan. In themselves, the martyrological motifs only allow for the *possibility* that Luke penned the account; they do not prove that he did. Precisely at this point the transcriptional question arises, whether a later scribe, perhaps himself writing in a context of persecution, may not have sought to heighten the martyrological aspects of Luke's passion narrative by adding vv. 43–44. When the entire theological depiction of the passage is set forth, this option appears increasingly attractive.

The critical theological issue concerns whether Luke sought to portray Jesus facing his death with fear and trembling or with cool equanimity. Brun suggested that the saying at Luke 12:50, together with the frequent emphasis on the suffering Son of Man, compels the former conclusion.³⁰ Such a depiction of Jesus would be consistent with Luke 22:43–44. Nevertheless, it can be convincingly argued, as Jerome Neyrey has done recently,³¹ that Luke actually presents Jesus as emotionally restrained, without λύπη or φόβος. In the scene on the Mount of Olives, Luke omits any mention of Jesus' fear or sorrow (cf. Mark 14:33–34), depicts Jesus as kneeling rather than falling on the ground (Luke 22:41; cf. Mark 14:35), omits Jesus' prayer for the hour to pass (cf. Mark 14:35), and adds an important condition, εἰ βούλει, to the prayer for God to remove the cup

²⁸ Ibid., 201–2; see also M. Dibelius, "Gethsemane," *Botschaft und Geschichte* (ed. G. Bornkamm; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1953), 1.269. L. Brun ("Engel und Blutschweiss," 271) also cites the martyrologies as evidence for inclusion of the verses.

²⁹ H. Aschermann, "Zum Agoniegebet Jesu, Luk 22:43–44," *Theologia Viatorum* 5 (1953–54) 143–49.

³⁰ L. Brun, "Engel und Blutschweiss," 273.

³¹ J. H. Neyrey, "The Absence of Jesus' Emotions—The Lucan Redaction of Lk 22, 39–46," *Bib* 61 (1980) 153–71. D. M. Stanley (*Jesus in Gethsemane* [New York: Paulist, 1980] 206) draws the conclusion, which Neyrey does not, that Luke 22:43–44 is an interpolation.

from him (Luke 22:42; cf. Mark 14:36). Elsewhere in Luke's passion narrative as well, Jesus is in control of himself and the situation: he does not allow Judas' kiss (22:48); he talks with women along the *via dolorosa* (23:28–31); he forgives his executioners (23:34, but another textual problem); he converses with the two thieves while on the cross (23:29–43); and instead of uttering the awful cry of dereliction (Mark 15:34–35) he commits his soul to the Father, apparently in control even of the time of his death (23:46).

Only Luke 12:50 could serve as a counterexample to the predominant portrayal of Jesus as facing death with equanimity: βᾶπτισμα ἔχω βαπτισθῆναι, καὶ πῶς συνέχομαι ἕως ὅτου τελεσθῆ. But even if συνέχομαι were to be rendered psychologically as "afflicted" (which itself is doubtful; cf. *RSV* "constrained"), Luke does not say that the συνοχή is *because* of the passion, but that it is *until* the passion is completed. Hence the συνοχή applies not to the passion itself, but to Jesus' ministry prior to the passion. Read in the context of 12:49, the verse signifies Jesus' longing to fulfill his mission in Jerusalem.

Given this understanding of Jesus' calmness in the face of his death, 22:43–44 appears to be theologically intrusive in its context. In all of Luke's passion narrative, only here is Jesus portrayed as out of control; only here does he fail to approach his fate with calm assurance.

Lyder Brun took an entirely different approach to establishing the intrinsic probability of 22:43–44. In an analysis of Luke's redactional technique, Brun came to the following conclusion: "Lc in der Leidensgeschichte sonst nirgends die Darstellung des Mc ohne irgendwelchen Ersatz kürzt."³² On the basis of this redactional pattern, Brun contended that 22:43–44 compensates for the loss of Mark 14:33–34.³³ If vv. 43–44 were not original to Luke, the scene on the Mount of Olives would be unique in his passion narrative; here alone would the evangelist have failed to substitute his own material for the material deleted from Mark.

Many scholars have found Brun's case convincing, but his argument merits closer attention. In the first place, the word *Ersatz* ("substitution") is somewhat misleading; although Brun mentions several additions that substitute for specific passages omitted from Mark,

³² L. Brun, "Engel und Blutschweiss," 273.

³³ *Ibid.*, 275–76.

most of his examples depict “substitution” only in a very loose sense, i.e., the material added often does not correspond in its content to the material omitted. For example, Luke made a number of additions to Mark’s arrest scene (Luke 22:47–53), but none corresponds materially to the account of the fleeing young man (Mark 14:51–52), which he omitted. Thus, the omission of Jesus’ agony in Mark 14:33–34 does not in itself require the addition of a corresponding portrayal.

Quite apart from the issue of “substitution,” the real force of Brun’s argument lies in his observation that in every other pericope of the passion narrative Luke adds his own material to put his peculiar stamp upon the story. But Luke has also placed his stamp upon the Mount of Olives scene (22:39–46) aside from the addition of vv. 43–44. This he has done by making at least three kinds of changes: (1) Luke adds several phrases—κατὰ τὸ ἔθος (v. 39a); ἠκολούθησαν δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ μαθηταί (v. 39b); γενόμενος δὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ τόπου (v. 40a); εἰ βούλει (v. 42); ἀναστὰς ἀπὸ τῆς προσευχῆς (v. 45a); and ἀπὸ τῆς λῆπης (v. 45b); (2) he omits much of the Marcan story (Mark 14:33–34, 35b, 37c, 38b–42); (3) he changes the wording of Mark’s story at several points: e.g., Mark 14:32, χωρίον οὗ τὸ ὄνομα Γεθσημανί is changed to read τὸ ὄρος τῶν ἐλαιῶν, Luke 22:39. The combination of additions, omissions, and substitutions results in a restructuring of the pericope into a chiasmus (see below). Thus, although Brun is correct in pointing out that here alone in the passion narrative does Luke fail to add larger units of his own material, Luke has made the story distinctively his own by other means. Thus, there is no compelling reason to think that Luke needed to make an addition to his Mount of Olives scene to accomplish his redactional purpose.³⁴

We have argued above that 22:43–44 is theologically intrusive in its context. Now it can be shown that the verses are formally intrusive as well, that they disrupt the otherwise distinct structural pattern of 22:39–46. In past discussions of the text-critical problem of this pericope, inadequate attention has been paid to the following formal observation: When vv. 43–44 are withdrawn from the pericope, a remarkably clear chiastic structure emerges.³⁵ After the intro-

³⁴ The authors wish to thank David R. Adams of Princeton Theological Seminary for his suggestions regarding the two preceding paragraphs.

³⁵ This observation has been made independently by M. Galizzi (Gesù nel

duction (v. 39), the account is bracketed by Jesus' two admonitions to the disciples to pray not to enter into temptation (vv. 40, 46). The key words of both admonitions are identical (προσεύχομαι, εἰσερχομαι, εἰς πειρασμόν). Between these two admonitions, the focus of attention is Jesus and his own prayer. The first half of the chiasmus portrays Jesus leaving the disciples (ἀπεσπάσθη ἀπ' αὐτῶν, v. 41a) and kneeling into the position of prayer (θεῖς τὰ γόνατα, v. 41b). The middle position of the chiasmus consists of Jesus' prayer itself (προσηύχετο λέγων, Πάτερ, εἰ βούλει . . ., vv. 41c–42b). The second half of the chiasmus corresponds exactly to the first: when he finishes, Jesus rises from the position of prayer (ἀναστὰς ἀπὸ τῆς προσευχῆς, v. 45a) and returns to the disciples (ἔλθων πρὸς τοὺς μαθητάς, v. 45b). Thus the chiasmic structure of the passage can be diagrammed as follows:

Introduction—Καὶ ἐξελθὼν ἐπορεύθη κατὰ τὸ ἔθος εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν Ἐλαιῶν· ἠκολούθησαν δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ (22:39).

- A γενόμενος δὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ τόπου εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Προσεύχεσθε μὴ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς πειρασμόν (22:40).
- B καὶ αὐτὸς ἀπεσπάσθη ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὥσει λίθου βολήν (22:41a)
- C καὶ θεῖς τὰ γόνατα (22:41b)
- D προσηύχετο λέγων, Πάτερ, εἰ βούλει παρένεγκε τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἀπ' ἐμοῦ· πλὴν μὴ τὸ θέλημά μου ἀλλὰ τὸ σὸν γινέσθω (22:41c–42).
- C' καὶ ἀναστὰς ἀπὸ τῆς προσευχῆς (22:45a)
- B' ἔλθων πρὸς τοὺς μαθητάς (22:45b)
- A' εὗρεν κοιμωμένους αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς λύπης, καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Τί καθεύδετε; ἀναστάντες προσεύχεσθε ἵνα μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς πειρασμόν (22:45c–46).

It should be clear that vv. 43–44 stand out from this pattern as an appendage, intruding into an otherwise clear and concise chiasmus.

Furthermore, the intrusion redefines the thematic center of the entire pericope. The chiasmic structure serves to focus attention on Jesus' prayer of submission. Notably, Luke typically depicts Jesus in prayer at critical junctures of his life.³⁶ With the addition of the formally intrusive vv. 43–44, however, the focus of attention shifts to

Getsemani [Zurich: Pas, 1972] 137–38), as noted in D. M. Stanley, *Jesus in Gethsemane*, 206, 213.

³⁶ Cf. Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:28; 9:18; 11:1.

Jesus' intense agony and the appearance of the angel. Here the typically Lucan emphasis is pushed into the background while the uncharacteristic elements (see above) assume a dominant position. Hence, Luke's portrayal of Jesus accepting his fate in a quiet minute of prayer has become tainted by a description of his overwhelming grief. This shift of focus lends probability to the judgment already made on transcriptional and theological grounds: these verses were added to the Gospel by someone other than the evangelist himself.

A possible objection to the structural argument may derive from source analysis. If it could be shown that Luke utilized a special source for this passage, it could be further asserted that Luke himself disrupted the chiasmic structure of the source by adding vv. 43–44. While the question concerning the sources of Luke's passion narrative is complex, a good case has been made that Mark was Luke's primary source for the Mount of Olives pericope.³⁷ This would eliminate the objection altogether. But even if a special source were granted, problems would remain. Karl Georg Kuhn, for instance, contended that Luke 22:39–46 came from a special source into which Luke interpolated vv. 43–44. But he could posit this source only by attributing to Luke's stylistic reworking certain other phrases in the pericope: *θεῖς τὰ γόνατα* (v. 41; cf. Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5), *ἀπὸ τῆς λύπης* (v. 45; cf. Luke 21:41, 45), and *ἀναστὰς ἀπὸ τῆς προσευχῆς* (v. 45).³⁸ In this case the chiasmic structure of the final form of the passage must be attributed to Luke himself, which brings us back to the original problem—why Luke would add material that breaks up a structure which he imposed on the pericope. On the other hand, if Luke's source did contain all of vv. 39–42, 45–47 as we have them now, why would Luke have altered this source only by disrupting its structure with two verses that violate his own theological purposes? And why would precisely these two verses be omitted by early and widespread witnesses to the text? Thus even if Luke did use a special source, 22:43–44 can best be understood as an intrusion into his final redaction of the story.

A more weighty objection to the argument of structural intrusion could derive from literary criticism. Is it not possible that Luke wrote

³⁷ E.g., E. Linnemann, *Studien zur Passionsgeschichte* (FRLANT 102; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970) 35–37.

³⁸ K. G. Kuhn, "Jesus in Gethsemane," *EvT* 12 (1952–53) 268–70. Kuhn, however, overlooks the chiasmic structure of the pericope.

the story as it is, with vv. 43–44 breaking up the chiasmic structure? Why does Luke have to follow a set formal pattern? Nils W. Lund points out an analogous structure in Eph 5:28b–33a:³⁹

- A ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἑαυτὸν ἀγαπᾷ (5:28b), [οὐδεὶς γὰρ ποτε τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σάρκα ἐμίσησεν, ἀλλὰ ἐκτρέφει καὶ θάλπει αὐτήν (5:29a),]
- B καθὼς καὶ Χριστὸς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν (5:29b),
- C ὅτι μέλη ἐσμὲν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ (5:30).
- D ἀντὶ τούτου καταλείπει ἄνθρωπος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο σὰρκα μίαν (5:31).
- C' τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν (5:32a),
- B' ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν (5:32b).
- A' πλὴν καὶ ὑμεῖς οἱ καθ' ἕνα ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα οὕτως ἀγαπάτω ὡς ἑαυτόν (5:33a).

In this case, at least, v. 29a (οὐδεὶς . . . αὐτήν) clearly intrudes into the chiasmic structure of the unit. Yet not a single MS omits the line.⁴⁰ Thus one is forced to concede that NT authors could compose chiasmic units with intrusive sentences. Nevertheless, the example from Ephesians does not completely dull the force of the structural argument for excluding 22:43–44. There are noteworthy differences between the structural problems of the two passages. It is significant, for example, that the character of the additions to Ephesians and Luke differs: Eph 5:29a consists of a parenthetical explanation at the fringe of the chiasm made in the context of discourse; Luke 22:43–44 is a substantive addition to a narrative, an addition that shifts the entire center of gravity of the chiasm away from the focal point of the pericope (Jesus' prayer). Furthermore, as has been emphasized already, the Lucan intrusion is questionable on other grounds as well. In the final analysis, of course, the structural argument is not decisive in itself, it must be taken in conjunction with all the other

³⁹ N. W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1942) 198–200. Since in Ephesians μυστήριον refers to God's plan in bringing together Jews and Gentiles into one body (Eph 3:2–7), "C'" and "C" correspond.

⁴⁰ Despite this total lack of MS support, N. W. Lund (*ibid.*) attributes v. 29a to a later scribe. But a conjectural emendation based solely on formal criteria is altogether one-sided and incautious. In the case of Luke 22:43–44, the omission has strong external support; otherwise the longer reading would remain unquestioned.

arguments, the cumulative force of which allows a decision to be made concerning the genuineness of the verses.

Conclusion

We have attempted to survey the issues relevant to the textual problem of Luke 22:43–44. The matter is complex; no one argument yields a definitive solution. Rather, the cumulative force of a group of arguments must be assessed, and even then the critic is left with a probability-judgment. Our conclusion is that the problem is best resolved by considering the verses an interpolation into the text of Luke's Gospel, made sometime before A.D. 160. The following evidence is most important in reaching this conclusion:

(1) External. The verses are lacking in many ancient and widespread witnesses, particularly of the Alexandrian family; they are marked by obeli or asterisks in other witnesses; they are transposed into the Gospel of Matthew by others.

(2) Transcriptional Probability. The early date of the textual alteration lends probability to the theory of an interpolation for doctrinal reasons, probably as anti-docetic polemic.

(3) Intrinsic Probability.

(a) Theology. The portrayal of Jesus in these verses does not accord with the rest of Luke's passion narrative in which Jesus is depicted as emotionally restrained, in control of himself and the situation, facing his death with equanimity.

(b) Structure. These verses are structurally intrusive, breaking into an otherwise clear and concise chiasmus.

Other types of arguments discussed do not lend probability to either side of the debate concerning the genuineness of the verses.

Future work on this problem will include identifying the source of the early interpolation. Jean Duplacy contends that the realism and low christology of the text make a Jewish-Christian milieu a prime candidate (although in the long run Duplacy attributes the verses to Luke).⁴¹ Duplacy may be on the right track; his theory would accord with the anti-docetic, polemical context posited for the

⁴¹ J. Duplacy, "La préhistoire," 84–86.

origin of the interpolation. If continued research confirms this conclusion, valuable light may be shed on another particularly elusive issue: the use and understanding of Luke's Gospel by various Christian sects in the early second century.

JESUS AND THE ADULTERESS¹

The story of Jesus and the Adulteress (John 7:53–8:11) is fraught with historical and literary problems, many of which have seemed insoluble. On only two points is there a scholarly consensus: the passage did not originally form part of the Fourth Gospel,² and it bears a close resemblance to Synoptic, particularly Lukan, traditions about Jesus.³ The arguments for these judgments are overwhelming and do not need to be repeated here. In some respects these unanimous conclusions have themselves brought into sharp focus the thorny problems of the story's textual and pre-literary history:⁴ (1) Textual. Since the oldest and best textual witnesses of the Gospel of John do not contain the passage, how should the allusive references to it from the second and third centuries be evaluated? Did Papias know this story? If so, did he find it in the Gospel according to the Hebrews? Or was it Eusebius, who informs us of Papias's knowledge of this or a similar story, who found it there? What form of the story was known to the author of the Didascalia and his subsequent editor,

¹ Originally published as in *NTS* 34 (1988) 24–44. Used with permission.

² See the commentaries. The fullest discussion is found in Ulrich Becker, *Jesus und die Ehebrecherin* (Berlin: Alfred Topelmann, 1963) 8–74. Helpful summaries of the textual evidence are given by Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971) 219–22; Frederick A. Schilling, 'The Story of Jesus and the Adulteress', *ATR* 37 (1955) 91–106; and Gary M. Burge, 'A Specific Problem in the New Testament Text and Canon: The Woman Caught in Adultery (Jn 7.53–8.11)', *JETS* 27 (1984) 141–8. See further n. 33 below.

³ The oft-repeated assertion that the third Evangelist composed the story is intriguing on stylistic grounds, but has proved untenable in view of the textual history of the passage. This particular issue need not concern us further here. For a full discussion see Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 43–74, and esp. the literature he cites on pp. 68–9. In addition, see Fausto Salvoni, 'Textual Authority for John 7.53–8.11', *ResQ* 4 (1960) 11–15.

⁴ The story is also riddled with exegetical ambiguities and historical enigmas (Had the authorities already tried and condemned this woman, or were they bringing her to Jesus for judgment? What, if anything, did Jesus write on the ground? Was death by stoning the penalty for adultery in first-century Palestine?). Although these questions are not directly germane to our discussion at this point, they will have a bearing on the form-critical evaluation of the story. See below. See further the comments and literature cited by Raymond Brown (*The Gospel According to John* [AB, 29. New York: Doubleday, 1966], 1.332–38), and Rudolf Schnackenburg (*The Gospel According to St. John* [New York: Crossroad, 1982], 1.162–8).

the author of the Apostolic Constitutions? Did Origen know the story? If not, when was it first accepted into the Alexandrian canon?⁵ (2) Preliterary. How should this story be classified form-critically? And in what *Sitz im Leben* of the early church would it have thrived?⁶ Does the story preserve authentic tradition from the life of Jesus?⁷ Scholarship has reached an impasse on these questions because the early evidence is so sparse. Martin Dibelius's famous pronouncement from a different context applies here as well: 'Enlightenment is to be expected not from new hypotheses but only from new discoveries.'⁸

We now have the good fortune to state that a new discovery has been made which may shed considerable light on the textual history and pre-literary form of the *pericope de adultera* (hereafter PA). The new evidence derives from a recently discovered Biblical commentary of Didymus the Blind,⁹ the renowned exegete and educator of fourth-century Alexandria.¹⁰ The value of this new source of knowl-

⁵ On these questions, see the discussion and literature below.

⁶ On these form-critical issues, see below.

⁷ See below.

⁸ *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1926), 1. 55.

⁹ Portions of five OT commentaries of Didymus were discovered in 1941 by soldiers digging out a grotto for use as a munitions depot near Toura, Egypt. The first notice of the Toura discovery was made by O. Guérard, 'Note préliminaire sur les papyrus d'Origène découverts à Toura', *RHR* 131 (1946) 85–108. Shortly thereafter a number of brief appraisals of the find were published: B. Altaner, 'Ein grosser, aufstehen erregender patrologischer Papyrusfund', *TQ* 127 (1947) 332–3; O. Cullmann, 'Die neuesten Papyrusfunde von Origenestexten und gnostischer Schriften', *TZ* 5 (1949) 153–7; J. de Ghellinck, 'Récents découvertes de littérature chrétienne antique', *NRT* 71 (1949) 83–6; E. Klostermann, 'Der Papyrusfund von Tura', *TLZ* 73 (1948) 47–50; H.-Ch. Puech, 'Les nouveaux écrits d'Origène et de Didyme découverts à Toura', *RHPR* 31 (1951) 293–329. The best discussion of the find prior to the publication of any of the texts was by Louis Doutreleau, 'Que savons-nous aujourd'hui des Papyrus de Toura?' *RSR* 43 (1955) 161–93. Doutreleau updated this discussion twelve years later with the assistance of Ludwig Koenen, 'Nouvelle inventaire des papyrus de Toura', *RSR* 55 (1967) 547–64.

¹⁰ Didymus's life, work, and teachings have been the subject of three monographs in modern times: G. Bardy, *Didyme l'Aveugle* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1910); J. Leipoldt, *Didymus der Blinde von Alexandria* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1905); and William J. Gauche, *Didymus the Blind: An Educator of the Fourth Century* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1934). Other helpful sketches include Wolfgang A. Bienert, 'Allegoria' und 'Anagoge' bei Didymos dem Blinden von Alexandrien (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972) 1–31; Louis Doutreleau, ed., *Sur Zacharie. Texte inédit d'après un papyrus de Toura: Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes* (SC 244; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1978) 2.1–128; Bärbel Kramer, 'Didymus von Alexandrien', *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1981) 8.741–6; Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1966), 3.85–100; and Frances Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 83–91.

edge cannot be exaggerated: prior to the discovery of Didymus's writings, no Greek Father before the twelfth century comments on the PA,¹¹ and no Alexandrian text of the NT includes it in the Gospel of John before the ninth century.¹² If Didymus can be shown to have found the passage in his MSS of John, he would thus be the earliest Greek Patristic witness to it by eight centuries, and the earliest Alexandrian witness by five.

Didymus's discussion of the PA comes in the midst of his interpretation of Eccl 7:21–22a, *καί γε εἰς πάντας λόγους, οὓς λαλήσουσιν, μὴ δῶς καρδίαν σου, ὅπως μὴ ἀκούσης τοῦ δούλου σου καταρωμένου σε* ('And do not give your heart to all words which they speak, lest you hear your slave cursing you'). Didymus comments that slave owners should not be upset by slaves who do their work grudgingly and who curse their masters for their heavy burdens. The only ground for judging slaves, i.e. for granting manumission, is whether they do what their masters require, quite apart from the attitude they take toward their masters or their work. Didymus quotes Paul as saying that masters must treat their slaves fairly (Col 4:1), which he understands to mean that a master should regard only a slave's work, not his or her temperament. Didymus then finds further confirmation of his views in the story of Jesus and the adulteress (EcclT 223.6b–13a).¹³

φέρομεν οὖν ⁷ ἐν τισιν εὐαγγελίοις· γυνή, φησίν, κατεκρίθη ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐπὶ ἀμαρτία καὶ ⁸ ἀπεστέλλετο λιθοβοληθῆναι εἰς τὸν τόπον, ὅπου εἰώθει γίνεσθαι. ὁ σωτὴρ, φησίν, ἔω ⁹ ρακῶς αὐτήν καὶ θεωρήσας ὅτι ἔτοιμοὶ εἰσιν πρὸς τὸ λιθοβολῆσαι αὐτήν, τοῖς μέλ ¹⁰ λουσιν αὐτήν καταβαλεῖν λίθοις εἶπεν· ὃς οὐκ ἤμαρτεν, αἰρέτω λίθον καὶ βαλέτω αὐτόν. ¹¹ εἴ τις σύνοιδεν ἑαυτῷ τὸ μὴ ἡμαρτηκέναι, λαβὼν λίθον παισάτω αὐτήν. καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐτόλ ¹² μῆσεν. ἐπιστήσαντες ἑαυτοῖς καὶ γόνοντες, ὅτι καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑπεύθυνοι εἰσίν τισιν, οὐκ ¹³ ἐτόλμησαν καταπταῖσαι ἐκείνην.

This passage can be translated somewhat literally as follows:

¹¹ Cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 220: 'No Greek Father prior to Euthymius Zigabenus (twelfth century) comments on the passage, and Euthymius declares that the accurate copies of the Gospel do not contain it.'

¹² None of the Primary Alexandrian witnesses attests the passage, and of the Secondary Alexandrians, only MS 892 preserves it. On the Alexandrian character of Didymus's Gospel text, see the present writer's *Didymus the Blind and the Text of the Gospels* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1986).

¹³ On the appropriateness of the PA for Didymus's exposition at this point, see below.

We find, therefore, ⁷ in certain gospels [the following story]. A woman, it says, was condemned by the Jews for a sin and ⁸ was being sent to be stoned in the place where that was customary to happen. The saviour, it says, ⁹ when he saw her and observed that they were ready to stone her, said to those ¹⁰ who were about to cast stones, 'He who has not sinned, let him take a stone and cast it.' ¹¹ If anyone is conscious in himself not to have sinned, let him take up a stone and smite her. And no one ¹² dared. Since they knew in themselves and perceived that they themselves were guilty in some things, they did not ¹³ dare to strike her.

The Sources of Didymus's Story

Since one of the pressing questions of our investigation is whether or not Didymus found the PA in his MSS of the Fourth Gospel, our attention must first be directed to his curious introduction of the story. He does not say that the PA occurs in the Gospel of John, nor indeed, in any one Gospel. Rather it is found ἐν τισιν εὐαγγελίοις ('in certain gospels'). What might Didymus mean by this phrase which, in all of his writings, occurs only here?¹⁴

The editor and translator of this portion of Didymus's Ecclesiastes Commentary, Bärbel Krebber, renders the introductory statement as follows: 'Wir finden, z.B., in einigen Handschriften des Evangelien die folgende Geschichte . . .'¹⁵ She observes in a note that 'Die Perikope von der Ehebrecherin steht nur in einem Teil Handschriften des Johannesevangeliums. εὐαγγέλιον bedeutet nicht nur "Evangelium" in unserem Sprachgebrauch, sondern auch allgemein "Abschrift", "Edition", vgl. Lampe s.v. G 2.'¹⁶ Thus Krebber understands ἐν τισιν εὐαγγελίοις to mean that the story occurs in some but not all of Didymus's MSS of the Gospel of John. She assumes Didymus found it there, of course, because all other witnesses attesting the passage locate it in the Fourth Gospel (except f¹³ which at a later date transposed it into Luke).

Although Krebber seems to be generally on the right track, several factors militate against understanding the phrase in precisely this

¹⁴ I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Theodore Brunner of the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae for his helpful assistance in procuring a comprehensive listing of Didymus's use of the word εὐαγγέλιον.

¹⁵ Johannes Kramer and Bärbel Krebber, *Didymos der Blinde, Kommentar zum Ecclesiastes (Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen)*, 16. Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1972) 4.89.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 89, n. 1.

way. First and most obviously, if Didymus had really wanted to state that the story is found ‘in some *manuscripts* of the Gospel’, he could easily have said ἔν τισιν ἀντιγράφοις εὐαγγελίου. ἀντίγραφον (= Handschrift, MS) is a common word and was certainly in Didymus’s vocabulary.¹⁷ Nor is it quite right to say that ἀντίγραφον denotes the same thing as εὐαγγέλιον, as Krebber’s translation suggests. An examination of the examples provided by Lampe shows that εὐαγγέλιον never signifies an ‘edition’ of a Gospel—that is, an attempted restoration of an autograph through the conscientious application of critical principles (which is not the same thing as a MS in any case). ‘Abschrift’ (‘copy’) comes closer to the correct meaning, but does not convey quite the right nuance either. Rather the examples cited by Lampe show that εὐαγγέλιον can refer to a Gospel *book*, i.e. to the book containing a Gospel, rather than to the Gospel itself as a literary work. Thus a εὐαγγέλιον can be placed on the head of a bishop during his consecration (*Const. App.* 8.4.6), hung beside a bed (Chrys. *hom.* 43.4 in *I Cor* [10.405E]), laid on the throne at council meetings (Cyr. *apol. Thds.* [p.83.25]), etc. If this is what Didymus means by εὐαγγέλιον, then he is saying that the PA can be found ‘in certain books which contain Gospels’.¹⁸

Alexandrian Gospel books that preserved the PA would probably have done so in the traditional place in the Fourth Gospel, given the textual history of the passage. And, in fact, there is solid evidence that the PA appeared in Alexandrian texts of John well before its incorporation in the earliest extant MSS.¹⁹ That Didymus found

¹⁷ See the listing in LPGL.

¹⁸ Thus, as was suggested by Paul W. Meyer of Princeton Theological Seminary in a private conversation, Didymus may simply mean that if someone were to go to a Christian library in Alexandria and choose several Gospel books off a shelf, he could find the PA in *some* of these books but not others.

¹⁹ The evidence derives from scholia found in several Syriac MSS of the Gospels (see John Gwynn, *Remnants of the Later Syriac Versions of the Bible* [London: Williams and Norgate, 1909] 1.lxxi–lxxii, 41–2). Although the oldest Syriac versions of John omit the PA, some later Syriac MSS include it either after John 7:52, in the margin, or as an appendix to the entire Gospel. In several of these MSS, ranging from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries, the passage is accompanied by a note claiming that it derived from a certain ‘Abbot Paul’, who found it in Alexandria (Syriac and English translation in Gwynn, 41). The same scholion is independently attested by a thirteenth-century Arabic MS of the Gospels (see G. Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect* [Oxford, 1898] 2.429 ff.). It remains unclear whether this scholion refers to Paul of Tella, the translator of the Syro-Hexaplar of the OT, who was known to have accompanied Thomas Harkel on his journey to Alexandria, or, as is somewhat less likely, the ‘Abbot Paul’ who translated the

it in some of his MSS of John can be established by considering the way the story functions in his exposition of Eccl 7:22. On first reading it is difficult to discern any relationship between the Ecclesiastes text and the story of the adulteress. As already indicated, Didymus interprets Eccl 7:22 to mean that masters must judge their slaves by their actions rather than by their attitudes, i.e. by whether or not they obey, not by whether they do so cheerfully or grudgingly. But the PA, which he adduces in support, scarcely demonstrates this principle. Not only are slaves and masters absent from the account, but the woman is accused for a wrong she actually did commit (not for an attitude she took).

It may be, therefore, that the PA relates to Didymus's exposition in a somewhat more oblique fashion. Didymus is apparently concerned to warn his reader not to sin by inappropriately judging another person, i.e. by judging aspects of another's life that have no bearing on his own. Thus a master should not condemn slaves for their disposition, which is none of his business, but only for their acts of disobedience, which are. Didymus uses the PA, then, to show that since we all are guilty before God, we should not be quick to condemn others, but should react to them only insofar as their actions relate directly to us.

But precisely here is where our problem lies—for the narrative that Didymus paraphrases does not teach this lesson at all. Instead the story shows that sinners *never* have the right to condemn other sinners. Only one who has not sinned can take up a stone to execute

works of Gregory Nazianzus into Syriac on Cyprus (Gwynn, lxxi; Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 15). In either case, the scholion indicates that the PA was found in Alexandrian MSS of John by the early seventh century.

A notably different form of the PA in Syriac is preserved in the *Church History* of Zacharias Scholasticus, the Monophysite Bishop of Mitylene (d. after 536) (Gwynn, *Remnants*, lxxi–lxxii, 46–7; Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 15–16). A Syriac translation of this original Greek composition was expanded and later incorporated into a larger work that still survives. In a portion of this expanded edition, completed in the year 569, the story of Jesus and the adulteress is told with a note that it 'was found in the Gospel of Mara, Bishop of Amid' (Syriac and English translation in Gwynn, *Remnants*, 47). In 525 c.e. this Bishop Mara fled to Alexandria, where he acquired a large library and composed, among other things, a Greek preface to the Fourth Gospel (see K. Ahrens and G. Kruger, *Die sogenannte Kirchengeschichte des Zacharias Rhetor* [Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1899] 155). Thus there can be little doubt that Mara found the PA in the Gospel books of Alexandria in the early sixth century (thus Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 16). If the interpolation was common knowledge by the early sixth century—so that visitors to Alexandria became acquainted with it—would it not have occurred in a much earlier period?

judgment on the sinful woman. In contrast to this view, Didymus asserts that sinners *do* have the right of judgment in certain instances. Sinful masters, for example, are right to refuse the manumission of sinful slaves in judgment for their disobedience.

This incongruity between the point Didymus wants to make with the story of the adulteress and the point conveyed by the story itself suggests that he had found it in its Johannine context. For although the PA does not in itself illustrate Didymus's contention about executing judgment in a righteous manner, the story does convey exactly this message when placed between John chs. 7 and 8. Most scholars account for the otherwise peculiar location of the passage on just these grounds. Although in other respects the story is disruptive of its context—it breaks up Jesus' discourses at the Feast of Tabernacles—scribes apparently inserted it here in order to illustrate the statements about judgment that Jesus makes at the Feast.²⁰ In John 7:24 Jesus says, 'Do not judge according to appearances, but judge a right judgment.' In the immediately preceding context, 'the Jews' have condemned Jesus for healing a man on the Sabbath. To answer this accusation, Jesus employs a common rabbinic principle *qal wa-homer*. Since his opponents approve of a person being circumcised on the Sabbath, they must certainly approve of one having his whole body healed (7:22–23). Jesus' opponents have therefore condemned him 'according to appearances' (he seems to be breaking Sabbath) rather than judging 'a right judgment' (since he does what they also do). Thus Jesus speaks out against hypocritical judgment, i.e. the Jews' condemnation of actions they themselves do or approve of.

The same principle recurs in 7:50–52, where the Pharisees are shown to err in their judgment of Jesus. Here Nicodemus objects that his compatriots are condemning Jesus without giving him due process according to their law. Before Jesus can be condemned, he first must be heard. Since the Pharisees refuse to allow him to make a defense, they are guilty of breaking their own law. Thus again they fall under Jesus' judgment: they are hypocritical in doing what they accuse him of doing (breaking the law) and thus have judged according to appearances rather than rightly.

When read in isolation, the PA does not condemn hypocritical condemnation. It instead prohibits *any* judgment of the sins of another.

²⁰ See, for example, Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1.336.

But in its Johannine context the focus of the story is transformed. Now it serves to illustrate John's opposition to hypocrisy. Here the scribes and Pharisees are prevented from stoning a sinful woman. Although in appearances this woman deserves to die, her condemnation is not just because her judges have committed comparable sins. The woman has, to be sure, committed a grievous offence. But she has not offended the state or her executioners. She has erred against God, who alone can be her judge—and is, in the person of Jesus who extends mercy instead of judgment. Thus the scribes and Pharisees are prevented from executing judgment against a sin which is none of their concern. Such a judgment would be hypocritical, since they too have sinned against God.

This transformation of the original meaning of the story corresponds to what happens when Didymus retells the story. Here too the story itself shows that all judgment is wrong. But, just as happened when the PA was inserted after John 7:52, the story is now used to teach that it is inappropriate to judge *certain kinds* of transgressions. Just as in John, where the Jews are prevented from stoning a woman who had sinned against someone other than themselves, so too in Didymus Christians are urged to refrain from judging others for activities which are not their appropriate concerns. How are we to evaluate the circumstance that in Didymus the PA functions just as it does when inserted after John 7:52? In view of this parallel it would seem easiest to assume what has otherwise seemed probable enough—Didymus found the story in at least some of the copies of the Fourth Gospel located in Alexandria.²¹ His retelling of the story, then, would be the earliest evidence of its acceptance into the Gospel of John by Alexandrian scribes.²²

²¹ To the best of our knowledge, Didymus never left his home city of Alexandria even as an adult. Thus all MSS of John at his disposal were necessarily Alexandrian MSS. See the literature cited above, n. 10.

²² Becker (*Ehebrecherin*, 119–24) argues that Origen had known the story a century and a half earlier, but only from non-canonical traditions. It is clear that Origen did not consider the PA to be part of the Fourth Gospel, since in his commentary on John he moves directly from 7:52 to 8:12 without a break in his exposition. But Becker finds it significant that in his Comm. on Rom. 7.2b Origen cites the penalty for adultery as death by stoning. Neither the OT nor the Mishnah (codified some years before Origen) specifies stoning as the mode of execution for adultery. So, in the opinion of Becker, Origen must have had some other authority for his statement, presumably the PA.

This is obviously a very slim argument. For one thing, it has been convincingly demonstrated that death by stoning *was* the normal penalty for adultery among

At the same time, it cannot be overlooked that Didymus does not classify the story as Johannine, nor does he suggest that it is canonical Scripture.²³ The entire preceding discussion has operated on the assumption that ἔν τισιν εὐαγγελίοις means ‘in certain Gospel books’. Is it possible, without retracting that assumption, to take Didymus somewhat more literally and ask whether he actually found this story in different Gospels (one of which must have been John) contained in these books? It is not likely, of course, that the story was present in any of the other canonical Gospels current in Alexandria. It is true that several MSS place the story in Luke; notably MSS of f¹³ take the logical step of placing it after Luke 21:38, where it fits more closely into its context than after John 7:52.²⁴ But these MSS are much later than Didymus and are not Alexandrian. Furthermore, as will be discussed more fully below, virtually all of the Lukan features of the passage that would prompt a Lukan placement are absent from Didymus’s form of the story.²⁵ Since the story never occurs in either of the other canonical Gospels, one must consider the possibility that Didymus found it in one that was not canonical.

According to the earliest available traditions, the only other Gospel said to contain the PA is the Gospel according to the Hebrews.²⁶

Jews, at least during NT times. On this see J. Blinzler, ‘Die Strafe für Ehebruch in Bibel und Halacha. Zur Auslegung von Joh viii, 5’, *NTS* 4 (1957–8) 32–57; J. Duncan Derrett, ‘Law in the New Testament: The Story of the Woman Taken in Adultery’, *NTS* 10 (1963–4) 1–26. And even if Origen was not aware of first-century practices, it could easily be argued that he simply assumed stoning was implied in Deut 22:22, either because that was the traditional means of execution among the Jews or, even more likely, because other sexual offences in the context of Deut 22 are specifically punishable by stoning (cf. 22:13–21!). Thus Origen’s Romans Commentary provides no grounds for assuming that he knew the PA.

For a convincing demonstration that Origen’s *Homily on Jer* xvi, 5 also does not attest his knowledge of the PA, see Samuel Läuchli, ‘Eine alte Spur von Joh 8:1–1?’ *TZ* 6 (1950) 151.

²³ On the method of discerning canonical Scripture in the works of Didymus, see my article, ‘The New Testament Canon of Didymus the Blind’, *VC* 37 (1983) 1–21.

²⁴ See the literature cited above, n. 3.

²⁵ See n. 61 below.

²⁶ At a much later period, in a scholion from an eleventh-century MS of the Gospels (MS 1006), the PA is said to have been derived from the Gospel of Thomas: τὸ κεφάλαιον τοῦτο τοῦ θῶμαν εὐαγγέλιον ἐστίν (for the text, see Kirsopp Lake, *Texts from Mount Athos* [*Studia biblica et ecclesiastica*, 5/2. Oxford, 1903] 173). We now know of two ‘Gospels of Thomas’—one the so-called infancy Gospel, which records incidents from Jesus’ childhood, the other the Gnostic record of Jesus’ sayings discovered at Nag Hammadi. Neither Gospel, of course, contains the PA, nor, given their emphases and literary character, could they have. Becker’s claim (*Ehebrecherin*,

The reference occurs in Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, in the context of a discussion of the writings of the second-century church Father Papias (E.H. III, 39). This chapter has generated considerable scholarly debate, particularly with respect to Papias's statements concerning the apostolic origins of Matthew and Mark. At the end of the passage comes an equally enigmatic comment:

ἐκτίθεται δὲ καὶ ἄλλην ἱστορίαν περὶ γυναικὸς ἐπὶ πολλαῖς ἀμαρτίαις διαβληθείσης ἐπὶ τοῦ κυρίου, ἣν τὸ καθ' Ἑβραίου εὐαγγέλιον περιέχει.

And he [Papias] also sets forth another story concerning a woman who was accused of many sins before the Lord, which the Gospel according to the Hebrews contains.

Eusebius does not recount this story, which he found in Papias's work *Expositions of the Lord's Sayings*. But since he labels it ἄλλην ἱστορίαν ('another story'), there can be no doubt that Papias did not simply allude to an already familiar story but narrated the account in full. Despite the strikingly allusive character of Eusebius's reference to the story, it is normally assumed that he refers here to the PA. At least that was the understanding of Eusebius's contemporary and translator, Rufinus.²⁷ And the assumption has recently been supported by the detailed arguments of U. Becker.²⁸ All the same, it is not clear from Eusebius's statement whether Papias had found the story in the Gospel according to the Hebrews or whether Eusebius himself had. While the syntax of the sentence allows for either possibility, the context suggests that it was Eusebius who made the identification. In this chapter Eusebius relates some of the stories that Papias had learned from the 'elders'—as he calls the friends of Jesus' earthly disciples. Papias is said to prefer the 'living voice' of oral tradition (i.e. his living authorities) to the 'books' about Jesus available to him (E.H. III, 39, 4). Among the stories he learned from the elders are the accounts of how Mark and Matthew came to write their Gospels. Papias's forthright preference of living tradition to Christian writings suggests that his story of Jesus and the adulteress derived from the reports of the 'elders' rather than from a written

145–50) that at one time or another the Nag Hammadi GTh probably did contain the story must be considered nothing short of remarkable.

²⁷ As is frequently noted, Rufinus's translation of Eusebius, E.H. III, 39, 17 specifically labels the woman an adulteress: 'simul et historiam quandam subiungit de muliere adultera, quae accusata est a Judais apud dominum . . .'.

²⁸ Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 93–9.

Gospel. This view is corroborated by the circumstance that Eusebius otherwise relates only those traditions that Papias had drawn from such oral sources. Thus Papias probably learned the story of Jesus and the adulteress through early Christian tradents, and Eusebius recognized it as the story found in the Gospel according to the Hebrews.²⁹

If the Gospel according to the Hebrews contained the story of Jesus and the adulteress, is it possible that Didymus had read the story there and identified it with the account found in some MSS of John (much as Eusebius had identified it with the story of Papias's *Expositions*)? For some time now it has been recognized that the Gospel according to the Hebrews was known and used in Alexandria. It is quoted by both Clement of Alexandria and Origen,³⁰ and seems to have preserved semi-Gnostic traditions that coincide rather well with theological developments readily located in Alexandria.³¹ One could naturally assume, then, that Didymus used the Gospel according to the Hebrews as one of his sources for the PA.

This assumption can now be accepted as probable on the basis of one final piece of evidence: Didymus elsewhere indicates that he has in fact read this non-canonical Gospel and accepted some of its

²⁹ The specificity of Eusebius's reference shows that he is not merely claiming to have heard of the PA from non-canonical Jewish-Christian traditions, as is sometimes asserted (e.g., Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 100–1). Wherever else Eusebius mentions the Gospel according to the Hebrews, he clearly has in mind a distinct literary work. Thus he states that this Gospel is not canonical, although Jewish Christians take a particular delight in it (E.H. III, 25, 5); it is the only Gospel used by the Ebionites (E.H. III, 27, 4); and Hegesippus used it along with other Jewish traditions, which unlike the Gospel, were not written (E.H. IV, 22, 8).

³⁰ Clem. Alex. *Strom.* II, ix, 45; V, xiv, 96; Origen, *Comm. on Jn.* II, 12; *Hom. on Jer.* XV, 4.

³¹ See P. Vielhauer, 'Jewish-Christian Gospels', in Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 1.163. While the problem of differentiating the Jewish-Christian Gospels has proved notoriously difficult, the best evidence suggests that three existed at a fairly early date: the Gospel of the Nazarenes, the Gospel of the Ebionites, and the Gospel of the Hebrews (*ibid.*, 118–38). Of these, the third is most readily assigned to Alexandria on precisely the grounds just enumerated: it is quoted by early Alexandrian sources and appears to preserve theological views amenable to an Alexandrian environment (*ibid.*, 162–3). Thus Walter Bauer's conjecture of more than half a century ago still has much to commend it: the title of this work served to differentiate it from a competing Gospel also known to have existed in Alexandria, the Gospel of the Egyptians. These titles, then, did not signify the languages in which the two Gospels were written, but rather their respective audiences: one was used by the Alexandrian Jews, the other by native Egyptians. *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971) 50–3.

traditions as historically reliable. In his commentary on the Psalms Didymus discusses the superscription of Ps 33 (LXX; Hebrew, Ps 34), which mentions that David ‘feigned madness before Abimelech’ (PsT 184.3–4). In order to reconcile this statement with I Sam 21:10–15, where David acts insane before Achish, king of Gath, Didymus argues that Achish and Abimelech designate the same person. He appeals to other Biblical traditions of double names—Moses’ father-in-law was sometimes called Jethro, sometimes Reuel, and Thomas was also called Didymus. Then he notes that the apostle Matthew appears to be named Levi in Luke’s Gospel (Luke 5:27, 29). But Didymus concludes that Levi was actually a different person, that he was, in fact, the man called Matthias chosen to replace Judas Iscariot after Jesus’ ascension. This identification, Didymus states, is supported by the Gospel according to the Hebrews: ἐν τῷ καθ’ Ἑβραίους εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦτο θάινεται (PsT 184.10).

Thus Didymus had read the Alexandrian Gospel according to the Hebrews and considered it a reliable source (although he does not quote it as Scripture).³² Since we know on other grounds that this Gospel also contained an account of Jesus and the adulteress, we are now in a position to draw conclusions about Didymus’s sources for his retelling of the story. When he says that it is found ‘in certain Gospels’, he may mean, as argued previously, that he found it in some books that contain Gospels. Or more literally he may mean that it occurs in more than one of the Gospels at his disposal. In either case, he must mean that he knew the story from some copies of the Gospel of John and from the Gospel according to the Hebrews. This is not to say that these two sources preserved identical versions of the story. Quite the contrary, as we will see, there are reasons to think that these Gospels transmitted the PA in radically different forms.

The Form and Content of Didymus’s Story

Now that we are reasonably certain about the sources of Didymus’s account of Jesus and the adulteress, we are in a position to ask whether his version of the story can help us unravel the complexities of its pre-literary and textual history. We are perfectly justified

³² See n. 23 above.

in pursuing this question since Didymus's paraphrase of the PA occurs prior to the first extant instance of its incorporation in the Fourth Gospel (5th c., MS D). Thus what we want to know is what Didymus's paraphrase can tell us about the form and content of the story found in his immediate source (i.e., the Gospel he draws upon for this particular retelling) and what, in turn, the form and content of his source can reveal about the character of the story before it was written down.

An inroad into this issue is provided by an important formal observation: in the course of his exposition Didymus makes two direct quotations of his source (EccIT 223.6b–13). His story begins (11.6b–10a) with a simple description of the setting of Jesus' confrontation with the woman's accusers. At this point he appears to be simply paraphrasing his source. But in the second half of his account (11.10b–13a) Didymus quotes and then expounds two sentences of his source (ὅς οὐκ ἤμαρτεν, αἰρέτω λίθον καὶ βαλέτω αὐτόν, 'He who has not sinned, let him take a stone and cast it'; and καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐτόλμησεν, 'And no one dared'). That these are deliberate citations is evident from the repetitions found in the succeeding lines, lines which seem curiously redundant until it is realized that Didymus is simply providing interpretive paraphrases of material he has just quoted. Thus after he cites Jesus' challenge to the woman's accusers, ὅς οὐκ ἤμαρτεν, αἰρέτω λίθον καὶ βαλέτω αὐτόν, Didymus expounds as follows: εἴ τις σύννοιδεν ἑαυτῷ τὸ μὴ ἡμαρτηκέσαι, λαβὼν λίθον παισάτω αὐτήν, 'If anyone is conscious in himself not to have sinned, let him take a stone and smite her.' This exposition expands the direct quotation of Didymus's source: the use of synonyms and cognates cannot be overlooked (ὄς/τις; οὐκ/μή; ἤμαρτεν/ἡμαρτηκέσαι; αἰρέτω λίθον/λαβὼν λίθον). At the same time, Didymus's paraphrase is not a simple repetition. In it he heightens the sense of the accusers' own guilt and thus their unworthiness of executing judgment (εἴ τις σύννοιδεν ἑαυτῷ, 'if anyone is conscious in himself . . .') and he personalizes the action they are about to undertake (παισάτω αὐτήν, 'smite her' for βαλέτω αὐτόν, 'cast it'). Didymus clearly employs the same technique of quotation-exposition in 11.11b–13 as well. καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐτόλμησεν, 'and no one dared' must represent a citation of his source, since the next line repeats the idea, expanding it once again along psychological lines, and actually repeating *τολμάω* as the main verb.

Once it is accepted that Didymus preserves intact two key statements of his source, new possibilities open up for understanding the

history of the PA in its pre-Johannine tradition. For in no other account of the PA is Jesus' challenge to the Jewish authorities worded in this way,³³ and in no extant version of the story does the episode end with the simple declaration that 'no one dared'.³⁴ This then is the first clue that Didymus knew two different versions of the story: one that has survived in the MS tradition of the Fourth Gospel and one that has otherwise perished, presumably from the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

A closer examination of other details of Didymus's account confirms this initial suspicion. As could perhaps be expected, Didymus does not give an opening statement regarding the time or setting of the event (cf. John 7:53–8:2). In his version, the antagonists are simply 'the Jews' rather than the 'scribes and Pharisees' (John 8:3). The woman is not accused of adultery, but, as in some MSS of John 8:3, is simply guilty of a 'sin'.³⁵ This woman is not merely deserving of death here, as in the traditional story: she has already been tried and sentenced (κατεκρίθη) and has been brought out to the place of execution to be stoned. Thus this story is not about a legal 'trap' set for Jesus by his opponents while he teaches in the Temple. Instead, Jesus happens to witness the beginning stages of an execution and, unsolicited, interposes himself in the proceedings ('seeing her and perceiving that they were ready to stone her, to those about to cast stones he said . . .'). Jesus intervenes by crying out to the judges that they must consider their own sinful lives before executing judgment ('Let the one who has not sinned take a stone and

³³ For an exhaustive analysis of the textual traditions of the PA, see Hermann von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments in ihrer ältesten erreichbaren Textgestalt hergestellt auf Grund ihrer Textgeschichte* (Berlin: Alexander Duncker, 1902) 1.486–524. A more recent treatment of the MS tradition is given by Kurt Aland, *Studien zur Überlieferung des Neuen Testaments und seines Textes* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967) 39–46. An extensive critical apparatus can be found in Kurt Aland, ed., *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* (11th ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1976) 325. In regard to John 8:7, most MSS read Jesus' challenge as ὁ ἀναμάρτητος ὑμῶν πρῶτος ἐπ' αὐτήν βαλέτω λίθον (with some variation in word order in the second part of the clause, and some disagreement over the presence of the article before λίθον and the case of αὐτήν). Contrast Didymus, ὃς οὐκ ἡμαρτεν, αἰρέτω λίθον καὶ βαλέτω αὐτήν.

³⁴ Although the MSS preserve numerous variations in John 8:9, in every instance the Jewish antagonists are portrayed as leaving Jesus and the woman.

³⁵ Thus for γυναῖκα ἐπὶ (or ἐν) μοιχείᾳ in the majority of MSS, D and d read ἐπὶ ἁμαρτία γυναῖκα and MS 1071 reads γυναῖκα ἐπὶ ἁμαρτία. It should be noted, however, that in all MSS of Jn 8:4 the sin is specified as adultery, whereas here it is not.

cast it'). Jesus' words have their desired effect; no one dares carry out the sentence.

Particularly striking here is the complete omission of the material found in John 8:6b, 8–11. There is no mention at all of Jesus' conversation with the woman, a conversation which brings the Johannine passage to a fitting close.³⁶ Furthermore, the familiar novelistic touches of the traditional story are absent—Jesus' initial silence and his subsequent writing on the ground, the accusers' leaving the scene, beginning with the elders. It is interesting to note that these very features are frequently pointed to either as later embellishments³⁷ or as clear indications of the story's inauthenticity.³⁸ Is it possible that Didymus preserves an older version of the PA than that attested by the MS tradition of the Fourth Gospel?

To pursue such a hypothesis it may be instructive to consider the only other exposition of the PA in a source that predates its incorporation into an extant MS of John: the *Didascalia Apostolorum*. The *Didascalia* was written in Syria, probably at the beginning of the third century.³⁹ Although the original Greek text is lost, a fairly loose Syriac and a fairly literal but fragmentary Latin translation have survived.⁴⁰ And much of the original has been preserved in an expanded and frequently modified form in the first six books of the *Apostolic Constitutions* (ca. 380 C.E.).

In an exhortation to Christian bishops to receive penitent sinners back into their flock, the author of the *Didascalia* writes:

But if you do not receive him who repents, because you are without mercy, you shall sin against the Lord God. For you do not obey our Saviour and our God, to do as even He did with her who had sinned, whom the elders placed before Him, leaving the judgement in His hands, and departed. But He, the searcher of hearts, asked her and said to her: 'Have the elders condemned you, my daughter?' She says to him: 'Nay, Lord.' And he said unto her: 'Go, neither do I condemn you.' (VIII, ii, 24)⁴¹

³⁶ The conclusion is particularly apt in its Johannine context as an illustration of John 8:15, where Jesus states 'I judge no one.'

³⁷ Thus Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 82–91.

³⁸ Thus Hans Freiherr von Campenhausen, 'Zur Perikope von der Ehebrecherin (Joh 7.53–8.11)', *ZNW* 68 (1977) 164–75.

³⁹ See, e.g. Quasten, *Patrology*, 2.147–52, and Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 124–5, and the literature cited there.

⁴⁰ The Syriac comes from the early part of the fourth century, the Latin from the late.

⁴¹ Translation of the Syriac by A. Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*

Here is a phenomenal contrast indeed. One cannot possibly overlook the radical divergences from the account found in Didymus. The present version of the story is based entirely on the traditional elements which are absent from Didymus, just as the prominent features of Didymus's story are completely lacking here! This observation encourages us to examine more closely the relationship of the Didascalia's account, first with the traditional story and then, in greater detail, with the story found in Didymus.

Again, as might be expected, the Didascalia does not supply a time or setting for the story (contrast John 7:53–8:2). The antagonists here are called the 'elders' rather than the 'scribes and Pharisees'. The woman's particular sin is not mentioned, nor have her opponents pronounced judgment upon her. They bring her to Jesus for justice and then leave. No trap is set here for Jesus, not a word is said about execution by stoning, and Jesus does not write on the ground. A particularly glaring omission is Jesus' dialogue with the woman's accusers, his challenge for them to consider their own sins before condemning her, and their shameful departure from the scene. In this version of the story, Jesus speaks only with the woman. This dialogue itself is very much like that in John 8:10–11. Jesus asks the woman whether the elders have condemned her; upon hearing that they have not, he sends her on her way with an exhortation to sin no more. Thus the story told by the Didascalia concerns an incident in which Jesus extends unmerited favour to one guilty of grievous sin.

T. Zahn used some of these differences to argue that the Didascalia preserves an early pre-literary form of the PA, notable especially for its omission of the dialogue between Jesus and the accusers.⁴² This suggestion did not receive widespread acceptance since the limited evidence available to Zahn and his critics made it impossible to determine whether the author of the Didascalia was relying on an independent version of the story or was simply paraphrasing a part of the account amenable to his purpose.⁴³ But now a comparison of

(CSCO, *Scriptores Syri*, vol. 177). A handy synopsis of the Syriac (in German translation), Latin, and Greek is given with a detailed comparison in Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 126–7.

⁴² See his particularly cogent discussion of the PA, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1908) 712–18.

⁴³ Thus Becker (*Ehebrecherin*, 128–30), whose rejoinder is itself open to question, since the dominical injunction, 'Let him who is without sin cast the first stone',

the story from the Didascalia with the story told by Didymus forces one to reconsider Zahn's basic contention.⁴⁴

The truth of the matter is that without the traditional form of the PA as a mediating factor, one would be hard-pressed to identify Didymus's story with that found in the Didascalia. In one a woman is opposed by 'the Jews'; in the other by 'the elders'. In one she has been tried, convicted, and sentenced; in the other she has merely been accused. In one her opponents are preparing to execute her by casting stones; in the other they have left before the trial begins. In one Jesus makes an unsolicited interposition to save the woman's life; in the other he is approached and asked to make a fair judgment. In one Jesus accuses the accusers; in the other he does not address them at all. In one Jesus holds no converse with the woman; in the other he does speak with her, granting her mercy and sending her away with an exhortation to purity. These differences cannot be lightly dismissed: the setting and action of the stories differ entirely, and each version narrates exclusively an episode omitted by the other.⁴⁵

The Early Forms of the PA

Is it possible that Didymus and the Didascalia actually preserve two originally distinct stories⁴⁶ which were conflated into the traditional

seems particularly apt to the Didascalia's exhortation to bishops to be merciful in light of the Lord's own example, making it hard to explain its omission had it been known to the author.

⁴⁴ Without, however, committing ourselves to the particulars of Zahn's reconstruction. On the basis of his more limited evidence, Zahn concluded that the PA survived in two independent streams of tradition: one stemming from Palestinian Jewish-Christians, later incorporated into the Gospel according to the Hebrews and used by the author of the Didascalia, the other deriving ultimately from Jesus' own disciples, circulated in Asia Minor, taken up by Papias in his *Expositions*, and from there into the MS tradition of the Fourth Gospel. As will be seen, our reconstruction of the prehistory of the PA differs at significant points.

⁴⁵ These stark contrasts do not, of course, mean that the stories are *totally* dissimilar. Both concern Jesus' act of mercy towards a sinful woman in the face of the Jewish system of justice. But this mutual interest is of the broad-based kind that would cause the stories to be associated in the common mind, as frequently happens, for example, with the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke. The general similarity of the stories must not blind us to their vast differences at virtually every point. It is worth pointing out that a strikingly similar confusion of independent stories occurred in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' anointing in Bethany. See Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 1.449–54 and the literature cited there.

⁴⁶ It should be noted, in this regard, that on form-critical grounds the version

version of the PA only after they had circulated independently in different Christian communities?⁴⁷ Such a hypothesis would go a long way toward explaining some of the passage's previously insoluble enigmas. Scholars have been unable to determine, for example, whether in the traditional story the woman had been condemned already by the Jewish authorities (in Didymus's version she has, in the Didascalía she has not).⁴⁸ There is uncertainty as to the main focus and central apophthegm of the story—is it on the guilty accusers, 'Let the one who is without sin . . .' (as in Didymus) or on the forgiven sinner, 'Neither do I condemn you . . .' (as in the Didascalía)?⁴⁹ Nor is it easy to explain adequately why the passage evidences more

preserved in the Didascalía looks to be at least as ancient as that recounted by Didymus. Here too there is a notable scarcity of novelistic features and here too the story comes to a climax with a striking dominical pronouncement.

⁴⁷ Several readers of an earlier draft of this article have proposed that while Didymus evidences a different version of the PA from that found in the MS tradition of the Fourth Gospel, the Didascalía simply contains a paraphrase of this more familiar account. Although this proposal is plausible, three points must constantly be borne in mind: (1) There is no independent evidence which suggests that the familiar story even *existed* at such an early date. This counter proposal, therefore, is not inherently more plausible than that being advocated here. (2) The stories in Didymus and the Didascalía are absolutely unique *in terms of content*. The counter proposal has to explain this circumstance as a matter of sheer coincidence, which seems to me unlikely in the extreme. (3) The counter proposal cannot at all explain how the passage's famous enigmas came into existence, as discussed below.

⁴⁸ J. Jeremias, e.g., argues that she had been condemned ('Zur Geschichtlichkeit der Verhörs Jesu vor dem Hohen Rat', *ZNW* 43 [1950–1] 148–50), while most commentators think not (see, e.g., Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 1.337 and Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2.164).

⁴⁹ Thus most form critics categorize the passage as a controversy dialogue, but acknowledge that it represents a 'hybrid form'. It is striking that Dibelius and Bultmann disagreed on the paradigmatic core of the story. Dibelius found the focus of the passage in v. 11, which represented for him an elaboration of the original paradigm (*From Tradition to Gospel* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965] 98). Bultmann, on the other hand, saw the climax in the apophthegm of v. 7, and concluded that Jesus' dialogue with the adulteress was novelistic and secondary (*History of the Synoptic Tradition* [New York: Harper and Row, 1963] 63). Becker concurs with this judgment, but concedes the problem created by the 'addition' of vv. 8–11:

Auffällig deshalb, weil unser Streitgespräch auf diese Weise eigentlich zwei Höhepunkte erhält: Nach der das Gespräch mit den Gegnern abschliessenden Antwort Jesu in v. 7 folgt erneut ein Gespräch, nun mit der Ehebrecherin, das wiederum in einem Wort Jesu seinen Höhepunkt und Abschluss findet (v. 11). (Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 88).

Schnackenburg, on the other hand, refuses to classify the PA as a controversy dialogue at all (*The Gospel According to St. John*, 2.168–9). Here there is no condemnation of Jesus or his disciples for their questionable behaviour (as in the controversies of Mark 2:1–3:5) nor is there a controversial matter of doctrine which Jesus resolves by stating a general principle (as in Mark 10:1–45; 12:13–37). The PA

textual corruption than any text of comparable length in the entire NT.⁵⁰ If the story was originally two different stories with different situations, different focal points, different apophthegms, and different textual histories, one would naturally expect their later combination to produce just such ambiguities and complexities.⁵¹

In pursuing our hypothesis a step further, certain form-critical questions should be addressed: Is it possible to reconstruct these two independent stories more accurately? How should they be classified form-critically? And is it possible that either of them represents an authentic episode from the life of Jesus?

As already suggested, Didymus's story must represent the form of the PA preserved in the Gospel of Hebrews.⁵² This story was not a controversy dialogue, as such stories are normally conceived. Schnackenburg's comments on the Johannine version of the story are even more appropriate here—Jesus is not questioned for his (or his dis-

does not focus on a controversy at all, in the normal sense, but rather on a concrete situation of a sinful woman and God's reaction to her through Jesus. Hence Schnackenburg classifies the story as a biographical apophthegm and sees it functioning in a catechetical context as a paradigm for Christian attitudes toward those within the community who have suffered ethical lapses. Thus while the concluding dialogue may seem awkward, in Schnackenburg's opinion, it does fit with the rest of the story.

Schnackenburg's statement of his general frustration with the form-critical classification of the PA is instructive for our purposes here: 'Possibly our schematic form-critical categories are too rigid for this type of material in the gospel tradition' (*ibid.*, 169). See n. 51 below.

⁵⁰ It is normally assumed that the widespread discrepancies derive from the story's inordinately long circulation in the oral tradition, where it failed to achieve a fixed verbal form. The numerous variants generated and perpetuated during its oral history would have continued to exert their influence when the story had achieved relative fixity in its written form. This line of argument is on the right track, but it does not explain why this particular story evidences so much greater variation than other late interpolations into the text of the NT (the last twelve verses of Mark, e.g., which must have had a comparable oral history, evidence far less corruption). If, on the other hand, our present theory is correct and the PA represents three textual histories rather than one (see below), then the relatively greater preponderance of textual divergence is more readily explicable.

⁵¹ The conflated story, then, *would* be a 'hybrid' (see n. 49 above), but in a radically different sense than normally supposed. Instead of representing an original story with secondary expansions, the PA would comprise two different stories, each with unique formal characteristics, combined into one. Thus Bultmann, et al., are right to see a controversy dialogue here. But the striking irony is that v. 7 does not belong to that dialogue, and the controversy is resolved by the apophthegm of v. 11! Similarly Schnackenburg is justified in seeing a biographical apophthegm here. But this apophthegm climaxes in v. 7!

⁵² See above.

ciples') conduct, nor is he asked to resolve a controversial doctrinal dispute. Jesus, in fact, is not approached at all. In contrast with the Synoptic controversy dialogues, Jesus approaches the Jewish authorities and himself initiates a controversy. Even less than in its Johannine form is this story concerned with a controversial principle of conduct or a point of doctrine *per se*. Instead it represents a concrete episode in which Jesus demonstrates the love of God and his mercy towards a sinner. The story, then, is comparable to a biographical apophthegm that instructs, not by advancing a generalized principle, but by portraying a concrete action on the part of Jesus.⁵³ Thus the focus is not on Jesus' controversy but on the proper conduct toward a sinner by those armed with a Scriptural warrant for judgment.

In terms of *Sitz im Leben*, a story of this sort would have circulated in Jewish-Christian circles struggling with the issue of the continuing relevance of Torah in the life of the Christian community. Materially the story finds its closest parallels in the antitheses of Matthew, where the Mosaic Law is carried to its logical extreme, thereby, in effect, abrogating it ('You have heard it said to you "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," but I say to you, "Turn the other cheek"'). So too here, Jesus' intervention in a Jewish execution shows that the right to condemn another for sin belongs to God alone, since Moses' call for righteous judgment presupposes a righteous judge. Thus, in terms of its specific content, the story illustrates another Matthean principle, 'Judge not that you be not judged.' It is no accident that later in such communities, penance—a system of self-judgment before God—came to replace execution as the means for dealing with serious infractions.⁵⁴

Despite its resemblances to certain traditions found in the Synoptic Gospels, this account does not bear the marks of historical authenticity.

⁵³ See n. 49 above. On the category of biographical apophthegm more generally, see Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 55–61.

⁵⁴ Harald Riesenfeld is no doubt correct that the PA came to be suppressed by churches that wanted to emphasize the need for penance for grievous sins ('The Pericope de adultera in the Early Christian Tradition', in *The Gospel Tradition* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970] 95–110). But this suppression dates after the turn of the first century and is understandable only in a context where the Mosaic Law is no longer considered applicable by the Christian community. The ancient story we have posited here predates that context and, in fact, presupposes a community which is just now realizing that the prescriptions of Torah no longer apply to the contemporary situation. Only after this issue is resolved does the PA prove potentially embarrassing for Christians who take sin seriously.

The scene appears contrived and Jesus' words have an unrealistically immediate and striking effect.⁵⁵ The narrative may well have formed itself around an early apophthegm in Jewish Christian communities in the way classically described by the early form critics.⁵⁶

Our second hypothetical story is by far the more interesting and, in contrast to the first, has a decided air of authenticity. As we will see, this story must have circulated among Christians in Syria and Asia Minor, where Papias and the author of the *Didascalia* both heard it. The story can be tentatively reconstructed as follows.⁵⁷ The Jewish authorities have caught a woman in committing a grievous sin (adultery?). But rather than put her on trial themselves, they see in her predicament an opportunity to discredit Jesus before the crowds. They bring the woman before him publicly, perhaps as he teaches in the Temple, and set a legal trap for him. The woman has committed a sin for which the Torah prescribes execution by stoning, and Jesus must pronounce judgment. Will he remain consistent with his own teaching by urging them to be lenient? If so, he can be accused of denying the validity of the Law of Moses, the final authority of all Jewish life and practice. Or will Jesus agree to her execution and thereby lose face before the crowd to which he has been preaching the love and mercy of God toward sinners? Jesus sees the trap. Stooping down he draws in the dust, considering his options. Suddenly an obvious solution presents itself, a way to escape this ridiculous trap and turn the tables on his Jewish opponents. Looking up he asks the accused woman, 'Has any one of these authorities condemned you?' The woman truthfully responds, 'No lord, they have not.' (The authorities had brought her to *Jesus* for judgment and so had *not* officially condemned her.) Jesus' way is now clear: 'If these men have not condemned you, then neither do I. Go and sin no more!'

Unlike our first story, this one bears a close resemblance to the controversy dialogues of the Synoptic traditions. The focus of attention is on a controversy between Jesus and Jewish teachers of the Law who take exception to his implicit devaluation of the Mosaic

⁵⁵ See the criticisms of von Campenhausen on these aspects of the Johannine story. 'Zur Perikope', 164–75.

⁵⁶ See Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 39–69 (esp. 61–9).

⁵⁷ This reconstruction is based on two sources of evidence: (1) the story loosely paraphrased by the author of the *Didascalia*, and (2) components of the traditional version of the PA that could not have derived from the story attested by Didymus.

tradition (cf. Mark 2:23–28). As in the story of the tribute money (Mark 12:12–17) Jesus' opponents set a trap for him. Only by making a totally unexpected and clever response to their question is Jesus able to escape. Furthermore, as in some of the oldest Synoptic traditions, Jesus takes the side of a sinner against the Jewish authorities (cf. Mark 2:15–17; Luke 7:36–50), and does so despite having to contravene the authority of the Torah (or at least of Torah as traditionally understood, cf. Mark 7:1–15).

This story appears to be very ancient and has as good a claim to authenticity as any of its Synoptic parallels. On the one hand, as just seen, it coincides both formally and materially with traditions commonly judged to be very ancient on other grounds.⁵⁸ On the other hand, it is difficult to see how a story that teaches absolute and free pardon of a heinous sin could have been formulated late in the Christian tradition.⁵⁹ As is well known, penance very early became an overriding emphasis in ecclesiastical discipline (see, e.g., 2 Cor 7:8–10; 12:21; Acts 5:1–11; 8:22). In the present story, however, the adulteress is freely pardoned and sent on her way. Since forgiveness without previous remorse or repentance can scarcely be attributed to the NT church, the story of the freely forgiven adulteress may well be thought to ante-date the earliest writings of the NT.

In this connection it is worth noting that this is the story Papias would have related in his *Expositions of the Sayings of the Lord*. It has already been pointed out that Eusebius makes only a glancing reference to this story. But his synopsis speaks of 'a woman who was accused of many sins before the Lord'. Papias, then, tells the story

⁵⁸ The closest parallel, of course, is the controversy over the tribute money (Mark 12:13–17). It is worth pointing out, in this connection, that the 'trap' set for Jesus in our reconstructed story could easily be construed in political rather than religious terms. As is sometimes suggested for the Johannine form of the story, the Jewish leaders may want Jesus to (a) agree that the woman must be put to death, and thereby incur the wrath of Rome (since the Romans reserved the right of judgment in capital offences) or (b) disallow Torah in the face of political realities, and thus be shown to violate the standard of all Jewish faith and practice. If this understanding of the entrapment story is correct, the scene corresponds even more closely to the story of the tribute money, and makes sense only in a pre-70 context.

⁵⁹ The official church position on penance, of course, represents a much later development. But this later doctrine had its roots in the primitive community's understanding of the gravity of sin and the need of godly remorse. See Riesenfeld, 'The Pericope de adultera', 99–105. This circumstance could not be used to argue for the necessary antiquity of our other story since, as we saw, that account had no word to say concerning the plight of the sinner or her future life.

of a woman who was brought to Jesus for judgment.⁶⁰ This theme coincides with the account underlying the Didascalia as we have reconstructed it, but not at all with the other (where the woman is not ‘accused’ at all ‘before the Lord’). The fact that Papias learned this story directly from the ‘elders’, i.e. from friends of Jesus’ own disciples, corroborates our thesis of its great antiquity.⁶¹

Given these two originally independent stories, how does one account for the traditional form of the PA preserved in some MSS of the Fourth Gospel? As already noted, the accounts are not *absolutely* dissimilar. In a general way, both concern a merciful act of Jesus towards a sinful woman confronted by the Jewish system of justice. As happened with other ancient Gospel traditions, this broad-based similarity could have caused some confusion in the transmission of the stories by tradents familiar with them both.⁶² That is to say, even before they were combined into the traditional story later incorporated into John’s Gospel, the stories could have been mutually

⁶⁰ On the juridical implications of διαβλήθεις in the Eusebius quotation, see Becker, *Ehebrecherin*, 96–7.

⁶¹ A supporting piece of evidence deserves mention here. Some researchers have argued for the antiquity of the traditional version of the PA because of its remarkable affinities to certain Lukan traditions about Jesus (see n. 3 above). It is particularly striking that *all* of these Lukan parallels must have derived from this, the second of our two stories. Thus Jesus comes from the ‘Mount of Olives’ (ὄρος τῶν ἑλαιῶν, found three times in both Matthew and Mark, never in John, but five times [including cognates] in Luke), ‘early in the morning’ (ὄρθρου, unique to Luke-Acts [four occurrences, including cognates]). He ‘arrives’ (παραγίνομαι, found once in both Mark and John, three times in Matthew, but twenty-eight times in Luke-Acts) in the Temple, where ‘all the people’ (πᾶς ὁ λαός, found once in Matthew, never in Mark or John, but eleven times in Luke) come to him. The details of this setting fit perfectly in the story preserved in Papias and the Didascalia, but not at all that found in Didymus: in the latter story Jesus is not in the Temple teaching the crowds, but is passing by the place of execution outside the walls of the city. So too the address of Jesus as διδάσκαλε, (found in John only as a translation of its Aramaic equivalent, but occurring six times in Matthew, ten times in Mark, and twelve times in Luke) makes sense only in the Didascalia account where the Jewish leaders question Jesus (in Didymus’s story Jesus cries out *to them*). The leaders’ ulterior motive (ἵνα ἔχωσιν κατηγορεῖν αὐτόν, with its closest NT parallel in Luke 6:7 ἵνα εὐρωσιν κατηγορεῖν αὐτόν) could obviously derive only from an entrapment story, i.e. again that narrated by the Didascalia, just as Jesus’ exhortation to the woman to sin ‘no more’ (ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν, found five times in Luke but in no other Gospel) must derive from the account in which he speaks to her, again the one attested by the Didascalia.

That the Lukan features of the traditional story of the PA are unique to one of our two early accounts may corroborate our view of its great antiquity. Might they also indicate that this particular story was transmitted by the community standing behind the Third Gospel?

⁶² See n. 45 above.

influential. Accidental conflation may have occurred. It may well have been, to take a plausible example, that in only the second story was Jesus said to write on the ground (since there the gesture seems less intrusive), and that this detail was later imported into the first account where the action signified something entirely different.⁶³ Then when someone later made a complete conflation of the stories⁶⁴ certain doublets appeared: some because of earlier conflation, such as the twofold writing on the ground, others deriving from the nature of the stories themselves, such as the two apophthegms. Furthermore, certain ambiguities resulted: had the woman already been condemned? Why did Jesus write on the ground? And since the story now exists in three versions—two originally independent accounts and a third conflation, all of which continue to circulate, each occasionally influencing the details of the other—there resulted an unprecedented morass of textual variation.

To sum up. By the fourth century there were actually three extant versions of the PA: (1) the entrapment story in which Jesus freely pardons a sinful woman, known to Papias and the author of the *Didascalia*, (2) the story of Jesus' intervention in an execution proceeding, preserved in the Gospel according to the Hebrews and retold by Didymus in his *Ecclesiastes* commentary, and (3) the popular version found in MSS of the Gospel of John, a version which represents a conflation of the two earlier stories. There is no evidence that either of the unconflected accounts found its way into any MS of the Fourth Gospel. Consequently, the conflated version must have appeared before Didymus's day: as we have seen, he tells the story

⁶³ For the various interpretations of Jesus' writing see Schnackenburg, *Gospel According to St. John*, 2.165–6 and the literature cited there. It should be noted that some of the solutions to this enigma of the Johannine story cannot apply to the account of Jesus' intervention in an execution proceeding, the story attested in Didymus's commentary. Thus, e.g., T. W. Manson's theory ("The 'Pericope de Adultera' [Jo 7.53–8.11]" *ZNW* 44 [1952–3] 253–6) that Jesus followed normal Roman judicial procedure by writing out his judgment before pronouncing it would make no sense here, since Jesus is not asked to render a verdict. Nor would the common view that Jesus simply doodled on the ground to forestall having to make a decision, although this view does work for our second hypothetical account. On the other hand, theories which claim that Jesus' writing related somehow to his condemnation of the woman's accusers (he wrote down *their* sins, or a Scripture verse such as Jer 17:13 or Ex 23:1b) accord well with the story presupposed by Didymus.

⁶⁴ The final conflation was made, no doubt, in order to give a fuller account of Jesus and the adulteress.

as it was apparently recounted in the Gospel according to the Hebrews, yet seems also to have known it in its Johannine context.

The scope and content of the traditional account suggest that when the two earlier stories were conflated, one of them—that represented by the Didascalia—provided the controls for the other. The setting, the entrapment scene, and the concluding apophthegm remain intact from the more ancient account. But the version of the story found in the Gospel according to the Hebrews and Didymus provides an important element found wanting in the older story of Jesus' escape from a Jewish trap. Now he does not escape simply by means of a clever response. In the conflated version the accusers are the ones made to look foolish. Coming to trap Jesus, they themselves are trapped, forced to admit their own shortcomings before the one who pronounces forgiveness for sinners. Their shameful exit from the scene now casts Jesus' words to the adulteress in a new light. No longer does he counteract the Jewish authorities and violate their desires by turning their insidious actions back upon themselves. Now Jesus' antagonists are forced to concede the truth of Jesus' teaching of love and mercy even to the most grievous of offenders. Jesus' words now encapsulate what even the leaders of the Jews have come to affirm as the word of God. Judgment belongs to God alone, who forgives sinners and urges them to sin no more.

1 JOHN 4:3 AND THE ORTHODOX CORRUPTION OF SCRIPTURE¹

The textual problem at 1 Joh 4:3 has perplexed scholars for over a century. On the one hand, the external support of the reading “every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God” (πάν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν) is quite overwhelming.² This is the reading found in every Greek uncial and minuscule MS of 1 John,³ every Greek lectionary with the passage, every MS of the Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian versions, the oldest Latin MS of 1 John, and virtually all the Greek and many of the Latin fathers who cite the passage. In the words of one modern commentator, “normally such textual support would be more than adequate to establish it as the original text.”⁴

On the other hand, the variant reading “every spirit that looses Jesus is not from God” (πάν πνεῦμα ὃ λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν) has some surprisingly good claims to being original, despite the paucity of its attestation. On the Greek side, this reading is admittedly found only in the margin of MS 1739, an important albeit late (10th c.) MS, in MSS known to the 5th-century church father Socrates, and in several Greek fathers whose citations of the verse are preserved only in Latin translation (Irenaeus, Origen, and perhaps Clement). By and large the reading is preserved only in the Latin tradition, where it is attested by several Latin fathers, five Old Latin MSS, and the Latin Vulgate. Nonetheless, despite this sparse external support, internal considerations have compelled numerous critics to accept the reading as original: it is not only extremely difficult to understand (and therefore likely to be changed by scribes),

¹ Originally published as “1 Joh 4:3 and the Orthodox Corruption of Scripture,” in *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 79 (1989), 221–243. Used with permission.

² We are not concerned here with the variant readings, scattered throughout the tradition, of the name τὸν Ἰησοῦν. These variants simply attest the scribal tendency to augment this name with Christological titles (χριστόν, κύριον) and descriptive phrases (ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα, drawn from V. 2). In many instances, the agreements of the various witnesses at this point are simply accidental agreements in error.

³ With the exceptions of MS 1898 which reads ὃ ἂν μὴ ὁμολογεῖ and MS 242 which reads οὐχ ὁμολογεῖ. Both MSS represent obvious attempts to ameliorate the difficulties of the grammar.

⁴ R. E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (AncB 30), Garden City, New York 1982, 494.

but is possibly also pregnant with meaning, unlike the seemingly flaccid reading supported by the Greek witnesses, a reading that indeed could be taken to represent a scribal harmonization of 4:3 to its immediate context (4:2 ὁμολογεῖ; 4:3 μὴ ὁμολογεῖ). On these and similar grounds, the reading πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦ was championed by such eminent scholars as Zahn and Harnack earlier in this century, and by a veritable host of commentators down to the present day, including Bultmann, Schnackenburg, and R. Brown.⁵

Rather than reiterate the standard arguments in this classic deadlock between a reading with overwhelming attestation and a reading with strong internal claims—arguments which to be sure will come out in due course—the present paper seeks to shed new light on this thorny textual issue. My thesis itself is not new: the best attested reading (πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν) must be accepted as original, while the variant (πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν) represents a second-century corruption of the text generated precisely *by* the context in which it is still preserved: orthodox⁶ Christological polemics. But my way of coming to this conclusion is based on newer considerations, which can be summed up in the following three assertions: (1) The absolute domination of the reading πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν in the Greek MS tradition, precisely because the reading represents a grammatical inconcinnity, indicates that it is original; (2) Since all the early Patristic sources that attest λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν take it to mean what modern commentators who champion the reading concede it could not have meant in an original Johannine context, and since these same champions of the reading ascribe to it a meaning that it cannot bear linguistically, one is left to conclude that (a) the ancients were correct in their understanding of what the reading means and (b) the moderns are correct in seeing that this meaning is not attributable to a Johannine document; and (3) Unlike the commonly attested reading, the variant λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν presupposes a very different kind of docetic tendency from that otherwise attributable to the secessionists⁷ from the Johannine community.

⁵ For a list of scholars who prefer this reading, see Brown, *Epistles*, 496.

⁶ Throughout this discussion I will use the terms “orthodox” and “heretical” in their purely historical sense, implying no value judgments as to the truth or error of the theological positions they represent.

⁷ I borrow this term from Raymond Brown as an apt designation of the group that, according to 1 Joh 2:19, left the Johannine community.

Documentary Considerations

It is no surprise that all scholars, regardless of which reading they prefer, acknowledge that μή ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν completely dominates the Greek tradition of 1 Joh 4:3. What is surprising is how some commentators can so blithely label λῦει τὸν Ἰησοῦν the more difficult reading, and therefore original, immediately after observing that the use of μή with the indicative ὁμολογεῖ is grammatically bizarre and therefore textually suspect!⁸ But precisely here is the critical point: the puzzling phrase λῦει τὸν Ἰησοῦν is not the only difficult reading in 1 Joh 4:3. The use of μή with the indicative makes μή ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν difficult as well, although to be sure for a different reason.⁹ The grammatical peculiarity of the reading should at least raise an initial suspicion that we are not dealing with a simple scribal assimilation of 4:3a to the phrasing of 4:2.¹⁰ A scribe who wanted to ease a difficult reading would scarcely have created such a grammatical enigma, but would have simply supplied an antonym,¹¹ or negated the preceding verb with the common οὐχ. The real question to be addressed, then, is why *one* of the two very difficult readings has come to dominate the Greek MS tradition of 1 John so thoroughly as virtually to exclude the other reading altogether.

A word concerning the nature of this tradition would be in order here. It should not be supposed, as it might well be otherwise, that the Greek text of 1 John is some sort of monolith, so that its uniform attestation of a reading simply represents a single textual form to be compared with other textual forms, such as that represented by the Latin. In point of fact, the Greek MS tradition of 1 John is extremely complex, evidencing widespread corruption and cross-fertilization of text-types. The complexity of this tradition has been demonstrated in Larry Richard's classification of the Greek MSS of

⁸ As, for instance, A. Rahlfs (*ThLZ* 40 (1915), 525), who concurs with A. v. Harnack's vigorous support λῦει τὸν Ἰησοῦν as the more difficult reading ("Zur Textkritik und Christologie der Schriften des Johannes," SPAW 1915, 556–561), but sees confirmation of this view on the grammatical ground that μή is almost never used with the indicative in the NT.

⁹ While this construction is unusual, it is not at all impossible, as is shown by the occurrences of analogous constructions (μή with the indicative) throughout the NT: John 3:18 (!); 2 Pet 1:9; 1 Tim 6:3; Tit 1:11; and Acts 15:29 in MS D. See further Robertson's *Grammar*, par. 962.

¹⁰ *Contra* R. Schnackenburg, *Die Johannesbriefe* (HThK XIII), Freiburg ²1963, 222.

¹¹ In this case ἀρνέομαι, as in 1 Joh 2:22–23.

1 John on the basis of their textual affinities.¹² Richards was able to isolate three major groups of related MSS of 1 John, groups that divide themselves up into a total of fourteen subgroups, one of which comprises MSS of such complex textual relations as to defy classification altogether. What is striking for our purposes is that in the midst of this complicated nexus of widely variant texts and mixed texts, our reading at 1 Joh 4:3b is absolutely secure. $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν is not only the majority reading of all three divergent groups of MSS and of all fourteen subgroups—it is the reading of every solitary MS of every single group and subgroup.

Now the whole notion of classifying or grouping MSS according to the readings they have in common is based on the judgment that “community of reading indicates community of origin.” That is to say, wherever there is textual variation in the tradition, the MSS that attest the same reading do so ultimately because they descend, at that one point, from the *same* archetype, either directly or through intermediaries. This archetype must either be the autograph itself or an exemplar that introduced a corruption of it. In only one circumstance can MSS share a reading that does not derive from a common archetype; that is when individual scribes working independently happened to introduce the *same* corruption of a text. Such “accidental agreements in error,” while not altogether uncommon, can be expected only where the change of a text seems logical or natural—as in fact happens in other textual modifications of 1 Joh 4:3.¹³

Given this state of affairs, how is it that every Greek MS of this complex tradition of 1 John has the same reading in our text? There are only three possibilities. Either $\mu\acute{\eta}$ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν represents a corruption created independently by a number of different scribes in an effort to ameliorate the difficulties of $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\epsilon\iota$ τὸν Ἰησοῦν by harmonizing the verse to its immediate context; or this same corruption was made for the same reason in only one MS, which happens to be the archetype of the entire Greek (and Syriac and Coptic and Armenian) tradition; or the reading is in fact original. It is at this point of our deliberations that the grammatically incongruous character of $\mu\acute{\eta}$ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν becomes decisive. The idea that this

¹² W. L. Richards, *The Classification of the Greek Manuscripts of the Johannine Epistles* (SBLDS 35), Missoula, 1977.

¹³ I.e. in the various scribal expansions of the simple name τὸν Ἰησοῦν. See note 2 above.

reading represents an “accidental agreement in error,” i.e. that different scribes independently and repeatedly corrupted the text to *μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν*, is altogether implausible. On the one hand this would mean that the exemplars used by each of these scribes—exemplars that all read *λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν*—were *never* copied correctly in any copies that have survived. And even more incredibly it would mean that scribes independently chose to conform 4:3a to 4:2 by using a grammatical construction so bizarre as to send scholars scurrying to their Greek grammars to decide if the construction is even possible!¹⁴ While, as we shall see presently, it is unlikely that *any* scribe would have made such a change, it is scarcely conceivable that a number of scribes would have made it independently of one another.

This means that the reading *μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν* must derive from a solitary MS, either the autograph or a corrupted copy of it. This determination has far-reaching consequences because of its strictly historical implications, implications all too often overlooked by scholars who fail to consider MS alignments as strictly historical phenomena.¹⁵ For this solitary MS was the archetype of every extant Greek MS at I Joh 4:3, whatever its textual character otherwise. Indeed, since none of our Greek MSS—wildly divergent in other respects—attests any other reading, the reading *μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν* must have been introduced at the very earliest stages of the

¹⁴ Schnackenburg, e. g., notes that *μὴ* with the indicative is out of the ordinary, but then goes on to say that *λύει τὸν . . .* was mechanically created by scribal changes of the difficult reading (!) which then came to dominate the entire tradition (*Johannesbriefe* [above n. 10] 222). Similarly R. Bultmann, *The Johannine Epistles* (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1973, 62.

¹⁵ Scholars cannot be allowed simply to bypass the historical issues raised by an absolute domination of one reading in the MS tradition of the NT—particularly when the reading is “difficult.” Some critics, like Harnack, seem content to trace readings as far back into the tradition as possible, and, having established, say, that two readings both reach into the second century, assume that the readings are thereby on equal footing in terms of their antiquity. This of course is not the case at all. *Most* variant readings can be traced back into the early centuries—but that does not mean all readings are equally ancient! The historical question of why one reading dominated the text of the NT in later centuries is also, in the present case especially, the question of why it dominated the text of the second century. Unless this domination can be *explained*, historically, the determination that more than one reading can be found in the second century is really of no consequence. Even worse is an assumption, which is sometimes expressed in so many words, that since the MSS preserve both readings, their claims to being original must be adjudicated on strictly internal grounds. This again ignores the purely historical question of how one difficult reading came to dominate the tradition instead of the other.

transmission of 1 John. Otherwise there can be no explanation for the historical circumstance that it absolutely dominates a widely aberrant tradition. Thus if this is not the original reading, it must have been a corruption of one of the first copies of the original.

This conclusion creates insurmountable problems for those who reject $\mu\eta\ \acute{o}\mu\omicron\lambda\omicron\gamma\epsilon\acute{\iota}\ \tau\acute{o}\nu\ \text{'}\eta\sigma\omicron\upsilon\nu$ as the original text of 1 Joh 4:3. Let us assume that this reading is in fact an extremely early corruption. Was it created within the Johannine community itself? This *could* have happened, of course. But then one is left without an adequate explanation of its origin. Why would such an alteration have been made in the first place? It has sometimes been argued, for instance, that the reading $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\epsilon\iota\ \tau\acute{o}\nu\ \text{'}\eta\sigma\omicron\upsilon\nu$ was changed by later scribes who no longer understood what it meant. In the scenario just envisaged, however, the change would not have been made by later scribes at all. Why would the wording of this passage appear so mysterious at the outset of the tradition in the very community that produced it? And even if it did, one still cannot explain why a copyist would change one difficult reading by creating another, and why none of the community's other MSS of the letter made an impact on the subsequent tradition.

Is it possible then that the corruption was made at a later time, outside of the Johannine community? This hypothesis would be even harder to sustain, since it would now be even more difficult to account for the presence of the reading in the archetype of the entire Greek tradition of the epistle. And why would this particular reading have been created in the first place?

Here a word should be said concerning the extremely influential, if overly ingenious, explanation of Adolf von Harnack. It is to his credit that Harnack wrestled with the problem of how to account for the reading found in the text of all our Greek MSS if in fact the reading $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\epsilon\iota\ \tau\acute{o}\nu\ \text{'}\eta\sigma\omicron\upsilon\nu$ is original. He claimed that as early as Polycarp's letter to the Philippians (7,1) church fathers cited 1 Joh 4:2–3 alongside 2 Joh 7 in opposition to various Christological heresies. The texts are similar, but in the latter the participle $\acute{o}\mu\omicron\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\upsilon\nu\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ is used, negated, as participles normally are, with $\mu\eta$. Harnack maintained that early in the textual history of 1 John, a conflation of these texts created the variant: the participle from 2 Joh 7 was taken into 1 John and changed to the indicative to fit the context, while the transposed negative $\mu\eta$ was not changed accordingly, creating the grammatically peculiar corruption.

This is admittedly a brilliant solution to the problem; but unfortunately it creates far more problems than it is able to solve. Even apart from the inherent implausibility of the theory, about which we will be speaking presently, one has to ask how well it conforms to the historical requirements of the textual data. Is it *likely* that a passage from 2 John made such an impact on the text of 1 John at such an early date outside of the Johannine community? It is true that at a *later* time these two letters may have circulated together—at least 2 Joh 7 and 1 Joh 4:1–3 came to be cited side by side near the end of the second century.¹⁶ But whether that is what is happening as early as Polycarp's letter to the Philippians is another matter. Recent investigations have concluded that it is more natural to understand Polycarp 7,1 simply as a loose paraphrase, of 1 Joh 4.¹⁷ Certainly in that context there is no evidence of a partial conflation such as Harnack suggests: that is, Polycarp does not attest the grammatical inconcinnity (μὴ ὁμολογεῖ) that Harnack's solution attempts to explain.

But even apart from the more natural construal of this evidence, one is left with the problem that 2 John does not appear even to have been known in the church at large before the end of the second century, let alone known in such a way that a fairly precise knowledge of its text could have led to a corruption of a different epistle. The book is not cited or even alluded to by any of the Apostolic Fathers, or indeed by any Christian writer before the end of the second century. And even then the letter is attested only in parts of the church, primarily in the West. Throughout much of the church down into the third and fourth centuries there remained considerable doubt as to the canonical standing of the letter.¹⁸ Thus

¹⁶ See Brown, *Epistles* (above n. 4) 9–10 (on Irenaeus).

¹⁷ E.g. B. M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*, Oxford 1987, 61–62.

¹⁸ The following information has been culled from the data amassed by B. M. Metzger (*Canon*) and J. Lieu (*The Second and Third Epistles of John*, ed. J. Riches, Edinburgh 1987, 5–36). In the East, Clement of Alexandria quotes 1 John, but never 2 or 3 John (although see note 69 below); Origen doubts the canonicity of these latter two epistles and never quotes either in all his writings. They were not translated into Syriac along with the rest of the NT in the second and third centuries, and were widely doubted until the sixth. Eusebius places them among his antilegomena. In the West, 2 John is found in Hippolytus, the Muratorian Canon, and Irenaeus, but not elsewhere in the second and third centuries: it is not cited by Tertullian or Cyprian or, e.g., in the *Adversus Aleatores*. See further Brown, *Epistles* (above n. 4) 5–13.

Harnack's solution, which requires an extremely early and influential knowledge of 2 John, can scarcely be accepted.

As for the matter of plausibility, to my knowledge, there is no analogy to the unusual sequence of events that Harnack's theory presupposes: two texts had to be cited side by side; one of them—the less familiar one!—had to be the source of corruption of the other; a scribe created a *partial* conflation of the two passages by transposing the participle and its negative from one document into the context of the other; recognizing that the participle did not fit syntactically into this new context, he changed it to an indicative; but he neglected to change the negative to make it also conform to the new context; this partial conflation then completely displaced the original reading of the epistle so that the newly created hybrid was copied by all the subsequent scribes whose copies have survived. Is this really to be regarded as the most probable solution to the textual problem here? What scribe would have made such a partial harmonization? Why would he have created such a difficult grammatical construction, if in fact the difficulty of the original was the reason for his change? Why did the other reading—the original—become virtually extinct in the face of this grammatically peculiar variant? These are questions that Harnack's theory is hard-pressed to answer. Among all the thousands of textual variants of the Greek NT, I know of no textual situation that could be considered analogous.

Our conclusion at this stage is that the grammatically incongruous character of the reading μή ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν makes its dominance in the textual tradition of 1 John particularly impressive. Any argument for the genuineness of the variant reading, λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν, has to fly in the face of the only hard evidence we have—the MS tradition of 1 John—and really takes on the appearance of special pleading.¹⁹ This becomes particularly clear when one sees how convenient the alternative reading λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν proved for the orthodox church fathers in their confrontation with various heretical christologies in the second and third centuries.²⁰

¹⁹ This conclusion should not be misconstrued as resting on the notion that the MSS should simply be counted, so that the more frequently attested reading is automatically regarded as original. The unique problem being considered here is of a *difficult* reading that absolutely dwarfs the entire tradition, and the question is how that could have happened given the genealogical relationships of the MSS of the NT.

²⁰ As we will see, orthodox fathers cite the reading whenever they find it con-

Linguistic Considerations

That λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν represents a corruption of 1 Joh 4:3 made for polemical reasons can be supported by certain linguistic considerations. What was stated earlier with regard to μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν applies to the variant reading as well: it derives either from an accidental agreement in error by various scribes, or from a solitary archetype—either the autograph or an early corruption of it. Since it too is such a puzzling reading, difficult to understand in all respects, one can be reasonably certain that the individual witnesses that attest it did not chance upon it and thereby concur accidentally. It must ultimately derive, therefore, from a solitary source, which, since it could scarcely have been the autograph, must have been subsequent to it. The linguistic considerations that support this assessment and that presage our conclusion, that the reading was in fact generated by orthodox scribes in the context of Christological polemics, have already been stated: the early witnesses that attest πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν take it to mean what its modern champions agree it could not have meant in the Johannine context, while these same modern commentators ascribe to it meanings that it cannot bear linguistically. What the reading *must* have meant makes sense only in a later setting.

We begin, then, with a brief assessment of the early attestation of the variant. It is worth noting that for the first two hundred years of its existence, the reading is found exclusively in the context of Christological polemics. The Greek attestation of the verse, as previously indicated, is practically non-existent. Some scholars have made a great deal over the presence of the reading in the margin of an important 10th c. MS 1739.²¹ But in point of fact, this scholion simply informs us that λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν was the text cited by Irenaeus, Origen, and Clement. In other words, despite its great value in other respects,²² 1739 provides no independent support for this reading and tells us little we did not already know from simply reading the writings of the fathers it mentions.

venient to do so. In itself this creates problems for its acceptance as original, since *convenient* readings are always textually suspect. See pp. 244–245 below.

²¹ E.g. Harnack, *Textkritik* (above n. 8). See also F. Büchsel, *Die Johannesbriefe*, Leipzig 1933, 63.

²² See esp. G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition on the Corpus Paulinum*, London 1953, 68–86.

The 5th c. church father Socrates, the strongest Greek patristic supporter of the variant, cites it in an anti-Nestorian polemic. He informs his reader that Nestorius errs in spurning the title “Theotokos” for the Virgin Mary, because in doing so he unwittingly divides Jesus’ humanity from his deity. He does this, asserts Socrates, not knowing that in the ancient copies (ἐν ταῖς παλαιαῖς ἀντιγραφαῖς) of 1 John it is written that every spirit that “looses” Jesus (i. e. “sets loose” or “separates” his humanity from his deity) is not from God.²³ Thus Socrates shows that in the 5th c. the reading could be found in earlier sources but that, nonetheless, it was a reading that was not generally well known. Furthermore, Socrates takes the phrase πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν in a literal sense of “loosing” Jesus by positing a metaphysical separation of Christ’s natures.

Interestingly, the reading was taken in a similar way from the very beginning of the patristic period. Thus Irenaeus, our earliest Greek source for the reading, whose citation of it has unfortunately come down to us only in Latin translation, quotes it against Valentinian gnostics who “divide” (*dividere*) Jesus Christ into multiple substances (*substantia*), by claiming that the Christ descended from the pleroma into the man Jesus, and then left him prior to his crucifixion.²⁴ So too Origen, who knows both readings,²⁵ cites the verse to claim that he himself is *not* violating its teaching by “dividing up” Jesus, despite his unusual views on the relationship between Jesus’ human and divine substances.²⁶

Such is the extent of our evidence of the reading in Greek!²⁷ Although the evidence is sparse, it is enough to show (1) that the reading was known at least towards the end of the second century, (2) that it was cited in the context of Christological polemics, and

²³ *Hist. Eccl.* V11, 32. Socrates claimed that the Nestorians changed the text of 1 Joh 4:3 because they “wanted to separate the man [Jesus] from God” (λύειν ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν ἄνθρωπον θέλοντες).

²⁴ *Adv. Haer.* III, 16.8.

²⁵ He quotes the traditional wording in the *catena* on 1 Cor 12:3 and, significantly, seems to presuppose the wording μὴ ὁμολογεῖ in his comments. See C. Jenkins, “Origen on 1 Corinthians,” *JThS* 10 (1909): 30. Origen also attests the more common reading in *Exod. Hom.* 3,2, where the context indicates that he is quoting 1 John rather than 2 Joh 7.

²⁶ *Comm. Matt.* 65.

²⁷ As previously noted, Origen’s mentor Clement may well have had the reading as well. This is evidenced not only in the scholion in MS 1739, but may be suggested also by his discussion of the closely related 2 Joh 7. See the discussion of note 69 below.

(3) that it was taken to confute any metaphysical separation of Christ's substances.

On the Latin side of the evidence much the same can be said. The reading *solvit Iesum*, the most common Latin translation of λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν, appears not to have been the earliest reading of the tradition. At least that was the conclusion drawn by the editors of the *Vetus Latina* after an exhaustive study of all the evidence.²⁸ In any case it was not the reading known to Cyprian and it is not found in the earliest OL MS of 1 John, a MS that appears to stand alone among OL MSS in withstanding contamination by the Vulgate at this point.²⁹ And again when it is quoted by the Fathers, it is always in a highly charged polemical context and understood in its literal sense of "loosing" or "separating" Jesus. Thus Tertullian, who knows both readings and attests the variant *solvit Iesum* only in a conflated form, directs it against Marcion, whose Christology in effect denies that Jesus Christ came "in the flesh" and therefore, "looses" or "separates" Jesus from the Creator God.³⁰ A century and a half later, the modalist Priscillian (c. 370), who more frequently attests the other reading, cites the variant as a Scriptural warrant for spurning a Christology that "separates" Jesus from the divine realm.³¹ So too most of the later Latin witnesses, many of whom know both forms of the text, cite the variant *solvit Iesum* regularly in the context of their Christological controversies. For them the variant reading provides a standard refutation of anyone who appears to deny the deity of Christ.³²

²⁸ W. Thiele (ed.), *Vetus Latina* 26/1, Freiburg 1956–1969, 330–331.

²⁹ Only six OL MSS contain the passage: q (6–7th c.); ar (9th c.), p (9th c.), div (13th c.), c (12–13th c.), and dem (13th c.). Two of these simply preserve the Vulgate text of the Catholic epistles (ar, div), three preserve the Vulgate text with a greater or lesser smattering of OL readings (p, c, dem). Only one MS—the earliest by two or three centuries—preserves a pre-(or non-)Vulgate text of the Catholic epistles to any great extent: MS q, which happens to support the reading μή ὁμολογεῖ in 1 Joh 4:3! See the discussion of these MSS in B. M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament: Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations*, Oxford 1977, 285–322.

³⁰ *Adv. Marc.* V, 16.4.

³¹ *Tract.* 1,31,3. In two other places, Priscillian attests the other reading (*Tract.* 2, 42,4.5; 51,27–29). For the debate over the Priscillian authorship of these tracts and a cogent defense of the traditional view, see H. Chadwick, *Priscillian of Arila*, Oxford 1976, 62–69.

³² See the helpful synopsis of references provided *in loc.* by J. Wordsworth and H. J. White, *Novum Testamentum Domini Nostri Iesu Christi Latine secundum editionem Sancti Hieronymi*, Oxford, 1949.

How do these various witnesses confirm the secondary character of the variant reading? Two critical points need to be made. The first is so obvious that it seems to have escaped general notice. From the late second century on church fathers showed no embarrassment over this variant reading. They quoted it at will, whenever they found it appropriate. This puts the lie to the universal notion that $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\epsilon\iota\ \tau\acute{\omicron}\nu\ \text{Ἰησοῦν}$ is the *lectio difficilior* in this passage. It may be the more difficult reading to modern scholars who cannot understand what it originally could have meant, but it was not difficult at all, so far as our evidence suggests, to the early witnesses. They knew exactly what it meant, and had no difficulty in applying its meaning to the various Christological controversies they faced. “To loose Jesus” meant, for them, to effect any kind of metaphysical separation in Jesus Christ. True believers (i.e. “orthodox”) confessed that Jesus Christ came in the flesh (1 Joh 4:2). Whoever maintained a Christological view that “loosed” or “separated” Jesus—either from the Creator God (Marcion), or from the heavenly Christ (Valentinians), or from true Deity (Arians)—denied that confession. It is no accident that in the Latin tradition *solvit Iesum* alternates with *dividere Iesum* in the early discussions of this reading.³³ It was the notion of “dividing” or “separating” Jesus that the reading was universally taken to condemn.

But this metaphysical interpretation of $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\epsilon\iota\ \tau\acute{\omicron}\nu\ \text{Ἰησοῦν}$ is precisely the problem for modern interpreters who opt for the reading. For scholars generally concede that it is anachronistic to posit such an understanding for a first-century context.³⁴ This is a striking irony of modern-day discussions of the problem: critics who accept the early witnesses’ attestation of the reading refuse to accept their interpretation of it. What meaning then do modern scholars assign to the reading? While there have been several unusual proposals, none of which has received any kind of following,³⁵ most scholars have settled on the meaning “to destroy, annihilate, or annul” Jesus. Since

³³ Thus the Latin translations of Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 3,16) and Clement of Alexandria (see note 69 below).

³⁴ From two widely divergent points of view, see Büchsel, *Die Johannesbriefe* (above n. 21) 64, and I. H. Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, Grand Rapids, 1978, 207–208.

³⁵ E.g. that of O. Piper (“1 John and the Primitive Church,” *JBL* 66 [1947], 443–444) who understood the phrase, in light of 1 Cor 12:3, to mean to “curse” Jesus, so as to rob him of his supernatural power.

no one thinks that the secessionists literally “destroyed” or “annihilated” Jesus, even those who subscribe to this particular nuance of the term understand it figuratively. The Johannine opponents, then, “destroy” Jesus by denying his, the man Jesus’, value or worth, or, in the expression of Raymond Brown, they “negate the importance of [the man] Jesus.”³⁶

This way of understanding the text certainly does make better sense in a Johannine context than the Patristic interpretation of “divide” or “separate.” But no one seems to be asking the obvious question of whether the phrase *λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν* can mean “to nullify” or “negate the importance of” Jesus. It is striking that none of the early witnesses that attests the reading—including the earliest Greek-speaking witnesses—attribute any such meaning to it. But now the question is purely linguistic: what does it mean in Greek “to loose” (*λύειν*) a person?

The point does not need to be belabored here. As anyone can see by surveying the literature—whether the Johannine writings, the rest of the NT, the early patristic literature, the LXX, or the writings of Koine Greek at large—whenever *λύειν* is used with a personal object, it never means to nullify or negate his or her importance. The frequently cited parallel in 1 Joh 3:8 is not analogous, for there it is the “works” of the devil that are “destroyed.” Never is this connotation applied to a person, not even to the devil himself. Not only in the Johannine literature, but throughout the NT, “to loose” a person always means “to release” or “to set the person free” (i.e. “to separate” the person) from some sort of bondage, whether physical (e.g. fetters),³⁷ social (e.g. a marriage contract),³⁸ or spiritual (e.g. sins).³⁹ This too is the meaning of the term in the writings of the

³⁶ This way of wording the phrase fits into Brown’s entire reconstruction of the secessionists’ Christology. In his opinion, the secessionists do not deny Jesus’ humanity *per se*. They deny only the salvific *significance* of that humanity, and therefore “nullify” or “negate” the importance of Jesus. For an evaluation of this view, see note 53 below. Other scholars who do not share this particular understanding of the secessionists’ views but who nonetheless subscribe to a similar rendering of *λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν* as “annul Jesus,” “nullify Jesus,” or “render [Jesus] ineffectual” are Bultmann, *Johannine Epistles* (above n. 14) 62; Büchsel, *Die Johannesbriefe* (above n. 21) 64; Schnackenburg, *Die Johannesbriefe* (above n. 10) 222.

³⁷ E.g. Paul in Acts 20:30. See also John 11:44; Rev 8:14–15; 20:3, 7.

³⁸ 1 Cor 7:27.

³⁹ E.g. Rev 1:5 and, probably, Luke 13:16.

early church fathers,⁴⁰ of the LXX,⁴¹ and of the Hellenistic world at large.⁴² So far as I can see, there is no ancient parallel to the understanding of λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν as “nullifies,” or “negates the importance of Jesus.”

Thus if we were to accept this reading as original—which we can scarcely do, given the MS alignments—we must take it to mean what in fact our earliest sources claim it means: λύειν τὸν Ἰησοῦν means to release or separate Jesus—perhaps from the Creator God (Marcion), perhaps from the Christ (Valentinus, cf. Cerinthus), or perhaps from his divine nature (Nestorius, according to Socrates). But one can scarcely speak of such concerns over Jesus’ “unity” in the early Johannine community, where the secessionists and “orthodox” engaged in disputes on an entirely different front. On the one hand this confirms our judgment that the reading λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν is not original. On the other hand, it urges us to consider more carefully how the theological climate of the Johannine writings differs from that presupposed by the variant reading.

Theological Considerations

It is sometimes claimed that the reading we have argued is secondary, λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν, must be original since it would have more effectively refuted the position of the author’s opponents than the more flaccid μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν.⁴³ This is a curious claim, for it assumes that modern perceptions of rhetorical effectiveness somehow constitute text-critical *evidence*.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the claim seems to

⁴⁰ E.g. 1 Clem 56:9 (quotation of Job 5:20); IMagn 12:1; ISmyr 6:2. In addition the term later came to mean “releasing” the body from tension, i.e. relaxing, and “releasing” a person from this life, i.e. dying. See the listing in *PGL*, 817.

⁴¹ Tobit 3:17; Judith 6:14; Job 5:20; Psalms 101:20; 104:20; 145:7; Isa 14:17; Jer 47:4; Dan 3:25; 3 Macc 6:29.

⁴² I have not checked every solitary occurrence in every Greek author. But in addition to the NT, the LXX, and the Apostolic Fathers, I have checked every reference in the standard lexicons (*LSJ*, *BAGD*, *PGQ*) and have examined every occurrence of the term in Epictetus, Josephus, Philo, and the inscriptions currently available through the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.

⁴³ E.g. Harnack, “Textkfitik” (above n. 8) 559–560.

⁴⁴ As though the author of 1 John had these two readings before his eyes and would have obviously chosen the one more suitable to his polemical ends. In point of fact, he simply wrote what he wrote hoping that it would be effective. So much early Christian polemic is so notoriously *ineffective*, at least to modern ears, one wonders how such arguments can really be put forth with seriousness. Furthermore, if

be motivated by an important concern—to locate the reading $\lambda\upsilon\epsilon\iota$ $\tau\omicron\nu\nu$ Ἰησοῦν in its proper polemical context. When this is done, the conclusion we have already drawn on documentary and linguistic grounds receives a striking confirmation. For, as we have already intimated, although the statement, “every spirit that looses Jesus is not from God” makes sense in somewhat later Christological controversies that did tend to “separate” Jesus (e.g. from the Christ), it does not make equal sense in the context of the Johannine community near the end of the first century. The reading presupposes a different polemical context from that otherwise attested by the Johannine epistles themselves.

Here we are thrown into the wider debate concerning the history of the Johannine community, specifically concerning the theological controversies that created a rift in the community, causing one group of Christians to secede sometime prior to the writing of 1 John. The literature on this subject is extensive, and adequate summaries can be found in recent commentaries.⁴⁵ While we cannot go into all the complexities of this debate here, we would do well to consider, in brief, the Christological views of the secessionists that apparently compelled them to leave the Johannine community.

Unfortunately, as is well known, the investigation is somewhat hampered by the circumstance that we have access to the views of the author’s opponents only in the polemical arguments that he levels against them. Nonetheless, the explicit polemics of 1 John provide some indication of the Christological views of the secessionists. The author calls his opponents “antichrists” because they refuse to confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son (of God) (2:22–23).⁴⁶ This

it is in fact true that the variant reading would have been more “effective,” one wonders how then it can be labeled the more difficult reading, particularly since the alternate reading, in this case, must have been produced in the first generation of the transmission of this document. Why would the more effective reading have immediately caused such a problem?

⁴⁵ See e.g. Brown, *Epistles* (above n. 4) 47–68. Several more recent attempts to understand the theology of the secessionists take different tacks and come to different conclusions. See e.g. M. C. de Boer, “Jesus the Baptizer: 1 John 5:5–8 and the Gospel of John,” *JBL* 107 (1988), 87–106; J. Painter, “The ‘Opponents’ in 1 John,” *NTS* 32 (1986), 48–71.

⁴⁶ It is widely recognized that the terms “Christ” and “Son of God” appear to be interchangeable for this author. Compare, e.g., 3:23; 4:15; 5:1, 13. It is too infrequently noted that in this Christological confession it is the subject, not the predicate, that takes the definite article. Thus we have here an identification formula that answers the question “who is the Christ (or the Son of God)?” On this grammatical

led some earlier interpreters to assume that the opponents were non-Christian Jews who failed to acknowledge the messiahship of Jesus. But since the opponents formerly belonged to the Johannine community (2:19), it seems far more likely that they were in fact Christians who had developed their Christological views to some kind of extreme that the author construed as a denial of the community's basic confession that the Christ, or the Son of God, is actually the man Jesus (cf. John 20:30–31). Most commentators, therefore, speak of the secessionists in terms of a “high” Christology, which in some sense minimizes or eliminates the community's belief that the man Jesus was himself the Christ.⁴⁷

Can the Christology of the secessionists be determined more precisely? In what sense did they deny that the Christ is the man Jesus? Some important clues are provided by the other ostensibly polemical comments of 1 John. In one other place the author calls his opponents “antichrists.” In 4:1–3 he sets the “spirit” of the “false prophets,” the antichrists gone out into the world, against the spirit of God. Only the latter confess that Jesus Christ has come “in flesh.” Whichever reading is adopted for 4:3, the antichrists' denial that the Christ is the man Jesus must derive from their denial of the fleshly manifestation of Jesus Christ. This is no doubt why the author begins his epistle as he does, with a Prologue reminiscent of the more eloquent Prologue of the fourth Gospel,⁴⁸ in which he emphasizes that the “Word of life” which was revealed could be perceived *by the senses*: he was seen and heard and touched, i.e., he was a real person of real flesh.

Elsewhere too the author emphasizes the “fleshly” character of Jesus Christ, particularly with respect to his real death. Thus in the final explicit polemic against the secessionists the author informs his

point, see de Boer, “Jesus the Baptizer” (above n. 45), who in turn depends on the comments of E. V. N. Goetchius, *JBL* 95 (1976), 147–149, in a review of L. C. McGaughey, *Toward a Descriptive Analysis of EΙΝΑΙ as a Linking Verb in New Testament Greek* (SBLDS 6), Missoula 1972.

⁴⁷ Since the epistle's explicit polemics are always directed against this one Christological view, there is little reason to adopt S. Smalley's recent resuscitation of the view that the author is actually fighting on two fronts, one against the “high” Christology of proto-Gnostics and the other against the “low” Christology of Jewish Christians (*1, 2, and 3 John* [Word Biblical Commentary 51], Waco 1984). See the present writer's review of Smalley's commentary in *PSB* 7, 1986, 86–87.

⁴⁸ On which indeed it may be based. See the detailed discussion of Brown, *Epistles* (above n. 4) 151–188, esp. 176–187.

readers that Jesus Christ did not “come in water only,” as was apparently believed by the secessionists whom he cites here only in order to correct,⁴⁹ but “in water and in blood.” Whatever the precise meaning of the secessionists’ formula “Jesus Christ came in water”—and the matter is widely debated and far from certain—it seems clear that the author’s modification of this Christological claim involves the confession that Jesus Christ actually experienced a real death in which he shed real blood. Apparently, then, connected with the secessionists’ denials that the Christ was the man Jesus and that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh was their refusal to acknowledge that Jesus Christ had suffered real death by shedding blood. This explains the importance attached, throughout this epistle, to the “blood of Jesus” and to Jesus’ work of “expiation.”⁵⁰

It will be seen from this brief survey of the epistle’s polemics that the author by and large indicates what the secessionists fail to confess rather than what they actually do believe.⁵¹ They refuse to acknowledge that the man Jesus was the Christ who had come in the flesh and who had died a real death. Commentators generally see here evidence of a high Christology, one that was probably built on the already high Christology preserved in the Johannine traditions that were originally accepted by both the secessionists and the group represented by the author of 1 John. Many of these earlier traditions are still preserved in the Gospel of John.⁵² Since the secessionists had apparently developed the Johannine view of the divinity of Christ to an extreme that made it impossible for them any longer to acknowledge his *identity* with the man Jesus, many commentators speak of their position in terms of docetism—the view that Christ only “appeared” to be human, or that he only “appeared” to suffer and die.⁵³

⁴⁹ See de Boer, “Jesus the Baptizer” (above n. 45). It will be seen that apart from this formal observation, I do not rely on de Boer’s creative reconstruction of the secessionists’ Christology.

⁵⁰ 1:7; 2:2; 4:10.

⁵¹ With the exception of 5:6, whose interpretation necessarily involves more or less sophisticated guesswork. See note 49 above.

⁵² Whether or not the final writing of the Gospel itself had been completed. See Brown, *Epistles* (above n. 4) 69–115.

⁵³ A markedly different position is taken by Raymond Brown, who thinks that the secessionists do not deny Christ’s humanity so much as they think that it is not of salvific importance. The reaction to Brown’s views has been mixed. For my part, I do not see how such a view really explains all the polemical emphases of the

This may be on the right track, but some careful distinctions need to be made. These distinctions are important not only for the closer determination of the theology of the secessionists but, more directly germane to our purposes here, also for determining the original reading of 1 Joh 4:3. Calling these secessionists “docetic,” or stating that they were “on the road to docetism” is not entirely helpful, since docetism came in several quite distinct varieties. Within three decades, at the outside, of the writing of 1 John, we know of at least three basic forms of docetism represented among early Christians. All three seem to derive from the notion that since the divine cannot experience suffering, Jesus as divine could not have suffered.⁵⁴ But the ways they explained this “appearance” of suffering differed radically.

In, one strand of docetism, Christ only “appeared” to suffer because someone else was mistakenly crucified in his place. Thus, according to Irenaeus, the Gnostic Basilides taught that Simon of Cyrene, who was forced to bear Jesus’ cross, was miraculously transformed into Jesus’ likeness, and so was mistakenly crucified while the Christ looked on.⁵⁵ Hence Christ only “appeared” to suffer death on the cross.

In a notably different form of docetism, the infamous Cerinthus, again according to Irenaeus, taught that Jesus and the Christ were actually separate entities.⁵⁶ Jesus was the pious and righteous man on whom, at his baptism, the Christ descended from above, thereafter empowering Jesus throughout his ministry. But then, prior to Jesus’ death, the Christ again separated from him, leaving him to die alone on the cross. Here also, then, the Christ only appeared to suffer.

letter. The Prologue in particular seems designed to show that the “Word that has been manifested” could be sensibly perceived: he could be seen, heard, and handled. What would be the point of this emphasis if it were *not* to counteract the claim of the secessionists that Jesus Christ was *not* fully human, a man of flesh? As I read this letter, the author does not emphasize merely that Jesus’ death was salvifically important; he stresses *that* he died and in doing so shed real blood. Here it may be helpful to apply Brown’s own technique of contrasting emphases: the author of 1 John does not simply assert that it is *important* that Christ died, but rather that it is important *that* he died.

⁵⁴ For a more sophisticated treatment of the phenomenon, see J. G. Davies, “The Origins of Docetism,” in: *StPatr* 6, ed. by F. L. Cross (= TU 91), Berlin 1962, 13–35.

⁵⁵ *Adv. Haer.* 1, 24,3–4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 1, 26,1. This is the kind of docetism represented by various gnostic groups some time later. See, e.g., Irenaeus on the Valentinians, *ibid.* III, 16,8.

We have yet another explanation for Christ appearing to suffer in the opponents of Ignatius. While there remains considerable debate over whether Ignatius opposed two heterodox groups or only one,⁵⁷ it is clear from his letters to Smyrna and Tralles that some of his opponents maintained that Jesus Christ only appeared to suffer because, in fact, Jesus Christ was only “an appearance.” That is to say, in this view, for which perhaps the term “docetic” should be reserved, Jesus Christ was not a human being with flesh and blood; he only *appeared* to be so. He was a spectre of some sort, a phantasm.⁵⁸ Based perhaps on the notion that the divine is impassible and therefore cannot change its essence by becoming human and so experience finitude, passions, and mortality, this view maintained that Jesus Christ, who was divine, must have simply appeared to be human and therefore only seemed to experience death.

Although much more could be said about the views of each of these three groups, enough has been said to indicate their radically different versions of the view that the Christ only appeared to suffer. Now is it possible, without requiring the absolute identification of the Johannine secessionists with one or the other group, at least to place them along the heterodox trajectory leading to one or the other of these views? In these secessionists we have a group of Christians who seem to deny both the identity of the man Jesus as the divine Christ become flesh and his real death by shedding blood. There is no indication that these Christians thought, along the lines of Basilides, that Simon or someone else was substituted for Christ at his crucifixion. Indeed, since there is no mention of anyone bearing Jesus’ cross in the traditions of the Johannine passion narrative (cf. John 19:17) it would be hard to see how such a notion of substitution could have arisen within this particular community.

Many scholars, however, have seen a Cerinthian type of docetism in the theology of the secessionists. The strongest evidence for this view derives from 1 Joh 5:6, where the secessionists are said to confess that Jesus Christ came in water but not in blood. This, it is sometimes thought, relates to the Cerinthian notion that the Christ

⁵⁷ Although I agree with those who maintain there were two sets of opponents, this judgment has no bearing on the issues dealt with here. See W. R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch* (Hermeneia), Philadelphia, 1985, 12, and Brown, *Epistles* (above n. 4) 57–59.

⁵⁸ Cf. IgnSmyr 1,1–2; 2,2; 3,2–3; 4,2; 5,2; IgnTrall 9,1–2; 10,1.

was manifest at the beginning of Jesus' ministry when he entered into him at the baptism, but left him prior to the crucifixion. In a recent defense of this understanding, K. Wengst has argued that the secessionists could in fact have derived such a view from the traditions preserved in the Gospel of John, for at the outset of the narrative the Spirit descends and remains on Jesus at his baptism (1:32), and departs from him immediately prior to his death (19:30).⁵⁹

But the identification of the secessionists with Cerinthianism, or even with a Cerinthian-like docetism, founders on a number of considerations. On the one hand, as Schnackenburg has aptly pointed out, there is no suggestion at all in the polemics of 1 John of the metaphysical speculation upon which the Cerinthian theology is built.⁶⁰ Even more damaging is the fact that neither 1 Joh 5:6 nor the Gospel of John could indicate a Cerinthian-type of docetism. As M. C. de Boer has recently shown, 1 Joh 5:6 can only be understood as citing the secessionist position "Jesus Christ came in water" in order to correct it: "not in water only, but by water and blood."⁶¹ Thus the secessionists believed that "Jesus Christ" was manifest "in water." But that is not at all the same thing as saying that "the Christ" was manifest to "Jesus" in water (i.e. at his baptism). Whatever may be the precise meaning of 5:6, no Cerinthian could say that "Jesus Christ" came in water, for this confession would entail a denial that Jesus and the Christ were distinct entities.

Moreover, Wengst's attempt to see a precursor of the Cerinthian view in the Gospel of John is totally unconvincing. Jesus' baptism is not even narrated in the Gospel.⁶² And even worse, Jesus gives up the spirit in John of his own volition (John 10:17–18; 19:30), and only *after* he has suffered and shed blood! Wengst acknowledges that a Cerinthian exegesis of these texts would have to be forced, since it would violate their obvious meanings and involve blatant misconstruals of their grammar.⁶³ In actuality, if the secessionists appealed to these traditions to support their views, it would be a marvel that they posed any threat to the community at all: this kind of Christology

⁵⁹ K. Wengst, *Häresie und Orthodoxie im Spiegel des ersten Johannesbriefes*, Gütersloh, 1976.

⁶⁰ See his other criticisms as well, *Die Johannesbriefe* (above n. 10) 15–23.

⁶¹ See note 45 above.

⁶² Apparently this is because Jesus' baptism was not seen as a critical juncture in his existence by this community.

⁶³ Wengst, *Häresie* (above n. 59) 24.

is altogether insupportable from the Johannine traditions as they have come down to us.

Finally, while a Cerinthian kind of docetism may be able to explain the polemical emphasis in 1 John on Christ's expiation and real death, it cannot adequately explain the author's emphasis on the real fleshly existence of Jesus Christ (4:2). The Prologue, which emphasizes the real, tangible, fleshly character of the Word of life made manifest, must certainly be regarded as a critical component in the overall polemic of the letter. But the Cerinthians did not deny that Jesus could be heard, seen, and felt—which makes this polemical introduction virtually inexplicable if in fact the secessionists embraced the kind of docetism that "separated" Jesus and the Christ.

In point of fact, as can be inferred from the preceding remarks, these secessionists must have developed a Christology along the lines of those advocated by the heterodox group attacked a few years later—in the same geographical region—by Ignatius. So far as I can see, this view explains all the polemic of the epistle and is readily explicable as a development of the high Christology already evidenced in the Gospel of John. It explains, for example, why the secessionists are called false prophets who refuse to acknowledge that Jesus Christ came in the flesh (ἐν σαρκί 4:2). Ignatius' opponents in Smyrna and Tralles also rejected the notion that Jesus Christ truly (ἀληθῶς) came in the flesh and was killed and raised in flesh (ἐν σαρκί), teaching that he only "seemed" (δοκεῖν) to be what he was and to do what he did (see esp. Smyr 1,1–2; 3,1; 4,2; Trall 9,1–2). For them Jesus was apparently a spirit without a real fleshly body, one who only assumed a human form for a time (cf. Smyr 3,2; 4,1).⁶⁴ Significantly, in his rebuttal of these docetists, Ignatius emphasizes that Jesus' real body could be perceived and handled (ψηλαφάω Smyr 3,2), much as the Prologue of 1 John stresses that the Word of Life could be heard and handled (ψηλαφάω). A particularly striking parallel comes in Ignatius' condemnation of his opponents for "not confessing that he bore flesh" (Smyr 5,2 μὴ ὁμολογῶν αὐτὸν σαρκοφόν, cf. 1 Joh 4:2 πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα . . .).

Furthermore, just as in 1 John, there is an emphasis in Ignatius on the reality and importance of Jesus' real death by shedding real

⁶⁴ Taking these references to represent sarcastic uses of the opponents' own slogans: "δαιμόνιον ἀσώματον" (Smyr 3,2); ἀνθρωπομόρφων (Smyr 4,1).

blood. The opponents in Smyrna and Tralles are explicitly said to believe that Christ, who was not of real flesh, only “appeared to suffer” (λέγουσιν τὸ δοκεῖν αὐτὸν πεπονθέναι Smyr 2,2; Trall 10,1), whereas Ignatius emphasizes that Christ truly (ἀληθῶς) suffered, died, and was raised, and that anyone who fails to believe in Jesus’ blood is subject to judgment (Smyr 6,1), since Christ’s real suffering is what effects salvation (Smyr 1,1; 2,1; cf. 1 Joh 1:7; 2:2; 5:6). Interestingly, just as the aberrant Christology of the Johannine secessionists led to an aberrant system of ethics in which love of the brothers and sisters was neglected, at least in the view of the author of 1 John, so too Ignatius explicitly connects the docetists’ heterodoxy with their failure to love (Smyr 6,2; 7,1; cf. 1 Joh 2:9–11; 3:14–18; 4:7–8).

Thus the polemical emphases of 1 John seem to parallel those found somewhat later in Ignatius’ opposition to the docetic Christians of Smyrna and Tralles. It would be foolish, of course, to insist that the Johannine secessionists should be *identified* with these later groups; here there is simply no evidence. But at least they are moving along the heterodox trajectory that eventuated in such full-blown docetism.

What then would the author of 1 John have meant when he accused the secessionists of refusing to make the community’s confession that the Son of God/the Christ *is Jesus*? He must mean, as intimated earlier, that the secessionists cannot truly make these confessions because they devalue the fleshly existence of Jesus, i.e. the view that he was a real flesh and blood human being. The emphasis of the Johannine homology, then, falls either on the predicate noun, that the “Son of God *is Jesus*” (the man), or perhaps on the verb itself, that the “Son of God *is Jesus*” (since in the secessionists’ view the Son of God only *appears* to be the man Jesus).

Is it conceivable that the secessionists would have moved so far from the original beliefs of the Johannine community? Given the high Christology embedded in the later traditions of the Gospel of John,⁶⁵ it is not at all difficult to see how further developments toward a non-human Jesus could have occurred very soon within this community. Indeed the Gospel of John itself is sometimes read as naively docetic in its portrayal of Jesus.⁶⁶ If modern scholars with all the critical tools at their disposal can read the Gospel this way, it should

⁶⁵ Cf. John 1:1; 8:58; 10:30; 20:28.

⁶⁶ See especially, E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, Philadelphia, 1968.

be no surprise to find that earlier, less critical readers saw the Jesus of these traditions in a similar light.

The preceding argument has been designed to show that the epistle of 1 John is addressed to counter the views of the secessionists who subscribed to a docetic view of Jesus comparable to that later espoused by the opponents of Ignatius. In this view Jesus only appeared to be human and to suffer and die, for he was not really made of flesh, but only appeared to be so. This is strikingly different from a Cerinthian type of docetism that divides into distinct entities Jesus and the Christ, so that the Christ at one point came into Jesus and, prior to his death, separated from him.

This kind of differentiation between docetic tendencies is crucial for our analysis of the textual problem in 1 Joh 4:3. For the original reading in this passage (πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν) presupposes the same kind of docetic tendency evidenced elsewhere throughout the letter, while the variant reading (πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν) presupposes precisely the *other* docetic tendency. The reading we have already favored as original on other grounds represents an antithetical parallel to the community's confession of 4:2. In full the text must have read πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔστιν, καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν. The second part of the antithesis, of course, contains a typical Johannine ellipsis, to be supplied by the corresponding elements of the first part.⁶⁷ Thus the secessionists do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (μὴ ὁμολογεῖ [Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα]). This reading corresponds perfectly with the docetic views of the secessionists as we have reconstructed them. What can be said of the other reading? We have already established that the variant reading πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν must mean something in the linguistic range of "every spirit that separates (or divides) Jesus." Does this reading represent an antithetical parallel to 4:2? It does if taken in the Cerinthian mode of docetism: those who separate the Christ from Jesus do not confess Jesus come in the flesh. But this is precisely the form of docetism not evidenced elsewhere in this epistle. Our conclusion now seems unavoidable: the variant reading, which is found in none of the

⁶⁷ This is the only place in 1 John where Jesus is not called either Jesus Christ or Jesus the Son of God, and is also the only occurrence of the name with the definite article. Both considerations indicate the elliptical nature of the verse.

surviving Greek MSS, cannot have been the original reading of 1 Joh 4:3.⁶⁸

Conclusion

We can now restate our reasons for concluding that the original text of 1 Joh 4:3 must have read *πάν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν* “every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.” The absolute domination of the Greek MS tradition by this grammatically incongruous reading cannot be explained adequately if it is not genuine. Furthermore, the alternate reading *πάν πνεῦμα ὃ λύει τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν* must have originally meant “every spirit that looses (separates or divides) Jesus is not from God,” a meaning that does not fit well into the context of the Johannine community of the first century. On the contrary, this reading opposes a different kind of docetism from that otherwise evidenced in the later stages of the community: while the author of 1 John seems to have been confronted with a “phantasmal” kind of docetism, not unlike that later attacked by Ignatius, the docetism that is rejected by this variant reading is the kind that posits a differentiation between the man Jesus and the heavenly Christ.

How then can we account for the origin and propagation of this variant text, which, although no longer found in the Greek MS tradition 1 John, does still survive in some of our Latin evidence? It is not immaterial for our investigation that the reading is first attested in ostensibly polemical contexts. The fathers who cite 1 Joh 4:3 in the second and third centuries seem to have taken this reading to present a more graphic and immediately relevant expression of the meaning of the more common text of the verse. Thus many of these fathers cite the text in both forms, choosing one or the other for contextual reasons, or, on occasion, conflating them. This suggests that for these fathers the variant reading was considered more directly applicable to the Christological views they were opposing, all of which involved some kind of metaphysical separation, either of the

⁶⁸ Brown’s arguments to the contrary can no longer be sustained (*Epistles* [above n. 4] 495), for *λύειν* was sometimes used by church fathers with reference to various christological heresies (cf. Origen, *Comm. Matt.* XVI, 8, and Socrates, *Eccl. Hist.* VII, 32).

earthly Jesus from the heavenly Christ (Cerinthus, Valentinus), or of Christ from the Creator God (Marcion), or of Christ's humanity from his deity (Nestorius, according to Socrates, and Arianism). Since, as we have shown, the reading seems to have ultimately entered the stream of NT transmission through a solitary source, we can now provide a rough sketch of the course of its history.

The variant did not originate, as did many others, from simple scribal error. It did not originate, in fact, as a variant reading at all, but as an interpretive paraphrase of 1 Joh 4:3 in the context of orthodox Christological polemics. Its earliest datable occurrence is in Irenaeus' opposition to Valentinian Gnosticism. This indeed may have been its originating context. Such an interpretive reading of the passage may have had some following prior to the incorporation of the paraphrase into any MS, wherever Gnosticism proved to be a problem. Thus it is no surprise to find the reading attested, for example, in Alexandria in the writings of Origen and perhaps also in those of his predecessor, Clement.⁶⁹ Other fathers found the reading useful for combatting other Christological heresies that, like Valentinian Gnosticism, involved some kind of "separation" in Christ, whereas the orthodox insisted on "unity."

At some point prior to the fourth century, the interpretive paraphrase was placed in the margin of a MS—much as it was later placed in the scholion of the tenth-century MS 1739. The marginal note was evidently transferred into the text at some point, in a MS that was itself copied on occasion: by the early fifth century the reading could be found in a few Greek MSS known to Socrates. How the reading came to be incorporated into the Latin Vulgate is only one of the many mysteries surrounding that most influential of all

⁶⁹ As has been previously noted, Clement never cites 1 Joh 4:3 in any of his surviving works. But in fragments preserved in the Latin translation of Commodius, Clement does cite 2 Joh 7 (*ut . . . unum credat Iesum Christum venisse in carne*) as the Scriptural opposition to false teachers who are said to "divide Jesus Christ" (*dividunt Iesum Christum*). Some have inferred from this that Clement knew of the reading $\lambda\upsilon\epsilon\iota\ \tau\acute{o}\nu\ \text{Ἰησοῦν}$ from his Greek MSS of 1 John. But the reference could just as easily suggest that Clement understood that "failing to confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh" involved "dividing" Jesus. Or to put the matter in the proper chronological sequence, when Clement was confronted with "heretics" who posited a "separation" in Christ, he claimed that they had failed to "confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh," and simply quoted the Biblical text against them. As we will see below, it is this kind of simple equation of the text with contemporary christological problems that then led to the incorporation of the variant reading into the margin of a MS and from there into the text itself.

versions of the NT. Presumably the unknown translator of the Catholic epistles found it either in a Latin MS that he otherwise regarded as reliable, or in a Greek MS that he used to correct his Latin tradition. In any case, once the reading became part of the Vulgate, its position in the Latin tradition was secure, making it all the more noteworthy that later Latin writers still cite the passage in its original form, except when using it against certain Christological heresies. Thus the polemical context that created the corruption proved also to be the matrix within which the corruption was perpetuated throughout the course of its existence, until it captured the attention and imagination of contemporary scholars.

THE USE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PATRISTIC EVIDENCE FOR TEXTUAL CRITICISM¹

In comparison with Greek manuscripts and early versions, patristic sources for the text of the New Testament have, for the most part, suffered from benign neglect. This is not to deny that extravagant claims have occasionally been made on their behalf.² These claims, however, are widely—and probably rightly—regarded as specious, and have done little to promote a fuller and critically acceptable appreciation of these sources. Their value is nonetheless beyond dispute. Of the three major kinds of textual evidence—manuscript, versional, and patristic—only the patristic can be dated and geographically fixed with relative certainty. This kind of precision is a *sine qua non* for our pursuit of the elusive goals of the discipline.³

This essay will discuss four of these goals. The first two comprise the traditional agenda of the field: establishing the original text and writing the history of its transmission. The others represent, in my opinion, two of the seriously underrated aspects of the discipline: understanding the relationship of the text to the history of its interpretation and determining the social and theological motivations behind its corruption.

¹ Originally published as “The Use and Significance of Patristic Evidence for NT Textual Criticism,” in *New Testament Textual Criticism, Exegesis, and Church History: A Discussion of Methods*, ed. B. Aland and J. Delobel. Kampen, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1994, pp. 118–35. Used with permission.

² E.g., in the series of articles published in mid-century by M.-E. Boismard: “A propos de Jean V,39: Essai de critique textuelle,” *RB* 55 (1948) 5–34; “Critique textuelle et citations patristiques,” *RB* 57 (1950) 388–408; “Lectio brevior, potior,” *RB* 58 (1951) 161–68; “‘Dans le sein du Père’ (Jo., 1,18)” *RB* 59 (1952) 23–39; and “Problèmes de critique textuelle concernant le quatrième évangile,” *RB* 60 (1953) 347–71.” For summary and assessment, see Gordon D. Fee, “The Text of *The Jerusalem Bible*: A Critique of the Use of Patristic Citations in New Testament Textual Criticism,” *JBL* 90 (1971) 163–73.

³ For the most recent assessment of the the value and limitations of the patristic sources, see Gordon D. Fee, “The Use of Greek Patristic Citations in New Testament Textual Criticism,” *ANRW*, II.26.1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992) 246–65; reprinted in Eldon J. Epp and Gordon D. Fee, *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism* (SD 45; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) ch. 17, and idem, “The Greek Fathers,” in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (SD 46; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming).

Patristic Evidence and the Original Text

In the present century, nothing has contributed more to the depreciation of the patristic evidence than the discovery of the early papyri.

Whereas nineteenth-century scholars had access to the Greek texts of the ante-Nicene age only through their genealogical reconstructions of the manuscript tradition and through unreliable editions of the early Fathers (often in conjunction with the early versions), the discovery of the papyri provided scholars with hard data: actual documents from the period. The importance of these discoveries should by no means be downplayed; they were indeed magnificent, even though they had the net affect—to the ongoing discomfort of some in the field⁴—of showing that while aspects of our textual theories needed to be modified, the basic physiognomy of our reconstructed originals was altogether on target.

On the negative side, however, the papyri provided us with a set of blinders—blinders, which, regrettably, many among us continue to wear. The blinders can be recognized for what they are only when we pay serious attention to the provenance of these early manuscripts, a matter well-known and often discussed, but scarcely ever fully appreciated.⁵ To be sure, given the nature of the history of transmission, we can never be absolutely certain where the papyri documents were produced; all we can know is that they were discovered here and there throughout the dry climes of Egypt. The corollary fact, however, is altogether significant: papyri have not been discovered in other provinces of the Empire, throughout which Christianity had also spread in the second and third centuries. Thus Christians in North Africa, and Judea, and Syria, and Asia Minor, and Italy, and Gaul, and indeed elsewhere also had texts of the New Testament available to them in this early period, also on papyrus. *These* papyri have been lost to us as a result of the accidents of history and climate; some from Egypt happen to survive. The survivors, however, are not necessarily representative of the state of the text

⁴ E.g., Eldon Jay Epp, beginning with his well-known and controversial discussion, “The Twentieth-Century Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism,” *JBL* 93 (1974) 386–414.

⁵ See my discussion of the so-called Western non-interpolations in Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University, 1993) 223–27.

throughout all of Christendom in the early period, however fortunate we are now to have discovered them in modern times.⁶

Rarely has this simple observation been given its full due. Indeed, not only beginning students but also seasoned scholars are to be faulted for regularly accepting the superior merits of a reading whose manuscript support is evenly divided, simply because it is “found in the papyri.” The original text, however, must be established on a much firmer basis than the few fragmentary remains of early times, and here the Church Fathers can be given greater due. For even though the manuscripts used by these early Christians have not for the most part survived antiquity, some of their own writings, which occasionally *quote* these manuscripts, have. These writings span the Mediterranean of the first four centuries, the period of our most significant manuscript finds. To be sure, the patristic sources are themselves incomplete and survive by chance, and the quotations of Scripture in them are spotty, often paraphrastic, and likewise subject to the vagaries of textual transmission. Unlike the papyri, however, they are geographically diverse. For this reason, even though they must be used with caution, the Church Fathers can play an invaluable service for those interested in establishing the original text of the New Testament. No longer can we continue to ignore them.⁷

Limitations of space require that I restrict myself to one illustration of the problem. The vast majority of our later manuscripts—i.e., beginning with those that date from the end of the fourth century—indicate that the voice at Jesus’ baptism in Luke’s Gospel spoke the words found also in Mark: “You are my beloved son in whom I am well-pleased.” In Codex Bezae and most of the Old Latin manuscripts, however, the voice instead cites Psalm 2.7: “You are my son, today I have begotten you.” In a lengthier discussion published elsewhere I have adduced a number of arguments to show that this is the original reading.⁸ Here I am concerned only with

⁶ For full discussion, see Eldon J. Epp, “The Significance of the Papyri for Determining the Nature of the New Testament Text in the Second Century: A Dynamic View of Textual Transmission,” in *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century: Origins, Recensions, Text, and Transmission*, ed. William L. Petersen (Notre Dame, IN: University Press, 1989) 71–103.

⁷ For discussions of the problems and methodological suggestions for overcoming them, see Bart D. Ehrman, *Didymus the Blind and the Text of the Gospels* (SBLNTGF, 1; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), ch. 11 and the works of Gordon Fee cited in n. 3 above.

⁸ *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 62–67.

the documentary evidence, as this is one instance in which the patristic sources are altogether as valuable as P⁴, our lone surviving manuscript from the earlier period. For the “Western” reading is attested—prior to the production of this third-century papyrus—in the writings of Justin,⁹ Clement of Alexandria,¹⁰ and possibly Origen,¹¹ as well as in the unknown authors of the Gospel according to the Hebrews,¹² the Gospel of the Ebionites,¹³ and the Didascalia.¹⁴ Somewhat later it is found in Methodius, Lactantius, Juvenius, Hilary,

⁹ *Dial.* 88 (cf. 103). There seems to be little doubt that Justin refers here to the text of Luke. He states that after the Holy Spirit alighted on Jesus in the “form” (εἶδος) of a dove (a phrase unique to Luke), a voice came from heaven, using the very words uttered by David when he was impersonating Christ: “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.” What is particularly significant is that Justin appears to feel a need to explain away the text of Ps 2 by saying that this “generation of Christ” is not his “becoming” Christ but the “generation” of people who come to know him. It is easiest to assume that he felt compelled to explain away the text, i.e., to show that it was not really meant adoptionistically, because in a sense he *had* to: his explanation makes sense only if he knew that the voice at Jesus’ baptism quoted the second Psalm.

¹⁰ *Paed.* I, 25, 2. Clement indicates that at Christ’s baptism a voice from heaven came forth as a witness to the Beloved, saying “You are my beloved Son, today I have begotten you.” The quotation represents a slight conflation, but the second half clearly derives from the Lukan account.

¹¹ Origen clearly knows Matthew’s form of the text, which he quotes in *Contra Celsum* II, 72 and, somewhat curiously, in his Homilies on Luke (XXVII, 5). But in *Contra Celsum* I, 41 the Jewish opponent of Jesus asks him, “who heard a voice from heaven adopting you to be the son of God?” (εἰσποιοῦσης σε υἱὸν τῷ θεῷ), a question that seems to presuppose the text of Luke 3.22 in the form known to Origen’s older compatriot, Clement.

¹² Quoted in Jerome, *Comm in Isa* 11, 12: “Later on in the Gospel (According to the Hebrews), of which we made previous mention, this writing occurs: ‘And it came to pass when the Lord ascended from the water, the entire font of the Holy Spirit descended, and rested upon him, and said to him: You are my Son; in all the prophets I was expecting you, that you might come and I might rest in you. Indeed, you are my rest, you are my first-born Son, who will reign forever.’” The reference is allusive, but given the statement that Jesus is the “first-born Son” it seems to have in view the words of Ps. 2: tu es filius meus primogenitus, in reference specifically to Jesus’ baptism. In any event, the voice does not say “beloved Son,” making it less likely to be a reference to the other reading of the Synoptic tradition.

¹³ Thus Epiphanius *Pan.* 30. 13, 7–8. The Gospel provides a clear conflation of the three Synoptic accounts of the voice from heaven. When Jesus comes out of the water he hears the voice of God (quoting Mark), “You are my beloved Son. . . .” The voice then adds (καὶ πάλιν), “today I have begotten you.” This text must derive from Luke, for the text subsequently states that John the Baptist saw the brilliant light and asked, “Who are you?” In reply the voice from heaven iterates the words of Matthew, “This is my beloved Son. . . .”

¹⁴ Where the words at Jesus’ baptism are known to quote Ps. 2.7, as in the so-called Western text of Luke: “The Lord in baptism, by the laying on of the bishop’s

Tyconius, Augustine, and several of the later Apocryphal Acts.¹⁵ Here I should stress that except for P⁴, there is no certain attestation of the other reading, the reading of our later manuscripts, in this early period. The reading of Codex Bezae, then, is not—as it is sometimes claimed to be—an error introduced by an unusually aberrant witness. This manuscript is one of the last witnesses to preserve it. Nor is it merely a “Western” variant without adequate attestation. Among sources of the second and third centuries, it is virtually the only reading to be found; down to the sixth century it occurs in witnesses as far-flung as North Africa, Alexandria, Palestine, Northern Syria, Asia Minor, Rome, Gaul, and Spain.

The point cannot be stressed enough: even in Egypt, the presumed provenance of P⁴, most of the early evidence attests the other reading. It is pure serendipity that the manuscripts used by Clement, Origen, and the author of the Gospel according to the Hebrews have not survived, whereas P⁴ has. This accident of survival, however, should not be used to privilege one reading over another, especially when the other reading was more widely known not only in Egypt, but throughout the entire Mediterranean, wherever early evidence survives. Surely readings such as this demand our attention when working to establish the original text.

This is not to say that a wholesale reconstruction of the text should now be undertaken in light of patristic sources. As I have indicated, this has already been attempted, with no real success. Moreover, for

hand, bore witness to each one of you and caused his holy voice to be heard that said ‘You are my Son. This day I have begotten you’ (93.26).

¹⁵ Methodius, *Symposium* 9; Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* IV, 15; Juvencus, *Evangeliorum Libri Quattuor*, I, 360–64; Hilary, *de trinitate*, VIII, 25; Tyconius, *Reg* 1. Apocryphal Acts: cf. *The Martyrdom of Peter and Paul*, Par. 1; *The Acts of Peter and Paul*, Par 29. With respect to Augustine, the evidence is a bit more difficult to evaluate. When he wants to harmonize the Gospels he doubts that the voice quoted the Second Psalm but allows for the possibility (*de consensu ev.* II, 14), suggesting that the voice may have said more than one thing (cf. the Gospel of the Ebionites!). When he is not concerned with Gospel harmonization, Augustine seems to support the Psalm 2 form of the text. In *Enchiridion*, 49 he gives it as “This day have I begotten you,” and then explains that Jesus did not really become God’s Son on that “day”; the “today” is an eternal today! This shows that Augustine, like Justin, felt some embarrassment over the reading. Finally, in the *adv. Faust.* there is little doubt that Faustus attests this text, for he is quoted as saying, “(Matthew) tells us that the person of whom he spoke at the outset as the son of David was baptized by John and became the Son of God on this particular occasion. He was about thirty years old at that time, according to Luke, when also the voice was heard to say to Him, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you” (ch. 23).

scholars to continue being obsessed with an original text that differs significantly from the one we already have is probably an act of futility.¹⁶ Despite the fantastic discoveries of the papyri and the enormous quantities of research devoted to the “original” text over the past hundred years, very little in fact has changed in our printed editions, the occasional disclaimer notwithstanding.¹⁷ Whether this demonstrates the extraordinary abilities of Westcott and Hort, or simply the resilience of the discipline, is a moot question. In any event, it is probably safe to say (notwithstanding the widespread fear of saying it) that our current texts probably never *will* change significantly, except as critics reconsider a few hundred readings scattered here and there throughout the tradition (such as Luke 3.22 above), readings whose competing merits continue to be discussed.¹⁸ On the one hand, these are mere mopping up exercises in comparison with the enormous advances made by our forebears in the second half of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, they *are* mopping up exercises that need to be performed, and in doing so the patristic sources need to be given greater due.

To be sure, it is not absolutely impossible that future editions of the Greek New Testament will differ significantly from those that are now in vogue. For this to happen, though, scholars will need to become convinced that the basic principles on which the current reconstruction is based are fundamentally flawed. I am personally

¹⁶ Our surviving evidence can take us back only so far, to the point of being reasonably certain that we have before us a close approximation of the original text. For all practical purposes, however, this point was already reached a century ago in the ground-breaking work of Westcott and Hort.

¹⁷ Apart from a handful of passages, principally in Luke (the so-called Western noninterpolations), our current printed editions (i.e., the UBSGNT⁴ and NA²⁶) differ little from Westcott and Hort’s of 1881. Where they do differ, it is primarily in exegetically immaterial ways.

¹⁸ Tacit support for this opinion comes from the following: (1) the decision of the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung in Münster to determine the quality of all surviving manuscripts by collating them against the text of the NA²⁶ edition, which is itself sometimes labeled in Institut publications as the “original” text; (2) the decision to reprint the same text of the New Testament for the GNTUBS³, the GNTUBS⁴, the NA²⁶, and the NA²⁷; and (3) the decision of the editorial committee of the United Bible Societies Greek New Testament to re-evaluate its textual judgments by providing new rankings in the recent GNTUBS⁴. In virtually every case where previous decisions were changed, they were upgraded, so that former “D” rankings are now “C,” “C” rankings are “B,” and “B” rankings “A.” Since in only rare instances has new evidence been produced for evaluating these readings, one can only conclude that the committee has grown increasingly confident in its judgments with the passing of time.

not persuaded that this will ever happen; but if it does, it will only be because we have learned more about the history of the transmission of the text, a history about which, for all our labors on the original text, we are still woefully ignorant. For it is our understanding of this history that provides the grounding and rationale for all of our text-critical principles.¹⁹

Patristic Evidence and the History of the Transmission of the Text

To write a history of the text's transmission requires detailed information concerning where and when the text was changed, that is, a knowledge of the form of text available in different times and places of the Christian world. Unfortunately, we have no precise information about the dates or provenance of our early manuscripts, or even about the most important of our early versions (except in the general sense, for example, that Latin manuscripts were produced somewhere that Latin was spoken). Thus, if we are interested in knowing about how the text came to be transmitted, our patristic sources are of *primary* importance: only these can be dated and geographically fixed with relative certainty.

The reason this evidence has not been utilized more extensively in the past is that its extraction and evaluation have proved notoriously difficult. Recent years, however, have seen significant methodological advances for assessing and using even the most intractable patristic sources.²⁰ One by-product of this progress is the SBL-sponsored series, *The New Testament in the Greek Fathers*, a series devoted to sustained analyses of individual Father's texts.²¹ Each volume provides

¹⁹ Here I should be quite clear about my point. I personally do *not* think that there is a pressing need to modify our methods of textual reconstruction, and personally do think that at the end of the day (or, somewhat more distant, at the end of the millennium), even when we do establish on more certain grounds the history of the transmission of the text, we will still have the same basic printed form of the Greek New Testament that is widely available today. At the same time, it would be useful if this form of the text were grounded on a better historical footing in the history of the text's transmission, and (the point I began with) that we recognize that the only chance that the basic character of this text ever will be changed (if it turns out that it should be) is if we secure once and for all our understanding of how the text came to be transmitted in various places at different times in the history of early Christianity.

²⁰ See n. 7 above.

²¹ Published by Scholars Press. The series was started by Gordon D. Fee and is current edited by Bart D. Ehrman.

a full but carefully sifted list of a Church Father's quotations of the New Testament, including all textually significant allusions. These are ranked according to whether they represent precise citations, adaptations to the Father's material or grammatical context, or distant echoes of the text. The reliable quotations are then collated against a range of representative textual witnesses. The results are analyzed by means of quantitative and group profile methods, so as to establish the textual affinities of the Father's text in relation to other known witnesses, chiefly continuous text Greek manuscripts.

To date volumes have appeared on the Alexandrians Didymus the Blind (for the Gospels) and Origen (for the Gospel of John), and the Cappadocian Gregory of Nyssa (for the entire New Testament).²² Scholars are currently at work on other important figures: Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Hippolytus, Epiphanius, Methodius, and others. Much more needs to be done—including the rest of the New Testament for both Origen and Didymus and, perhaps most importantly, a full analysis of John Chrysostom. In this area of research in particular, the fields are ripe for harvest. Only when these studies are produced carefully and completely will we be able to make definitive statements concerning the state of the text in various regions of early Christendom, and on that basis write the history of its transmission.

I can illustrate the value of this information by drawing on data that I uncovered during my study of Origen's quotations of the Fourth Gospel, a study co-authored with Michael Holmes and Gordon Fee, which has now appeared as the third volume of the series.²³ These particular data do not relate directly to Origen's own text of John, however, but to that of his opponent, Heracleon. One of the reasons the data are significant is that they indicate how the text of the Fourth Gospel was being circulated in the place of Heracleon's residence, probably Rome, in the second half of the second century.²⁴

²² Bart D. Ehrman, *Didymus the Blind and the Text of the Gospels* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1986); James Brooks, *The New Testament Text of Gregory of Nyssa* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1991); and Bart D. Ehrman, Gordon D. Fee, and Michael W. Holmes, *The Text of the Fourth Gospel in the Writings of Origen* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992).

²³ See n. 22 above.

²⁴ That Heracleon lived and worked in the capital city is suggested by his association with the mature Valentinus and with Ptolemaeus, and in particular by his reputation of heading an Italic school of Valentinian Christians. See, e.g., Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* II, 4, 1; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* IV, 9; Origen, *Jo.Com* II, 8; Hippolytus, *Refutatio* VI, 35; and Tertullian *Adv. Val.* III, 4.

As is well known, Heracleon's work is preserved almost exclusively in the citations of Origen's Commentary on John, which was written, in some measure, to serve as a rebuttal.²⁵ Origen never completed his work; moreover, of the thirty-two volumes that he did produce, we have just nine. In these we find scattered quotations drawn from his predecessor, cited primarily in order to be refuted. In all, there are not quite fifty such quotations, ranging from two or three lines of Greek text in the standard edition up to several dozen.²⁶ Among these quotations are sporadic citations of the Fourth Gospel itself, citations that until now have not been examined for their text-critical significance despite their conspicuous importance: they derive from the first known exposition of the Gospel, penned around 170 C.E. or a bit earlier—i.e., before our earliest full papyri²⁷—probably in the capital of the Empire.

The general reluctance to investigate these data is not difficult to understand. For here the general problems of our patristic sources are compounded, as we must decide not only where Heracleon has given exact quotations of his text, but also where Origen has given exact quotations of Heracleon—specifically, exact quotations of Heracleon's quotations of John. Nonetheless, a close examination of Heracleon's fragments shows that the problems need not be altogether unnerving. There are, in fact, clear indications that Origen occasionally cites his opponent with pin-point accuracy, even with respect to his quotations of the Gospel. Limitations of space do not allow me to pursue this methodological question here.²⁸ Instead, I want simply to use the available data to show the potential of patristic sources—even the most difficult among them—for establishing both the history of the transmission of the text and its broader significance.

Origen preserves Heracleon's quotations of 49 verses of the Fourth Gospel (in chs. 1–2, 4–5, 8). When these are collated against leading

²⁵ Portions of the following paragraphs are drawn from my study, "Heracleon and the 'Western' Textual Tradition," *NTS* (see the following chapter), used with the permission of the editor.

²⁶ These are collected in Brooke, *Fragments*. I have given a liberal estimation of the number of lines; in fact, most of these fragments also include Origen's rebuttal of Heracleon's exposition. For an English translation of just the expositions themselves, see Werner Foerster, *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts*, tr. R. McL. Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) I. 162–83.

²⁷ I.e., not counting a scrap such as P⁵². P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵ are typically dated to around the year 200 C.E., or perhaps somewhat later.

²⁸ Those interested can refer to my articles in *Vigiliae Christianae* and *New Testament Studies*, cited in notes 25 and 31.

representatives of established textual groups, 46 units of variation emerge. When Heracleon's textual affinities are examined in these passages, what is most striking is not his occasional agreements with Alexandrian witnesses. This is what one would expect: his quotations are, after all, preserved entirely in Origen, himself a leading representative of the Alexandrian text, who may have occasionally modified his source in order to make it conform with the text as he himself knew it. What is more remarkable is that when Heracleon diverges from this type of text, he almost always sides with the so-called Western witnesses, which otherwise stand at a far remove from Origen's own form of the text: Codex Bezae, Codex Sinaiticus (which is "Western" in the first eight chapters of John), and to a somewhat lesser extent, the Old Latin manuscripts.

The data are recorded and evaluated in full elsewhere.²⁹ Here I simply summarize my conclusions concerning their significance: a profile analysis shows beyond reasonable doubt that in fact Heracleon's manuscripts of the Fourth Gospel were most closely related to the form of text later found in Codex Bezae.

The consequences of this discovery for the history of the NT textual tradition cannot be downplayed. Above all, it is important for our understanding of the "Western" text of John. To be sure, we have no evidence to suggest that this text was consolidated in any way comparable to the carefully controlled tradition of Alexandria. At the same time, there does appear to have been a variant textual tradition in the West, specifically in the capital city of the Empire, during the late second century.³⁰ This form of the text varied in significant ways from the text of our papyri, virtually coterminous witnesses uncovered in Egypt. While we cannot be certain as to the precise contours of this Roman text, it appears to have been perpetuated through lost intermediaries over the course of several centuries: an exemplar containing a comparable form of text was used for the first eight chapters of John by the late fourth-century scribe of Codex Sinaiticus; somewhat later another found its way into the hands of the scribe who produced Codex Bezae. The relationship of this tradition with the Greek MSS underlying the early versions

²⁹ "Heracleon and the 'Western' Textual Tradition."

³⁰ Cf. also the study of Carroll Osburn, "The Text of the Pauline Epistles in Hippolytus of Rome," *SecCent* 2 (1982) 97–124.

typically aligned with Bezae (esp. the Old Latin and Syriac) remains one of the many unsolved enigmas facing historians concerned with the history of transmission.

Patristic Evidence and the History of the Interpretation of the Text

To this point we have considered the two traditional goals of New Testament textual criticism: establishing the original text and writing the history of its transmission. Indeed, this second goal is generally made the handmaiden to the first, as if the only reason a scholar might want to know how the text was modified in different times and places would be to get behind the corruption to establish the words of the “pristine” original. Is it not possible, though, that the history of the transmission of the New Testament is important in its own right?

The fact that the question needs to be asked reveals how impoverished our historical imaginations have become. For from a historical perspective, the opposite, more traditional, view is the one subject to question: why should the earliest attainable form of the tradition be the only object of our concern? No doubt, for most practitioners such a preoccupation is rooted in theological convictions about the importance of the very words of Scripture—convictions of no moment to those outside the theological enclave. To be sure, scholars of a more historical bent may be concerned as well to establish the earliest form of a tradition for purposes of exegesis: one can scarcely understand what Paul, or Mark, or James meant unless it is known what they said. Nonetheless, from the historian’s point of view, it is important to know not only what an author wrote, but also what a reader read. These texts have played an unparalleled role in the history of our civilization. And what is remarkable is that throughout this history, virtually no one has read them in their original form. The history of exegesis is the history of readers interpreting different forms of the text. For the historian of Christianity, it is important to know *which* form of the text was available to Christians in different times and places. And here again, the patristic evidence is of unparalleled significance.

I can illustrate the possibilities by referring to another study of Heracleon’s text of the Fourth Gospel, which also emerged from my

larger project on Origen.³¹ The raw data that I uncovered are the following: in more than one out of five instances in which both Heracleon and Origen quote the same passage of the Fourth Gospel (11/49 total), Heracleon appears to attest a different form of the text from that known to Origen. Of these, over half (6/11) are instances in which their different interpretations of the text depend to some extent on the variant forms of its wording. Thus in almost one out of every eight verses cited by Heracleon, the divergent wording of the text has played some role in its exegesis.³²

To illustrate the point, I can give three brief examples drawn from John chapter 1. (a) Origen charged that Heracleon misconstrued John 1.21 by overlooking the presence of the article before *προφήτης*, wrongly thinking, as a result, that John the Baptist disclaimed being “a” prophet, rather than “the” (messianic) prophet. In fact, the dispute relates to their varying forms of the text. Heracleon appears to have known the verse in the shorter form also attested in the first hand of Codex Sinaiticus, where the article *ὁ* is lacking.³³ (b) Origen’s dispute with Heracleon over the interpretation of the end of the Johannine prologue (1.18) appears to relate to Heracleon’s knowledge of the text as attested otherwise only in K and (a). This text lacks the participial clause *ὁ ὢν* found in all other witnesses. As a result, Heracleon construed the verse soteriologically, to refer to the function of the Logos as the one who “explains unto the bosom of the Father.”³⁴ Origen, on the other hand, reads the clause, and interprets the verse christologically to refer to the identity of the Logos, “who is in the bosom of the Father.” (c) Finally, Origen ridicules Heracleon’s interpretation of John 1.3, “nothing came into being

³¹ Portions of the following paragraphs are drawn from my article “Heracleon, Origen, and the Text of the Fourth Gospel,” *VC* 47 (1993) 105–18, used with permission of the editor (chap. 14 above).

³² Of the verses in which Origen and Heracleon appear to attest the same form of the text, a total of fifteen are invariant or virtually invariant in the tradition otherwise (John 1.16, 23, 29; 2.12; 4.11, 22, 26, 36, 48, 50, 53, 5.45; 8.21, 22, 50). For the other twenty-four, leading textual witnesses of the Fourth Gospel attest one or more significant units of variation (John 1.17, 28; 2.14, 15, 17, 19; 4.14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 24, 27, 30, 34, 36, 38, 39, 40, 47, 49, 51; 8.43, 44). For a full listing of the data, see the apparatus in Ehrman, Fee, and Holmes, *Text of the Fourth Gospel*.

³³ Origen cites the passage a total of eight times in his extant writings, seven times with the article. The only exception is the paraphrase of Heracleon’s position (*Jo.Com* VI, 92). Sinaiticus gives the shorter text in the original hand, in company with MS 69.

³⁴ Heracleon’s text: *ἐξηγήσατο εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς* (*Jo.Com* VI, 15).

apart from him” (χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδέν),³⁵ as referring to the creation of the world and everything in it, but not “to the things outside of the cosmos and the creation.” That is to say, Heracleon argued that the statement does not apply to the divine Pleroma, which stands outside of creation. For Origen, the text clearly affirms, to the contrary, that “not even one thing” (i.e., not even the Pleroma) came into being apart from the creating activity of Christ. This interpretation of the verse is fortified by the stronger form of its wording, found in all of Origen’s citations, but not in Heracleon’s, χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν.³⁶

It is interesting to observe, as a sidelight, that in none of these instances does Origen appear to realize that his exegetical differences with Heracleon relate in any way to textual problems.

We would be amiss, however, to conclude from these examples that the form of text each exegete encountered played a determinative role in his exegesis. Quite the contrary, as we know from reading the works of Origen and his gnostic predecessors, the appeal to a spiritual level of meaning could be used to render a so-called “literal” (i.e. grammatico-historical) exegesis innocuous when it came to deciding what the text “really” meant. To many moderns—especially post-Enlightenment modernists—this might suggest that interpreters can use figurative modes of exegesis to make texts mean anything they want them to mean. As I argue in my fuller study, however, it may be more accurate to say that all interpreters, even the Enlightened, have assumptions and perspectives, and that these inevitably affect the way they approach and construe their texts. If studies such as this cannot show that the words of the text determine its meaning, they can at least show how the words of a text determine the rhetoric of exegesis, in that the kinds of arguments that an exegete—in this case, a Heracleon or an Origen—feels compelled to use to establish the meaning of a text, depend in some measure on the words that are found within the text.

This conclusion should not be taken to suggest, however, that early Christians were entirely disinclined to change the texts they inherited

³⁵ Origen explicitly cites Heracleon’s wording of the passage in order to explain his exegesis of John 4.24 (*Jo.Com* XIII, 118). This form of the text is also found in the two Western uncials of John 1.3 (S* and D), along with one of our earliest papyri witnesses, P⁶⁶, and fam¹ and Irenaeus.

³⁶ The exact citations and close adaptations: *Jo.Com* II, 91, 100, 101, 105, 108, 131; VI, 188; *Dial.Heracl.* 1, 9.

when it proved convenient or useful for them to do so.³⁷ In fact, one of the most important and interesting areas of text-critical research today deals with the motivations for scribes having modified the texts they received. That Christian scribes did change their texts is absolutely beyond dispute: witness the wildly divergent results of their transcriptions! That they occasionally did so with intent can also scarcely be doubted. Whoever added the final twelve verses to the end of Mark's Gospel, or the story of the woman taken in adultery to John's, can hardly be thought to have made a mere slip of a pen. This is not to say that we are now able, many centuries later, to establish with certainty the "intentions" of our anonymous scribes.³⁸ But as with all historical inquiry, scholarly curiosity looks for plausible explanations of the surviving data—in this case, explanations for scribes having consciously altered the texts they reproduced. Here again, the patristic evidence must figure prominently in the analysis.

Patristic Evidence and the Causes of Textual Corruption

Recent scholarship has shown beyond reasonable doubt that the social worlds and theological concerns of our anonymous scribes left its mark on the texts they produced.³⁹ Whereas the majority of our textual "corruptions" appear to have been created accidentally—for example, through carelessness or ineptitude—many of the most interesting embody the concerns of the scribes who made them. Since the vast majority of all textual changes were generated in the first three centuries of the text's transmission,⁴⁰ we do well to determine the kinds of Christian concerns salient throughout this period, so as to ascertain how they may have affected the transmission of the text.⁴¹

³⁷ Not everyone shared Origen's interest in the precise readings of the inspired originals; few early Christians, even those who transmitted and reflected on the text, were trained in the rhetorical schools of Alexandria!

³⁸ See my discussion of this problem in *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 26–28.

³⁹ For a fuller discussion, see my contribution to Bruce Metzger's recent *Festschrift*, "The Text as Window: New Testament Manuscripts and the Social History of Early Christianity," *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes (TS 46; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming). Some of the material in the following paragraphs is drawn from this study, used with permission (chap. 6 above).

⁴⁰ See *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, and the literature cited there.

⁴¹ As I indicate in my article, "The Text as Window," these data can be used to provide additional information for social historians of the period interested in seeing the affect of social conflicts on groups of Christians (our anonymous scribes)

As is all too well known, the only real access we have to the Christian milieu of the period is through our literary sources—i.e., the writings of the Church Fathers (and those they opposed). Once again, then, the key to understanding this aspect of the textual tradition lies in our Patristic sources—not so much through seeing how the Fathers themselves quote the text (although this can sometimes prove useful as well)⁴² as through seeing the kinds of issues that they discuss and dispute. The results of some of the ongoing research into this area, much of it preliminary, can here only be summarized, as a way of indicating what further work remains to be done.

Most of the scholarly effort has focussed on the theological controversies of the second and third centuries and on how these affected the scribes who produced our texts. We know of these controversies chiefly through the writings of the heresiologists, i.e., the first proto-orthodox intellectuals, whose works are full of vituperative responses to Christians who espouse aberrant points of view.⁴³ Hort's famous pronouncement that theological disputes played virtually no role in the transmission of the text was called into question by several scholars in the early part of this century. But it was not until Eldon Jay Epp published his revised Harvard dissertation, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts*, that scholars generally began to recognize the extent of the problem.⁴⁴ In a detailed analysis, Epp argued that some 40% of the textual variations attested by Codex Bezae in Acts can be ascribed to an anti-Judaic bias.⁴⁵

about whom otherwise we are altogether ignorant. It must be emphasized that this is not a circular proceeding, because the text is not to be *established* on the grounds of the social context, but on standard text-critical principles. Once the earliest form of the text is known, however, the subsequent modifications of the text can serve as data for historians interested in seeing the effects of early conflicts on some of the literate Christians of the period.

⁴² As scattered examples, see my discussions of 1 John 4.3; Luke 22.43–44; Luke 24.39–40; and Eph. 5.30 in *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, pp. 125–35; 187–94; 217–19, 236–37.

⁴³ The heresiologist opinion of such views, of course, cannot be construed as normative by historians; in this century a number of scholars have questioned whether the proto-orthodox position espoused by the likes of Irenaeus and Hippolytus and Tertullian was representative of Christendom at large and, perhaps yet more germane to the New Testament textual tradition, whether it was of any concern to those outside the ranks of the Christian *literati*.

⁴⁴ SNTSMS 3; Cambridge: University Press, 1966. For Epp's predecessors, see especially p. 2, n. 1.

⁴⁵ Epp does not address the question of the historical *Sitz im Leben* of the phenomenon he uncovers. Whether it should be labeled "theological" is a question that could perhaps be pursued.

Epp's study was significant not only for the conclusions he drew concerning Codex Bezae, but also for opening the door to other investigations. Here I have space to mention only the most recent and complete analysis of one aspect of the problem, my own study *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*.⁴⁶ In this volume I explore how the proto-orthodox insistence that Christ was fully divine (against adoptionists) and fully human (against docetists) and yet one being, not two (against Gnostics), affected scribes who modified their texts in an effort both to buttress their own perspective and to preclude the use of these texts by those supporting alternative positions.⁴⁷ The dozens of texts that were affected by these controversies involve many of the key passages of the New Testament: the prologue of the Fourth Gospel, the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke, the baptismal accounts of the Synoptics (see Lk 3.22 above), the passion narratives of all four Gospels, and significant passages throughout Paul and the rest of the New Testament.

Much more can no doubt be uncovered by textual scholars conversant with the patristic discussions of theological issues. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the only ideological conflicts in early Christianity to have affected the text pertained to early creedal developments. Epp's own study pursued a different issue, relating more directly to the rise of Christian anti-Semitism. During the thirty years since he wrote, Christian and Jewish scholars alike have been diligent in their attempts to understand precisely this phenomenon.⁴⁸ Interestingly enough, a survey of the patristic record shows that many of the authors who found themselves embroiled in christological controversies were simultaneously (and in fact, relat-

⁴⁶ See n. 5.

⁴⁷ A large chapter is devoted to each of these christological perspectives, with a briefer chapter on the impact of the Patripassianist controversy on third-century scribes.

⁴⁸ The literature is extensive. For bibliography and informed discussion see John Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University, 1983) 11–34 and more briefly, idem, "Judaism as Seen By Outsiders," *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters* (ed. Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsburg; Philadelphia / Atlanta: Fortress / Scholars, 1986) 99–116. Foundational works include Jules Isaac, *Jesus and Israel*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971; French original, 1948); Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (135–425)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986; French original, 1964); and Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury, 1974).

edly) engaged in explaining the problem of the ongoing existence of the Jews as well. As is well known, the theological resolution of this problem, in many cases, was not happy. Indeed, if anything, the vitriol leveled against heretics was intensified when directed against Jews, who were accused of horrendous beliefs and practices. Already by the middle of the second century “the Jews” are charged with deicide in the crucifixion of Jesus.⁴⁹

The animus of our literary elite (the patristic authors) appears to have affected the copyists of Scripture as well. This may be evident, for example, in the work of the scribe who changed the pronouncement of Matt. 1.21 so that Jesus no longer comes to save “his people” from their sins (in the view of many early Christians, he obviously did no such thing) but to save “the world.” It is perhaps also to be seen in the change of John 4.22, which in some manuscripts now states that salvation comes not from “the Jews” but from “Judea.” Perhaps the best known instance of the phenomenon (and, in fact, most instances are not known at all), is the common scribal elimination of the prayer of Jesus from the cross in Luke 23.34: in a number of surviving manuscripts the Savior no longer asks his Father to forgive the Jews who “do not know what they are doing.”

Heretics and Jews are not the only groups assaulted in our patristic sources. Church Fathers also attacked pagan beliefs and practices, although, given the social context in which Christians saw themselves as the persecuted minority, these attacks are perhaps better seen as a defensive posturing. In any event, many of the Fathers who were later embraced as forerunners of orthodoxy—one automatically thinks of Justin and Tertullian—were actively involved in writing *apologia* for the faith. The apologetic movement appears to have affected scribes as well, although no one has undertaken a sustained study of the phenomenon. There are passages, though, in which apologetic concerns may well explain the textual data. Did the claims of a pagan opponent like Celsus, that Jesus could not be the Son of God because he was a lowly carpenter, affect scribes who modified Mark 6.3, making the text not say (in harmony with Matthew) that he was a carpenter, but the son of a carpenter? Did the question over the appropriateness of Jesus’ character and demeanor (as a Son of God) lead scribes to change difficult texts like Mark 1.41,

⁴⁹ Thus Melito of Sardis, *Paschal Homily*, 96.

in which—at least according to the “Western” tradition—he inexplicably became angry? Or did it lead to the omission of ἕτερον in Luke 23.32, so that the text no longer speaks of two *other* criminals crucified along with Jesus? Did pagan claims concerning the significance of their own miracle workers lead scribes to magnify the significance of Jesus, so that he amazed “all” the crowds in some manuscripts of Matthew 7.28 and healed “everyone” in one other of Luke 6.18? These are possibilities that can be explored when patristic *apologia* and the textual data are read in tandem.

Christians of the second and third centuries were also engaged, of course, in a number of internal struggles, some of which appear to have affected the surviving texts of the New Testament. As one example, from near the end of the first century, the high profile that had been accorded women in the earlier stages of the Christian movement brought a widespread negative response, at least in proto-orthodox circles, leading to a suppression of women’s voices in the local congregations, a suppression that was to come to its head in the misogyny of such authors as Tertullian.⁵⁰ This progressive suppression of women appears to have played an important role in the transmission of texts that embodied the older perspective. The most famous issue, of course, concerns the status of 1 Cor 14.35–36, for which Gordon Fee has recently stressed textual evidence for considering the verses to be an interpolation.⁵¹ Only with the corruption are women told to “keep silent” in church and to “be subordinate.” Other, less ambiguous, cases can be cited as well. Ben Witherington, for example, compiled several instances in which Codex Bezae modified the text of Acts to eliminate its relatively high evaluation of women in the church, for example, in Acts 17.4, where those

⁵⁰ Again, the literature is extensive and burgeoning. For the New Testament period, see especially Elizabeth Schuessler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983). A recent insightful example of feminist reconstruction is Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul’s Polemic* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990). For the second century, see the more popular discussion, somewhat less rooted in feminist theory, of Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979). Finally, a study that usefully situates the Christian suppression of women in the broader currents of the Greco-Roman world is Ross S. Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women’s Religions Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the GrecoRoman World* (New York and Oxford: University Press, 1992).

⁵¹ *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 699–708.

who convert are no longer “prominent women” but “wives of prominent men” and in the sundry references to “Priscilla and Aquila” (e.g., 18.2, 3, 7, 21), in which the names are invariably reversed to give the male partner the priority.⁵² Other passages could be cited as well, e.g., Luke 8.3, where the women who minister to Jesus are in some manuscripts said to minister to the twelve disciples (i.e., to the menfolk), and Rom. 16.7 where by the addition of the article, scribes have affectively prepared the way for scholars concerned to rob Junia of her apostleship. Now rather than greeting “Andronicus and Junia, my kin and fellow prisoners, who are noteworthy among the apostles,” Paul sends greetings to “Andronicus and Junia my kin,” as well as to “my fellow prisoners who are noteworthy among the apostles.”

Conclusion

Scholars have begun to recognize the need for a fuller evaluation and deeper appreciation of the patristic evidence for the New Testament text. At the same time, requisite tools for pursuing this study are increasingly coming to the fore. Critical editions of important patristic texts continue to appear, and the new monograph series *The New Testament in the Greek Fathers* is starting to utilize these editions in an effort to establish with relative certainty (which is the best one can hope for in this, or any other, historical field of study) the extent of each Father's New Testament text, its evidential value, and its textual character. This kind of information will prove increasingly useful to scholars determined to pursue the question of the original text of the New Testament. For when a Father's text is certain, it is every bit as valuable as a continuous text manuscript that happens to survive. Moreover, when one can locate the text of a number of Fathers for a passage, judgments can be made concerning the geographical and temporal attestation of variant forms of the text, the *sine qua non* for establishing the text of the autographs and the nature of their subsequent modification.

Nonetheless, there is little reason and less need to be concerned only with the original text of the New Testament. The textual data

⁵² “The Anti-Feminist Tendencies of the Western Text in Acts,” *JBL* 103 (1984) 82–84.

at our disposal are significant for other forms of historical inquiry as well, and these may represent the future of the discipline. On the one hand, our patristic sources are absolutely vital for any reconsideration of the history of the transmission of the New Testament text—whether or not this reconsideration leads to a re-evaluation of the nature of our elusive autographs. Yet more importantly, this kind of evidence can contribute to our pursuit of other questions of potential interest to historians of Christianity outside the text-critical fold. In particular, the relatively untapped patristic quotations of the New Testament can tell us a good deal about the history of exegesis and the nature of early Christian theological developments and social conflicts, and the role that these matters themselves played in the transmission of the Christian scriptures.

HERACLEON, ORIGEN, AND THE TEXT OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL¹

The meager facts about Heracleon's life are well known and can be easily summarized.² He was a disciple of Valentinus, or perhaps his intimate.³ Along with Ptolemaeus he was known to be a leader of the Italic or Western branch of Valentinian Christianity.⁴ In view of these associations, he is generally thought to have been active around the year 170, or perhaps a bit earlier, possibly in Rome.⁵ Above all, he was remembered for his exegetical works on the emerging New Testament; he is reputed to have been the first to produce a commentary on the Fourth Gospel.⁶

We are ill informed concerning the structure and scope of this "commentary." It is fragmentarily preserved in the comments of Origen, and virtually nowhere else.⁷ There is in fact little to suggest

¹ Originally published as "Heracleon, Origen, and the Text of the Fourth Gospel," in *Vigiliae Christianae* 47 (1993), 105–118. Used with permission.

² For a fuller account, see, e.g., A. E. Brooke, *The Fragments of Heracleon* (TextS 1.4; Cambridge: University Press, 1891) 31–41; a recent and briefer discussion can be found in C. Bammel, "Herakleon", *TRE* XV (1986) 54–57. See further the works cited in n. 12 below.

³ Depending on how one construes the initial description of Origen: τὸν Οὐαλεντίνου λεγόμενον εἶναι γνῶριμον Ἡρακλέωνα (*Jo.Com* 11, 100). (Here and throughout I refer to Origen's John Commentary according to Book and paragraph number, as these are provided in C. Blanc, *Origène: Commentaire sur Saint Jean* [*SC* 120, 157, 222, and 290; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1975–1982] and, for Books XX and XXXII, in E. Preuschen, *Der Johanneskommentar* [*GCS* 10; Leipzig, 1903].) Clement of Alexandria calls him the most famous representative of the Valentinian school: ὁ τῆς Οὐαλεντίνου σχολῆς δοκιμώτατος (*Stromateis* IV, 9). The earliest reference appears to be that of Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 11, 4, 1), who mentions him but once and in passing (in connection with Valentinus), suggesting perhaps that he had not yet established a prominent following of his own (contrast Ptolemaeus). See also Tertullian, *Adv. Val.* III, 4.

⁴ Thus Hippolytus, *Refutatio* VI, 30.

⁵ E. Pagels speaks offhandedly of his life in Alexandria (because his works were known by Clement and Origen?). So far as I can see, she gives no evidence (*The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John* [Nashville and New York: Abingdon, 1973] 57). For his residence in Rome, see below, p. 279.

⁶ In addition to his comments on the Fourth Gospel, preserved almost exclusively by Origen, we have a relatively lengthy account of his exposition of Luke 12:8–11 preserved by Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* IV, 9, reproduced by Brooke *Fragments*, 50–103.

⁷ All of the extant remarks are collected in Brooke, *Fragments*, 50–103.

that Heracleon had prepared a full verse-by-verse exposition: Origen does not mention him until Book 11 of his own Commentary, and here it is in connection with his exposition of John 1:3 (*Jo.Com* 11, 100).⁸ Moreover, Origen elsewhere covers considerable territory without mentioning Heracleon's views—somewhat odd if in fact his opponent had provided a full commentary.⁹ As a consequence, some scholars have plausibly suggested that Heracleon's "commentary" was an annotated copy of the Gospel or perhaps random notes on passages of particular interest.¹⁰

Given Origen's relatively sporadic discussion of Heracleon, it would probably be going too far to say that his own thirty-two volume work, left uncompleted, was preeminently meant to offer a rebuttal.¹¹ At the same time, when Origen does mention his opponent, he makes it abundantly clear where he differs from him (as well as where he agrees), and expends some considerable effort in showing the inferiority of his exegesis.¹² Scholars have always recognized this

⁸ Pagels plausibly argues that Heracleon did not comment on the opening two verses (*Johannine Gospel*, 47).

⁹ In one place Origen observes that Heracleon did not comment on a passage (8:12–20)—presumably this is what he means by ὁ μὲντοι γε Ἡρακλέων ἐκθέμενος τὴν περὶ τοῦ γαζουπλακίου λέξιν οὐδὲν εἶπεν αὐτήν (*Jo.Com* XIX, 89). He may, on the other hand, have been thinking only of 8:20, which would mean that he simply decided not to discuss Heracleon's exegesis of the rest of the passage (or at least v. 19, which is where Book XIX begins). Elsewhere he refers to Heracleon's failure to comment on 4:32 (οὐδὲν δὲ εἰς τὴν λέξιν εἶπεν ὁ Ἡρακλέων, *Jo.Com* XIII, 225). In both instances, Origen mentions the fact because he wants to engage Heracleon on the verse that follows.

¹⁰ See, e.g., the brief remarks of C. Blanc, *SC* 120.10; Yvonne Janssens, "L'épisode de la Samaritaine chez Héracléon," *Sacra Pagina* (BETL 17–18; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1959) 77; and Karlfried Froehlich, "Bibelkommentare—Zur Krise einer Gattung," *ZTK* 84 (1987) 472.

¹¹ Although certainly, since he undertook this labor at the instigation of Ambrose, whom he had earlier converted away from Valentinianism, we might suspect that there was some implicit attempt to give the "true" interpretation of this Gospel in light of the interpretations commonly advanced among the Valentinians, for whom it happened to be the Gospel of choice.

¹² For insightful studies that attempt to present Heracleon's views on their own terms see esp. Barbara Aland, "Erwählungstheologie und Menschenklassenlehre: Die Theologie des Herakleon als Schlüssel zum Verständnis der christlichen Gnosis?" in *Gnosis and Gnosticism*, ed. Martin Krause (NHS 8; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977) 148–81; Yvonne Janssens, "Héracléon: Commentaire sur l'Évangile selon S. Jean," *Le Muséon* 72 (1959) 101–51; 277–99; E. Mühlberg, "Wieviel Erlösungen kennt der Gnostiker Herakleon," *ZNW* 66 (1975) 170–93, and Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel*. For a recent comparative analysis, see esp. Jean-Michel Poffet, *La méthode exégétique d'Héracléon et d'Origène, Commentateurs de Jn 4: Jésus, la Samaritaine et les Samaritains* (Fribourg: Universitaires Fribourgeoises, 1985).

“reactionary” character of Origen’s work. What they have not recognized is the degree to which Origen’s disagreements with Heracleon relate not simply to varying theological assumptions about the text, but to divergent forms of the text itself. Indeed, a number of their exegetical differences relate closely to their use of variant textual traditions: to some degree, their exegesis of John differs because the wording of their Johannine texts differs.¹³

The raw data are these: in the surviving fragments Heracleon cites the Gospel of John nearly fifty times.¹⁴ In more than one out of five instances (11/49 total) Heracleon appears to attest a different form of the text from that known to Origen.¹⁵ Of these, over half (6/11) are instances in which their different interpretations of the text depend to some extent on the variant forms of its wording. Thus in almost one out of every eight verses cited by Heracleon, the divergent wording of the text has played some role in the exegesis.¹⁶

¹³ Before demonstrating this thesis, I should say a word about the comprehensiveness of my data. These are drawn in their entirety from a larger study I have co-authored with Gordon D. Fee and Michael W. Holmes, *The Text of the Fourth Gospel in the Writings of Origen* (NTGF, 3.1; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992). In this volume we have set forth every quotation of the Fourth Gospel in the surviving works of Origen, as well as all of the textually significant allusions. On the basis of these data we have reconstructed the probable character of Origen’s MSS of John, and collated this reconstructed text against a range of Greek and Latin MSS so as to determine his textual affinities.

¹⁴ The number does not include, of course, instances in which Heracleon refers to a passage that he does not actually cite (e.g., 1:25; 2:13, 20; 4:13, 19).

¹⁵ The difficulties of ascertaining Heracleon’s own wording of the text on the basis of Origen’s partial citations can well be imagined. Are Heracleon’s quotations of Scripture drawn from his own work or does Origen cite them in the form of text that he himself knew? Two data can help resolve this critical issue, data that in fact gave rise to the present study: (a) Origen otherwise appears to quote Heracleon’s commentary verbatim, and (b) in a number of instances, Origen introduces these quotations with a Johannine passage (a verse, a part of a verse, or a word) that differs in some way from the form of the text that he clearly attests elsewhere. How can these data be accounted for? I assume that in these instances, at least, Origen reproduces not only Heracleon’s exegesis but also the text on which this exegesis is based. I might add that the same is probably true, by and large, even where their forms of the text cannot be shown to differ (which we should expect to occur, after all, in a good number of instances). For possible exceptions, see notes 24 and 50 below.

¹⁶ Of the verses in which Origen and Heracleon appear to attest the same form of the text, a total of fifteen are invariant or virtually invariant in the tradition otherwise (John 1: 16, 23, 29; 2:12; 4:11, 22, 26, 36, 48, 50, 53; 5:45; 8:21, 22, 50). For the other twenty-four, leading textual witnesses of the Fourth Gospel attest one or more significant units of variation (John 1:17, 28; 2:14, 15, 17, 19; 4:14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 24, 27, 30, 34, 36, 38, 39, 40, 47, 49, 51; 8:43, 44). For a full listing of the data, see the apparatus in Ehrman, Fee, and Holmes, *Text of the Fourth Gospel*.

The viability of these data can be illustrated by several instances in which the exegesis does not appear to have been at stake. There are three citations of John 4:17b in Origen's surviving writings. In two of the three, Jesus is said to reply to the Samaritan woman, "You have said rightly, 'I do not have a husband'" (οὐκ ἔχω ἄνδρα).¹⁷ In only the third quotation does Origen mention the text in order to explain Heracleon's interpretation. Notably, here Jesus' words are somewhat different, as they are put in indirect discourse, "You have said truly that you do not have a husband" (οὐκ ἔχεις ἄνδρα).¹⁸ One might be tempted to see in this final quotation a simple paraphrase, made perhaps by Origen himself. It is nonetheless striking that the verse is worded in precisely this way in a significant stream of the textual tradition of the Fourth Gospel. This is the text preserved in the "Western" codices Bezae and Sinaiticus (the latter of which is Western in the first eight chapters of John)¹⁹ as well as in the Latin tradition. It appears then to be a genuine variant reading, attested differently in Heracleon and Origen.

A similar situation occurs seven verses later in Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman "God is Spirit, and those who worship him (τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας αὐτόν) must worship in spirit and in truth." Origen gives precise citations of the verse in five places, three times in the *Contra Celsum* and twice in the Commentary on John. Four of the citations are exactly the same.²⁰ The exception is the second quotation from the Commentary, which again is the only one for which Origen presents Heracleon's interpretation.²¹ In this final instance, he omits the third person pronoun, so that the verse now reads "God is Spirit, and those who worship (τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας) must worship in spirit and in truth." Again one might suspect that Origen has given the passage in a slightly modified form for unknown reasons. What is striking, however, is that the pronoun is also missing from the leading representatives of the Western text as well (the first hands of D and S).

¹⁷ *Jo.Com* XIII, 50; XIII, 52. For the use of the *lemmata* to establish Origen's text, see Ehrman, Fee, and Holmes, *Text of the Fourth Gospel*.

¹⁸ *Jo.Com* XIII, 70.

¹⁹ Demonstrated conclusively by Gordon D. Fee, "Codex Sinaiticus in the Gospel of John: A Contribution to Methodology in Establishing Textual Relationships," *NTS* 15 (1968–69) 23–44.

²⁰ *Jo.Com* XIII, 122; *Cels.* II, 71; VI, 70; VII, 27.

²¹ *Jo.Com* XIII, 147.

As a brief third example, Origen cites John 4:37 on two occasions. The first agrees with the vast majority of MSS: “In this the word is true” (ὁ λόγος ἐστὶν ἀληθινός).²² The other differs simply in the matter of word order (ἐστὶν ὁ λόγος for ὁ λόγος ἐστὶν).²³ Notably, this second instance is the text that Origen has drawn from Heracleon; again, this form of the text agrees with leading representatives of the Western tradition (thus D a b).

These are instances, then, in which Heracleon appears to attest a form of text that is otherwise preserved in the textual tradition of the NT, even though it was not known to, or at least not used by, Origen. In all three of these instances Heracleon’s text supports the so-called Western tradition; in none of them has any exegetical issue been at stake.²⁴

Exegesis does enter into the picture in several other texts, however, and these are to serve as the object of our primary concern. One of the most striking comes in Origen’s interpretation of John 1:21. Origen objects to Heracleon’s construal of this verse by claiming that he had not attended closely to its wording. As it stands, the objection appears odd, given Heracleon’s remarkable attentiveness

²² *Jo.Com* XIII, 319.

²³ *Jo.Com* XIII, 324.

²⁴ A comparable situation occurs in Origen’s citations of John 1:27. Six times he quotes the text as οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ἄξιος (*Jo.Com* II, 215 [with a slight change of word order, ἄξιος ἐγώ; VI, 48, 153, 157, 185; *Mat.Com* XVII, 32]; his seventh quotation derives from Heracleon (*Jo.Com* VI, 198) and omits the ἐγὼ altogether. Interestingly, while this shorter text is attested by a number of Alexandrian witnesses (P⁶⁶, 75, C L 33 565), it is preserved in the “Western” tradition as well (i.e. in Codex Sinaiticus; D is not extant here). Here I should add that even though Origen presents this form of the text as Heracleon’s, in his actual exposition of the passage Heracleon states that John the Baptist declared himself not to be “adequate” (ἰκανός) rather than not “worth” (ἄξιος). If this in fact was Heracleon’s actual text, then he would have agreed with the early Alexandrian witnesses P⁶⁶ and 75 against Origen and the rest of the textual tradition.

Finally, it should be noted that in Origen’s two citations of John 4:42, he gives the text as διὰ τὴν λαλίαν σου (*Jo.Com* XIII, 180, 351), in agreement with P⁷⁵ and B against virtually the rest of the tradition; when he cites Heracleon’s form of the text, however, he gives the passage in the more commonly attested form (which is, of course, also that of the “Western” text) διὰ τὴν σὴν λαλίαν. Moreover, whereas Origen cites Heracleon’s text with λαλίαν rather than μαρτυρίαν, it is patent from Heracleon’s explanation of the verse that he read μαρτυρίαν (which, interestingly enough, happens to be the text of \aleph and D as well): οὗτοι οὐκέτι διὰ μόνη ἀνθρωπίνην μαρτυρίαν, ἀλλὰ δι’ αὐτὴν τὴν ἀλήθειαν πιστεύουσιν. We can probably assume again, therefore, that that when Origen reproduced Heracleon’s text, he inadvertently substituted the key word as himself remembered it. For another instance of this phenomenon, see n. 50 below.

to textual detail elsewhere.²⁵ Nonetheless, according to Origen, when John the Baptist answers the Levites and Priests that he is neither the Christ nor the prophet, Heracleon fails to observe the repetition of the article and so mistakenly thinks that John denies being “a” prophet rather than “the” (messianic) prophet.²⁶ This disregard for the words of the text, maintains Origen, is what leads to Heracleon’s fantastic explanation of why Jesus elsewhere calls John a prophet when the Baptist himself denies it.²⁷

For our purposes it should be noted that Origen cites the passage a total of eight times in his extant writings, seven times with the article. The only exception is the paraphrase of Heracleon’s position. What must not escape our attention, however, is that there is a stream of the NT textual tradition that also lacks the article. In this instance, of course, the Latin witnesses are of no assistance (since Latin has no article); moreover, and regrettably, one of the two leading representatives of the Western tradition (Codex Bezae) happens to be lacunose in this part of John. But Codex Sinaiticus, the other leading Western witness, is extant; remarkably, it stands virtually alone against all other witnesses in reading the shorter form of the text.²⁸ Origen may well have attacked Heracleon for failing to observe an article that was not present in his text of John.

Staying for the moment with the traditions about the Baptist, we do well to reflect on the textual situation of John 1:26, where John observes, “In your midst is standing one whom you do not know.” According to Origen, Heracleon interpreted the verse to mean that, in Jesus, the Savior is now present in the world; from this Origen concludes that Heracleon did not recognize any earlier presence of the Savior.²⁹ Origen rejects this interpretation, insisting that the Logos had been in the world since creation, and could be found among the people of God throughout their history. He finds evidence for his position in Isaiah and the Psalms.

²⁵ His exegesis not infrequently turns on the author’s choice of individual words, verbal inflections, and syntax; he is conscious of literary context and is keen to ask critical questions of the text. See further the comments in R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen’s Interpretation of Scripture* (Richmond VA: John Knox, 1959) 143–47 and, especially, Janssens, “Héracléon,” 277–78.

²⁶ See *Jo. Com* VI, 92 and 115.

²⁷ *Jo. Com* VI, 112–118.

²⁸ In the first hand, along with MS 69.

²⁹ *Jo. Com* VI, 194–197.

This debate centers on the time of the Savior's presence in the world, a question related to the verb tense used by the Baptist. Does he say that the Savior "is now standing" among them (present tense, *στήκει*, as in Heracleon's view?) or that he "has stood" among them (perfect tense, *ἔστηκεν*, as in Origen's)? Interestingly enough, the question relates closely to the textual tradition of the verse: throughout our surviving MSS of John 1:26, the verb fluctuates between the present tense and the perfect, with the present found among Western witnesses and several others,³⁰ the perfect virtually everywhere else. What is peculiar in this instance is the pattern of Origen's own citations. In all, Origen quotes the passage sixteen times. In the early part of the Commentary on John, i.e. in Book Two, written in Alexandria, and Book Six, written soon after his move to Caesarea (and in which he spurns Heracleon's exegesis), he cites the verb in the perfect tense virtually without fail (10 out of 11 times).³¹ The only exception is his quotation of Heracleon, where the present tense coincides with Heracleon's interpretation of the verse.³² Curiously, when Origen cites the verse later in his career, viz. in the *Contra Celsum* (three times) and in the final volume of the John Commentary (twice), he gives the verb in the present tense.³³

What are we to make of these data? Heracleon appears to have known and interpreted a form of the text that is still preserved in some of the Old Latin witnesses and several other MSS. Early in his career, up to and including the time he wrote his rebuttal in Book Six of his Commentary, Origen appears to have known only the other form of the text. His own text ("in your midst has stood one whom you do not know") makes Heracleon's exegesis appear forced, and allows Origen to charge him (implicitly) with failing to recognize the significance of the tense. Ironically, it appears that some years later, long after he had written his attack on Heracleon, Origen himself acquired a MS of the Fourth Gospel in which the verb of 1:26 was given in the present tense.

Other instances of divergent traditions occur in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel. As we have already observed, Origen first mentions

³⁰ Viz., the Old Latin, the Alexandrian witnesses B and L, and fam¹. Codex Sinaiticus, oddly, reads *εστηκεν*.

³¹ Jo.Com II, 215 (*bis*); VI, 48, 153, 154, 155, 156, 188, 197, and 254 (the final reference is an allusion).

³² Jo.Com VI, 194.

³³ *Cels*, II, 9 (*bis*); V, 12; Jo.Com XXXII, 378, 380.

Heracleon in conjunction with his exegesis of John 1:3. Heracleon had interpreted the words, “Apart from him was nothing made,” to refer to the creation of the world and everything in it, but not “to the things outside of the cosmos and the creation.” In other words, the “all things” that came into being through the Logos (v. 3a) did not include the divine Pleroma, which preceded it.³⁴

Origen argues, on the contrary, that all things were indeed made through Christ, including the entire spiritual realm. He makes his point, in part, by emphasizing that when the text says “apart from him, not even one thing came into being,” it really means “not even one thing” (οὐδὲ ἓν). This emphatic statement is buttressed by the strong wording of Origen’s text of John, found consistently in all of his own quotations of 1:3. In conformity with the majority of MSS of the Fourth Gospel, Origen cites the text eight times as χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν.³⁵

It should be noted that he preserves the same form of text even when he summarizes Heracleon’s position. On a later occasion, however, Origen explicitly cites Heracleon’s wording of the passage in order to explain his exegesis of John 4:24.³⁶ In *this* context the text reads χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδέν. What we cannot fail to notice here is that this form of text is also found in the two Western uncials of John 1:3 (S* and D), along with one of our earliest papyri witnesses, P⁶⁶, and fam¹ and Irenaeus.

In this instance in particular we are justified in asking which of our two authors preserves the earlier form of the text.³⁷ Heracleon’s form is supported by a remarkable confluence of early and diverse witnesses: the best Western MSS, one of the earliest Alexandrian,

³⁴ *Jo.Com* II, 100–101. When Origen claims that Heracleon shamelessly “adds” the words “of the things in the cosmos and the creation” to “apart from him was made nothing,” (*Jn.Com* II, 100) he is not referring to an actual textual emendation but to the addition of an extrinsic notion to the text (*contra* Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 145). A comparable situation arises in Origen’s comments on Heracleon’s interpretation of 4:42, “No longer do we believe on account of your testimony.” According to Heracleon the verse means “on account of your testimony, alone,” and in this sense he suggests that the word “alone” is missing (*Jo.Com* XIII, 363).

³⁵ The exact citations and close adaptations: *Jo.Com* II, 91, 100, 101, 105, 108, 13 1; VI, 188; *Dial.Heracl.* 1, 9.

³⁶ *Jo.Com* XIII, 118.

³⁷ As was the case with 1:26, of course, both Heracleon and Origen would well have taken their exegetical stands on *either* wording of the text. The point to be stressed, however, is that Origen’s refutation is especially poignant given his form.

and an assortment of others. Since it is attested by Irenaeus as well, the reading can be dated to a point prior to the production of any of our MSS with text.³⁸ The plausibility that this form of the verse antedates the other is heightened when we consider that Origen's more emphatic form (οὐδὲ ἓν, which for Origen means *not even one thing*) works particularly well for his own position. The sheer convenience of this wording makes one suspect, on transcriptional grounds, that it actually represents a slight scribal corruption effected for polemical reasons—it makes Heracleon (and those like him) look particularly foolish to say “apart from him was made not even one thing . . . except some things.”

Is it conceivable that proto-orthodox scribes would have slightly altered their sacred texts for polemical gain? It is not only conceivable, it is patent that they did, in far more telling and blatant cases than the present.³⁹ What is intriguing about this particular instance is that the change could be effected so readily—simply by the repetition of an epsilon—and that the result is merely a heightening of the nuance, rather than a transformation of the sense.⁴⁰ Here we might say then, that the *origin* of the corruption of οὐδὲν to οὐδὲ ἓν in John 1:3 appears to lie, if not with Origen himself, then in proto-orthodox controversies with Christian Gnostics that were transpiring in his day.⁴¹

An even more complicated textual situation occurs at the end of the Prologue in John 1:18. The general problems that surround this verse are particularly thorny, and do not need to deter us at this point.⁴² There can be little doubt, in any case, about Origen's own

³⁸ With regard to the antiquity of the reading, we should also note that while Origen never explicitly quotes the text in this less emphatic form, he does appear to know of its existence. Before contending with Heracleon over the interpretation of the verse, he indicates that evil is “nothing,” so that when “nothing” came into being “apart from him,” that means that the Word is not responsible for the coming of evil into the world (*Jo.Com* VI, 99 and 107).

³⁹ For a full discussion of scribal alterations of theologically significant texts, see my study *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University, forthcoming).

⁴⁰ At least as the sense is interpreted by most modern commentators.

⁴¹ This controversy also led to disputes concerning the punctuation of vv. 3 and 4 (viz. whether there should be a full stop before ὁ γέγονεν or after). This issue lies beyond the purview of our present discussion, however, as MSS in this early period were by and large not punctuated.

⁴² See Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*. There I argue that the original form of the text was preserved outside of the Alexandrian witnesses, viz. ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός.

form of the text: “The unique God (ὁ μονογενὴς θεός) who is in the bosom of the Father, that one has made him known.” He quotes the passage this way in the two clearest citations of the John Commentary,⁴³ and in five of his seven adaptations or allusions to the verse in the Commentary and in the *Contra Celsum*.⁴⁴ In only one clear citation of the verse does Origen omit the article with μονογενής; perhaps not coincidentally, this is the one instance in which he is discussing Heracleon’s interpretation of the verse.⁴⁵

If Heracleon’s text indeed lacked the article, it would have stood in good company: the one leading representative of the Western text that is extant here, codex Sinaiticus, reads μονογενὴς θεός,⁴⁶ as do leading representatives of the generally superior Alexandrian tradition (P⁶⁶ B C* and L). Is this an earlier form of the text? If so, the strengthening of the phrase through the addition of the article would make some sense: Christ is now said to be absolutely unique, he is not simply one of the aeons of the Pleroma. Conceivably, Origen’s text has arisen from the ashes of anti-gnostic polemics.⁴⁷

But that is not all. On one other occasion Origen refers to Heracleon’s interpretation of John 1:18, citing it in a form that has appeared truncated to most of his editors and translators. In Book Six of this Commentary Origen objects to Heracleon’s opinion that the Evangelist rather than John the Baptist uttered the words of v. 18. He points out that, contrary to Heracleon’s view, the Baptist and even some of his predecessors received the full benefit of the revelation of the μονογενής;⁴⁸ (literally) “for not now for the first time

⁴³ *Jo. Com* II, 212 (written during his Alexandrian period) and XXXII 264 (during his Caesarean).

⁴⁴ *Jo. Com* VI, 14 and 74; *Cels.* VII, 49; VIII, 1 and 17. The exceptions are too allusive to be of much use: *Cels.* II, 71 and VII, 43.

⁴⁵ *Jo. Com* VI, 13. As he is indicating the extent of the pericope here, one might plausibly think that he has simply truncated his reference for contextual reasons—i.e. that he is not trying to give an exact citation of the verse, but simply to indicate which verse he is referring to. At the same time, since he is in the midst of discussing Heracleon’s interpretation, it is at least equally plausible that Heracleon’s form of the text has in this instance come to influence him.

⁴⁶ In the first hand.

⁴⁷ I offer an alternative explanation of the textual data in *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*.

⁴⁸ For Heracleon, the psychic (represented by the John the Baptist, who is also an image of the Demiurge) does not have full knowledge of God, and yet is ignorant of this lack. Therefore, in his ignorance of his ignorance, the Baptist can scarcely say, “no one has seen God at any time.” Origen replies that if the Baptist had indeed “received grace upon grace,” and confessed that “grace and truth come

has he explained unto the bosom of the father” (οὐ γάρ νῦν πρῶτον ἐξηγήσατο εἰς τὸν κοιλὸν τοῦ πατρὸς). Given the unusual phrasing, it is not surprising to find Preuschen, followed by Blanc, emending Origen’s text by reinserting the clause that appears at first glance to have inadvertently dropped out. The “restored” text reads οὐ γάρ νῦν πρῶτον ἐξηγήσατο <ὁ ὄν> εἰς τὸν κοιλὸν τοῦ πατρὸς “for not now for the first time did the one who is in the bosom of the Father make [him] known.”⁴⁹

The emendation is certainly possible, but it overlooks a significant datum. Elsewhere in the textual tradition of the Fourth Gospel there are MSS that lack the clause ὁ ὄν. Specifically, it is missing in the Western tradition of the verse, as attested in Codex Sinaiticus and the Old Latin MSS a. Is it possible that Heracleon’s text lacked not only the article before μονογενῆς but also the participial clause? If so, then interpreters have consistently misconstrued Heracleon’s exegesis. For him the text does not function christologically, as it does for Origen, in stating something about the identity of the μονογενῆς. Instead, it functions soteriologically to indicate the effect of his revelation. That is to say, Heracleon’s text does not indicate that the Logos *is in* the bosom of the Father, it says that the Logos explains “unto” the bosom of the Father. For Heracleon, this would mean that Christ’s revelation elevates the pneumatics into the bosom of the Father. That this was indeed Heracleon’s construal of the verse is suggested by Origen’s rebuttal, for he proceeds to argue that in fact the coming of the Logos in Christ is not its first appearance, since even Abraham—i.e., not one of Heracleon’s *pneumatikoi*—encountered the revelation and experienced its benefits.

In sum, Heracleon explained the verse soteriologically to show how one comes into the bosom of the Father. Origen, on the other hand, interprets it christologically, to explain the nature of the Logos. Here again it appears that these two exegetes did not simply differ over the correct interpretation of the words of the text. To some degree, they disagreed over the words of the text themselves.

Something similar may perhaps be said concerning the text of John 1:4. In this case, unfortunately, we cannot be certain that

through Jesus Christ” (since Heracleon concedes that the Baptist spoke the words of 1:16–17), then he indeed must have acquired the full revelation of the one who is in the bosom of the Father (*Jo.Com* VI, 14).

⁴⁹ *Jo.Com* VI, 15.

Origen has actually cited Heracleon's form of the passage.⁵⁰ What we do know is that Heracleon understood the phrase "What was in him was life," to mean that "life" is found within the "*pneumatikoi*," who realize their true essence when they encounter the revelation in Christ. Among other things, this means that Heracleon did not refer the verse to Christ *per se*; he understood it chiefly in reference to the present reality of those who have the divine seed within them: in them "is" life.

Here we must observe that this exegesis would make particular sense if Heracleon's text of John 1:4 read ἐν αὐτῷ ζῶν ἔστιν ("in him *is* life").⁵¹ Interestingly, Origen himself acknowledges that this reading appears "in some copies" of the Fourth Gospel.⁵² What is particularly intriguing is that among the copies that have survived, those of the so-called Western tradition (§ D OL) consistently read the present tense. Perhaps the fact that the text presupposed by Heracleon's exegesis is preserved within the tradition that he otherwise appears to attest is not altogether accidental. Here again one might suppose that his exegetical difference from Origen is in some way related to the differences between their MSS of the Gospel.

In only one instance does Origen explicitly attribute a difference in interpretation to a difference in text. Ironically, this is also the only instance in which none of our surviving MSS has preserved Heracleon's reading. As if taking the text for granted, Heracleon remarks that the Samaritan woman's *six* husbands represent the material realm into which she has fallen, the number six being representative of matter and, therefore, of evil.⁵³ Origen disallows Heracleon's construal, in part because his own MSS of the Fourth Gospel state that the Samaritan woman had five husbands, not six. Yvonne Janssens has argued that Heracleon actually does not preserve a divergent

⁵⁰ He discusses Heracleon's interpretation in *Jo.Com* II, 137, but focuses all of his attention on the meaning of ἐν αὐτῷ rather than the significance of the verb tense, which he gives, in conformity with all of his ten other citations, in the imperfect. We may be simply dealing here with a verse that was so familiar to Origen that he quotes it the way he had learned it, even when discussing Heracleon's exegesis. See further my article, "Heracleon and the 'Western' Textual Tradition," NTS (forthcoming) (chap. 15 above). For similar instances, see the discussion of 1:27 and 4:42 in n. 24 above.

⁵¹ Origen's precise citations are found in *Jo.Com* I, 112, 223, 159; II, 112, 114, 128, 137, 143.

⁵² *Jo.Com* II, 132.

⁵³ *Jo.Com* XIII, 71–72.

textual tradition: if one counts the woman's present husband, along with the five in her past, she has in fact had six.⁵⁴ The difficulty with this suggestion is that Origen presents his disagreement with Heracleon not by summarizing his opponent's construal (e.g., by saying, "Heracleon claims that she had six husbands") but by actually quoting Heracleon's form of Jesus' words: "We find in Heracleon [the words], 'You have had six husbands'." This appears, then, to be a textual discrepancy pure and simple, one that proved particularly useful for Heracleon's exegesis.

That there could be such a discrepancy should by now come as no surprise, given the other data we have considered. It may be a matter of pure serendipity that the few MSS that have survived from the early centuries do not preserve the reading. On the other hand, Janssen's intuitions are surely correct to the extent that there is little in what we have examined to suggest that Heracleon himself felt any need to modify his text in light of his interpretation. He may well have done so on occasion—we will never know—but more typically he appears rather to have paid close attention to the details of the text and to have gotten whatever mileage he could out of them in light of his entire theological and hermeneutical system.⁵⁵ Thus, in this particular instance as well, it seems reasonable to assume that he simply cited and interpreted the text as he found it in his copy of the Fourth Gospel.

What conclusions can we draw from this accumulation of data? They would prove particularly significant for NT textual critics if we could determine beyond reasonable doubt where Heracleon produced his work. As intimated at the outset of the study, his association with the mature Valentinus and with Ptolemaeus, and in particular his reputation of heading an Italic school of Valentinian Christians, may well be taken to suggest that he lived and worked in the capital city. If so, this would make his clear agreements with the so-called "Western" tradition especially noteworthy: here we would have an independent witness to the transmission of this form of text in Rome itself during the second half of the second century.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ "Héracléon," 135, n. 43. So too, more recently, Poffet, *La méthode exégétique*, 34, n. 69.

⁵⁵ See n. 25 above.

⁵⁶ These few remarks must be seen as depending on the rather impressionistic impact of an initial study. The text-critical significance of these data can only be determined on the basis of a carefully controlled statistical analysis of their textual

These data are significant in other ways for those who are more generally interested in the history of the interpretation of the NT, as they show how exegesis in the early church related in some measure to the wild fluctuations of the text during the course of its transmission. In the fragmentary materials that survive, over twenty percent of Heracleon's citations of the Fourth Gospel differ textually from Origen's; of these differences, over half have some bearing on their respective exegeses.⁵⁷

This is not at all to say that the form of text each exegete encountered played a determinative role in his exegesis. Quite the contrary, as we know from reading the works of Origen and his gnostic predecessors, the appeal to a spiritual level of meaning could be used to render a so-called "literal" (i.e. grammatico-historical) exegesis innocuous when it came to deciding what the text "really" meant. To many moderns—especially post-Enlightenment modernists—this might suggest that interpreters can use figurative modes of exegesis to make texts say anything they want them to say. It may be more accurate, however, to say that all interpreters, even the Enlightened, have assumptions and perspectives, and that these inevitably affect the way they approach and construe their texts. If the present study has not shown that the words of the text determine its meaning, it has at least shown how the words of a text determine the rhetoric of exegesis, in that the kinds of arguments that an exegete—in this case, a Heracleon or an Origen—feels compelled to use to establish the meaning of a text, depend in some measure on the words that are found within the text.

affinities, which I have now undertaken in a study entitled "Heracleon and the 'Western' Textual Tradition."

⁵⁷ Since the surviving portions of Origen's own work provides some limited evidence that he occasionally modified Heracleon's text into conformity with his own (see the discussions of John 1:27, 1:4, and 4:24 in notes 24 and 50 above), we might suppose that in reality the differences were even more wide-ranging than we can currently detect.

HERACLEON AND THE 'WESTERN' TEXTUAL TRADITION¹

Heracleon's commentary on the Fourth Gospel has always intrigued Patristic scholars concerned with the history of exegesis.² Rarely has it evoked equal interest among textual critics concerned with the history of the NT text. In part this is due to the unfortunate bifurcation of the disciplines, a breach that has begun to mend only in recent years.³ Perhaps in greater part it is due to the nature of the materials. Heracleon's work is preserved almost exclusively in the citations of Origen, who wrote his own exposition, in some measure, as a rebuttal. Origen never completed his commentary on John; of the thirty-two volumes that he did produce, we have just nine. In these we find scattered quotations drawn from the work of his predecessor, cited primarily in order to be refuted. In all, there are not quite fifty such quotations, ranging from two or three lines of Greek text in the standard edition up to several dozen.⁴ Among these

¹ Originally published in *New Testament Studies* 40 (1994) 161–179. Used with permission.

² Among the most interesting and compelling studies are the following: Barbara Aland, 'Erwählungstheologie und Menschenklassenlehre: Die Theologie des Herakleon als Schlüssel zum Verständnis der christlichen Gnosis?' in *Gnosis and Gnosticism* (ed. Martin Krause; NHS 8; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977) 148–81; E. Mühlenberg, 'Wieviel Erlösungen kennt der Gnostiker Herakleon', *ZNW* 66 (1975) 170–93; Elaine Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis: Heracleon's Commentary on John* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon, 1973); and Yvonne Janssens, 'Héracléon: Commentaire sur l'Évangile selon S. Jean', *Le Muséon* 72 (1959): 101–51; 277–99. For a recent comparative analysis of Heracleon and Origen, see Jean-Michel Poffet, *La méthode exégétique d'Héracléon et d'Origène. Commentateurs de Jn 4: Jésus, la Samaritaine et les Samaritains* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1985). A relatively full biographical sketch can be found in the older work of A. E. Brooke, *The Fragments of Heracleon* (TextS 1.4; Cambridge: University, 1891) 31–41; a more recent and briefer discussion can be found in C. Bammel, 'Herakleon', *TRE* 15 (1986) 54–7.

³ I have addressed one aspect of this problem *in extenso* in my book, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford, 1993). In addition, see my overview in 'The Text as Window: NT MSS and the Social History of Early Christianity', *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes; Studies and Documents; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming), chap. 6 above.

⁴ These are collected in Brooke, *Fragments*. I have given a liberal estimation of the number of lines; in fact, most of these fragments also include Origen's rebuttal of Heracleon's exposition. For an English translation of just the expositions themselves,

quotations are sporadic citations of the Fourth Gospel itself, citations that have never been examined for their text-critical significance despite their conspicuous importance: they derive from the first known exposition of the Gospel, penned around 170 C.E. or a bit earlier—i.e., before our earliest full papyri⁵—probably in the city of Rome.⁶

The methodological difficulties of extraction and evaluation have evidently appeared daunting. As a rule, it is difficult to know whether a Patristic citation of Scripture is deliberately precise, deliberately paraphrastic, or inadvertently casual. In the case of Heracleon, we must decide not only where he himself has given exact quotations of his Gospel text, but also where Origen has given exact quotations of Heracleon—specifically, exact quotations of Heracleon’s quotations of John. Nonetheless, methodological breakthroughs in the study of Patristic citations of Scripture have cleared the way for an evaluation of even our most difficult witnesses,⁷ and a close examination of Heracleon’s fragments show that while methodological problems may appear difficult, they are not at all unnerving.

There are, in fact, clear indications that Origen occasionally cites Heracleon with pin-point accuracy, even with respect to his quotations of the Gospel:⁸ he sometimes discusses his opponent’s exposition after citing the text in a form that differs from that which he attests elsewhere in his own writings. These differences almost certainly indicate that Origen has reproduced his text of Heracleon accurately.⁹ On other occasions, fewer in number, Origen cites

see Werner Foerster, *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts* (tr. R. McL. Wilson; Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) 1.162–83.

⁵ I.e., not counting such scraps as P⁵², P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵ are typically dated to around the year 200 C.E., or perhaps somewhat later.

⁶ The Roman provenance becomes important in assessing the text-critical significance of Heracleon’s citation (see below). For the arguments in its favor, see my article, ‘Origen, Heracleon, and the Text of the Fourth Gospel,’ *VC* 47 (1993) 105–18 (chap. 14 above).

⁷ See, esp., the article by Gordon D. Fee on the use of Patristic evidence in *ANRW* II.26.1246–65. These breakthroughs led Fee to launch a new monograph series, *The New Testament in the Greek Fathers: Texts and Analyses*. See further the discussion in my contribution to the series, *Didymus the Blind and the Text of the Gospel* (NTGF 1; Atlanta: Scholars, 1986) ch. 1.

⁸ Here it may be noted that Origen typically introduces his quotations of Heracleon with set phrases that serve almost as quotation marks; e.g. ὁ δὲ Ἡρακλέων τὸ μέσος ὑμῶν στήκει φήσιν . . . (*Io.Com* 6.39.194) or ὁ μέντοι γε Ἡρακλέων τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο κατέβη εἰς Καφαρναούμ αὐτός (*Io.Com* 10.11.48) or σφόδρα δὲ ἀπαρτηρήτως ὁ Ἡρακλέων οἶεται τὸ ὁ ζῆλος τοῦ οἴκου σου καταφάγεται με (*Io.Com* 10.34.223).

⁹ See my discussion of these instances in ‘Heracleon, Origen, and the Text of the Fourth Gospel’.

Heracleon's text in a form that *does* coincide with his own citations, even though Heracleon's exposition presupposes a different form. Normally the differences amount to a single key term; in most instances they occur in passages with which Origen enjoyed a particular intimacy, judging from the extent of their appearance in his writings elsewhere. In these instances we are relatively safe in assuming that Origen has inadvertently substituted his own form of the text for Heracleon's. Heracleon's text can itself then be reconstructed with fair accuracy.¹⁰

There are of course numerous instances—the majority, so far as we can tell—in which Origen and Heracleon shared a form of the text. A final possibility, however, is that Heracleon occasionally knew a variant form of a verse for which he provides only a partial exposition. In these instances we can be confident of his reading only for those portions of the verse on which his detailed comments survive. In fact, as we shall see, there are clear and certain reasons for thinking that Origen occasionally modified Heracleon's citations in other portions of these texts, perhaps unconsciously.

Heracleon's Text of the Fourth Gospel

The following apparatus presents every quotation of the Fourth Gospel that can be culled from Origen's citations of Heracleon's commentary, including all of the significant allusions.¹¹ I have not cited the standard formulae the Origen uses to introduce these citations.¹² Wherever possible, I have collated Heracleon's text against a range of Greek and Latin textual witnesses that have been chosen as representative of the leading textual groups.

The verses are cited in canonical order, with Heracleon's quotations and allusions sequenced according to their occurrence in Origen's John Commentary. References are drawn from the edition prepared by C. Blanc in the *Sources Chrétiennes*¹³ (so that *Io.Com* 6.3.14 refers

¹⁰ I have cited all such instances in the apparatus.

¹¹ I have drawn these data from the volume I have co-edited with Gordon D. Fee and Michael W. Holmes, *The Text of the Fourth Gospel in the Writings of Origen* (NTGF 3.1; Atlanta: Scholars, 1992).

¹² See n. 8 above.

¹³ C. Blanc, *Origène: Commentaire sur Saint Jean* (SC 120, 157, 222, 290; Paris: Cerf, 1975–82).

to Book 6, Section 3, Paragraph 14 of Origen's Commentary on John). Multiple citations of a verse are separated by semi-colons. As already indicated, Heracleon's text can sometimes be reconstructed from his exegetical comments; typically this occurs when Origen cites the text in one form—that which he attests elsewhere—whereas Heracleon's exposition indicates support for another. In such instances I have provided a plausible reconstruction of Heracleon's text, marked the reconstruction with the siglum [R], and provided a footnote that explains my rationale. When the quotation of Heracleon preserves only an allusion to the Fourth Gospel rather than a direct citation, I mark the text with the siglum [Al]. Extremely distant echoes of the text have not been included, as these are of no text-critical significance.¹⁴

Following the citations and allusions of each verse is an apparatus that indicates the alignments of the following textual witnesses for the portion of Heracleon's text that survives: P⁶⁶ P⁷⁵ ⚭ A B C D E L Δ Θ Π Ψ Ω f¹ f¹³ 33 565 579 700 892 1241 a b e TR UBS and Origen. Witnesses that are lacunose for the verse are indicated at the outset of each apparatus (e.g., Lac: A 33). The sigla 'inc.' (= beginning with) and 'expl.' (= ending with) indicate the extent of surviving text for witnesses that are partially lacunose. MSS that are highly fragmentary (i.e., that preserve only bits and pieces of a verse) are listed as lacunose in parentheses, and are individually cited in the apparatus as lacunose for each unit of variation they lack. The units of variation are separated from the list of lacunose witnesses, and multiple units of variation from each other, by a double vertical line. Variations are given in the order in which they occur in the verse. The collations follow standard format, with Heracleon's text given first. Witnesses found in parentheses attest the reading in a slightly modified form. Correctors are designated with a superscript 'c', the first hands by a superscript asterisk (thus A* and A^c). Multiple correctors are not distinguished from one another. For each unit of variation, the abbreviation 'rell' (*reliqui*, the rest) signifies the support of all witnesses with text that are not explicitly cited for one of the other readings; NA means 'not applicable', and is applied

¹⁴ Even, e.g., Origen's claim that ἔοικε δὲ βασιλικὸν ὁ Ἡρακλέων λέγειν τὸν Δημιουργόν—which might be taken to suggest that H. read βασιλικός rather than βασιλισκός in 4.46—is so allusive and so clearly put in Origen's own words, that there is simply no way to know.

chiefly to the Latin witnesses where their testimony is ambiguous or mute (e.g., concerning the presence or absence of the article).¹⁵

Following standard procedures, I have not indicated variations involving itacism,¹⁶ minor spelling differences, *nu-ephelkustikon*, and scribal nonsense. For established methodological reasons, I have also not cited variations that involve introductory conjunctions or particles,¹⁷ or variations that involve a longer text that continues after the completion of Heracleon's citation.¹⁸ Moreover, I have not cited all of the variations attested elsewhere in the tradition for verses or portions of verses to which Heracleon merely alludes; in such instances I cite only those variations for which his references indicate his support.

Text and Apparatus

John 1.3 παντα δι' αυτου εγενετο (*Io.Com* 2.14.100); παντα δι' αυτου εγενετο και χωρις αυτου ουδεν (*Io.Com* 13.19.118)¹⁹—Lac.: C [inc. ουδε] || ουδεν P⁶⁶ S* D f¹] ουδε εν S^c rell [NA: a b e]

John 1.4 ο γεγονεν εν αυτω ζωη εστιν [R]²⁰ (*Io.Com* 2.21.137)—εστιν S D a b e] ην rell] omit P⁶⁶

¹⁵ I have not marked the Latin witnesses as 'not applicable' in cases of singular readings, since in these instances *none* of the witnesses can be used to establish textual affinities.

¹⁶ E.g., the variation involving διψήσει/διψήση in 4.14.

¹⁷ E.g., the absence of γάρ in 4.37 or δέ in 4.39. Patristic citations tend to conform such connectives to the context, making their testimony unusable in all but the rarest incidences. See the discussion in Ehrman, Fee, and Holmes, *The Text of the Fourth Gospel in the Writings of Origen*, 26.

¹⁸ E.g., in John 1.27, where ἐρχόμενος is followed by ὃς ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν in many but not all witnesses. There is simply no way to divine Heracleon's text in such instances.

¹⁹ Origen notes that Heracleon appeals to this verse in explicit support of his exegesis of 4.24. When he earlier discusses Heracleon's interpretation of 1.3, he quotes it in the form found otherwise throughout his own writings (οὐδε ἔν). As I argue in 'Heracleon, Origen, and the Text of the Fourth Gospel', he appears to do so in order to make Heracleon's construal look particularly forced: 'Apart from him was made not even one thing' . . . except for *some* things (the Pleroma and what was in it)!

²⁰ This reconstruction is based on Origen's discussion of Heracleon's exegesis, which focuses on the meaning of ἐν αὐτῷ rather than the significance of the verb tense. What is striking is that Heracleon understands the verse to refer to the pneumatics, who because of the revelatory work of the Logos have come to their true being 'in him', and in that sense are, in Origen's words, 'the same as the Logos'. The present tense is clearly amenable to this kind of exegesis. Combined with this is the circumstance that ἔστιν is in fact preserved in the two witnesses that Heracleon

- John 1.16* εκ του πληρωματος αυτου ημεις παντες ελαβομεν και χαριν αντι χαριτος (*Io.Com* 6.3.14)²¹—Lac.: D (explicit παντες) || και rell] omit a b e
- John 1.17* οτι ο νομος δια Μωσως εδοθη, η χαρις και αληθεια δια Ιησου Χριστου εγενετο (*Io.Com* 6.3.14)²²—Lac.: D || οτι rell] τι Ω || χαρις rell] add δε P⁶⁶ a b e || Χριστου **Σ**^c rell] omit **Σ**^{*}
- John 1.18* ουχ υγιως δε ο Ηρακλειον υπολαμβανει ουδεις τον θεον εωρακεν ποποτε [A] (*Io.Com* 6.3.13);²³ μονογενης θεος ο ων εις τον κολπον του πατρος εκεινος εξηγησατο (*Io.Com* 6.3.13);²⁴ εξηγησατο εις τον κολπον του πατρος (*Io.Com* 6.3.15)²⁵—Lac.: D || εωρακε ποποτε rell] ποποτε εωρακε P⁷⁵ θεος (P⁶⁶) P⁷⁵ (**Σ**) (B) (C*) (L) 33 (Origen) (UBS) || υιος C^c (a) rell] μονογενης θεος P⁶⁶ **Σ**^{*} B C L UBS] ο μονογενης θεος P⁷⁵ **Σ**^c C^c 33 Origen [rell lac.] || θεος **Σ**^{*} (a)] add ο ων **Σ**^c rell || εις rell] omit a
- John 1.21* ως αρα Ιωαννης ωμολογησεν μη ειναι ο χριστος αλλα μηδε προφητης μηδε Ηλιας [A] (*Io.Com* 6.15.92)²⁶—Lac.: D (565) || προφητης **Σ**^{*}] ο προφητης **Σ**^c rell [NA a b e]
- John 1.23* εγω φωνη βοωντος εν τη ερημω (*Io.Com* 6.21.118)—Lac.: D
- John 1.26* μεσος υμων στηκει (*Io.Com* 6.39.194)²⁷—Lac.: D || στηκει (Origen) B L f¹ a b e] εισηκει P⁷⁵ (**Σ**); εστηκεν (Origen) rell²⁸

otherwise supports in unusual readings (D; see below). Here we are dealing with a verse that was so familiar to Origen—he cites this portion of it ten times in his extant writings, always in exactly the same form—that even when discussing Heracleon's exegesis he appears to have quoted it the way he had learned it. See further my discussion in 'Heracleon, Origen, and the Text of John'.

²¹ Origen notes that Heracleon attributes these words to John the Baptist.

²² Origen notes that Heracleon attributes these words to John the Baptist.

²³ The reference is probably too allusive to draw any conclusions concerning the word order of Heracleon's text or the presence of the article (οὐδεις τὸν θεόν for θεὸν οὐδεῖς).

²⁴ This quotation comes from Origen, but Heracleon's text may have influenced its form: this is the only clear citation of the passage in which Origen omits the article before μονογενής. The rest of the citation, however, is Origen's: Heracleon apparently did not read ὁ ὢν (see the following reference).

²⁵ C. Blanc (SC 157, p. 140) follows Preuschen in supplying the clause <ὁ ὢν>, so as to bring the passage into closer conformity to the prevailing text of the MS tradition of the Fourth Gospel (ἐξηγήσατο <ὁ ὢν> εις τὸν κόπλον τοῦ πατρος). As I have argued in 'Heracleon, Origen, and the Text of the Fourth Gospel', however, this overlooks both the exegetical possibilities of the shorter text and its preservation in a stream of the NT textual tradition.

²⁶ Origen is paraphrasing Heracleon's text explicitly to show that he failed to account for the article before προφήτης.

²⁷ This is the one instance in Book 6 in which Origen clearly cites Heracleon's form of the text. In all of his other quotations of the passage in Book 6, and earlier in Book 2, Origen cites the verb in the perfect (see the following note). This suggests that in the quotation in 6.39.197, Origen has given the clause in his own customary form, even though it might appear at first to be from Heracleon. It is to be noted that the quotation of 1.27 that immediately follows appears also to be Origen's, in that Heracleon's exegesis appears to presuppose a different wording.

²⁸ With the exception of *Io.Com* 6.39.194—which happens to preserve Heracleon's text—the alternation of ἔστηκεν/στήκει in Origen's citations follows a regular pat-

- John 1.27* οπισω μου ερχομενος (*Io.Com* 6.39.197); ουκ ειμι ικανος ινα λυσω αυτου τον ιμαντα του υποδηματος [R]²⁹ (*Io.Com* 6.39.198)³⁰—Lac.: D || ουκ P^{66*75} S C L 33 565] εγω ουκ rell³¹ || ικανος P^{66,75}] αξιος rell || αυτου τον ιμαντα του υποδηματος rell] τον ιμαντα του υποδηματος αυτου P⁶⁶ a b (e) || του υποδηματος rell] omit 579
- John 1.28* και παρα Ηρακλεωνι γουν βηθανιαν ανεγνωμεν [A] (*Io.Com* 6.40.204)—Lac.: D || βηθανια S* C* Ψ* rell³²] Βηθαβαρα S^c C^c Π Ψc f^{1.13} 33 TR] βηθαβαρα S^c
- John 1.29* ο Ηρακλεων . . . αποφαινεται οτι το μεν αμνος του θεου ως προφητης φησιν ο Ιωαννης, το δε ο αιρων την αμαρτιαν του κοσμου ως περισσοτερον προφητου [A] (*Io.Com* 6.60.306)—Lac.: D || την αμαρτιαν rell] τας αμαρτιας e
- John 2.12* μετα τουτο κατεβη εις Καφαρναουμ αυτος (*Io.Com* 10.11.48)—Lac.: C D || τουτο rell] ταυτα b] add το σημειον e] add ο Ιησους f¹
- John 2.14* ευρεν εν τη ιερη (*Io.Com* 10.33.211); προς τουτοις τους ευρισκομενους εν τω ιερω πωλουντας βοας και προβατα και περιστερας και τους καθημενους κερματιστας εξεδεξατο λεγεσθαι . . . [A] (*Io.Com* 10.33.212)³³—Lac.: C D || πωλουντας rell] add και αγοραζοντας e] add τας P⁷⁵ || βοας και προβατα S^c rell] και τα προβατα και βοας S* a || καθημενους rell] add επι τραπεζας e
- John 2.15* και το φραγγελιον δε πεποιησθαι εκ σχοινων υπο του Ιησου [A] (*Io.Com* 10.33.213)³⁴—Lac.: C D || φραγγελιον rell] ως φραγγελιον P^{66,75} L f¹ 33 565 892 1241 a b e || σχοινων rell] σχοιου 33

tern: he uses the perfect tense early in his career (*John Commentary*, Books 1–6), the present tense late (Book 32, and the *Contra Celsum*). This appears then to be an instance in which Origen continued using an Alexandrian MS during his early residence in Caesarea, before changing MSS later. See further ‘Heracleon, Origen, and the Text of the Fourth Gospel’, 108–9.

²⁹ Origen appears to have cited Heracleon’s text precisely *except* in his substitution of the ἄξιος for Heracleon’s ἰκανός. In fact, Heracleon’s own exposition of the verse in 6.39.198 explicitly uses the latter term. This is another verse that was so intimately familiar to Origen (he cites it six times in his extant writings, in every case with ἄξιος), that he apparently made an inadvertent modification of Heracleon’s text when citing it. Cf. 1.4 above.

³⁰ The first citation is too terse to be taken as evidence that Heracleon’s text lacked the article before ὀπίσω, or even the introductory clause αὐτὸς ἐστίν. I have therefore not cited these variants in the apparatus. The case is otherwise with Origen himself. See Ehrman, Holmes, and Fee, *The Text of the Fourth Gospel in the Writings of Origen*.

³¹ The witnesses locate ἐγώ in a variety of places in the clause.

³² I take this to be the text of Origen’s own MSS, even though he himself emended the text to Βηθαβαρά. This emendation itself proved influential, as later scribes incorporated it into their texts. Origen admits, however, that his preference is based not on MS evidence, but on having realized that his MSS could not be correct: Bethany is not near the River Jordan. His statement that ‘nearly’ all MSS read Βηθανία (6.40.204) should probably be taken, then, as hyperbole; so far as we can tell, none of his MSS read otherwise.

³³ Origen is referring to Heracleon’s exegesis of the text.

³⁴ Again, Origen is referring to Heracleon’s exegesis.

- John 2.17* ο ζηλος του οικου σου καταφαγεται με (*Io.Com* 10.34.223)—Lac.: C D || ο rell] omit Δ || καταφαγεται rell] κατεφαγε 565 TR [NA: a b e]
- John 2.19* ο μεντοι γε Ηρακλεων το εν τρισιν φησιν αντι του εν τριτη [A] (*Io.Com* 10.37.248)—Lac.: C D || εν rell] omit B
- John 4.11* ουτε αντλημα εχεις και το φρεαρ εστιν βαθυ (*Io.Com* 13.35.226)—ουτε rell] ουδε D
- John 4.12* και οιοται του κοσμικην αυτην ειναι αποδειξιν φερειν εκ του τα θρεμματα του Ιακωβ εξ αυτης πεπωκεναι [A] (*Io.Com* 13.10.57)³⁵
- John 4.14* ου μη διψηση δε εις τον αιωνα (*Io.Com* 13.10.60)—ου μη . . . αιωνα C^c rell] omit C*³⁶ || μη rell] omit D
- John 4.15* δος μοι τουτο το υδωρ (*Io.Com* 13.10.65); δος μοι τουτο το υδωρ ινα μη διψω μηδε διερχομαι ενθαδε αντλειν (*Io.Com* 13.10.66)—διψω P^{66c} rell] διψησω P^{66*} D [NA: a b e] || διερχομαι P⁶⁶ N* Origen UBS] διερχομαι P⁷⁵ B] ερχομαι N^c E L Θ Ψ f¹³ 33 700 892 1241 (a b e)] ερχομαι (a b e) rell || ενθαδε N^c rell] ωδε N*
- John 4.16* λεγει αυτη . . . υπαγε φωνησον τον ανδρα σου (*Io.Com* 13.11.67);³⁷ φωνησον σου τον ανδρα και ελθε ενθαδε (*Io.Com* 13.11.68)—Lac.: (33) σου τον ανδρα (Heracleon) (Origen) B] τον ανδρα σου (Heracleon) (Origen) rell³⁸
- John 4.17* αληθες ειρηκας οτι ανδρα ουκ εχεις (*Io.Com* 13.11.70)³⁹—Lac.: (33) (a) || αληθες] καλωσ rell || ειρηκας] ειπας rell || ανδρα ουκ εχεις rell] ουκ ανδρα εχεις (f¹³)] ουκ εχεις ανδρα b || εχεις N D (b) e] εχω rell [a lac.]
- John 4.18* αληθες ειρηκας (*Io.Com* 13.11.70);⁴⁰ εξ ανδρας εσχεις (*Io.Com* 13.11.71)⁴¹—Lac.: (33) || αληθες rell] αληθως N E [NA: a b e] || ειρηκας rell] ειπας P⁷⁵ || εξ] πεντε rell

³⁵ Origen is referring here to Heracleon's interpretation of the verse.

³⁶ It has sometimes been argued that, along with C*, the exemplar Origen used for his commentary on the Fourth Gospel had inadvertently omitted the phrase οὐ μή . . . αὐτῶ³ from 4.14 (because of homoeoteleuton; thus, e.g., Fee 'The Text of John', 377). The lemma of *Io.Com* 13.1.2 omits the phrase, as does the full quotation of *Io.Com* 13.3.14 and the adaptation of 13.4.20. It is nonetheless to be noted that Origen explicitly quotes the first portion of the phrase in question in the nearby context (*Io.Com* 13.10.60), countering Heracleon's interpretation of it with his own. It would appear then, that Origen's earlier citation and allusion have been shortened for contextual reasons (Origen is interested in commenting on what the final clause might mean) and that the lemma has in turn been influenced by his quotations ad. loc.

³⁷ It is impossible to determine whether Heracleon's text included the name Ἰησοῦς, with or without the article. I have therefore not cited the variants in the apparatus.

³⁸ Both Heracleon and Origen attest the variant word orders.

³⁹ Origen appears to give Heracleon's precise text, even though it varies from all other witnesses in reading ἀληθὲς εἴρηκας (for καλῶς εἶπας). Either Heracleon or his MS of John has been influenced here by the phrasing at the end of v. 18. This in itself, however, indicates the wording of that passage (which is otherwise disputed) in Heracleon's text.

⁴⁰ Heracleon, or his MS of John, derived these words from 4.18; see n. 39 above.

⁴¹ This represents an actual quotation from Heracleon's text, *contra* Janssens,

- John 4.20* οι πατερες ημων εν τω ορει τουτω προσεκυνησαν (*Io.Com* 13.15.94)—
Lac.: (a) || τω ορει τουτω rell] τουτω τω ορει 565 a b e TR
- John 4.21* πιστευε μοι γυναι (*Io.Com* 13.16.95)—Lac.: (33) || πιστευε P^{66,75}
⊠ B C* D L f^{1,13} 565 1241 Origen UBS] πιστευσον rell [NA: a b e;
33 lac.] || πιστευε μοι γυναι P^{66,75} ⊠ B C L (Ψ) (892) 1241 b Origen
UBS] γυναι πιστευε (Δ)] γυναι πιστευε μοι rell || μοι rell] add λεγοντι f¹³
- John 4.22* ημεις προσκυνουμεν (*Io.Com* 13.19.114); οτι η σωτηρια εκ των
Ιουδαιων εστιν (*Io.Com* 13.19.115)—οτι rell] add οίδαμεν a || των Ιουδαιων
rell] της Ιουδαιας b
- John 4.24* πνευμα ο θεος . . . τους προσκυνουντας εν πνευματι και αληθεια δει
προσκυνειν (*Io.Com* 13.25.147); εν πνευματι και αληθεια προσκυνεισθαι τον
θεον [AI] (*Io.Com* 13.19.117)—προσκυνουντας ⊠* D*] add αυτον ⊠^c D^c
rell || δει προσκυνειν ⊠^c rell] προσκυνειν δει ⊠* D] δει e || και αληθεια
⊠^c rell] αληθειας ⊠*
- John 4.26* εγω ειμι ο λαλων σοι (*Io.Com* 13.28.172)
- John 4.27* ηλθον . . . οι μαθηται προς αυτον (*Io.Com* 13.28.172)⁴²—ηλθον ⊠^c
rell] επηλθον ⊠* e
- John 4.30* εξηλθον δε εκ της πολεως (*Io.Com* 13.31.191)—εξηλθον rell] εξηρχ-
οντο L 1241 [NA a b e]
- John 4.34* εμον βρωμα εστιν ινα ποιησω το θελημα του πεμψαντος με (*Io.Com*
13.38.247)—ποιησω P^{66,75} B C D L Θ Π Ψ f¹ 33 565 579 Origen UBS]
πωω rell [NA: a b e]
- John 4.36* ο θεριζων μισθον λαμβανει . . . και συναγει καρπον εις ζων αιωνιον
(*Io.Com* 13.46.299); ινα ο σπειρων ομου χαριη και ο θεριζων και ο θεριζων (*Io.Com*
13.49.322)—ινα P^{66,75} B C L Ψ f¹ 1=33 565 892 1241 e Origen UBS]
add και rell || ομου χαριη και ο θεριζων (e) rell] ομου καιριη και θεριζων
P⁶⁶ Θ] και ο θεριζων ομου χαριη D] ομου χαριη μετα του θεριζοντος e
- John 4.37* εν τουτω εστιν ο λογος αληθινος οτι αλλος εστιν ο σπειρων και
αλλος ο θεριζων (*Io.Com* 13.49.324)—εν . . . θεριζων rell] omit P⁷⁵ || εστιν
ο λογος D a b] ο λογος εστιν rell [P⁷⁵ lac.] || αληθινος B C* L Δ Π*
Ψ 33 565 700 1241 Origen UBS] αληθης f¹ (579)] αληθειας a] ο αληθι-
νος C^c Π^c rell [P⁷⁵ lac.] || εστιν² rell] omit Ψ [P⁷⁵ lac.]
- John 4.38* υμεις εις τον κοπον αυτων εισεληλυθατε (*Io.Com* 13.50.336)—εις
C^c rell] omit C* || τον κολπον rell] τους κοπλους e
- John 4.39* ο δ' Ηρακλεων το μεν εκ της πολεως αντι του εκ του κοσμου εξειλ-
ηφεν· το δε δια τον λογον της γυναικος τουτεστιν δια της πνευματικης
εκκλησιας· και επισημαινεται γε το πολλοι ως πολλων οντων ψυχικων [AI]
(*Io.Com* 13.51.341)
- John 4.40* ο δε Ηρακλεων εις τους τοπους ταυτα φησιν· παρ' αυτοις εμεινεν
και ουκ εν αυτοις και δυο ημερας [AI] (*Io.Com* 13.51.349)—παρ' αυτοις
rell] προς αυτους C || δυο ημερας rell] ημερας δυο ⊠

'Héracleon', 135, n. 43. See my discussion in 'Heracleon, Origen, and the Text of the Fourth Gospel', 112–13.

⁴² It is impossible to judge whether Heracleon's text actually included the prepositional phrase πρὸς αὐτόν, or whether this is simply a loose citation adapted to the context. The phrase is otherwise unattested.

- John 4.42* ουκετι δια την σην μαρτυριαν πιστευομεν . . . αυτοι γαρ ακηκοαμεν και οιδαμεν οτι ουτος εστιν ο σωτηρ του κοσμου [R]⁴³ (*Io.Com* 13.53.363)—ουκετι rell] ουκ a || σην (rell)] σου (post λαλιαν) P⁷⁵ B Origen [NA: a b e] || μαρτυριαν **Σ*** D b] λαλιαν **Σ^c** rell || πιστευομεν rell] αυτω b || αυτοι rell] αυτου D a || ακηκοαμεν Π* rell] add παρ' αυτου **Σ** Π^c f^{1.13} || οιδαμεν rell] εγνωκαμεν Π || ουτος P^{66c} rell] αυτος P^{66*} || ουτος εστιν Π 1241] add αληθως rell⁴⁴ || ο rell] omit Δ
- John 4.47* εκ της Ιουδαϊας εις την Γαλιλαιαν . . . ημελλεν αποθνησκειν [A] (*Io.Com* 13.60.417)—εκ rell] απο f¹³ 33 1241 [NA: a b e]
- John 4.48* εαν μη σημεια και τερατα ιδητε ου μη πιστευσητε (*Io.Com* 13.60.419)—πιστευσητε rell] πιστευσετε E
- John 4.49* καταβηθι πριν αποθανειν το παιδιον μου (*Io.Com* 13.60.420)—Lac. (a) || πριν Π* rell] add η Θ Π^c 579 [NA: b e; a lac.] || το παιδιον (b e) rell] τον παιδα **Σ** (b e)] τον υιον A f¹³ [a lac.] || μου rell] omit D f¹ 565 b e [a lac.]
- John 4.50* ο υιος σου ζη (*Io.Com* 13.60.421)⁴⁵
- John 4.51* δουλους δε του βασιλικου εξειληφεν τους αγγελους του δημιουργου, απαγγελοντας εν τω· ο παις σου ζη [A] (*Io.Com* 13.60.423)—ο παις P⁶⁶ rell] ο υιος P^{66c} D L Π 33 579 892 1241 a b e] ο παις . . . ο υιος f¹³ || σου P^{66c} (f¹³) rell] αυτου P^{66*,75} **Σ** A B C (f¹³) UBS || ο C^c rell] omit C*
- John 4.53* επιστευσεν αυτος και η οικια αυτου ολη (*Io.Com* 13.60.424)
- John 5.45* εις ον υμεις ηλπισατε (*Io.Com* 20.38.358)⁴⁶—Lac.: C
- John 8.21* οπου εγω υπαγω υμεις ου δυνασθε ελθειν (*Io.Com* 19.14.89)—Lac.: A C
- John 8.22* μητι αποκτεινει εαυτον (*Io.Com* 19.19.124)—Lac.: A C || εαυτον rell] αυτον D 1241 [NA: a b e]
- John 8.43* δια τι δε ου δυνασθε ακουειν τον λογον τον εμον; [A] (*Io.Com* 20.20.168); . . . μη δυνασθε αυτους ακουειν τον Ιησου λογον μηδε γινωσκειν αυτου την λαλιαν [A] (*Io.Com* 20.20.168)—Lac.: A || τι rell] omit L || τον λογον τον εμον (a b e) rell] τον εμον λογον Θ f¹³ (a b e)] των λογων των εμων 700 || λαλιαν rell] αληθειαν D

⁴³ Origen actually cites the text with *λαλίαν* rather than *μαρτυρίαν*. But Heracleon's explanation of the verse shows that he read *μαρτυρίαν*: οὔτοι οὐκέτι διὰ μόνην ἀνθρωπίνην μαρτυρίαν, ἀλλὰ δι' αὐτὴν ἀλήθειαν πιστεύουσιν. I have assumed, for the purposes of the reconstruction, that here again Origen reproduced Heracleon's text, but inadvertently substituted the key word as he himself remembered it.

⁴⁴ The MSS that attest the adverb locate it in a variety of places in the clause.

⁴⁵ The context of the discussion indicates that the reference is to 4.50 rather than 4.53.

⁴⁶ It is difficult to judge from this brief reference whether Heracleon stands against virtually the entire MS tradition of John in reading the verb in the aorist rather than the perfect.

John 8.44 υμεις εκ του πατρος του διαβολου εστε (*Io.Com* 20.20.168); υμεις εκ του πατρος του διαβολου εστε (*Io.Com* 20.20.168); εκ του πατρος του διαβολου . . . τας επιθυμιας του πατρος υμων θελετε ποιειν (*Io.Com* 20.24.211)—Lac.: A || του¹ rell] omit 565 892 TR [NA: a b e] || του² rell] omit 892
John 8.50 εστιν ο ζητων και κρινων (*Io.Com* 20.38.358)—Lac.: A

The Affinities of Heracleon's Text

We can begin to assess the contours of the text available to Heracleon around 170 c.e. in Rome⁴⁷ by evaluating its relation to witnesses of other times and places, witnesses whose affinities are reasonably well known. The approach I use here is the quantitative method introduced by E. C. Colwell and refined by Gordon Fee and others. The procedure, which is by now familiar and needs no justification, involves determining the percentage of agreements of an uncharted witness with members of established textual groups in units of variation in which at least two of the witnesses differ from all others.⁴⁸ For the purposes of this analysis, the witnesses of my apparatus can be grouped as follows:⁴⁹

Primary Alexandrian: P^{66,75} B Origen UBS³

Secondary Alexandrian: C L Ψ 33 579 892 1241

Caesarean: Θ f¹ f¹³ 565 700

Western: ⋈ D a b e

Byzantine: A E Δ Π Ω TR

For the verses that Heracleon cites, there are a total of 46 units of variation in which at least two of these witnesses stand against the others. When Heracleon's textual alignments in these readings are calculated in terms of overall percentage of agreement, they can be ranked as follows.

⁴⁷ See n. 6 above.

⁴⁸ For the development of this method and its various refinements, see my article, 'Methodological Developments in the Analysis and Classification of New Testament Documentary Evidence', *NovT* 29 (1987) 22–45 (chap. 2 above).

⁴⁹ I have included a proportionally greater number of Alexandrian witnesses and a number of 'Caesarean' witnesses because Origen, our source for Heracleon's text, has traditionally been used to establish the contours of these traditions.

Table I
 Agreements with Heracleon (excluding the modern editions)

Origen	71.11%	Ⲛ ^c	58.70%
Ⲛ	69.57%	1241	57.78%
B	69.57%	565	57.78%
L	69.57%	700	57.78%
C	69.05%	Ω	57.78%
P ⁷⁵	68.18%	C ^c	57.14%
P ^{75c}	68.18%	579	55.56%
Ψ	66.67%	892	55.56%
P ⁶⁶	65.22%	E	55.56%
P ^{66c}	65.22%	Π ^c	53.33%
Ψ ^c	64.44%	Θ	53.33%
D	62.50%	A	50.00%
f ¹	60.00%	b	48.28%
33	60.00%	f ¹³	45.45%
Δ	60.00%	a	37.04%
Π	60.00%	e	31.03%
D ^c	59.83%		

In isolation, these alignments might be taken to suggest that Heracleon attests an essentially Alexandrian form of the text: he appears to agree most extensively with leading representatives of both forms (primary and secondary) of this tradition. But this judgment would be premature. We must recall that Heracleon's citations are preserved only in Origen, one of the purest witnesses of the Alexandrian tradition. We have already seen instances in which Origen manifestly changed Heracleon's text into conformity with his own.⁵⁰ Are there other instances in which we cannot demonstrate the change?

It is necessary, first, to recognize Origen's own affinities in these portions of the text.

⁵⁰ See notes 20, 29, and 43 above.

Table II
 Agreements with Origen, in verses attested by Heracleon
 (excluding the modern editions)

B	93.33%	f ¹	77.27%
Ψ	90.91%	1241	77.27%
Ψ ^c	88.64%	565	77.27%
P ⁷⁵	88.37%	Θ	77.27%
P ^{75c}	88.37%	A	75.61%
C	87.80%	P ⁶⁶	73.33%
L	84.44%	Π ^c	72.73%
Δ	84.09%	ℵ ^c	71.11%
33	81.82%	Heracleon	71.11%
700	81.82%	f ¹³	69.77%
Ω	81.82%	ℵ	55.56%
C ^c	80.49%	b	50.00%
579	79.55%	D ^c	46.88%
892	79.55%	e	46.43%
E	79.55%	D	43.75%
Π	79.55%	a	42.31%
P ^{66c}	77.78%		

It is striking to observe that whereas Alexandrian witnesses as a rule rank quite high in their support of Origen's text, Heracleon ranks quite low. It should be noted, in this connection, that the six witnesses standing furthest from Origen are all Western. Heracleon follows not far behind; of the other non-Western witnesses, only Family 13 stands at a comparable distance.

It is of particular interest to notice the position of Codex Sinaiticus in these two tables. Gordon Fee has conclusively shown that Sinaiticus is a leading representative of the 'Western' tradition in these early chapters of John, that in fact its base text here is a close relative to that of Codex Bezae. This form of the text is at a far remove from the Alexandrian tradition attested by Origen. But strikingly, it stands in particularly close proximity to Heracleon.

Here we find ourselves in a dilemma not uncommon in analyses of Patristic citations. While a Father's quantitative relations to other witnesses might, on the surface, suggest one conclusion—in this case, that Heracleon's nearest affinities lie with the Alexandrian tradition—a closer examination uncovers complications. In this instance, it appears that below the surface of a high proportional agreement with Origen and his allies is a clear substratum of tradition that varies significantly from this Alexandria form of the text. This substratum can be raised to visibility by uncovering Heracleon's attestation of various 'group' readings.

First we can rearrange the materials in Table One in terms of our textual groupings.

Table III
Witnesses Arranged by Groups, according to Percentage
Agreement with Heracleon

<i>Western</i>	<i>Agreements</i>	<i>Disagreements</i>	<i>Percentage Agreements</i>
Ⲛ	46	32	69.57%
D	32	20	62.50%
D ^c	32	19	59.38%
Ⲛ ^c	46	27	58.70%
b	29	14	48.28%
a	27	10	37.04%
e	29	9	31.03%
Average	287	158	55.05%
(Ⲛ and D)	78	52	66.67%
<i>Caesarean</i>			
f ¹	45	27	60.00%
565	45	26	57.78%
700	45	26	57.78%
Θ	45	24	53.33%
f ¹³	44	20	45.45%
Average:	224	123	54.91%
<i>Byzantine</i>			
Δ	45	27	60.00%
Π	45	27	60.00%
Ω	45	26	57.78%
E	45	25	55.56%

Table III (*cont.*)

<i>Western</i>	<i>Agreements</i>	<i>Disagreements</i>	<i>Percentage Agreements</i>
Π ^c	45	24	53.33%
A	42	21	50.00%
Average:	267	150	56.18%
<i>Alexandrian Secondary</i>			
L	46	32	69.57%
C	42	29	69.05%
Ψ	45	30	66.67%
Ψ ^c	45	29	64.44%
33	45	27	60.00%
1241	45	26	57.78%
C ^c	42	24	57.14%
892	45	25	55.56%
579	45	25	55.56%
Average:	400	247	61.75%
<i>Alexandrian Primary</i>			
Origen	45	32	71.11%
B	46	32	69.57%
p ⁷⁵	44	30	68.18%
p ^{75c}	44	30	68.18%
p ⁶⁶	46	30	65.22%
p ^{66c}	46	30	65.22%
Average:	271	184	67.90%
Average w/o Origen:	226	152	67.26%
Total Alexandria:	671	431	64.23%

Again, at first glance, might appear to attest an essentially Alexandrian form of the text; this rearrangement of the witnesses, however, illustrates one of the difficulties with the Western tradition: due to well-known difficulties of transmission, the Old Latin MSS typically evidence a high level of disagreement with all other witnesses, even their closest allies (e.g., one another). They are of limited usefulness, therefore, in establishing statistical relations. When the Greek witnesses of the so-called Western tradition (Ⓢ and D) are isolated, however, a different picture emerges: these two average a 66.67%

agreement with Heracleon, better than any of the other major groups (Alexandrian stands at 64.23%). Only the primary Alexandrian subgroup, the text supported by Origen, stands in a closer overall relation. When Origen's own witness is removed from this group—i.e., when only the Greek MSS themselves are considered—the alignments are almost identical, with the primary Alexandrians agreeing with Heracleon in 67.26% of all variation.

What is one to make of the circumstance that Heracleon agrees almost equally with two forms of the text that do not otherwise attest a high rate agreement between themselves? It cannot be accidental that the source for Heracleon stands firmly within one of these traditions. Could it be that his base text was 'Western' and that it has been brought into partial conformity with the primary Alexandrian tradition by the citations of Origen?

Some such conclusion is suggested by a variety of group profiles for the units of variation preserved among our test witnesses.⁵¹ First we might ask how Heracleon fares in readings that are attested uniformly among the two groups of our primary concern. Of our 46 units of variation there are 20 in which all the Alexandrians share the same reading (generally, in the company of witnesses of other groups). Heracleon varies from this uniform Alexandrian text in over one out of three instances. Interestingly, all seven of his divergences involve agreements with the leading witnesses of the Western tradition when these stand along against all other witnesses.⁵² At the same time, there are 13 readings in which these Western witnesses (including here the OL, where their witness can be adduced) stand in uniform agreement. Strikingly, Heracleon agrees with all but two of them ($11/13 = 84\%$).⁵³

Also of interest are variants whose support is found *only* among members of one group or another. The most important of these readings are those attested by all the members of one group (i.e., uniformly) and by no others. There are no such readings among the

⁵¹ On the significance of group profiles for a full analysis of textual alignments, see my article 'The Use of Group Profiles for the Classification of New Testament Documentary Evidence', *JBL* 106 (1987) 465–86, chap. 3 above.

⁵² See the apparatus at 1.4, 18 (fourth variant), 21; 4.17 (final variant), 24 (first variant), 37 (second variant), and 42 (third variant).

⁵³ The exceptions occur in 1.27 (second variant) and 4.42 (ninth variant). It should be noted here that Heracleon agrees with 56% of the 'Caesarean' uniform readings (14/25) and with only 43.33% of the Byzantine (17/30).

Alexandrian witnesses for the portions of text that Heracleon preserves; but there are two among the Western witnesses (1.4 and 4.17 [final variant]). Heracleon supports both readings.⁵⁴ Also significant are variants attested exclusively by members of only one group, even when other members of the group join the majority of witnesses in readings otherwise. There are four such readings preserved among the Alexandrian witnesses here;⁵⁵ Heracleon attests only one of them (1.27). At the same time, there are nine such readings among the Western witnesses;⁵⁶ of these, Heracleon attests five (in 1.18, 21; 4.24, 37, 42). In terms of total support of readings found only among members of one group, then, Heracleon attests the Western text in 7/11 instances (63.64%) but the Alexandrian in only 1/4 (25%). His basic affinities appear, therefore, to lie with the Western tradition, as this is attested in slightly different forms in Codex Bezae and Sinaiticus.

This conclusion can be sustained by considering other kinds of alignments. Here we might observe that out of the eighteen variant readings in which Codex Bezae and Codex Sinaiticus agree, Heracleon concurs some thirteen times (72.22%). Moreover, in ten of these eighteen times the combined text of Bezae and Sinaiticus differs from that of Origen. Heracleon concurs with this Western text on six of the ten occasions (60%). This stands in sharp contrast with what happens when the leading witnesses of the primary Alexandrians vary from Origen; Codex Vaticanus differs on three occasions, of which Heracleon supports just one (33.33%),⁵⁷ whereas P⁷⁵ differs in five instances, of which Heracleon supports only two (40%).⁵⁸ On neither of the two occasions in which B and P⁷⁵ agree together against the reading of Origen does Heracleon attest their reading (4.15 second variant and 4.51 second variant).

It is also striking to observe that when Heracleon *does* vary from Origen (thirteen times), he agrees with Codex Bezae in seven instances (53.85%) and Codex Sinaiticus an even more significant 10 (76.92%).

⁵⁴ Assuming, that is, the validity of my reconstruction of 1.4.

⁵⁵ 1.27 (second variant); 4.15 (second variant), 30, 42 (second variant).

⁵⁶ 1.18 (fourth variant), 21; 2.14 (second variant); 4.24 (first and second variants), 27, 37 (second variant), 42 (third and fourth variants).

⁵⁷ He agrees in 1.18 (third variant), but not in 4.15 (second variant) or 4.51 (second variant).

⁵⁸ Agreeing in the first two variants of 1.27, but not in those of 2.15 (first variant), 4.15 (second variant), and 4.51 (second variant).

This stands in stark contrast with his agreements with the Alexandrian readings in these instances: he agrees with Codex Vaticanus only once (16.67%; second variant of 1.18) and with P⁷⁵ only twice (out of 12, 7,69%; both times in 1.27).⁵⁹

Finally, and perhaps most significantly of all, there are seven instances in which Sinaiticus and Bezae stand alone or virtually alone against all other Greek MSS (or where Sinaiticus does when D is not extant).⁶⁰ Strikingly, Heracleon supports their combined reading in all but one instance (the exception: the second variant of 4.24).

How is it that Heracleon's overall quantitative agreements appear to be aligned with Origen's form of the text while his essential group affinities appear to lie with the tradition that stands at the greatest variance from Origen's? It is striking that in those fourteen instances in which Heracleon varies from Codex Bezae, his text agrees with Origen in ten, and that in his twelve disagreements with Sinaiticus, he agrees with Origen in eleven. This suggests that while his group affinities are with an **Σ**-D form of text, his divergences away from it are toward the form of text attested by the author responsible for preserving his quotations. The conclusion is near to hand: Heracleon used a form of the text that bore a close resemblance to the kind of 'Western' tradition jointly attested by **Σ** and D; in an indeterminate number of instances, Origen consciously or inadvertently modified this text when reproducing Heracleon's exposition. The results of this sporadic modification are now manifest: even though Heracleon's essential alignments were with the Western tradition, his quotations of the text mistakenly appear by and large to be Alexandrian.

Conclusion

What conclusions can we draw from this analysis? Above all, it is significant in saying something about the transmission of the so-called 'Western' text of the Fourth Gospel. To be sure, we have not uncovered any evidence of a consolidated form of this text that could match the carefully controlled tradition of Alexandria. At the same time, there does appear to have been a variant textual tradition in

⁵⁹ He would not be expected to agree as frequently with these witnesses in such readings, of course, since here they tend to side with Origen.

⁶⁰ 1.4, 18 (fourth variant), 21; 4.17 (fourth variant), 24 (first and second variants), and 42 (third variant).

the West, specifically in the capital city of the Empire, during the late second century. This form of the text varied in significant ways from the text of the papyri, virtually coterminous witnesses that have now been uncovered by the spectacular finds in Egypt. While we cannot be certain as to the precise contours of this Roman text, it appears to have been perpetuated through lost intermediaries over the course of several centuries: an exemplar containing a comparable form of text was used for the first eight chapters of John by the late fourth-century scribe of Codex Sinaiticus; somewhat later another found its way into the hands of the scribe who produced Codex Bezae. The relationship of this tradition to the Greek MSS underlying the early versions typically aligned with Bezae (esp. the Old Latin and Syriac) is only one of the many unsolved enigmas facing historians concerned with the history of transmission. The general issues involved, however, are not only of interest to specialists in the text. As can be inferred from the readings cited in the apparatus, and as I have spelled out more fully elsewhere, discrepancies among early textual witnesses relate rather closely to disagreements among early Christian exegetes, whose interpretations of the text depended, to some extent, on the variant forms of the tradition with which they happened to be familiar, some of which have survived antiquity in the fragmentary MSS of the Fourth Gospel available to us today.⁶¹

⁶¹ This is the burden of my article, 'Origen, Heracleon, and the Text of the Fourth Gospel'. See further my full-length treatment, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*.

THE THEODOTIANS AS CORRUPTORS OF SCRIPTURE¹

The beliefs and practices of the followers of Theodotus of Byzantium lie shrouded in the mists of antiquity, and a close examination of our sources can do little to lift the fog. There are certainly reasons to wish that we knew more: according to Eusebius, Theodotus was the first heretic to assert that Christ was a ‘mere man’ (ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος).² The earliest discussions occur in Hippolytus’s *Refutatio* and the so-called Little Labyrinth, a set of three anonymous fragments cited by Eusebius and often attributed, probably wrongly, also to Hippolytus.³ Both sources are contemporary with the group; both engage in severe polemic against it. Later heresiologists simply reassert the claims of these earlier accounts, occasionally providing additional anecdotal material and imaginative detail.⁴ In this paper I am concerned neither to explicate this orthodox polemic *per se* nor to sketch

¹ Originally published as “The Theodotians as Corruptors of Scripture” (*Studia Patristica* 9; Louvain: Peeters, 1992) 46–51. Used with permission.

² *HE*, V, 28, quoting the Little Labyrinth. A useful sketch can still be found in Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, tr. Neil Buchanan (New York, 1900; reprinted 1961) 3.20–32.

³ Hippolytus, *Ref.*, VII. 35f.; X. 23f.; Eusebius, *HE*, V. 28. See esp. R. H. Connolly, ‘Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* V. 28’, *JThSt* (1948), 73–79, where the Hippolytan authorship of the Little Labyrinth, championed by Lightfoot and Harnack, is accepted. What these sundry investigations have failed to consider adequately, in my opinion, is precisely the christological views of the fragments in relationship to Hippolytus’s own claims. The fragments attack a purely adoptionistic christology (Christ is a ‘mere man’), while Hippolytus claims that Theodotus espoused a gnostic separationist christology comparable to that of Cerinthus (Jesus is a man, Christ is the God who temporarily inhabits him). In terms of the historical Theodotus, Hippolytus appears to have gotten the facts of the case wrong—as often happens when he combines disparate views in order to demonstrate a common source of deviation (he claims, e.g., that the Ebionites also share this separationist view). But quite apart from the accuracy of his description of the Theodotians, it appears that his view is not what is envisaged by Eusebius’s anonymous source. For a ‘*Tendenz-kritik*’ of Hippolytus’s *Refutation*, see esp. Klaus Koschorke, *Hippolyt’s Ketzerbekämpfung und Polemik gegen die Gnostiker: Ein tendenzkritische Untersuchung seiner ‘Refutatio omnium haeresium’* (Wiesbaden, 1975).

⁴ Ps. Tert., *Adv. Haer.* 8 (in dependence on Hippolytus?) and Epiphanius, *Pan.* 54. In particular cf. Epiphanius’s story that Theodotus apostatized in the face of torture and afterwards devised a theological rationale for his cowardice by claiming that he had denied only a man (Christ), not God. According to Epiphanius, this then led Theodotus to develop a full theology of Christ as a ‘mere man’ (ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος; *Pan.* 54,1,3–8).

a history of scholarship. I am instead interested in examining the charge discussed at greatest length by the author of the *Little Labyrinth*, viz. that the Theodotians intentionally corrupted the text of Scripture, altering its sacred words in light of their own adoptionistic views. Are their grounds for indictment, or is this simply standard polemic?

To support his claim of malfeasance, the author of the *Little Labyrinth* notes the existence of discrepant copies of Scripture produced by the group:

If anyone will take the trouble to collect their several copies and compare them, he will discover frequent divergencies; for example, Asclepiades' copies do not agree with Theodotus' . . . Nor do these agree with Hermophilus' copies. As for Appoloniades, his cannot even be harmonized with each other; it is possible to collate the ones which his disciples made first with those that have undergone further manipulation, and to find endless discrepancies (Eusebius, *HE* V,28).⁵

Had our author taken similar pains to collate the manuscripts produced by scribes of his own theological persuasion, he may well have found the results distressing.⁶ The general nature of his accusations should not escape our notice: he says nothing in particular concerning the *character* of the Theodotians' corruptions. Did he have such information available, or was he simply articulating 'common knowledge' concerning the group's insidious practices (which in this case would amount to 'conventional slander')? Since we know nothing about the individuals he names and have no access to the manuscripts they produced, we are to be sure at something of a loss to evaluate his claims. But we do have the charge itself, and perhaps some reflections on its character may shed light on its accuracy.

As is well known, the charge of corrupting the text of Scripture is standard fare in polemical contexts. Indeed, it is leveled against virtually every Christian group of antiquity, including the orthodox.⁷

⁵ Translation of G. A. Williamson, rev. and ed. by Andrew Louth (London, 1989), 177.

⁶ See below.

⁷ Thus Epiphanius, *Anc.* 31:4–5, against the 'orthodox' who misunderstood the Lukan account of Jesus' 'bloody sweat', and as a consequence deleted it from their manuscripts. See further Bart D. Ehrman and Mark A. Plunkett, 'The Angel and the Agony: The Textual Problem of Luke 22.43–44', *CBO* 45 (1983), 401–416 (chap. 10 above). Similar charges may be implied in Tertullian, *Prescript.* 38. On this form of polemic in general, see A. Bludau, *Die Schriftfäschungen der Häretiker: Ein Beitrag zur Textkritik der Bibel* (NTA 11; Münster, 1925).

We most commonly find the charge, of course, directed against groups that were not destined—speaking metaphorically—to achieve dominance in the fourth century. The Ebionites, Jewish-Christian counterparts of our Roman adoptionists, were sometimes accused of excising portions of the Gospel according to Matthew to accommodate their rejection of the doctrine of Jesus' virginal conception.⁸ Marcion of Pontus proved to be a favorite target of the charge, in view of his conscientious decision to expunge portions of the Pauline epistles and of the Gospel according to Luke when these did not coincide with his theological system.⁹

In Tertullian's words, Marcion performed exegesis with a knife.¹⁰ Various groups of Gnostics proved susceptible to the charge as well, even though in their case one might expect to find it with less frequency, given their uncanny ability (at least in the eyes of their orthodox opponents) to discover their views in virtually any text, regardless of its wording.¹¹ Nonetheless they occasionally stood condemned on precisely such ground, as when Tertullian argued that the Valentinians had altered the verbal form of John 1.13 from the singular to the plural: originally, claimed Tertullian, the verse had referred to the miraculous birth of Jesus ('who was born not from blood nor from the will of the flesh nor from the will of man, but from God'); the Valentinians, however, had modified the text to make it refer to their own supernatural generation through gnosis ('who were born not from blood . . .').¹² What is revealing about this particular instance is that Tertullian was clearly in the wrong: it is he who preserves the corruption.¹³

Is it possible, then, that the standard polemic has become little more than that, simply a common way of abusing one's opponents when they refuse to accept correction and reproof? The case of the

⁸ Cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30, 13,2; 14,2–3.

⁹ As to whether his 'Gospel' was in every respect the same as the canonical Luke even prior to the application of his penknife, see now David Salter Williams, 'Reconsidering Marcion's Gospel', *JBL* 108 (1989), 477–496.

¹⁰ *Prescript.*, 38.

¹¹ So, e.g., Tertullian, *Prescript.*, 38.

¹² *de carne Christi*, 19.

¹³ The singular is attested in only one OL manuscript, it^b, and appears to embrace precisely the proto-orthodox concerns discussed near the end of this article; with the change, Jesus' uniqueness as one born not of natural means but of God is found even in the Gospel of John (which otherwise lacks a birth narrative). The change, in other words, appears to be an anti-adoptionistic corruption of the text.

Theodotians becomes particularly intriguing when compared with that of the Marcionites, since, so far as we can tell, the groups stood diametrically opposed on virtually every theological ground. Marcion built a theology around the idea of two gods; the followers of Theodotus appear to have been staunch monotheists; Marcion's christology was blatantly docetic—Christ was divine, not human; the Theodotians were resolute adoptionists—Christ was a 'mere man', not God. Marcion was forthright in his rejection of the Jewish Scriptures; the Theodotians evidently embraced the Old Testament.¹⁴ In light of these clear and substantial differences, what should the historian make of the circumstance that orthodox Christians leveled the same charge of corrupting the sacred text against both the Marcionites and the Theodotians?

In point of fact their shared condemnation is not restricted to this solitary charge. On the contrary, virtually every accusation that the Little Labyrinth levels against the Theodotians (Eusebius, *HE*, V,28) recurs in the heresiological attacks on Marcion. Both groups have appeared only recently and teach doctrines contrary to the views held by orthodox Christians from apostolic times. They nonetheless claim to subscribe to the original form of Christianity, which they assert had been corrupted by the church hierarchy.¹⁵ Both heresies became prominent in Rome, even though they derived from the East (Byzantium, Pontus). The leaders of both movements were allegedly expelled by the hierarchical authority of the church in Rome, and proceeded then to establish their own schismatic churches with their own hierarchies.¹⁶ Under supernatural pressure, leaders of both schismatic groups are said to have repented, begging to be reaccepted into the catholic circle.¹⁷ The groups nonetheless continued. The ultimate basis for their abberant views, it is claimed, is not Scripture

¹⁴ This is at least a common and reasonable assumption, given their strong monotheism and obvious parallels to the Ebionites (i.e., with regard to theology; certainly not in their ritual observances).

¹⁵ Cf. Tert., *Adv. Marc.* 1.8, 19–20; 4.3.

¹⁶ 'It (Marcion's Gospel) too, of course, has its own churches, but specially its own as late as they are spurious; and should you want to know their original, you will more easily discover apostasy in it than apostolicity, with Marcion forsooth as their founder, or some one of Marcion's swarm. Even wasps make combs; so also these Marcionites make churches' (Tert., *Adv. Marc.* 4.5).

¹⁷ Thus, according to Eusebius, the Theodotian bishop Natalius; according to Tertullian, Marcion himself! Tert., *Adv. Marc.* 4.4; *Prescr.* 30; cf. Epiphanius's account of Marcion begging his father for readmission to the church of Sinope (*Pan.* 42,3,6).

but the ‘secular’ sciences.¹⁸ Lacking genuine scriptural support for their views, the heretics have sought to restore their allegedly ancient belief to the texts of Scripture by ‘correcting’ them. In fact, by so doing, they have ‘corrupted’ the divine Word.¹⁹ As a result, these heretics deny the truth of Scripture; worse still, they actually reject the Law and the prophets altogether.²⁰

It is this final charge that tips the hand of the Little Labyrinth. Is there any reason to believe that the Theodotians rejected the validity of the Old Testament? If so, whence their radical monotheism?²¹ The charge appears to represent a standard polemic, pure and simple.

Where then does this leave us? The heresiologists and their theological allies regularly accuse a number of groups—regardless of their theological persuasion—of corrupting Scripture; against the Theodotians the charge appears among a cluster of accusations that comprise standard polemic; indeed precisely the same accusations are leveled against the Marcionites, who apart from their similar defamation stand diametrically opposed to the Theodotians on virtually every point of theology. Moreover, the evidence of the corrupting practices of the group is neither extant nor, when it comes down to that, perhaps even credible.

¹⁸ For the Theodotians: logic, geometry, Euclidean geometry, Aristotle, Theophrastus, and Galen; for Marcion: astrology, Stoicism, and Empedocles. For Marcion’s addiction to astrology, cf. Tert., *Adv. Marc.* 1. 18; for his philosophical underpinnings, cf. Tert., *Prescr.* 7: ‘Heresies are themselves instigated by philosophy . . . From the same source came Marcion’s better god, with all his tranquillity; he came of the Stoics’, and Tert., *Adv. Marc.* 1. 13, those ‘[pagan] professors of wisdom from whose genius every heresy derives its spirit’, and *Prescr.* 30, ‘Where was Marcion, then, that shipmaster of Pontus, the zealous student of Stoicism?’ Hippolytus, of course, sees Marcion almost exclusively in light of his ties to secular philosophy (as is the case of all the heresies). In this instance the culprit is Empedocles, to whom Hippolytus affords a far greater treatment than Marcion himself, his latter-day disciple (*Ref.* VII. 17–19).

¹⁹ Tert. *Adv. Marc.* 4.3–5, *passim*.

²⁰ Tertullian, *passim*. See, e.g. *Adv. Marc.* 4.6, ‘For it is certain that the whole aim at which he has strenuously laboured even in the drawing up of his *Antitheses*, centers in this, that he may establish a diversity between the Old and the New Testaments, so that his own Christ may be separate from the Creator, as belonging to this rival god, and as alien from the law and the prophets’.

²¹ To be sure, it is not *impossible* that an avid monotheist might reject the Jewish Scriptures. But in every other case of which we have knowledge, only those who leaned toward a multiplicity of divinities called the Old Testament into question. This would include Marcion (who rejected the OT outright) and the majority of Gnostics (who recognized its problems and allegorized them away).

A final word concerning its credibility. While the New Testament manuscripts produced by Asclepiades, Theodotus, Hermophilus, and Apolloniades have not survived antiquity, thousands of others have. Three observations about these surviving manuscripts relate to our present concerns. First: among the 5366 Greek manuscripts that happen to survive, no *two* are exactly alike in all their particulars.²² The collations adduced as evidence of the Theodotians' mal-intent could just as well be used against any group, aberrant or otherwise, in antiquity—even the group of the Little Labyrinth's own persuasion. To say that all the copies produced by the group differ from one another is to state a truism, not an offense; its force is rhetorical, not evidential. This makes it all the more striking that the author of the Little Labyrinth is either unable or unwilling—at least in the surviving fragment—to give a single detail or example. Second: so far as we know, of the manuscripts that are now extant—and here we can throw in the tens of thousands found among the versions as well—there is not a solitary instance of one that preserves a decidedly adoptionistic bias. Some have thought that portions of the Syriac Sinaiticus are liable to the charge; but in fact, the scribe of the passages in question (Matthew's birth narrative) was clearly and demonstrably careless, not deliberate.²³ To be sure, we would not anticipate many adoptionistic corruptions of Scripture among our surviving witnesses; the winners not only write the history, they also produce the texts. But our meager expectations should be placed in the context of our third and most significant observation: we do find just the opposite scribal *Tendenz* preserved among our manuscripts, and preserved with notable frequency, viz., the tendency to change the text

²² Apart that is, from the smallest fragments. I have taken the number from the most up-to-date statement of Kurt and Barbara Aland (who maintain the numbering system of newly discovered manuscripts at the Institute for New Testament Textual Research in Münster), *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, 2nd ed. revised and enlarged, tr. Erroll F. Rhodes (Grand Rapids, 1989).

²³ The manuscript, for example, concludes Matthew's genealogy of Jesus with the words 'Jacob begot Joseph; Joseph, to whom was betrothed the virgin Mary, begot Jesus, who is called the Christ' (Matt. 1.16). For an explanation of the error as deriving from inattention, see the discussions of Bruce M. Metzger, 'The Text of Matthew 1.16', in *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature: Essays in Honor of Allen P. Wikgren*, ed. David E. Aune (Leiden, 1972), 16–24; idem, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York, 1971), 2–7; Alexander Globe, 'Some Doctrinal Variants in Matthew 1 and Luke 2, and the Authority of the Neutral Text', *CBQ* 42 (1980), 63–66.

to *counteract* adoptionist christologies, by altering passages in such a way as to affirm more strongly than ever that Christ was born of a virgin, that he was the Son of God from eternity past, that he was not adopted to be the Son of God at his baptism, that he was in fact God himself in human flesh.²⁴

As the investigation of these kinds of corruptions requires a much longer treatment than I can devote to them here, I defer to other discussions of the topic.²⁵ In the present context, it is enough to conclude with a solitary observation: the charge leveled by the author of the Little Labyrinth that the Theodotians corrupted their texts of Scripture could just as easily be directed against the scribes of his own proto-orthodox party, with one exception. For the proto-orthodox, we have hard and fast evidence that the charge is true.

²⁴ For a full treatment, see Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of The New Testament* (New York, forthcoming). Here I simply cite several of the outstanding instances. Variants that preserve the notion of Jesus' virginal conception (cf. Matt. 1.16; Luc. 2.33, 43, 48; in addition to Joh. 1.13, mentioned above), that oppose the notion that he was 'adopted' to be the son of God (cf. Luc. 3.22, where the Western text appears to be original; Job. 1.34 where the text of P⁵ and codex Sinaiticus is original), and that affirm that indeed he was God himself (e.g., 1 Tim. 3.16 and Joh. 1.18, where I take ὁ μονογενῆς υἱός to be the original).

²⁵ In addition to the study mentioned in notes 7 and 24 above, see e.g., Globe, 'Some Doctrinal Variants', and Bart D. Ehrman, 'The Text of Mark in the Hands of the Orthodox', in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Biblical Perspective: Essays in Honor of Karlfried Froehlich*, ed. Mark Burrows and Paul Rorem (Grand Rapids, 1991), 19–31, chap. 8 above.

TEXT AND TRADITION:
THE ROLE OF NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS
IN EARLY CHRISTIAN STUDIES

TEXT AND INTERPRETATION:
THE EXEGETICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE
“ORIGINAL” TEXT¹

Kenneth Clark was a real pioneer in the field of NT textual criticism; his collections and photographs of Greek MSS, his significant essays on major aspects of the discipline, his selfless leadership of the International Greek New Testament Project all served to make him a premier textual scholar and to elevate Duke to a place of prominence as one of the great institutions of learning in this field. I am honored and flattered to be asked to present the lectures that have been endowed in his name.

Introduction

Interpreters of the NT are faced with a discomfoting reality that many of them would like to ignore. In many instances, we don't know what the authors of the NT actually wrote. It often proves difficult enough to establish what the words of the NT mean; the fact that in some instances we don't know what the words actually *were* does more than a little to exacerbate the problem. I say that many interpreters would *like* to ignore this reality; but perhaps that isn't strong enough. In point of fact, many interpreters, possibly most, *do* ignore it, pretending that the textual basis of the Christian scriptures is secure, when unhappily, it is not.

When the individual authors of the NT released their works to the public, each book found a niche in one or another of the

¹ The Kenneth W. Clark lectures delivered at Duke Divinity School in 1997. This article, though slightly modified from the oral presentation, preserves the original flavor of the lecture. It was originally published as “Text and Interpretation: The Exegetical Significance of the ‘Original’ Text,” in *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism*, 5 (2000). Online: <http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/vol05/Ehrman2000a.html>.

burgeoning Christian communities that were scattered, principally in large Greek-speaking urban areas, around the Mediterranean. Anyone within these communities who wanted a copy of these books, whether for private use, as community property, or for general distribution, was compelled to produce a copy by hand, or to acquire the services of someone else to do so.

During the course of their transmission, the original copies of these books were eventually lost, worn out, or destroyed; the early Christians evidently saw no need to preserve their original texts for antiquarian or other reasons. Had they been more fully cognizant of what happens to documents that are copied by hand, however, especially by hands that are not professionally trained for the job, they may have exercised greater caution in preserving the originals. As it is, for whatever historical reasons, the originals no longer survive. What do survive are copies of the originals, or, to be more precise, copies made from the copies of the copies of the originals, thousands of these subsequent copies, dating from the 2nd to the 16th centuries, some of them tiny fragments the size of a credit card, uncovered in garbage heaps buried in the sands of Egypt, others of them enormous and elegant tomes preserved in the great libraries and monasteries of Europe.

It is difficult to know what the authors of the Greek New Testament wrote, in many instances, because all of these surviving copies differ from one another, sometimes significantly. The severity of the problem was not recognized throughout the Middle Ages or even, for the most part, during the Renaissance. Indeed, biblical scholars were not forcefully confronted with the uncertainty of their texts until the early eighteenth century. In the year 1707, an Oxford scholar named John Mill published an edition of the Greek New Testament that contained a critical apparatus, systematically and graphically detailing the differences among the surviving witnesses of the NT. Mill had devoted some thirty years of his life to examining a hundred or so Greek MSS, several of the early versions of the NT, and the citations of the NT in the writings of the church fathers. His apparatus did not include *all* of the differences that he had uncovered in his investigation, but only the ones that he considered significant for the purposes of exegesis or textual reconstruction. These, however, were enough. To the shock and dismay of many of his contemporaries, Mill's apparatus indicated some *30,000* places of variation, 30,000 places where the available witnesses to the NT text differed from one another.

Numerous representatives of traditional piety were immediately outraged, and promptly denounced Mill's publication as a demonic attempt to render the text of the NT uncertain. Mill's supporters, on the other hand, pointed out that he had not *invented* these 30,000 places of variation, but had simply *noticed* them. In any event, Mill's publication launched a discipline committed to determining places of variation among our surviving NT witnesses, ascertaining which of these variations represent modifications of the text as it was first produced by its authors, and which represent the original text itself.

We have, of course, come a long way since Mill. Today we have over fifty times as many MSS as he had—at last count, there were upwards of 5300 complete or fragmentary Greek copies—not to mention the thousands of MSS attesting the early translations of the NT into Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, Old Slavonic, etc., and the many thousands of quotations of the NT by church authors of the first few hundred years. What is particularly striking is that among the 5300+ Greek copies of the NT, with the exception of the smallest fragments, there are no two that are exactly alike in all their particulars.

No one knows for sure how many differences there are among our surviving witnesses, simply because no one has yet been able to count them all. The best estimates put the number at around 300,000, but perhaps it's better to put this figure in comparative terms. There are more differences among our manuscripts than there are words in the NT.

As one might expect, however, these raw numbers are somewhat deceptive. For the vast majority of these textual differences are easily recognized as simple scribal mistakes, errors caused by carelessness, ineptitude, or fatigue. The single largest category of mistake is orthographic; an examination of almost any of our oldest Greek manuscripts will show that scribes in antiquity could spell no better than most people can today. Scribes can at least be excused on this score: they lived, after all, in a world that was for the most part without dictionaries, let alone spell check.

Other textual variants, however, are significant, both for the interpretation of the NT texts and for our understanding of the social world within which these texts were transmitted. The importance of establishing a hypothetically "original" text has always been fairly self-evident to historians; you can't know what an author meant if you don't know what he or she said. The importance of variant readings,

however, has rarely been as self-evident to historians, although it is now becoming the most exciting area of study in this field. For once it is known what an author wrote, one can ask why the text came to be changed by later scribes living in different circumstances. Is it possible that Christian scribes in the second, third, and fourth centuries, for example, modified the texts they copied for reasons of their own, possibly to make them *say* what they were supposed to *mean*?

In my two lectures I am going to be dealing with these two areas of significance. In this afternoon's talk, I'll be exploring three textual problems to show the importance of establishing the "original" text for its interpretation. In my lecture tomorrow, I'll show how modifications of the text by early scribes can help us understand something about the pressing social and theological problems in ancient Christianity, such as the emergence of Christian orthodoxy, the rise of anti-Semitism, and the oppression of women.

The three textual problems that I've chosen for this lecture occur in three different books of the New Testament. Each of them relates to the way Jesus himself is portrayed by the book's author; in each instance I will argue that the reading chosen by the United Bible Societies for their Greek New Testament, which is also the text of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, and the text on which most modern English translations are based, and which most interpreters simply assume is probably accurate, is in fact *wrong*, and that the understanding of the three books of Mark, Luke, and Hebrews is, as a result, significantly affected. These are not trivial and unknown problems for NT scholars; some of you among us, especially my New Testament colleagues, are already aware of the problems surrounding Mark 1:41, where Jesus becomes incensed at a leper's request for healing; Luke 22:43–44, where he allegedly sweats blood before his betrayal and arrest; and Hebrews 2:9, where he is said to have died apart from God.

Mark 1:41 and the Angry Jesus

The textual problem of Mark 1:41 occurs in the story of Jesus' healing a man with a skin disease. The surviving manuscripts preserve v. 41 in two different forms; I've included both variant readings for you here, italicized:

And he came preaching in their synagogues in all of Galilee and casting out the demons. **40** And a leper came to him beseeching him and saying to him, "If you wish, you are able to cleanse me." **41** And [*feeling compassion* (σπλαγχνισθείς)/*becoming angry* (ὀργισθείς)], reaching out his hand, he touched him and said, "I wish, be cleansed." **42** And immediately the leprosy went out from him, and he was cleansed. **43** And rebuking him severely, immediately he cast him out **44** and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing that which Moses commanded as a witness to them." **45** But when he went out he began to preach many things and to spread the word, so that he [Jesus] was no longer able to enter publicly into a city.

Most English translations render the beginning of v. 41 so as to emphasize Jesus' compassion for this poor outcast leper, "moved with compassion/filled with pity." In doing so, they are following the Greek text found in most of our manuscripts, σπλαγχνισθείς ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ, "feeling compassion, reaching out his hand." It is certainly easy to see why compassion might be called for in the situation. We don't know the precise nature of the man's disease—many commentators prefer to think of it as a scaly skin disorder rather than the kind of rotting flesh that we commonly associate with leprosy. In any event, he may well have fallen under the injunctions of the Torah that forbade "lepers" of any sort to live normal lives; they were to be isolated, cut off from the public, considered unclean (Leviticus 13–14). Moved with pity for such a one, Jesus reaches out a tender hand, touches his diseased flesh, and heals him.

The simple pathos and unproblematic emotion of the scene may well account for translators and interpreters, as a rule, not considering the alternative text found in some of our manuscripts. For the wording of one of our oldest witnesses, Codex Bezae, which is supported by three Old Latin manuscripts, is at first puzzling and wrenching. Here, rather than saying that Jesus felt *compassion* for the man, the text indicates that he became *angry*. In Greek it is a difference between the words σπλαγχνισθείς and ὀργισθείς. Because of its attestation in both Greek and Latin witnesses, this reading is generally conceded by textual specialists to go back *at least* to the second century. Is it possible, though, that this in fact is what Mark himself wrote?

In many instances of textual variation, possibly most, we are safe in saying that when the vast majority of manuscripts have one reading

and only a couple have another, the majority are probably right. But this is not always the case. Sometimes a couple or a few manuscripts appear to be right even when all the others disagree. In part this is because the vast majority of our manuscripts were produced hundreds and hundreds of years after the originals, and they themselves were copied not from the originals but from other much later copies. Once a change made its way into the manuscript tradition, it could be perpetuated until *it* became more commonly transmitted than the original wording. Both readings we are considering here are very ancient. Which one is original?

If Christian readers today were given the choice between these two readings, virtually everyone, no doubt, would choose the one more commonly attested in our manuscripts: Jesus felt pity for this man, and so he healed him. The other reading is hard to construe: what would it mean to say that Jesus felt angry? Isn't this in itself sufficient ground for assuming that Mark must have written *σπλαγχνισθείς* feeling compassion?

On the contrary, and this may indeed seem backwards at first, the fact that one of the readings makes such good sense and is easy to understand is precisely what makes some scholars suspect that it is *wrong*. For scribes also would have preferred the text to be simple to understand and nonproblematic. Which is more likely, that a scribe copying this text would change it to say that Jesus became wrathful instead of compassionate, or to say that Jesus became compassionate instead wrathful? When seen from this perspective, the latter is obviously more likely. *ὀργισθείς*, became angry, is the more difficult reading and therefore more likely to be "original."

But there is even better evidence than this speculative question of which reading the scribes were likely to invent. As it turns out, we don't have any Greek manuscripts of Mark that contain this passage until the end of the fourth century, nearly 300 years after the book was produced. But we do have two authors that copied this story from within *twenty years* of its first production. Matthew and Luke have both taken this story over from Mark, their common source. It is striking that Matthew and Luke are virtually word for word the same as Mark in the leper's request and in Jesus' response in vv. 40–41. Which word, then, do they use to describe Jesus' reaction? Does he become compassionate or angry? Oddly enough, as has often been noted, Matthew and Luke both omit the word altogether.

If the text of Mark available to Matthew and Luke had used the term *σπλαγχνισθεῖς*, feeling compassion, why would each of them have omitted it? On only two other occasions in Mark's Gospel is Jesus explicitly described as compassionate: Mark 6:34, at the feeding of the 5000, and Mark 8:2, the feeding of the 4000. Luke completely recasts the first story and does not include the second. Matthew, however, has both stories and retains Mark's description of Jesus being compassionate on both occasions (14:14 [and 9:30]; 15:32). On three additional occasions in Matthew, and yet one other occasion in Luke, Jesus is explicitly described as compassionate, using this term (*σπλαγχνίζω*). It's hard to imagine, then, why they both, independently of one another, would have omitted the term from the present account if they had found it in Mark.

What about the other option? What if both Matthew and Luke read in Mark's Gospel that Jesus became angry? Would they have been inclined to eliminate that emotion? There are in fact other occasions in which Jesus becomes angry in Mark. In each instance, Matthew and Luke have modified the accounts. In Mark 3:5 Jesus looks around "with anger" (*μετ' ὀργῆς*) at those in the synagogue who were watching to see if he'd heal the man with the withered hand. Luke has the verse almost the same as Mark, but he removes the reference to Jesus' anger. Matthew completely rewrites this section of the story and says nothing of Jesus' wrath. Similarly, in Mark 10:14 Jesus is aggravated at his disciples (different word: *ἠγονάκτησεν*) for not allowing people to bring their children to be blessed. Both Matthew and Luke have the story, often verbally the same, but both delete the reference to Jesus' anger (Matt 19:14; Luke 18:16).

In sum, Matthew and Luke have no qualms about describing Jesus as compassionate. But they never describe him as angry. In fact, whenever one of their sources, Mark, did so, they both independently rewrite the term out of their stories. Thus it's hard to understand why they would have removed *σπλαγχνισθεῖς* from the account of Jesus' healing of the leper but altogether easy to see why they might have wanted to remove *ὀργισθεῖς*. Combined with the circumstance that the term is attested in a very ancient stream of our manuscript tradition and that scribes would have been unlikely to have created it out of the much more readily comprehensible *σπλαγχνισθεῖς*, it is becoming increasingly evident that Mark in fact described Jesus as angry when approached by the leper to be healed.

But one other issue must be emphasized before moving on. I've

indicated that whereas Matthew and Luke have difficulty ascribing anger to Jesus, Mark has no problems at all doing so. I should point out that even in the present story, apart from the textual problem of v. 41, Jesus does not treat this poor leper with kid gloves. After he heals him, he “severely rebukes him” and “throws him out.” These are literal renderings of the Greek words that are usually softened in translation. But they are harsh terms, used elsewhere in Mark always in contexts of violent conflict and aggression (e.g., when Jesus casts out demons). It’s difficult to see why Jesus would harshly upbraid this person and cast him out if he feels compassion for him; but if he is angry, perhaps it makes better sense.

At what, though, would Jesus be angry? This is where the relationship of text and interpretation becomes critical. Some scholars who have preferred ὀργισθεῖς (becoming angry) in this passage have come up with highly improbable interpretations, usually, in fact, with the goal of exonerating the emotion and making Jesus look compassionate when in fact they realize that the text says he became angry. And so one commentator argues that Jesus is angry with the state of the world that is full of disease; in other words, he loves the sick but hates the sickness. There’s no textual basis for the interpretation, but it does have the virtue of making Jesus look good. Another interpreter argues that Jesus is angry because this leprous person had been alienated from society, overlooking the facts that the text doesn’t say anything about the man being an outsider and that even if it assumes he was, it would not have been the fault of Jesus’ society but of the Law of God (specifically the book of Leviticus). Another argues that in fact that is what Jesus is angry about, that the Law of Moses forces this kind of alienation. This interpretation ignores the fact that at the conclusion of the passage (v. 44) Jesus affirms the law of Moses and urges the former leper to observe it.

All of these interpretations have in common the desire to exonerate Jesus’ anger and the decision to bypass the text in order to do so. Should we opt to do otherwise, what might we conclude? It seems to me there are two options, one that focuses more heavily on the immediate literary context of the passage and the other on its broader context.

First, in terms of the more immediate context. How is one struck by the portrayal of Jesus in the opening part of Mark’s Gospel? Bracketing for a moment our own pre-conceptions of who Jesus was and simply reading this particular text, one has to admit that Jesus

does not come off as the meek and mild, soft-featured, good shepherd of the stain-glassed window. Mark begins his Gospel by portraying Jesus as a physically and charismatically powerful authority figure who is not to be messed with. He is introduced by a wild-man prophet in the wilderness; he is cast out from society to do battle in the wilderness with Satan and the wild beasts; he returns to call for urgent repentance in the face of the imminent coming of the judgment of God; he rips his followers away from their families; he overwhelms his audiences with his authority; he rebukes and overpowers demonic forces that can completely subdue mere mortals; he refuses to accede to popular demand, ignoring people who plead to have an audience with him. The only story in this opening chapter of Mark that hints at personal compassion is the healing of the mother-in-law of Simon Peter, sick in bed. But even that compassionate interpretation may be open to question. Some observers have wryly noted that after Jesus dispels her fever, she rises to serve them, presumably bringing them their evening meal.

Is it possible that Jesus is being portrayed in the opening scenes of this Gospel as a powerful figure with a strong will and an agenda of his own, a charismatic authority who doesn't like to be disturbed? It would certainly make sense of his response to the healed leper, whom he harshly rebukes and then casts out.

There is another explanation, though. For as I've indicated, Jesus does get angry elsewhere in this Gospel. The next time it happens is in chapter 3, which involves, strikingly, another healing story. Here Jesus is explicitly said to be angry at Pharisees, who think that he has no authority to heal the man with the crippled hand on the Sabbath.

In some ways an even closer parallel comes in a story in which Jesus' anger is not explicitly mentioned but is nonetheless evident. In Mark 9, when Jesus comes down from the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James, and John, he finds a crowd around his disciples and a desperate man in their midst, whose son is possessed by a demon, and who explains the situation to Jesus and then appeals to him: "If you are able, have pity on us and help us." Jesus fires back an angry response, "If you are able? Everything is possible to the one who believes." The man grows even more desperate and pleads, "I believe, help my unbelief." Jesus then casts out the demon.

What is striking in these stories is that Jesus' evident anger erupts when someone doubts his willingness, ability, or divine authority to

heal. Maybe this in fact is what is involved in the story of the leper. As in the story of Mark 9, someone approaches Jesus gingerly to ask: “If you are *willing* you are able to heal me.” Jesus becomes angry. Of course he’s willing, just as he is able and authorized. He heals the man and, still somewhat miffed, rebukes him sharply and throws him out.

There’s a completely different feel to the story, given this way of construing it, a construal based on establishing the text as Mark appears to have written it. Mark, in places, portrays an angry Jesus.

Luke 22:43–44 and the Imperturbable Jesus

Unlike Mark, Luke never explicitly states that Jesus becomes angry. In fact, here Jesus never appears to become disturbed at all, in any way. Rather than the angry Jesus, Luke portrays an imperturbable Jesus. There is only one passage in this entire Gospel where Jesus appears to lose his composure. And that, interestingly enough, is a passage whose authenticity is hotly debated among textual scholars.

The passage occurs in the context of Jesus’ prayer on the Mount of Olives prior to his betrayal and arrest (Luke 22:39–46). After enjoining his disciples to “pray, lest you enter into temptation,” Jesus leaves them, bows to his knees, and prays, “Father, if it be your will, remove this cup from me. Except not my will, but yours be done.” In a large number of manuscripts the prayer is followed by the account, found nowhere else among our Gospels, of Jesus’ heightened agony and so-called “bloody sweat”: “And an angel from heaven appeared to him, strengthening him. And being in agony he began to pray yet more fervently, and his sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground” (vv. 43–44). The scene closes with Jesus rising from prayer and returning to his disciples to find them asleep. He then repeats his initial injunction for them to “pray, lest you enter into temptation.” Immediately Judas arrives with the crowds, and Jesus is arrested.

One of the intriguing features about the debate over this passage is the balance of arguments back and forth over whether the disputed verses were written by Luke or were instead inserted by a later scribe. The manuscripts that are known to be earliest and that are generally conceded to be the best do not, as a rule, include the verses. So perhaps they are a later scribal addition. On the other

hand, they are found in several other early witnesses and are, on the whole, widely distributed throughout the entire manuscript tradition.

So, were they added by scribes who wanted them in or deleted by scribes who wanted them out? It's hard to say on the basis of the manuscripts themselves.

Some scholars have proposed that we consider other features of the verses to help us decide. Adolph von Harnack, for example, claimed that the vocabulary and style of the verses are distinctively Lukan: e.g., appearances of angels are common in Luke, and several words and phrases found in the passage occur in Luke and nowhere else in the New Testament (such the verb for "strengthen"). The argument hasn't proved convincing to everyone, however, since most of these "characteristically Lukan" ideas, constructions, and phrases are either formulated in *uncharacteristically* Lukan ways (e.g., angels never appear without speaking in Luke) or are common in Jewish and Christian texts outside of the New Testament. Moreover, there is an inordinately high concentration of *unusual* words and phrases in these verses: three of its key words, for example (agony, sweat, and drops) occur nowhere else in Luke or Acts. At the end of the day, it's difficult to decide about these verses on the basis of their vocabulary and style.

And so we need to turn to other kinds of arguments. In the early 1980's I wrote an article on the problem with Mark Plunkett, a friend of mine in graduate school. There we developed an argument that proved to be convincing, at least to the two of us. It has to do with the literary structure of the passage. In a nutshell, the passage appears to be deliberately structured as a kind of chiasmus:

Jesus (a) tells his disciples to "pray lest you enter into temptation" (v. 40). He then (b) leaves them (v. 41a) and (c) kneels to pray (v. 41b). The center of the pericope is (d) Jesus' prayer itself, a prayer bracketed by his two requests that God's will be done (v 42). Jesus then (c) rises from prayer (v. 45a), (b) returns to his disciples (v. 45b), and (a) finding them asleep, once again addresses them in the same words, telling them to "pray lest you enter into temptation" (vv. 45c-46).

One of the reasons I like this argument, which, I'm sorry to admit, Plunkett came up with, is that, contrary to the claims of some scholars, chiasmus is a relatively rare phenomenon within the pages of the New Testament. This means that when a clear instance of its use does occur, one must do something with it—either deny its

presence or its significance, or admit that an author has employed a literary device in order to contribute to his overall purpose. In this case the chiasmus is nearly impossible to overlook.

But the mere presence of this structure is not really the point. The point is how the chiasmus contributes to the meaning of the passage. The story is bracketed by the two injunctions to the disciples to pray so as to avoid entering into temptation. Prayer of course has long been recognized as a Lukan theme; here it comes into special prominence. For at the very center of the pericope is Jesus' own prayer, a prayer that expresses his desire, bracketed by his greater desire that the Father's will be done (vv. 41c–42). As the center of the chiastic structure, this prayer supplies the passage's point of focus and, correspondingly, its hermeneutical key. This is a lesson on the importance of prayer in the face of temptation. The disciples, despite Jesus' repeated injunction to pray, fall asleep instead. Immediately the crowd comes to arrest Jesus. And what happens? The disciples, who have failed to pray, do "enter into temptation"; they flee the scene, leaving Jesus to face his fate alone. What about Jesus, the one who *has* prayed before the coming of his trial? When the crowds arrive he calmly submits to his Father's will, yielding himself up to the martyrdom that has been prepared for him.

Luke's Passion narrative, as has long been recognized, is a story of Jesus' martyrdom, a martyrdom that functions, as do many others, to set an example to the faithful of how to remain firm in the face of death. Luke's martyrology shows that only prayer can prepare one to die.

What happens though when the disputed verses are injected into the pericope? On the literary level, the chiasmus that focuses the passage on Jesus' prayer is absolutely destroyed. Now the center of the passage, and hence its focus, shifts to Jesus' agony, an agony so terrible as to require a supernatural visitant for strength to bear it. It is significant that in this longer version of the story Jesus' prayer does not effect the calm assurance that he exudes throughout the rest of the account; indeed, it is *after* he prays "yet more fervently" that his sweat takes on the appearance of great drops of blood falling to the ground. The point is not simply that a nice literary structure has been lost, but that the entire focus of attention shifts to Jesus in deep and heart-rending agony and in need of miraculous intervention.

This in itself may not seem like an insurmountable problem, until one realizes that in fact nowhere else in Luke's Gospel is Jesus por-

trayed in this way. In fact, quite the contrary, Luke has gone to great lengths to counter precisely the view of Jesus that these verses embrace. Rather than entering his passion with fear and trembling, in anguish over his coming fate, the Jesus of Luke goes to his death calm and in control, confident of his Father's will until the very end. It is a striking fact, of particular relevance to our textual problem, that Luke could produce this image of Jesus only by eliminating traditions offensive to it from his sources (e.g., the Gospel according to Mark). Only the longer text of 22:43–44 stands out as anomalous.

A simple redactional comparison with Mark in the story at hand can prove instructive in this regard. For Luke has completely omitted Mark's statement that Jesus "began to be distressed and agitated" (Mark 14:33), as well as Jesus' own comment to his disciples, "My soul is deeply troubled, even unto death" (Mark 14:34). Rather than falling to the ground in anguish (Mark 14:35), Luke's Jesus bows to his knees (Luke 22:41). In Luke, Jesus does not ask that the hour might pass from him (cf. Mark 14:35); and rather than praying three times for the cup to be removed (Mark 14:36, 39, 41), he asks only once (Luke 22:42), prefacing his prayer, only in Luke, with the important condition, "If it be your will." And so, while Luke's source, the Gospel of Mark, portrays Jesus in anguish as he prays in the garden, Luke has completely remodeled the scene to show Jesus at peace in the face of death. The only exception is the account of Jesus "bloody sweat," an account absent from our earliest and best witnesses. Why would Luke have gone to such lengths to eliminate Mark's portrayal of an anguished Jesus if in fact Jesus' anguish were the point of his story?

Luke in fact does not share Mark's understanding that Jesus was in anguish, bordering on despair. Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in their subsequent accounts of Jesus' crucifixion. Mark portrays Jesus as silent on his path to Golgotha. His disciples have all fled; even the faithful women look on only "from a distance." All those present deride him—passers by, Jewish leaders, and both robbers. Mark's Jesus has been beaten, mocked, deserted, and forsaken, not just by his followers but finally by God himself. His only words in the entire proceeding come at the very end, when he cries aloud, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani (My God, my God, why have *you* forsaken me?)." He then utters a loud cry and dies.

This portrayal, again, stands in sharp contrast with what we find in Luke. For here, Jesus is far from silent, and when he speaks, he

shows that he is still in control, trustful of God his Father, confident of his fate, concerned for the fate of others. En route to his crucifixion, seeing a group of women bewailing his misfortune, Jesus tells them not to weep for him, but for themselves and their children, because of the disaster that is soon to befall them (23:27–31). When being nailed to the cross, rather than being silent, he prays to God, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing” (23:34). While on the cross, in the throes of his passion, Jesus engages in an intelligent conversation with one of the robbers crucified beside him, assuring him that they will be together that day in paradise. Most telling of all, rather than uttering his pathetic cry of dereliction at the end, Luke’s Jesus, in full confidence of his standing before God, commends his soul to his loving Father: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (24:46).

It would be difficult to overestimate the significance of these redactional changes for our textual problem. At no point in Luke’s passion narrative does Jesus lose control, never is he in deep and debilitating anguish over his fate. He is in charge of his own destiny, he knows what he must do and what will happen to him once he does it. This is a man who is at peace with himself and tranquil in the face of death.

What then shall we say about our disputed verses? These are the only verses in the entire Gospel that undermine this clear portrayal. Only here does Jesus agonize over his coming fate; only here does he appear out of control, unable to bear the burden of his destiny. Why would Luke have totally eliminated all remnants of Jesus’ agony elsewhere if he meant to emphasize it in yet stronger terms here? Why remove compatible material from his source, both before and after the verses in question? It appears that the account of Jesus’ “bloody-sweat” is a secondary incursion into his Gospel.

Why did a scribe add them to his copy of Luke? This is a topic I will take up in my next lecture. For the purpose of the present lecture, it is enough to note that Luke himself evidently didn’t write them.

Heb. 2:9: The Forsaken Jesus

Luke’s portrayal of Jesus stands in contrast not only with that of Mark, but also of other NT authors, including the unknown author

of the epistle to the Hebrews, who appears to presuppose knowledge of passion traditions in which Jesus was terrified in the face of death and died with no divine succor or support, as can be seen in the resolution of one of the most interesting textual problems of the NT.

The problem occurs in a context that describes the eventual subjugation of all things to Jesus, the Son of Man:

For when [God] subjects to him all things, he leaves nothing that is not subjected to him. But we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we do see Jesus, who, having been made for a little while lower than the angels, was crowned with glory and honor on account of his suffering of death, so that [*by the grace of God/apart from God*] he might taste death for everyone. [Heb 2:8–9]

Although almost all of the surviving manuscripts state that Jesus died for all people "by the grace of God" (χάρτι θεοῦ), a couple of others state, instead, that he died "apart from God" (χωρὶς θεοῦ). There are good reasons for thinking that this, however, was the original reading of the epistle to the Hebrews.

I don't have time to go into the intricacies of the manuscript support of the reading, except to say that even though it occurs only in two documents of the tenth century (0121b 1739), one of these is known to have been produced from a copy that was at least as ancient as our earliest papyri. Of yet greater interest, the early 3rd century scholar Origen tell us that this was the reading of the majority of manuscripts of his own day. Other evidence also suggests its early popularity: it was found in manuscripts known to Ambrose and Jerome in the Latin West, and it is quoted by a range of ecclesiastical writers down to the eleventh century.

When one turns from external to internal evidence, there can be no doubt concerning the superiority of this poorly attested variant. We have already seen that scribes were far more likely to make a reading that was hard to understand easier, rather than to make an easy reading harder. This variant provides a textbook case of the phenomenon. Christians in the early centuries commonly regarded Jesus' death as the supreme manifestation of God's grace. But to say that Jesus died "apart from God" could be taken to mean any number of things, most of them unpalatable. Since scribes must have created one of these readings out of the other, there is little question concerning which of the two is more likely the corruption.

But was the corruption deliberate? Advocates of the more common

text (χάριτι θεοῦ) have naturally had to claim that the change was not made on purpose (otherwise their favored text would almost certainly be the modification). By virtue of necessity, then, they have devised alternative scenarios to explain the origin of the more difficult reading. Most commonly it's simply supposed that since the words in question are so similar in appearance (χάριτι/χωρίς), a scribe inadvertently mistook the word "grace" for the preposition "apart from."

This view, though, seems a shade unlikely. Is a negligent or absent-minded scribe likely to have changed his text by writing a word used *less* frequently in the New Testament ("apart from") or one used *more* frequently ("grace," four times as common)? Is he likely to have created a phrase that never occurs elsewhere in the New Testament ("apart from God") or one that occurs over twenty times ("by the grace of God")? Is he likely to produce a statement, even by accident, that is bizarre and troubling or one that is familiar and easy? Surely it's the latter: readers typically confuse unusual words for common ones and make simple what is complex, especially when their minds have partially strayed. Thus even a theory of carelessness supports the less attested reading.

The most popular theory for those who think that the phrase *χωρίς θεοῦ*, apart from God, is not original is that the reading was created as a marginal note: a scribe read in Heb. 2:8 that "all things" are to be subjected to the lordship of Christ, but he wanted it to be clear, based on his knowledge of 1 Cor 15:27, that this did not include God the Father. To protect the text from misconstrual, the scribe then inserted an explanatory note in the margin, pointing out that nothing is left unsubjected to Christ, "except for God" (*χωρίς θεοῦ*). This note was subsequently transferred into the text of a manuscript.

Despite the popularity of the solution, it strikes me as too clever by half, and requires too many dubious steps to work. There is no manuscript that attests both readings in the text (i.e., the correction in the margin or text of v. 8, where it would belong, *and* the original text of v. 9). Moreover, if a scribe thought that the note was a marginal correction, why did he find it in the margin next to v. 8 rather than v. 9? Finally, if the scribe who created the note had done so in reference to 1 Corinthians, would he not have written ἐκτὸς θεοῦ?

In sum, it is extremely difficult to account for *χωρίς θεοῦ* if *χάριτι θεοῦ* was the original reading of Heb. 2:9. At the same time, while

a *scribe* could scarcely be expected to have said that Christ died "apart from God," there is every reason to think that this is precisely what the author of Hebrews said. For this less attested reading is also more consistent with the theology of Hebrews. Never in this entire epistle does the word grace (*χάρις*) refer to Jesus' death or to the salvific benefits that accrue as a result of it. Instead, it is consistently connected with the gift of salvation that *is* yet to be bestowed upon the believer by the goodness of God (see esp. Heb. 4:16; also 10:29; 12:15; 13:25). To be sure, Christians historically have been more influenced by other New Testament authors, notably Paul, who saw Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as the supreme manifestation of the grace of God. But Hebrews does not use the term in this way, even though scribes who identified this author as Paul may not have realized it.

On the other hand, the statement that Jesus died "apart from God"—enigmatic when made in isolation—makes compelling sense in its broader literary context. Whereas this author never refers to Jesus' death as a manifestation of divine "grace," he repeatedly emphasizes that Jesus died a fully human, shameful death, totally removed from the realm whence he came, the realm of God; his sacrifice, as a result, was accepted as the perfect expiation for sin. Moreover, God did not intervene in his passion and did nothing to minimize his pain. Thus, for example, Heb. 5:7 speaks of Jesus, in the face of death, beseeching God with loud cries and tears. In 12:2 he is said to endure the "shame" of his death, not because God sustained him, but because he hoped for vindication. Throughout this epistle, Jesus is said to experience human pain and death, like other humans "in every respect." His was not an agony attenuated by special dispensation.

Yet more significantly, this is a major theme of the immediate context of Heb. 2:9, which emphasizes that Christ lowered himself below the angels to share fully in blood and flesh, experience human sufferings, and die a human death. To be sure, his death is known to bring salvation, but the passage says not a word about God's grace as manifest in Christ's work of atonement. It focuses instead on christology, on Christ's condescension into the transitory realm of suffering and death. It is as a full human that Jesus experienced his passion, apart from any succor that might have been his as an exalted being. The work he began at his condescension he completes in his death, a death that had to be "apart from God."

How is it that the reading $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$, which can scarcely be explained as a scribal corruption, conforms to the linguistic preferences, style, and theology of the epistle to the Hebrews, while the alternative reading $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\tau\iota\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$, which would have caused scribes no difficulties at all, stands at odds both with what Hebrews says about the death of Christ and with the ways it says it? Heb. 2:9 appears originally to have said that Jesus died “apart from God,” forsaken, much as he is portrayed in the passion narrative of Mark’s Gospel.

Conclusion

Let me take just one minute and 24 seconds to sum up what we have discovered. Establishing what an author wrote is an indispensable first step to determining what he or she meant. Within the pages of the New Testament there are textual variations that have not yet been satisfactorily resolved and that have profound effects, not just on a word here or there, but on the entire meaning of entire books and their portrayals of Jesus, e.g., the angry Jesus of Mark, the imperturbable Jesus of Luke, and the forsaken Jesus of Hebrews. These textual problems cannot simply be swept under the table and ignored. Commentators, interpreters, preachers, and general readers of the Bible must recognize their existence and realize the stakes involved in solving them.

But there is far more to the textual tradition of the New Testament than merely establishing what its authors actually wrote. There is also the question of why these words came to be changed, and how these changes affect the meanings of their writings. This question of the modification of Scripture in the early Christian church will be the subject of my next lecture, as I try to show how scribes who were not altogether satisfied with what the New Testament books said modified their words, to make them more clearly support orthodox Christianity and more vigorously oppose Jews, pagans, heretics, and women.

TEXT AND TRADITION:
THE ROLE OF NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS
IN EARLY CHRISTIAN STUDIES

TEXT AND TRANSMISSION:
THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE
“ALTERED” TEXT¹

Introduction

For most of its practitioners, the ultimate goal of textual criticism has been to reconstruct the original text of the New Testament. This conception of the field was exemplified in the work of Fenton John Anthony Hort, arguably the most brilliant mind to apply himself to the task, who focused his labors on a solitary objective: “to present exactly the original words of the New Testament, so far as they can now be determined from surviving documents.” Hort construed this task in entirely negative terms: “nothing more than the detection and rejection of error.”

No historian or exegete would deny the desirability of this objective; the words of an ancient author must be established before they can be interpreted. This became clear, I hope, in my last lecture, as I showed how the resolution of a textual problem can significantly affect exegesis, for example, by highlighting Mark’s portrayal of Jesus as an angry man, Luke’s portrayal of him as imperturbable, and the epistle to the Hebrews’ portrayal of him as forsaken.

Nonetheless, for textual scholars a century after Hort to continue being obsessed exclusively with the “original” text is, in my judgment, completely myopic. For the manuscript tradition of the New Testament provides us with much more than remnants of the New Testament autographs; it also gives us scribal *changes* of the text—changes that may be of significance in and of themselves for what they can tell us about the theological and social investments of the

¹ The Kenneth W. Clark lectures delivered at Duke Divinity School in 1997. This article, though slightly modified from the oral presentation, preserves the original flavor of the lecture. It was originally published as “Text and Transmission: The Historical Significance of the Altered Text,” in *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism*, 5 (2000). Online: <http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/vol05/Ehrman 2000b.html>.

scribes who made them and, correspondingly, about the theological and socio-historical contexts within which they worked. When viewed in this way, variant readings are not merely chaff to be discarded *en route* to the original text—as they were for Hort; they are instead valuable evidence for the history of the early Christian movement.

The historian of early Christianity shares a fundamental problem with all other historians of antiquity: our sources are frustratingly sparse. Moreover, the sources that have survived tend to be the literary remains of the cultured elite, which may or may not tell us what other, non-elites were thinking or experiencing. Our New Testament manuscripts were themselves, of course, produced by literate persons; but these anonymous scribes were not necessarily, or even probably, literary, in the sense of being among the most highly educated and cultured in their societies. If the changes that these unnamed copyists made in their reproductions are studied with sufficient care and with the right questions, they may provide a gold mine of information about the thoughts and experiences of late antique Christians who were not among the literary elite. Remarkably, this is a gold mine that has rarely been tapped.

Let me begin to illustrate the potential of this kind of approach to our textual tradition by picking up on the three variant readings that I examined in my previous lecture. I will start with the ones found in Luke and Hebrews, as these illustrate well the ways in which the theological controversies of early Christianity made an impact on the scriptural texts that were being used by various sides in the debates.

Theological Modifications of the Text

We saw last time that Luke 22:43–44, verses found in some manuscripts but not others, present the familiar story of Jesus in agony before his arrest, sweating great drops as if of blood, and being strengthened by an angel from heaven. I showed that these verses did not originally belong to Luke's Gospel but were inserted by a scribe or scribes in the second century. But why were they inserted? Was it simply because scribes found the story interesting or edifying? While this is, of course, possible, there may have been something far more significant going on. In fact, there are reasons to think that the verses were interpolated into the Gospel precisely

because they portray so well a human Jesus, one who agonizes over his coming fate to the point of needing supernatural succor, an agony so deep as to cause him to sweat great drops as if of blood.

In the second century, there were a number of Christians who maintained that since Jesus was fully divine, he could not be human. Included in their number were Marcion and members of several groups of Gnostics. Their opponents called these "heretics" docetists, from the Greek word *δοκέω* (to seem or to appear), since these persons maintained that Jesus only "seemed" or "appeared" to be human.

This was a serious and heated controversy in the second century, as it affected profoundly the church's entire understanding of the nature of Christ. If the solution to that question seems obvious today, we should surely reflect on the fact that one side eventually won the debate and then wrote the history of the conflict. In any event, in view of this controversy, it is worth observing how the verses in question were used in the sources that first attest them. They occur three times in the writings of anti-heretical, proto-orthodox church fathers of the second century: Justin, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus. Remarkably, in all three cases they are cited to the same end, to counter any notion Jesus was not a real flesh and blood human being. Justin, for example, argues that Jesus' bloody sweat shows "that the Father wished His Son really to undergo such sufferings for our sakes," so that we "may not say that He, being the Son of God, did not feel what was happening to Him and inflicted on Him" (*Dial.* 103). What is interesting in this case is that we do not need to hypothesize the usefulness of these verses for an anti-docetic polemic; we know that the verses were put to precisely this use during the second-century and that that is when the account came to be inserted into the third Gospel; scribes who did so may well have been reflecting the anti-docetic concerns of their own communities.

We might hypothesize a somewhat different motivation behind the modification of Hebrews 2:9. If you recall, in that passage Jesus was said to have died "apart from God." Early in the second century, however, scribes began to change the word "apart" (*χωρίς* in Greek) to a word similar in appearance *χάρτι*, "grace," so that now Jesus is said to have died "by the grace" of God. Even though this change may have been made by accident, it carries such a significantly different meaning that one might suspect that scribes knew full well what they were doing when they made it. On the one hand, one could probably argue that these anonymous copyists simply couldn't

understand what it might mean to say that Jesus died “apart from God” and so changed it to say something that made better sense; but, on the other hand, it may be that they knew full well what the text meant and that they knew how some Christians were interpreting it. If this is so, then the offending parties would not have been groups of docetists, but, possibly, other kinds of Gnostics who had a different view of Jesus.

For in fact, most Gnostics did not maintain that Jesus was fully God and not human (the docetic view); they instead claimed that Jesus Christ was two separate beings, one human (the man Jesus) and the other divine (the heavenly Christ). As the heretic-fighter Irenaeus explains, these Gnostics maintained that when Jesus was baptized, the Christ descended upon him as a dove and entered into him, empowering him for his ministry. Then, at some point prior to his death, the Christ, who could not suffer, departed from him. That’s why, according to some Gnostics, Jesus cried out on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you left me behind?” For them, that’s exactly what had happened, when the divine Christ made his exit. For these gnostic Christians, Jesus literally did die “apart from God.”

We know that the scribal alteration of the text of Heb 2:9 occurred precisely during the time that the controversy between proto-orthodox Christians and Gnostics was raging. It is not at all implausible to think that it was just this controversy then that led to the modification of this text, that proto-orthodox scribes, who shared the christological views of Irenaeus, modified the text so that Gnostics could not use it as a scriptural warrant for saying that Jesus died “apart from God,” since the divine Christ had already left him.

This would not be the only verse that was altered out of anti-gnostic concerns. Just to take one other similar example before moving on to other kinds of scribal changes, we might consider the cry of dereliction that I’ve just mentioned from Mark 15:34, where Jesus breaks the silence he has maintained throughout the entire crucifixion scene by crying out, in Aramaic: *ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι*, a quotation of Ps 22:2, for which the author supplies the Greek translation of the LXX, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

As I’ve already intimated, at stake in the Gnostic controversy was the meaning of the Greek verb in this verse, *ἐγκατέλιπες*, literally, “left behind.” The proto-orthodox took it to mean “forsake” and argued that because Christ had taken the sins of the world upon

himself, he felt forsaken by God; the Gnostics, on the other hand, understood the word in its more literal sense, so that for them, Jesus was lamenting the departure of the divine Christ: "My God, my God, why have you left me behind?"

This is clearly the interpretation given by the gnostic Gospel of Philip, which quotes the verse before explaining that "It was on the cross that Jesus said these words, for it was there that he was divided." The words appear to be construed similarly in their reformulation in the Gospel of Peter, where on the cross Jesus cries out, "My power, O power, you have left me."

Until recently, scholars have failed to recognize how this controversy over the meaning of Jesus' last words in Mark relates to a famous textual problem of the verse. For in some manuscripts, rather than crying out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" the dying Jesus cries "My God, my God, why have you reviled me?"

The witnesses that support this reading indicate that it was in wide circulation already in the second century. But it has proved very difficult for scholars to imagine that it was the original reading of Mark, for lots of reasons that I don't need to go into here. Assuming that Mark's Jesus cried out "why have you forsaken me," why would some scribes have changed it to "why have you reviled me"? Surely it's not unrelated to fact that Gnostics were using the verse to support their separationist christology. For them, Jesus' despair at being "left behind" by God demonstrated that the Christ had separated from him and returned into the Pleroma, leaving him to die alone. The change, then, may have been made to circumvent the "misuse" of the text, and naturally suggested itself from the context. Just as Jesus was reviled by his opponents, those for whom he died, so too he bore the reproach of God himself, for whose sake he went to the cross in the first place.

Variations such as this, that relate in one way or another to the early christological controversies, have been studied at some length in recent years. The same cannot be said about variants that relate to other kinds of issues confronting Christian scribes of the second and third centuries. There are a number of fruitful avenues of exploration, just begging for intelligent attention. We can begin by looking at variants involving the apologetic concerns of early Christianity.

Apologetically-Motivated Variants

To do so, we should return to the third variant that I considered in my previous lecture, Mark 1:41, where Mark indicates that Jesus became angry when approached by a leper who wanted to be healed. Scribes changed the text so that Jesus was no longer said to become angry, but was moved by compassion. This kind of change is also, roughly speaking, christological, in that it pertains to the portrayal of Jesus. But it is hard to understand the change in relation to any of the christological controversies known to be raging during the time it was made, the second century. So perhaps we should look for some other context within which to situate it.

Again, it's possible that scribes simply couldn't figure out why Jesus would get angry at this poor fellow and so changed the text to make his response more appropriate. But could something else have motivated the change? To my knowledge, no one has considered the possibility that the change was made in light of another kind of controversy second-century Christians were embroiled in, this time not with "heretics," that is, Christians who took different theological positions, but with pagan opponents of Christianity.

In the second half of the second century, when this text appears to have been altered, pagan critics started to take notice of the burgeoning Christian movement and began to write vitriolic attacks on it, labeling it a mindless superstition comprised of uneducated bumpkins, who followed the teachings of a rural nobody who was executed for crimes against the state. This was also the time when Christianity began to find real intellectuals among its converts, who began to write scholarly defenses, or apologies, on behalf of the faith.

None of the early pagan critics of Christianity was as thorough and penetrating as the late-second century Celsus, and none of its defenders was as brilliant as Celsus's posthumous opponent, Origen. In the five books of his work, *Against Celsus*, Origen quotes at length from the attack of Celsus on Christianity and defends the religion and its founder against the charges leveled against it.

I do not wish to say that this particular verse, Mark 1:41, figured prominently in Celsus' attack or in Origen's defense. But the issues involved are perhaps of relevance. Celsus maintained that Jesus was not the Son of God but was a poor, lower-class, uneducated peasant who did his miracles through the power of magic. Origen, writing 70 years later, tried to show that Jesus was not a purveyor of

the magical arts but was the son of God himself come to earth for the betterment of the human race. To mount his defense, Origen establishes some common ground with Celsus: anyone who is a true son of God will do what he does for the common good, to improve the lot of humanity, to resolve suffering, and to work for moral reformation. Both the goals of Jesus' miraculous deeds and the character of his person are at stake here, as they evidently were for other pagan opponents and Christian apologists.

In a context in which pagan critics are maligning the person of Jesus, what might one think of a scribe who modifies the scriptural accounts that describe his character? If we find a text in which Jesus, for no obvious reason, becomes angry at someone in desperate need, and see that scribes have changed it so that he reacts in a way more appropriate for the kindly divine presence on earth, being moved by compassion instead of filled with wrath, is it not possible that the alteration has been motivated precisely by the pagan attacks on Jesus' character? At this stage I throw it out merely as a suggestion; it is at least worth further investigation.

And other variants in our tradition may be worth considering in a similar light. Take, for example, the well known description of Jesus in Mark 6:3. In this passage, Jesus has returned to his hometown with his disciples, and preaches in the synagogue with a brilliance that astounds his hearers, who say, "What is the wisdom given to this one, and such powers have come through his hands. Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James, Joses, Juda, and Simon?"

This is the only passage in the New Testament that describes Jesus as a carpenter. The word, in fact, may not actually signify what we think of as a carpenter; it is true that in the second century author, Justin, Jesus was said to have made yokes and gates, but the Greek word *τεκτων* can refer to a number of different occupations, including metal smiths and stone masons. In any event, the term typically refers to a person who works with the hands, a lower-class blue-collar worker; we possibly get a comparable "feel" from our term "construction worker."

No where *else* is Jesus called a *τεκτων* in the New Testament; the other Synoptics independently change the passage; in Matthew the crowd asks, "is this not the son of the *τεκτων*," and in Luke, somewhat similarly, "Is this not the son of Joseph." In both Gospels a particularly acute irony is thereby created, since Matthew and Luke

each explicitly indicate that Jesus' mother was a virgin at his birth so that Joseph is not his father; the crowd obviously doesn't really know the first thing about him, despite their presumed familiarity, and the reader notes their ignorance. The irony is not possible in Mark, however, which says not a word about Jesus' virginal conception.

What is of particular interest for our purposes here is that this description of Jesus as a $\tau\epsilon\kappa\tau\omega\nu$ in Mark has been changed by some scribes, so that now, as in Matthew, Jesus is said to be the *son* of the $\tau\epsilon\kappa\tau\omega\nu$ rather than the $\tau\epsilon\kappa\tau\omega\nu$ himself. Some scholars have argued that this was in fact the original text in Mark, and that it got changed by scribes who were afraid that it might be taken to indicate that Jesus really was the son of Joseph, i.e., that he was not born of a virgin. This seems unlikely to me for a variety of reasons; for one thing, it doesn't explain why the explicit statements of Matthew and Luke, in which the crowds do say precisely this, were not also changed (and a change in those cases would have had the added benefit of resolving the apparent contradiction of the claim that he was Joseph's son, when in fact he was not).

For this, and other reasons, it looks like Mark probably did describe Jesus as a $\tau\epsilon\kappa\tau\omega\nu$. But why then did some copyists change it to say that he was the *son* of the $\tau\epsilon\kappa\tau\omega\nu$? It may be that they did so simply to bring Mark's Gospel into closer harmony with the more commonly read Gospel of Matthew; but whenever a harmonistic change like this has occurred, we are well served in asking whether there is anything in particular that might have influenced a scribe to harmonize the texts, especially if no explicit contradiction occurs between them.

In this case it is particularly worth noting that the pagan critic Celsus does attack Jesus' character precisely because of his blue-collar associations, making fun of the Christians' notion that a lowly day-laborer ($\tau\epsilon\kappa\tau\omega\nu$) could be the Son of God himself [*Cels.* 6.36]. It is hard to tell whether Origen's reply to this charge is disingenuous, for he claims that in fact Jesus is never *called* a $\tau\epsilon\kappa\tau\omega\nu$ in the Gospels. Either Origen overlooked this passage (which is a bit hard to imagine, given his exhaustive knowledge of the Gospels) or the manuscripts available to him had themselves been changed. But why changed? Could it have been in order to circumvent precisely the problem that Celsus raises, that it describes Jesus, whom Christians acknowledge as the divine son of God, as a low-class construction worker?

Other Examples

Other changes in the text of the New Testament may be closely related to the apologetic concerns of second-century Christians, even though they have never been examined in this vein. Throughout the Mediterranean world at this time, for example, it was widely and naturally thought that anyone claiming to be divine could foretell the future, and that those who made errors in their predictions were, more or less obviously, somewhat wanting in their divine skills. Could this kind of "common-sense" have motivated scribes occasionally to modify passages that appear to compromise Jesus' omniscience?

The most famous instance comes in Matthew 24:36, where Jesus explicitly states that no one knows the day or the hour in which the end will come, not even the angels of heaven nor the son, but the father alone. A significant number of our manuscripts omit the phrase "not even the son." The reason is not hard to postulate; if Jesus does not know the future, the Christian claim that he is divine is more than a little compromised.

A less obvious example comes three chapters later in Matthew's crucifixion scene. We're told in Matt 27:34 that while on the cross Jesus was given wine to drink, mixed with gall, which he tasted. A large number of manuscripts, though, indicate that it was not wine that he was given, but vinegar. The change may have been made to conform the text more closely with the proof-text that was used to explain the action, Psalm 69:22; but one might wonder if something else is motivating the scribes as well. It is interesting to note that at his last supper, in 26:29, after distributing the cup of wine to his disciples, Jesus explicitly states that he will not drink wine again until he does so in the kingdom of the father. Is the change of 27:34 from wine to vinegar meant to safeguard that prediction?

Or consider the alteration to Jesus' prediction to the high priest at the Sanhedrin trial of Mark 14:62. When asked whether he is the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, Jesus replies, "I am, and you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven." Widely considered by modern scholars to embody or approximate an authentic saying of Jesus, these words have proved discomfiting for many Christians since near the end of the first century. The son of man never did arrive on the clouds of heaven. Why then did Jesus predict that the high priest would himself see him come?

The answer may well be that Jesus actually thought that the high priest *would* see it, i.e., that it would happen within his lifetime. But, obviously, in the context of second-century apologetics, this could be taken as a false prediction. No wonder that one of our earliest witnesses to Mark modifies the verse by eliminating the offending words, so that now Jesus simply says that the high priest will see the son of man seated at the right hand of power with the clouds of heaven. No mention here, of an imminent parousia.

Jesus omniscience is safeguarded in other ways in yet other passages. A fairly obvious example occurs in Mark 2:26, in which Jesus wrongly claims that Abiathar was the high priest when David entered into the temple with his companions to eat the showbread. The incident is recorded in 1 Sam 21, and it is quite clear that it was not Abiathar, but his father Ahimelech, who was the high priest at the time. As one might expect, scribes have modified the text to remove Jesus' mistake; the reference to Abiathar is excised in several of our earlier manuscripts.

It is at least possible that these changes, and others like them, have been influenced by the apologetic concerns of early Christians. How many others are there? I have no idea and, I'm sorry to report, to my knowledge neither does anyone else. No one has undertaken a systematic investigation of the problem. But now we move on to another area of interest.

Anti-Judaic Modifications

A Christian living in the second century would find him or herself almost automatically embroiled in a situation of conflict with non-Christian Jews, a conflict that involved different understandings of the role that Jesus played in the divine plan for the world and of the meaning of the Jewish Scriptures. I should point out that by no means was this conflict an even match; by around the year 100, the Christian church was still only a tiny fraction of the population of the Empire, unheard of by most of its other inhabitants, outnumbered by non-Christian Jews something like ten to one.

It was perhaps their threatened and defensive position that led Christians of the second century to use such vitriolic polemic in their discussions of their Jewish opponents. From the first half of the cen-

ture, for example, we find the epistle of Barnabas claiming that Judaism is and always has been a false religion. The author argues that Israel had irrevocably broken God's covenant, smashed it to bits, as shown, quite literally, by the story of the giving of the Law in the Old Testament itself, for when Moses comes down from Mount Sinai he sees the children of Israel engaged in wild and lawless activities and smashes to smithereens the two tablets of stone containing the ten commandments. And the covenant never was restored. That is why, he maintains, Israel misunderstood all of its own laws subsequently given to Moses. For in fact, the laws of circumcision and kosher foods and all the rest were never meant to be taken literally, but were symbolic expressions of God's will, as has now been revealed in Christ.

Later in the second and third centuries we find other authors moving along a similar anti-Judaic path, authors like Justin in Rome who maintained that God commanded Jewish males to be circumcised not as a sign of his special favor, but in order to mark them off from the rest of the human race for special punishment; and authors like Tertullian and Origen, who claimed that Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans at God's own initiative, as a punishment upon the Jews for rejecting their own messiah. And we find the elegant if terrifying rhetoric of Melito of Sardis, whose Passover sermon provided an occasion to vent his own animosity towards the Jews.

Pay attention all families of the nations and observe! An extraordinary murder has taken place in the center of Jerusalem, in the city devoted to God's law, in the city of the Hebrews, in the city of the prophets, in the city thought of as just. And who has been murdered? And who is the murderer? I am ashamed to give the answer, but give it I must. . . . The one who hung the earth in space, is himself hanged; the one who fixed the heavens in place is himself impaled; the one who firmly fixed all things is himself firmly fixed to the tree. The Lord is insulted, God has been murdered, the King of Israel has been destroyed by the right hand of Israel (*Paschal Homily*, 94–96).

To my knowledge, this is the first instance in which a Christian author explicitly accuses the Jewish people of deicide in the death of Jesus.

How did the opposition to Jews and Judaism affect Christian scribes who were reproducing the texts of the New Testament? Many of

the passages involved stood at the heart of the conflict, New Testament passages that detailed the Jewish involvement in the death of Jesus. Here I can do little more than cite a couple of instances.

As I pointed out in my first lecture, Mark's powerful portrayal of Jesus going to his death in silence is modified by Luke, where, as he is being nailed to the cross, Jesus utters the memorable prayer, "Father forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing." Interestingly enough, Jesus' prayer is not found in every manuscript of Luke's Gospel. Of the manuscripts that lack the verse some can be dated to about the year 200. In these witnesses, Jesus does not ask his father to forgive those who are doing this cruel thing to him.

The verse appears to be clearly Lukan, as it portrays Jesus calm and in control of his own destiny, concerned about the welfare and fate of others more than himself. At the same time, and perhaps yet more significantly, the verse contains a perspective that proved discomforting to early scribes. Many people today understand Jesus' prayer to be for those who were in the act of crucifying him, that is, the Roman soldiers. But throughout the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, written by the same author, those who are blamed for Jesus' crucifixion are consistently the Jewish people. Furthermore, and this is the really important point, we know from later writings of the church fathers that Jesus' prayer of forgiveness was typically understood to refer to the Jews who were to blame for his death.

This makes our textual situation very interesting. A verse that gives every indication of having come from the hand of the author of the Gospel is occasionally being deleted by scribes of the late second or early third century. During this time the verse is being construed as Jesus' prayer that God forgive the Jewish people. Moreover, it is precisely at this time that anti-Judaic sentiment is rising to a kind of crescendo, when Jews are being accused as Christ killers, as murderers of God, when Christians are claiming that the destruction of the holy city Jerusalem was God's punishment of the Jews for the death of Jesus. For many Christians, God had *not* forgiven Jews for their rejection of Jesus. How then could Jesus have asked him to forgive them; and why would he have done so? Some Christian scribes evidently solved the problem of Jesus' prayer simply by excising it.

Other instances of this sort of scribal activity occur in modifications that heighten Jewish culpability for Jesus' death. As but one example, in the famous scene of Jesus' trial in Matthew's Gospel, we are told that Pilate washed his hands before the crowds and proclaimed

that he was innocent of Jesus' blood. The crowds then replied, "His blood be on us and our children." Pilate then had Jesus scourged and "delivered him up to be crucified."

The passage has served as an incentive for anti-semitic sentiments and activities over the years, since the Jewish crowds here are said not only to have borne the responsibility for Jesus' death but also to have made their succeeding generations accountable for it. Whether Matthew intended a kind of anti-Judaic reading is much debated among exegetes. In any event, the textual history of the passage is quite interesting in light of its subsequent usage by anti-Jewish Christians. Whereas in the oldest available form of the text, Pilate hands Jesus over to his Roman guard for crucifixion, in some of our early manuscripts, after hearing the Jewish crowd accept responsibility for Jesus' death, Pilate "delivered Jesus over to *them* so that *they* might crucify him." In these manuscripts, the Jews are fully responsible for Jesus' death.

Not only the guilt associated with Jesus' death, but also its salvific effect came to be modified in the hands of early Christian scribes. As but one quick example, we are told in the birth narrative of Matthew's Gospel that the newborn savior was to be called Jesus, a name that comes from the Hebrew word, Joshua, which means salvation, because he would "save his people from their sins." Interestingly enough, at least one ancient scribe appears to have had difficulty with this notion of Jews being saved and so modified the angelic explication of Jesus' name. In this Syriac manuscript, Jesus is said to "save the world," not his people, "from their sins."

Other examples of such possibly anti-Judaic alterations of the text could be multiplied. How many such instances are there? Again, it's impossible to say; no one has rigorously pursued the question.

Variants Involving the Oppression of Women

Over the course of the past twenty years or so, feminist historians have offered a number of compelling reconstructions of the history of early Christianity. In contrast, the historical narratives produced by white men have typically downplayed the role of women in the church, or more commonly, simply ignored their role altogether. It is certainly understandable how those trained in the standard European models of historiography may have overlooked the evidence for

women's actual, if not recorded, prominence in the early years of the Christian movement. The ancient records were themselves written almost entirely by men who no less than we were driven by ideological concerns in preserving descriptions of how things happened and at whose hands. By all counts, women are seriously under-represented in these ancient records.

And yet there are firm indications that women were quite active in the early Christian movement, that they were instrumental in its early development as a religion, that they probably comprised the majority of Christians in the early centuries, that at the outset they were widely granted positions of status and authority equal to that of men, and that only with the passing of time and the expansion of the movement did their voices come to be silenced. The evidence of the early prominence of women from the New Testament, especially the writings of Paul (e.g., Rom 16), is familiar to most of my audience, or at least easily accessible, and so I won't recount it for you now. Perhaps I should emphasize, though, that women's continuing prominence in some of the churches associated with Paul is attested in a number of places, such as the second-century apocryphal tales like the Acts of Thecla, in gnostic groups that claimed allegiance to Paul and that were known to have women as their leaders and spokespersons, and in such sectarian groups as that associated with the prophet Montanus and his two women colleagues Prisca and Maximillia—women who had evidently forsaken their marriages in order to live ascetic lives, insisting that the end of the age was near.

As is well known, not everyone in the early Christian movement was pleased with the important roles women played in the churches or the ideology that allowed them to do so. On the contrary, a good deal of the history of Christianity, including its early history, involved a movement to oppress women and to take away their voices, a movement spearheaded by those who believed that women should be in complete submission to men. The movement is already in evidence in the pseudonymous letters of Timothy and Titus that made it into the New Testament, letters allegedly written by Paul to male leaders of two of his churches, urging them to tend to the problems of their communities, including the problem of women, who were to be brought under subjection. Christian women were to be silent and submissive and sexually active with their spouses; those who

wanted to enjoy the benefits of salvation were to recognize the superiority of their husbands, to keep quiet, and to produce babies (1 Tim 2:11–13).

How did the debates over the status of women affect the scribes who reproduced our texts? The first place to turn is a familiar passage that continues to play a prominent role in modern Christian debates over women in the church, 1 Cor 14:35–36. Indeed, this is another passage commonly thought to show Paul's true misogynist colors, for here Paul appears to urge a view that is anything *but* egalitarian:

Let the women be silent in the churches For they are not permitted to speak but must be subordinate, just as the law says. But if they wish to learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

I'm sorry to say, especially for my fellow *neutestamentlers*, that I really have nothing new to say about this much worked over passage, except that the discussion over whether Paul actually wrote it ought to be situated in the context I've just sketched of the early Christian oppression of women, rather than left in vacuous isolation as is more commonly done.

For those of you not as familiar with the problem, let me summarize the issues briefly. There are good reasons for thinking that a scribe inserted this passage into 1 Corinthians after it had already left Paul's hand and been in circulation for a time.

The evidence is not as compelling as some of the other cases we have examined, for the passage is found in all of our manuscripts of 1 Corinthians. Nonetheless, some of our Latin manuscripts situate these verses in a different location, placing them at the end of the chapter, after v. 40. One way to explain this kind of transposition is to assume that the passage originated as a marginal note that scribes later incorporated into the text itself, some scribes inserting it in one place and others in another. And indeed, there are strong arguments for thinking that this is exactly what happened in the present instance, for the verses appear intrusive in their immediate literary context and completely at odds with what Paul says about women elsewhere—including within 1 Corinthians itself.

In terms of the immediate context, this entire chapter addresses the issue of prophecy in the church. This is the topic of discussion

up to v. 33, immediately before these verses, and the topic beginning again with vv. 36–37, immediately afterwards. The verses in question, however, go off on a different tangent, making them look intrusive.

Moreover, what the verses actually say stands in tension with Paul's own views—not only Gal 3:28, where he maintains that in Christ there is neither male nor female, but more puzzling still, even within the letter of 1 Corinthians itself. The present passage insists that women be silent, that they not be allowed to speak in church. But just three chapters earlier Paul endorsed the practice of women praying and prophesying in church, activities always done aloud in antiquity. How could he affirm the right of women to speak in chapter eleven and then deny them that right in chapter 14?

It could well be that he didn't deny them that right, but that a later author did so, a scribe who penned a marginal note in his manuscript of this letter, whose comments were later made part of the text itself. The note is remarkably close in tenor to the comments preserved pseudonymously in Paul's name by the author of the Pastoral epistles. It may well, then, represent a scribal attempt to understand Paul in light of the oppressive views advocated by the proto-orthodox Christians of a later generation.

Other passages of the New Testament are affected by this same tendency, although rarely in so striking a fashion. Here I might mention Rom 16:7, which identifies the woman Junia as one of the apostles: "Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and fellow prisoners, who are eminent among the apostles." English Bible translators have gone out of their way to perform a sex change on Junia, by transforming her name into a masculine name that didn't exist in ancient Greek, Junias. These modern scholars may find solace in the precedent set by two of our earliest scribes, who by adding an article to the text allow it to be read differently: "Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives; and also greet my fellow prisoners who are eminent among the apostles."

Two other quick examples from the book of Acts. In chapter 17, Paul is said to have converted several socially prominent women to the faith. One ancient copy of the passage, however, preserves a modification that celebrates the people who really count: now rather than calling these converts "women of prominence" they are unambiguously labeled "wives of prominent men." A similar tendency is at work in the regular scribal tendency to transpose the names of

two of the noteworthy companions of Paul, Priscilla and her husband Aquila, so that the husband's name, in these modified manuscripts of the book of Acts, appears in its appropriately prior position.

Conclusion

There are other kinds of scribal modifications that we could look at along similar lines, if we chose—e.g., changes that reflect theological issues other than christology or alterations that appear to be related to the ascetic practices emerging in the early Christian movement. Like scribal changes related to apologetic, anti-Jewish, and anti-women views that were sweeping through many of the Christian churches of the second century, these kinds of modifications have been left virtually untouched by textual scholars.

My time is running rather short, however, and rather than pursue these lines of inquiry here, I would like to conclude by reflecting for a moment on a somewhat broader issue. I have been trying to make a couple of basic points in these two lectures; one of my major theses, though, has remained more or less hidden as a kind of sub-text for them both. In my conclusion I would like to raise it to the level of consciousness. To some extent I've wanted these lectures to show that even though it's not generally perceived this way, the study of the NT manuscripts can be both interesting and important for early Christian studies more generally.

I say that it's not generally perceived this way, and that's perhaps a bit of an understatement. Most people, even most NT scholars, typically consider textual criticism to be an arcane subdiscipline of little interest to anyone residing outside the rare and occasionally endangered species of textual critics themselves. A lot of the fault for this perception lies with my colleagues in the field, who in fact are among the worst you'll find anywhere at explaining why it is that what they do *matters* for anything, for example, for exegesis or historical reconstruction, let alone for the study of NT theology, the history of doctrine, or the social world of early Christianity.

No wonder that most of today's NT scholars, by their own admission, are not capable of rendering independent judgments concerning textual variants preserved in the tradition (I except my NT colleagues here, by the way; and they will for the most part agree, I think, with my opinion on this point). It strikes me as a pity that

most doctoral candidates in New Testament are not trained even to use the apparatus of the standard Greek text, the Nestle-Aland 27th ed., that most divinity school students are not taught the fundamental problems of the textual tradition that they are expected to teach or preach, and that most of the laypersons in the churches to which the graduates of divinity school go are left completely unaware of the problems of the texts of the books that they themselves revere as Scripture.

In any event, I hope I've made a case for the fundamental importance of this kind of knowledge, and for why its continued neglect is not in anyone's best interest. It shouldn't be left to a small coterie of specialists. Significant issues surrounding NT exegesis, the development of early Christian theology, and the social history of the early church are intricately connected with decisions concerning the texts of the books that came to be considered by Christians as sacred scripture. The oldest form of the text must be established before it can be interpreted, and the later alterations of this text reveal significant moments in the use of these texts during the theological and social conflicts of the first three or four centuries of the Christian church.

CHRIST IN EARLY CHRISTIAN TRADITION:
TEXTS DISPUTED AND APOCRYPHAL

LECTURE ONE: CHRIST COME IN THE FLESH¹

In a famous passage found in our earliest Gospels, Jesus is said to have asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” We are familiar with the response of the disciples. But what if the question were asked of modern scholars? There would in fact be a bewildering array of responses:

Some say you’re a political revolutionary urging others to take up arms against the state; some say you’re a social radical urging a counter-cultural revolution; some say that you’re a Cynic Philosopher, with no real concern for the Jewish Scripture or the history of the Jewish people; some say you’re a proto-marxist; some say you’re a proto-feminist; some say you’re a gay magician; some say you’re a celibate holy man.

And who do you say that I am? In much of America and Germany, the scholarly reply comes: you are an apocalyptic prophet who expects God to intervene in the course of history to overthrow the forces of evil and set up his good kingdom on earth.

Suppose now that we move the clock back eighteen centuries or so, to the end of the second century. How were Christians then answering the question of who Jesus was?

As it turns out, we are well informed about some of these views. What is striking is that just like today, the answers were very much at odds with one another, even though the Christological issues dominating people’s thinking were quite different.

In the second century there were some Christians who claimed that Jesus was a “mere man”—a *PSILOS ANTHROPOS*, to use the Greek phrase, whose death brought about the salvation of the world. That may not be a surprising view, given the Synoptic portrayals of Jesus, as there too he does not appear to be anything other than a man, even though he is at the same time the man chosen by God to be his son, the messiah. But by the end of the second

¹ The Shaffer Lectures; Yale University, October 2004.

century, the notion that he was a mere man, and not himself divine, had become a dangerous heresy to be rooted out of the church. Some of the groups proclaiming that Jesus was only and completely human were Gentiles who repudiated for themselves all forms of Jewish worship. But there were others who were Jews, who saw Jesus specifically as the Jewish messiah. In their view, Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and Mary, who on account of his righteousness before the Jewish Law was adopted to be the Son of God and given the mission of dying for the sins of the world. Those who accepted his sacrifice for their sins would, like him, be faithful followers of the Jewish Law.

Standing over against such views of Jesus were the majority of Christians, who saw Jesus as in some sense divine, himself, personally. Jesus was God. For some, he was so much God, he was not human; for them, God cannot be human any more than a human can be a rock. But why then did Jesus *appear* to be human? It was because in fact it really was all an appearance. Jesus came in the “likeness” of human flesh, but he was not really human. He only seemed to be.

Some Christians who maintained this view understood Jesus’ bodily appearance to be a phantasm. Their opponents called such views “docetic”—from the Greek word *DOKEO*, “to seem,” “to appear.” Far from being a *PSILOS ANTHROPOS*, Jesus wasn’t an *ANTHROPOS* at all. Other Christians—probably far more—understood that Jesus himself was an *ANTHROPOS*, but that he was not identical with Christ. The Christ was a divine being who came into Jesus at his baptism, empowering him for his ministry, and then departing from him prior to his death. That’s why, on the cross, he cried out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Because it was at that point that the divine Christ left Jesus to face his agonizing death alone. Why? Because the divine can’t suffer.

Others insisted that the divine *could* suffer. In fact, for them, what was significant about Jesus was precisely that in him the divine had suffered. Since Jesus is God, and since there is and can be only one God, it is Jesus himself who is that God, become a human. Jesus is none other than God the Father become flesh, to die for the people he created. At one time in the second century, this appears to have been the favored view among church leaders, especially in the major center of Christendom, Rome. But opponents of the view mocked it claiming that it was nonsense to think that the father

suffered, and so they coined a phrase for this understanding, calling it Patripassianism (the “father suffers”) and declaring it a heresy. Among other things, they pointed out that the patripassianist view doesn’t make sense of the tradition that Jesus was the Son of God. How could he be son of the father if he were at the same time the father of the son? And when Jesus prayed: was he simply talking to himself?

For these opponents of the patripassianists, the Son was one thing, the Father was another. But the son, who was human, was also divine. How could he be divine, though, if the father was also divine and if there is only one God? As we all know so well, it was precisely such views that ultimately led to the doctrine of the trinity: one God manifest in three persons.

Before trinitarian thinking became orthodoxy, however, all of these views that I’ve been outlining were represented among early Christians. Some of those holding these views were leaders of the church. Looking back on these disputes about who Jesus was, one might be tempted to ask, why didn’t these second century Christians supporting one aberrant view or another simply read their New Testaments to see that their views were wrong?

There are several answers to this fairly obvious question. The first, of course, is that the New Testament itself didn’t exist yet. I don’t mean that the books that were eventually to make up the New Testament had not yet been written. They had been written, and had long been in circulation. But other books had been written as well, books equally claiming to have been written by apostles, embodying one or another of these various views. And no one had settled on a group of books as a canon of Scripture that was to guide Christians in their thinking about Christ, God, the created world, the place of humans in it, etc. And so some Christians revered Matthew, some John, some the Gospel of Thomas, or the Gospel of Peter, or the Gospel of Truth, or any other of the dozens of allegedly authoritative books in circulation among the Christian communities.

But what is more, even groups that agreed on the authority of one book or group of books over another had no guarantee that the views they propounded would be accepted by everyone else who accepted the *same* books. Accepting the authority of a book and interpreting the authoritative teaching of that book are two different things. As both postmodernists and historians of interpretation know

full well—and there’s no rule in the universe requiring these to be different people—rarely if ever do texts *compel* interpretations; rather they *enable* them. Two readers can take the same text and make it say radically different things. And it is not that one reader is simply being willful, wicked, or stupid when reading the text, and the other reader is simply letting the text speak for itself. Texts *don’t* speak for themselves. They have to be read. And they are read by living, breathing human beings, who have different worldviews, perspectives, opinions, beliefs, and inclinations, and all of these worldviews, perspectives, opinions, beliefs, and inclinations affect how texts can be and are read. No one can escape this situation any more than one can escape being human, either now or then, in the second century.

I want to illustrate this point in my three lectures by looking at one of our earliest surviving texts, the Gospel according to Luke, which, I will argue, could be read in radically different ways by radically different Christians with radically different Christological views in the early centuries. The heart of my argument will not be that one of these readings was right and all others were wrong, but that different Christians not only read the text in different ways but also tried to control the reading of the text to prevent it from being read in ways that were deemed inappropriate at best or heretical at worst. In other words, given the circumstance that the same text could be used to say different things, some Christians attempted to constrain the reading of the text of Luke, so that the text would mean what they *wanted* it to mean.

In this first lecture I want to consider how the text of Luke was read by one of its earliest interpreters—arguably the first systematic interpreter of the Gospel that we know of, the mid-second-century heresiarch Marcion.

It is much to be regretted that none of Marcion’s own writings have come down to us, as by all accounts he was one of the most significant and influential Christian thinkers of the second century. To reconstruct his views we need to rely on the comments made by his enemies, in particular his feisty proto-orthodox opponent Tertullian, who devoted a five-volume work, the *Adversus Marcionem*, to describing and attacking the writings and teachings of Marcion, some forty years or so after Marcion had already died and left the scene—itsself ample

testimony that the followers of Marcion continued to pose a serious threat to proto-orthodox Christianity into the third century. Later opponents indicate there were thriving Marcionite communities for centuries after *that*.

According to Tertullian, Marcion took the words of Jesus found in Luke 6:43 quite seriously: “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit.” Look around at this world we live in, said Marcion, this world of poverty, starvation, disease, war, and death. What kind of God could have created such a cesspool of misery and despair? In the Old Testament, God himself declares, “I am the one who creates misery” (Isa. 45:7). If a tree is known by its fruits, and the Old Testament God is one who produces misery, what does that say about God? He is the one responsible for all human suffering. He cannot be thought of as good.

But if there are good fruits there must also be a good God. This according to Marcion, is the God of Jesus, who must therefore be a different God from the one who created this evil world. Marcion found radical confirmation of his views in the writings of the one apostle he felt he could trust, the apostle Paul, who clearly differentiates the Law of the Jews from the Gospel of Christ. Paul argues vehemently that a person is made right with God, not by doing what the Law requires, but by faith in Christ. This differentiation between Law and Gospel Marcion saw as absolute. The Law was given by the God of the Jews, the Gospel by the God of Jesus.

In short, Marcion maintained, on the basis of his reading of Luke and Paul, that there were two different Gods. [This is a view that resonates with some Christians even today!]

The God of the Jews is the one who created this world, called Israel to be his people, and gave them his Law, as found in the Old Testament. Unfortunately, there is no one who keeps his law completely. And so, the harsh God of the Jews judges all people, condemning them to death. The God of Jesus, on the other hand, has intervened in the course of human affairs by sending Jesus to deliver people from this vengeful justice of the Old Testament God.

Jesus himself could not belong to the creator God. And so he could not actually have been born in this world—since to be born means to partake of material existence, which means to be part of the world of the harsh Creator God. Jesus in fact is from the good,

spiritual God, and came to earth only in the “appearance” of human flesh. Marcion, in short, was a docetist, who thought that Jesus was a phantasm. He had not actually “come in the flesh.”

It is not clear exactly how Marcion understood salvation to work. He appears to have maintained that it was faith in Jesus’ death that could bring deliverance from the Creator God—but if Jesus didn’t actually have a body, it is hard to say how he could have actually died. It may be that Marcion maintained that the good God of Jesus pulled a fast one on the God of the Jews, that Jesus appeared to die and so to bear the penalty for sin, tricking the creator God into releasing from his grasp those who were indebted to him through sin. In any event, what is clear is that for Marcion, Jesus brought salvation from the harsh, vengeful God of the Jews.

Marcion did not claim his own authority for these views. On the contrary, he indicated that they were clearly taught by the apostle Paul. It was Paul, for example, who insisted that Jesus brought salvation from the wrath of the Jewish God, it was Paul who claimed that the earlier Jewish apostles of Jesus had misunderstood the truth of the Gospel by insisting on the importance of following the Law, it was Paul who argued that Jesus came into the world only in the “likeness” of human flesh. Moreover, Paul continually talked about his “Gospel.” What was this Gospel? For Marcion, it was an actual written text, the Gospel that we today call the Gospel of Luke. Marcion was the first Christian that we know of who formed a closed canon of Scripture. It contained, naturally enough, the letters of Paul that he knew (all those in our New Testament, with the exception of the Pastoral epistles) and the Gospel of Luke, an eleven book canon that did not, of course, include the Old Testament, the book of the Jewish God, as its beginning section.

It may not be surprising that Marcion found the Gospel of Luke to be particularly amenable to his understanding of Jesus. Modern scholars have long noted, for example, that Luke portrays a rather passionless passion: that is to say the vivid portrayal of Jesus agonizing before his death and suffering, which we find in the earlier narrative of the Gospel of Mark, has been significantly modified in Luke’s account. Here there is no word of Jesus gripped by anguish before his death—he instead goes to his cross calm and in control, assured of the Father’s presence with him and eager to do his Father’s will until the very end. This might make particular sense if Jesus

was not really human, but simply went through the motions of suffering, bleeding, and dying, for the sake of salvation.

But still, can one seriously propose that Luke's Gospel promotes a docetic Christology? Church Fathers such as Tertullian were quite adamant on the point, that Marcion could use Luke only by abusing it. For doesn't Luke indicate that Jesus was actually born into the world? If nothing else, that's one of the central points of the opening two chapters, which describe Jesus' birth. And doesn't Luke tie Jesus directly to the God of the Jews? And doesn't Luke quote the Old Testament scriptures in a positive way, showing the continuity between the acts of God, old and new? And doesn't Luke show Jesus, after all, suffering before his death, agonizing in the Garden, sweating blood and praying to be delivered of his fate? And doesn't Jesus indicate in Luke that it is precisely his shed blood and broken body (not some kind of sleight of hand) that will bring about salvation? How could Marcion possibly appeal to Luke in support of his views?

According to the church fathers, he could do so only by altering the text of Luke. Marcion, Tertullian insisted, knew that the form of Luke popularly read in the churches contained passages that stood at odds with his teachings about God, Jesus, the Old Testament, and the world we live in. And so Marcion *removed* these passages from his copies of the Gospel. But how could he possibly justify altering the texts of his Scriptures simply to make them say what he wanted them to say? According to Tertullian, Marcion maintained that Christians before his time had simply not heeded the true message of Paul, and had wrongly believed that the God of the Jews was also the God of Jesus; and believing this, *they* had been the ones who had altered the texts of Scripture, by adding to them references to the Old Testament God, to the goodness of creation, to the suffering of Jesus, and the like. By eliminating these passages, Marcion did not think he was *changing* Scripture; he thought he was *restoring* Scripture to its original state.

I'm not sure if Tertullian is right that this is how Marcion went about handling his texts of Paul and Luke. But I am sure that there were key issues that divided Marcion from his proto-orthodox opponents about how to read these texts. It would be a mistake to think that since Marcion was a wicked heretic he was biased and therefore brought a biased reading to the text, making it say what he

wanted it to say, whereas Tertullian was an upright champion of orthodoxy and could simply read the text for what it really had to say and show that it supported his views. Both interpreters had biases and assumptions and world views and theologies, and these affected how they read their texts. Tertullian found a trinity in his text and Marcion found two different gods in his text; Tertullian found Jesus as both divine and human in his text and Marcion found Jesus as divine but not human in his text. Tertullian found an affirmation of the created order in his text and Marcion found a condemnation of the created order in his text. Most readers since then have sided with Tertullian. But that's not to say that this is what the text actually *says*. Texts, as I've pointed out, do not compel their own readings.

But suppose someone—whether Tertullian or one of his co-religionists—wanted to constrain the reading of a text like Luke? What if they wanted to convince others that it was to be read in a certain way, and not in the way Marcion read it? What strategies of containment could they devise?

One approach would be to maintain on exegetical grounds that the docetic interpretation was inadequate or wrong, and mount an argument based on details of the text. That would be the approach typically taken by modern scholars, who write commentaries in order to show what the text *really* meant. Another approach would be to write a polemical treatise that attacks a docetic perspective on other grounds and maligns docetists as willful, stupid, or demonically inspired. That would be the approach typically taken by ancient scholars, heresiologists like Tertullian.

There are three other strategies that I would like to consider here, which are somewhat more subtle though possibly, in the long run, equally effective. Two of them I have already intimated with respect to Marcion; all of them, I would suggest, were used by all sides in the debates in early Christianity over what to believe. In order to constrain the reading of a sacred writing, you could *change* its text, you could place it in a *canon* with other texts that present competing perspectives, and you could propagate *alternative narratives* that stress the points you want to make about Jesus.

First, you could change the text. I've already pointed out that Marcion was accused of doing just that. To take just one example, already by the time of the church father Irenaeus (ca. 180 C.E.) it was argued

that Marcion excised the first two chapters of his Gospel because they did not coincide with his view that Jesus was not actually born into the world (*Adversus Haereses* 1. 27. 2). But who is to say that Irenaeus, Tertullian, and their successors were right, that these are chapters that Marcion *excised* from his account? It is at least possible, as has occasionally been recognized, that the version of Luke in circulation in Marcion's home church in Sinope, on the coast of the Black Sea, didn't have these chapters, and that his view that Jesus simply appeared on the scene as an adult was surmised from the text as it was available to him.

Modern scholars, in fact, have recognized that the infancy narrative of Luke chapters 1–2 were a secondary and later, possibly final, addition to the Gospel, composed, that is, after the rest of the book (and probably Acts) was written and then added on in a final stage of composition.

Consider the following standard arguments:

- (1) When you read Luke 3:1–2, the solemn dating of the appearance of John the Baptist, it sure *sounds* like the beginning, not the continuation of the narrative: “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Casear, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee . . . the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. . . .”
- (2) Most of the central themes of chs. 1–2—including the familial ties of John the Baptist and Jesus, Jesus' virginal conception, and his birth in Bethlehem—are completely absent from the rest of the narrative, even though there were plenty of opportunities to mention them, had they already been narrated;
- (3) The genealogy of Jesus makes little sense in chapter 3, after his baptism, given the fact that he and his birth are already mentioned in chapter 2, and that would be the appropriate place to indicate his lineage. But if the Gospel began in chapter 3 and the first thing that happened to Jesus was the declaration that he was the “Son” of God (in 3:23), then his lineage back to God through Adam makes sense where it is;
- (4) The book of Acts summarizes the preceding narrative as involving what Jesus “began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1), saying nothing of his birth; so too in Peter's later summary of the Gospel, “beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John preached” (10:37).

These data are well known to NT scholars, but some of the historical implications have not always been considered, since exegetes have tended to treat Luke's Gospel as a whole, including the first two chapters. I don't want to make any definitive historical claim here, but I do wonder if it's possible that there was an earlier limited edition of Luke, a publication that did not get copied much but that was nonetheless in circulation, that lacked the first two chapters. If so, it is at least possible that Marcion's form of the text lacked this passage.

One of the reasons it is so hard to say is because we simply don't have much hard evidence. We don't have the original copy of Luke, or even copies of the original or copies of the copies of the original. Our two earliest manuscripts of Luke come from about 100–125 years after the book itself was originally published; these are P75 and P45, both of which are fragmentary, lacking portions of Luke, including the first two chapters. We can't say whether they originally had them or not. Our first manuscript with portions of the opening chapters is the third century P4. But our earliest patristic witness is over a century earlier. As it turns out, the witness is none other than Marcion, who didn't have the first two chapters!

Why would someone have added the first two chapters? One could think of a number of reasons—and most scholars, I think, believe that because of stylistic similarities with the rest of the Gospel it was Luke himself who added them. That is to say, that Luke published at least two editions of his Gospel.

Whatever reasons he had for adding them, this much is certain: these chapters do work to constrain a reading of the rest of Luke's Gospel, which must be read in light of how it now begins. It begins by leaving no doubt in anyone's mind: Jesus really was born, and the narrative of his birth is closely tied to Old Testament narratives, showing the continuity between the salvation of Jesus and the workings of the God of the Jews.

I am not saying that Luke added these chapters to counter Marcion; Marcion lived in a later generation. But there may well have been docetic Christians already in the late first century—as evidenced for example in the Johannine epistles of the New Testament—and such docetic Christians may well have been a bit discomfited by such a clear statement of Jesus' birth into this world to a human mother.

Other passages in Luke's Gospel came to be changed not by Luke himself, but by later scribes who were copying his account, who

occasionally would change the wording of the text in a way that made it far less susceptible of use by Christians like Marcion who denied that Jesus actually had a flesh and blood existence. A striking example occurs in Luke's passion narrative, which as I've pointed out, is sometimes considered a narrative without much passion. For Luke has removed virtually every reference to Jesus' agony in his account. In Mark's version, for example, we are told that in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus began to be distressed and agitated. Luke omits that sentence. In Mark, Jesus tells his disciples that his soul is sorrowful unto death; that line too is omitted by Luke. In Mark, Jesus prays three times for God to remove from him the cup of his suffering; in Luke he asks only once, and prefaces the prayer with the important condition, "If it be your will."

This passionless passion may have played well with readers like Marcion, who did not think that Jesus could have been in agony since he did not have a real flesh and blood body susceptible of suffering anyway. And so it is no surprise to see that the text came to be changed by scribes who wanted to insist that Christ really was a flesh and blood human. In a number of our manuscripts we find the addition in 22:43-44 of the famous account of the bloody sweat, an account found nowhere else in our Gospels: "and an angel from heaven appeared to him, strengthening him; And being in agony he began to pray yet more fervently, and his sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground." These are familiar words—this is where the phrase "sweating blood" probably originated; but they were not originally in Luke (or in any other Gospel). Not only do they go against the portrayal of Jesus as calm and in complete control, found in the account otherwise—a portrayal that Luke created only by eliminating some of the key verses from his source, Mark; they are missing from our oldest and best manuscripts of Luke. Someone has added them to the account. But why would they do so?

It is striking that the first first time these verses occur in any of our sources they are quoted precisely to show that Jesus really was a flesh and blood human being. Writing from the same time and place that Marcion was proclaiming his version of the Gospel, mid-second century in Rome, Justin Martyr argues that the story of Jesus' sweating blood shows that "we may not say that He, being the Son of God, did not feel what was happening to Him and inflicted upon Him" (Dial. 103). In other words, they show that he really was a

human who really did suffer, whatever Marcion would lead you to believe.

The importance of Jesus' actual suffering for salvation became a leitmotif for proto-orthodox Christians against their docetic opponents. Jesus had real flesh and real blood; and he sacrificed his flesh and his blood to bring salvation. It was not just an appearance. This emphasis made its way into Luke's account of Jesus' last supper, where originally the text simply speaks of Jesus first distributing the cup, indicating that he would not drink of it again until the Kingdom of God comes, and then distributing the bread saying, "this is my body. But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table." Several things are striking in the account: for one thing, the sequence of the elements is reversed here, so that the cup is given before the bread. Even more surprising, the sacrificial character of the elements is muted at best. It is no surprise, then, to find that proto-orthodox scribes altered the text by making a key addition. Now when Jesus distributes the bread, he says "This is my body *that is given for you. Do this in my remembrance.*" *And the cup likewise after supper saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood that is poured out for you.'* With this longer text there is no doubt that Jesus' body and shed blood is what brings about salvation. Once again, the textual alteration proved useful in attacking docetic understandings of Jesus.

There are yet other changes in Luke's Gospel made by proto-orthodox scribes to stress the anti-docetic notion that Jesus had a real flesh and blood body—for example an alteration in chapter 24:12 which shows that Jesus actually, bodily, physically was raised from the dead, and an alteration in 24:51–52 which suggests that he actually, bodily, physically ascended to heaven. The point I'm trying to make by referring to all these changes is the same: one way to constrain the text in the face of readers like Marcion who take it to portray a docetic Christ is to change the text.

A second strategy that could be used and was used by proto-orthodox Christians to constrain the reading of the text was by putting it in a canon of writings, a collection of texts with varying perspectives which, once placed together, affected how each one would be read. I'll not spend much time discussing this strategy, as it is probably familiar to everyone who has studied the New Testament enough to

recognize the wide range of perspectives that are actually found within its covers. It was familiar to early Christians as well, as early as Irenaeus, who points out in a famous passage in Book 3 of his *Adversus Haereses* that various groups of heretics go astray in their thinking because they choose to follow the teachings of just one Gospel or another, rather than recognizing that there are four Gospels whose teachings need to be read in light of one another. And so, he says, the Ebionites err by following only Matthew, those who separate Jesus from the Christ err by reading only Mark, the Marcionites err in accepting only Luke, and the Valentinians err in following only John. For Irenaeus, and those like him who advocated a four-Gospel canon, all four of these books need to be read in conjunction with each of the others. And this is in fact an effective hermeneutical strategy, so that one who reads Luke, and sees a passionless passion, also reads Mark, where Jesus is subject to deep pain and anguish, and naturally reads one in light of the other.

And it is not just the Gospels that are canonized: so too are the epistles and the Acts of the Apostles, and the book of Revelation. Taken as a whole, the canon can serve the anti-docetic cause extremely well. According to 1 John, anyone who does not confess that Jesus has come in the flesh is in fact an anti-Christ; that's why the epistle begins with the affirmation of Jesus' very real bodily appearance, as one who was heard, seen with the eyes, and handled with the hands. To be sure, this is the one who was from the beginning. But he became flesh. When the text of Luke is not only altered, but also placed in the same canon as, say, Mark and 1 John, it is very difficult to come away with a Marcionite understanding of Christ.

There is yet a third strategy that can be used in order to promote an anti-docetic reading of a text like Luke. That is to propound alternative narratives, with clear theological emphases, that can be used as hermeneutical lenses through which to read the canonical texts. As I stressed at the outset, all readers approach their texts with assumptions, biases, beliefs, and perspectives. And these assumptions, biases, beliefs, and perspectives are not picked up out of thin air: they come to be part of us through all of our experiences—including our experiences with other people and with other texts. On one level, of course, *all* of our experiences serve as hermeneutical guides to our reading of a text. But on a more specific level intertextual

reading means that we read any given text in light of other texts. The early Christians knew this full well, and frequently propounded narratives not simply for their own sake, but also for the sake of teaching theological lessons that could provide guidance in how to read the authoritative documents of the church.

Some of these narratives survive, although unfortunately for us as historians, most do not. Even those that do not are sometimes alluded to, however, and we can see how they may have guided the reading of other texts. I am thinking for example of an allusive passage in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, who like the author of the Johannine epistles before him and Tertullian afterwards, was an avid opponent of all things docetic. In a letter that he wrote to the Christians of the city of Smyrna, around 110 C.E., Ignatius refers to an event after Jesus' resurrection which *may* have been drawn from the Gospel of Luke, but more likely came from another narrative now lost:

For I know and believe that Christ was in the flesh even after the resurrection. And when he came to those who were with Peter, he said to them, "Reach out, touch me and see that I am not a bodiless daimon." And immediately they touched him and believed . . . And after his resurrection he ate and drank with them as a fleshly being, even though he was spiritually united with the Father. (Smyr. 3)

This now lost narrative could provide a hermeneutical lens through which to read the account that was to become canonical as the Gospel of Luke. It stresses Jesus' physicality, even after his resurrection, in the face of docetic Christologies that strove to deny it.

Other narratives survive till today—or rather, some have been discovered in relatively modern times—narratives that help interpret the Gospel passages that eventually became canonical. One such narrative is called the *Epistula Apostolorum*, the *Epistle of the Apostles*, a Gospel-like account that was probably written around the mid-second century, exactly the time, that is, when Marcion and his followers were propounding their docetic reading of the Gospel of Luke.

The title, *Epistle of the Apostles*, may be somewhat a misnomer. The book is, to be sure, written in the form of an epistle from the eleven apostles after Jesus' resurrection (they are named: one of them is Peter, and another, interestingly enough, is Cephas). But what it describes is an appearance of Jesus to the apostles, and the message that he delivered to them, prior to his ascension to heaven. It may

be better thought of, then as a Gospel narrative or perhaps even better, a form of writing scholars have called a Revelation Dialogue, in which Jesus conveys important information to his followers after his resurrection.

The information in this case is explicitly said to be provided in order to counter the teachings of two heretics, named Simon and Cerinthus, both of whom were thought, like Marcion, to have denied that Christ was a real flesh and blood human being. The apostles write this communication to the universal church; the book, of course, is pseudonymous, actually written years after the apostles themselves had died. It is, in other words, one of the many pseudepigrapha that survive from the second century, books claiming to be written by apostles in order to be granted an authoritative hearing by their readers.

The authority is important in this case because the book wants to stress precisely the fleshly nature of both Jesus and of the resurrection of believers which is yet to come. The readers of the text are told that “Cerinthus and Simon are enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in reality alienate those who believe in the true word and deed, namely Jesus Christ.” In contrast to these false teachers, the pseudonymous authors stress that Jesus was actually, bodily, raised from the dead. After his resurrection he gives the disciples proof, by having Peter put his finger in the nail print in his hand, and by pointing out that as he walks, he leaves footprints in the dust: “For it is written,’ we are told, “a ghost, a daimon, leaves no print on the ground.” And so they realize that this is the Jesus whom they knew before, the one who spoke to them about “my flesh, my death, and my resurrection” (ch. 11)

The apostolic authors then indicate that “we felt him that he had truly risen in the flesh.” His message to them, among other things, included instruction concerning their own future resurrection. It would not simply be a spiritual resurrection, or a rising of the soul [a view of many Christians still today]. The flesh itself would inherit eternal life.

It is difficult to know what the author of a text like this actually intended for his audience to think of it. Presumably he wrote it in the name of the apostles in order to get a hearing for his views. His views stress the importance of the flesh—not just of the believers but of Jesus himself. Once one is convinced of this message, of course,

the other texts that are read—including those that were eventually included in the New Testament—come to be read in light of this knowledge.

Something similar can be said of the final text I'll consider, Paul's so-called Third Letter to the Corinthians. Everyone knows about Paul's first *two* letters to the Corinthians; this is allegedly a third, usually included in the apocryphal Acts of Paul, and written in response to a letter from the Corinthians to Paul in which they complain about two heretics, Simon (again) and Cleobius. As it turns out, these heretics embrace views that sound very much like those of Marcion: that one must not appeal to the Old Testament prophets, that God (presumably the Creator God) is not almighty, that there is no resurrection of the body, that humans were not made by God (presumably the real God), that Christ has not come in the flesh and was not born of Mary, and so on. The pseudonymous author of 3 Corinthians, claiming to be Paul himself, writes a letter in response in which he stresses just the opposite teachings. Jesus really was born of Mary, God is the maker of heaven and earth and is almighty, he sent first the prophets of the Old Testament and then Jesus, who came bodily into the world so that he could save all flesh. "Those who say that there is no resurrection of the flesh shall have no resurrection, for they do not believe him who had thus risen."

Here we have a text that can serve as a guide for understanding Paul himself—who never in his authentic writings ever names Mary, the mother of Jesus, or in fact stresses most of the points made in this letter. But also we have a guide for understanding the truth, and once the truth is understood, then any book that conveys the truth—including, for example, such books as Luke, which were to become part of sacred scripture—would be read in light of that understanding.

My time is nearing an end, and so I would like to bring this, the first of my three lectures, to a rapid conclusion.

As we all know, there have been remarkable discoveries of ancient Christian texts in modern times, from such significant discoveries as the *Epistula Apostolorum*, the Gospel of Peter, and the Gospel of Mary in the 19th century, to the discoveries of the Gospels of Thomas and Philip in the mid 20th century, to the very recent discovery of the so-called Gospel of the Savior at the very end of the 20th cen-

tury. Discoveries no doubt will continue to be made, and to contribute to our understanding of the wide diversity of the early Christians and their understandings of Jesus. But in some ways the diversity that has so struck modern scholars has always been there, right under their noses, available for those with eyes to see, even though in fact for centuries most scholars didn't see it. For we have known all along that different Christians not only used different texts in order to support their various theological views, but that different Christians also used the *same* texts to support their various views. The Gospel according to Luke was used by both Marcion and Tertullian. Both of them thought their understanding of the Gospel was what the Gospel actually taught. It isn't that Marcion knew that his view was wrong but wanted to hold it anyway. He thought his view was right, and he thought that Luke supported it. And it's not true that he required an adulterated text of Luke whereas Tertullian had access to the original text. Tertullian's text also was a text that had been changed by scribes in the course of its transcription—maybe not as radically as the text utilized by the followers of Marcion, but changed nonetheless, and sometimes in significant ways.

If nothing else, learning this about the early Christians should make us leary of those who claim that some interpreters are biased and import their own meanings into texts, whereas other interpreters simply let the texts speak for themselves. As I insisted at the outset, texts need to be *interpreted*, and this can only happen among living, breathing human beings who have assumptions, beliefs, values, biases, loves, hates, and everything else that makes humans human. If you really want to see biases at work, just watch what happens when someone says they are simply letting a text speak for itself!

Luke continues to be a sacred text for Christians today. But the range of Christians who accept Luke as in some sense authoritative, if not as mind-boggling as the range in the second century, is diverse enough as it is. Luke is, after all, in the canon of Roman Catholics, Mormons, Primitive Baptists, Free Methodists, Seventh-day Adventists, Greek Orthodox, Jehovah's Witnesses, Presbyterians, and just about every other Christian group you can name, from the staid New England Congregationalists to the not so staid Appalachian snake handlers. All of these groups read Luke and understand Luke to convey their own sacred truth.

Even mainline seminarians who take courses in exegesis can have bizarre interpretations of Luke, including those who graduate from

major divinity schools and go on and preach in mainline churches, who assume that Luke says basically the same thing as Mark or as John, or who suppose that Luke understands Jesus to have suffered real agony in the face of death, or that Luke presents Jesus' death as an atonement for sin, or that Luke intimates that Jesus himself was God. These readings are no more strange than their alternatives, stranger in some ways, as historical exegesis tends to suggest otherwise.

Still, it is always possible to try to convince others of our interpretations, or if we fail in doing so, to call them willful, heretical, demonic, or stupid. The Early Christians did this sort of thing as well. But they did three other things to try to control how the sacred texts of the faith would be read: they altered the texts, they put them into a larger canon of scripture, and they propagated alternative narratives that could be used as hermeneutical lenses through which to read the texts of Scripture, including such docetically open texts as the Gospel of Luke.

CHRIST IN EARLY CHRISTIAN TRADITION:
TEXTS DISPUTED AND APOCRYPHAL

CHRIST AS DIVINE MAN¹

In my first lecture I began to speak about the Gospel of Luke as a kind of battlefield over which various competing understandings of Christ were fought. On the one hand there was our earliest known interpreter of Luke, the second-century Marcion, who propounded a docetic Christology, maintaining that Jesus was not a real flesh and blood human being, but was a completely divine being who was not, therefore, actually born and who did not actually have a physical body. For Marcion, this was a teaching found in his Gospel, a form of what we now call Luke. Opposed to Marcion were proto-orthodox writers such as Tertullian, who understood that Christ had a real human body, that he was actually born and that he that he died a real human death that involved the shedding of real human blood. For Tertullian, Christ actually had come in the flesh, and *this*, he maintained, was the teaching of the Gospel of Luke.

Part of the thesis of my talk was that the Gospel of Luke could be read to support both points of view. One piece of evidence that it *could* be read both ways is the historically indisputable fact that it *was* read both ways, by docetists and anti-docetists alike. Moreover, both groups went to some lengths to secure their reading of the text—for example, by changing the wording of the text in places and by placing it into a larger canon of Scripture—a collection of books that, once combined, would control how individual books within the canon would be read. Moreover, both groups propagated supporting narratives which provided hermeneutical lenses through which a text like Luke could be read.

In this lecture I'd like to show how the Gospel of Luke was amenable to yet a different kind of reading, one which saw Jesus not as at all divine, but as a human like the rest of us, who simply came to be *adopted* by God to be his son. This, I will argue, was a popular view among the earliest Christians, who may have used the

¹ The Shaffer Lectures, Yale University, October 2004.

earliest version of Luke in support of their views. In response, proto-orthodox Christians—that is, the forerunners of what would become Christian orthodoxy—insisted that Jesus was not merely a human but that he was also divine, that he was, in effect, a divine man.

Before getting into my argument, I should say a word about what I mean by this term “divine man,” especially for the New Testament specialists among us who may find the phrase problematic. By using it in my title I did not intend, and still do not intend, to enter the old cantankerous “divine man” debate. For those of you not conversant with the history of the discipline: there has been a long, protracted, and for the most part fruitless debate among scholars concerning whether this phrase—in Greek, it is *theios anhr*—was recognized widely enough in antiquity to be useful as a christological category. The term in my title is meant to involve something a bit more innocuous: the view that the *man* Jesus was also thought, in some sense, to be *divine*. I don’t know of a better description of this than the phrase, Christ as a divine man, although I’ll be happy to discuss the merits of the phrase later if anyone really thinks it important to do so.

One of my overarching questions involves the matter of when, and in what sense, the man Jesus came to be understood by Christians as divine. I don’t think it happened right away. It was something that eventually happened. But when, why, and in what sense? In some ways these are among the most pressing questions exegetes, theologians, and historians must ask when dealing with early christologies. Let me stress that I think these are in large measure *historical* questions, and so need to be addressed on historical grounds. I make this point because some scholars (none of them here with us today, to my knowledge) have offered what they have termed “historical” studies of this kind of question—of in what sense, and when, Jesus came to be seen as divine—by focusing exclusively on exegesis of New Testament texts. This focus may make sense for exegetical or theological studies, but not for historical investigation. That is to say, even for scholars who are interested simply in knowing what the early Christians believed, any decision to restrict the investigation to canonical texts in their final form is made not on historical but on theological grounds. If a *historical* investigation is relevant, then other Christian texts written at roughly the same time as those of the New Testament should be brought into view (parts

of the Didache, for example, are probably earlier than, say, the Johannine epistles; the letters of Ignatius are earlier than 2 Peter; etc.); if a *historical* investigation is relevant, then the manuscript tradition of the various texts should be taken into account more thoroughly, both to see what the so-called original texts said, but also to see where the originals came to be changed in the early history of their transmission. Moreover, if a *historical* investigation is relevant, then non-canonical apocryphal texts, especially Gospels and the narratives they relate, should be examined with greater rigor, if nothing else in order to see what kinds of oral traditions lie at their roots, traditions that could feasibly move back into the NT period. For a historical investigation, data other than just the NT documents in their final form need to be considered. Such a study, of course, will not be able to ignore exegesis on the one hand, and will be of interest to theological reflection on the other.

In this lecture I would like to conduct this kind of investigation, restricting myself, once again to just one of our early Christian texts, the Gospel according to Luke. As an opening thesis I would like to contend that the “earliest” version of Luke was particularly open to an adoptionistic reading, where Jesus was not seen as divine “by nature” (so to say) but as a human who was adopted by God to be his son.

First—before turning to Luke—I should say a word about adoptionism as a christological option in the early church. Scholars have long recognized that there have been “adoptionistic Christologies” for about as long as there have been Christologies, that in fact these are the oldest Christologies we know about. One of the earliest christological statements of the New Testament, for example, occurs in Rom. 1:3–4, which speaks of “the Gospel concerning God’s son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and who was appointed to be the son of God in power by the Spirit of Holiness at his resurrection from the dead.” This is widely recognized as a kind of creed about Christ that is being quoted by Paul to his readers in Rome. Since it pre-dates Paul’s letters themselves, it is a very ancient understanding of Jesus, one which appears to celebrate the *resurrection* of Jesus as the moment in which he came to be appointed to be the Son of God.

A similar view can be found in some of the speeches in the book of Acts. These speeches on the lips of the apostles were formulated

by the author of Luke, on the basis of earlier materials that he had available to him. And so, for example, in Acts 13 we find Peter making the following declaration: “We declare to you the good news that God has fulfilled the promise made to the fathers to us their sons, by raising Jesus from the dead, as it is written in the second Psalm: “You are my son *Today* I have begotten you” (Acts 13:32–33). Once again, the resurrection is when Jesus becomes the son of God. This view is possibly echoed in Paul’s speech on the Areopagus, which speaks of Jesus being appointed the judge of the earth, as shown by his resurrection from the dead (17:31).

At this point I can hop-skip-and-jump through a good deal of christological development in the early church. Eventually this most primitive notion that the resurrection was the moment of Jesus’ adoption to sonship came to be modified, as Christians of the early decades began to think that Jesus was God’s son during his entire ministry (in which case the voice from heaven spoke the words of Psalm 2—“today I have begotten you”—at his baptism). Eventually they came to think Jesus was God’s son for his entire life (in which case he was born the Son of God). Some came to think his sonship referred to his eternal existence with the Father (in which case he was with God from eternity past). It’s true that, as it turns out, one can trace these stages chronologically through our Gospels, so that Mark our earliest Gospel appears to have Jesus as son of God at his baptism, our later Gospels Matthew and Luke have him as the son of God at his miraculous birth, and our final Gospel John has him as the Word of God in eternity past. But it would obviously be a mistake to think in terms of a neat linear development of Christological views, since our *earliest* author, Paul, already muddies the waters by portraying Jesus as somehow divine from the time before he was born (Phil. 2:6–11). My own view is that different christologies emerged at different times in different places, that different christologies emerged simultaneously in different places; that different christologies emerged simultaneously in the same places; and even more that the same christologies emerged at different times or even at the same time in different places. {And *that’s* about as confusing as this lecture gets . . . }

We know this final option to be true from later times, for example, where such disparate second-century groups as the Jewish Christian Ebionites (or at least one sect of the group that, for the sake of convenience, we can label Ebionites) and the Gentile-Roman-Christian

Theodotians held in common the view that Jesus was a *PSILOS ANTHROPOS*—a mere man (meaning that he was not by nature divine). According to an anonymous second-century source quoted by Eusebius in Book V of his Ecclesiastical history, the latter group, the Theodotians, were followers of the Roman cobbler Theodotus, who obviously had a lot of time on his hands while making shoes for a living. Theodotus and his followers, insisted vociferously that their view was the original understanding of the apostles and of the entire early Christian tradition. Many scholars readily concede some such claim, at least with respect to the Ebionites, that this really was the oldest form of christological confession.

Maybe some form of adoptionism *was* the original Christology.

In any event, back to my opening thesis, that the “earliest” version of Luke was particularly open to an adoptionistic reading, where Jesus was not seen as divine “by nature,” but as a human who was adopted by God to be his son. As we saw in the previous lecture, it has widely been recognized that the infancy narrative of Luke chapters 1–2 was a secondary and later, possibly final, addition to the Gospel, composed, that is, after the rest of the book (and probably Acts) was written and then added on in a final stage of composition. Moreover, it is possible that the Gospel actually circulated for a time *without* the first two chapters, and that, as probably happened with the Gospel of John and possibly in a different way with the book of Acts, the Gospel was published in multiple editions, only one of which came to serve as the archetype for all of our surviving manuscripts.

We have seen that as early as Irenaeus’s *Adversus Haereses* (1. 27. 2) Marcion was accused of excising the first two chapters of his Gospel because they did not coincide with his view that Jesus appeared from heaven in the form of an adult man in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar—that is that he was not actually born into the world. But as I pointed out, it may not be that Marcion excised these chapters from his account. It is at least possible that the version of Luke in circulation in Marcion’s home church on the coast of the Black Sea didn’t have these chapters, and that his view that Jesus simply appeared on the scene as an adult was surmised from the text as it was available to him.

In the present lecture I’m less interested in exploring how a docetist like Marcion might read Luke if it were lacking these chapters than in seeing how an adoptionist might read it. Without these chapters,

the first reference to Jesus comes in connection with John the Baptist, who bears witness to him as a powerful apocalyptic judge (3:16–17); Jesus is then introduced as one who is baptized. The spirit comes upon him in the form of a dove, and the voice comes from heaven. But what does the voice say?

In the vast majority of our textual witnesses, the voice at the baptism of Luke speaks the same words as the voice in Mark, “You are my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.” But as I pointed out in the previous lecture, we don’t actually have the original manuscript of Luke’s Gospel (or of any of the other books of the New Testament), and so we need to reconstruct what the original wording was based on the later manuscripts that happen to survive. Our very earliest manuscript, called P4, produced in the early third century, reproduces words the text in the way I have just quoted. But it is striking that in some of our early manuscripts—one known to scholars as Codex Bezae and some of the Latin witnesses—the voice instead quotes the words of Psalm 2: “You are my Son, Today I have begotten you.” It should not be thought that this is merely an aberrant text of an aberrant textual tradition (which scholars call the Western text). For as it turns out, this reading did not originate with these manuscripts that attest it. Long before any of our surviving manuscripts of Luke were produced, decades before P4, there were church fathers who quote the text, and so it would be of interest to see how they read it—that is, to see what *their* (no longer surviving) manuscripts read at this point. What is striking is that every Patristic quotation of the passage from the second and third centuries gives the passage in the so-called Western form: “You are my son, today I have begotten you.” This is the form of the text cited by Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, the Gospel according to the Ebionites, the Gospel according to the Hebrews, Origen, Methodius, the Didascalia. P4, in other words, rather than giving the standard text of the third century, appears to have given the minority text.

Not only is the quotation of Psalm 2:7 better attested in our earliest sources, it is the wording that makes the best sense in the context of Luke’s two-volume work. I won’t give all the argument here, just one key aspect of it. As is well known, in Mark’s Gospel the voice at the baptism (You are my beloved Son) is echoed on the Mount of Transfiguration, where the voice tells the disciples “This is my beloved Son” (9:7). Luke, of course, used Mark’s account in creating his own, and so we should not overlook the voice at Luke’s

transfiguration scene when trying to reconstruct the earlier words spoken at the baptism. And here the textual situation is clearer. Luke has changed Mark's heavenly voice in the second instance, so that now rather than confirming to the disciples that Jesus is the "beloved" son, it confirms that Jesus is the "elect" Son: "This my son, my chosen one (hO "EKLELEGMENOS; 9:35). If the voice in Luke's transfiguration scene refers back to the scene of Jesus' baptism and confirms to the disciples what was there revealed to Jesus, that he "has been chosen" one is hard pressed to see how the more commonly attested text of Luke 3:22 could be original: for this reading ("you are my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased") constitutes a mere identification formula in which Jesus is *recognized* as the son of God. It is only in the variant reading, the one that is attested in virtually all the earliest witnesses, that God is actually said to confer a new status upon Jesus ("Today I have begotten you"). Only here, then, is God said to "elect" Jesus in a manner that is presupposed in 9:35.

Confirmation for this understanding comes in a summary speech in Acts, also, of course, written by Luke, where Peter in Cornelius's house affirms that it was at the baptism of John that God "anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power" and that it was from *that* point that "he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil (10:38).

Luke originally seems to have portrayed Jesus as one who was appointed Son of God at his baptism and empowered then for his ministry.

And so, without the first two chapters of Luke, and with the earliest attested reading of 3:22, it is easy to see how an adoptionist reading of Luke makes sense. Consider also the genealogy of Jesus in Luke. Matthew is the other Gospel that has a genealogy, and he places it where you would expect, at the very beginning of the narrative of Jesus' birth. But Luke's genealogy occurs in a rather strange place, after Jesus' baptism in chapter 3. The genealogy itself is peculiar for several reasons; but what is striking christologically is that it too functions in order to show that Jesus is the Son of God. Matthew's genealogy traces Jesus' family line back to Abraham, the father of the Jews; Luke's genealogy traces Jesus' line back to Adam, the father of the human race. But it doesn't actually stop there, for it continues all the way back to God himself. And so we're told that Jesus is supposedly the son of Joseph the son of Heli the son

of Matthat—and so on—the son of Seth the son of Adam the son of God.

In other words, according to the early references to Jesus in this Gospel, he is the son of God like everyone else, in that he has descended from God as a human, but he is uniquely the son of God because he was begotten by God at the baptism.

As the specially chosen son of God in Luke Jesus is empowered by the Spirit to resist the Devil, as is shown in the scene of the three temptations that follow the genealogy, and he is empowered to engage in a miraculous ministry among those in need. An adoptionistic reading of the text makes particular sense of the first event in Jesus' public ministry in Luke, the sermon that he delivers in his home synagogue in Nazareth. This account is found in Luke's source, Mark, halfway through Jesus' ministry. But Luke has transferred the story to the very beginning of the ministry, in part, evidently, because it foreshadows so well many of Luke's themes to be developed throughout his Gospel. And how is it that Jesus is able to perform his miraculous ministry of preaching and healing? According to this opening sermon it is because "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor . . . to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind" in the words of Isa 61. In other words, Jesus can proclaim the good news and heal the blind and so on, not because he has some kind of innate power as the Son of God, but because God has invested him with power through the Spirit (presumably meaning at his baptism, when the Spirit of God came upon him in the form of a dove).

It appears that the earliest form of Luke's Gospel locates Jesus' adoption/appointment to sonship, and its accompanying empowerment, at the baptism, when God declared "Today I have begotten you." It is true that throughout the work of Luke—Acts there are other kinds of christological traditions preserved as well—especially in the speeches of Acts. But as I've pointed out many of these are also adoptionistic, even though they appear to embody an even earlier adoptionistic notion that it was at the resurrection, not the baptism, that God conferred a special status upon Jesus and invested him with a special power.

Let me stress that I am not trying to give an exegesis of Luke's Gospel. That is to say, I am making no claims about what the text

actually meant or about what the author intended it to mean. I am instead asking how the text could have been read. And as it turns out, once again, it could have been read in radically different ways by radically different interpreters. Marcion could read the text as a docetist, and genuinely believe that his docetic reading is what the text said, just as an adoptionist could have read the same text believing that his adoptionist reading is what the text said. Texts don't compel readings; they enable them.

But suppose someone should want to try to *constrain* the reading of the text? How could one try to counter a reading of Luke's Gospel that takes it to support an adoptionistic understanding of Jesus as the one who was adopted and empowered by God at his baptism, so that Jesus was not himself divine "by nature"?

There are several strategies that might be considered, the same ones we considered in my previous lecture. One could argue on exegetical grounds that the adoptionistic interpretation was inadequate or wrong, and mount an argument based on details of the text. That would be the approach typically taken by modern scholars. Or one could write a polemical treatise that attacks an adoptionistic perspective on other grounds and maligns adoptionists as being willful, stupid, or demonically inspired. That would be the approach typically taken by ancient scholars, the heresiologists.

And there are the three more subtle approaches: you could change the actual text of the document, you could place it in a canon with other texts that present competing perspectives, and you could propagate alternative narratives that stress the points you want to make about Jesus.

First: it is possible to change the text itself, so that it is no longer as amenable (in your judgment) to an adoptionistic reading. This appears to have happened in the case of Luke, although it is not clear in many instances when, where, or by whom such changes were made, or whether they were made precisely to counter an adoptionistic reading or if this just happened to be one of the beneficial side-effects of the changes.

Whoever added the first two chapters of the Gospel certainly threw a monkey-wrench into an adoptionistic reading of the baptism. For among the many other purposes these opening chapters achieve, one is to show that it was at his very birth that Jesus was the son of God. As the Angel Gabriel announces to Mary prior to her conception

of Jesus: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; *for this reason* (DIO KAI) the child that is born of you will be called holy, the son of God.” Jesus is now son of God because of his miraculous conception, not his baptism; in some very real sense he *is* God’s son (rather than the son of Joseph, for example, later to be adopted by God).

Someone may well object that it would be unlikely for Luke himself to have added this beginning to his narrative, since the christology it embraces does in fact seem to stand at odds with what the rest of the account assumes. The objection applies to other christological conceptions used by Luke as well. In the infancy narrative, for example Jesus is said to have been born the Lord and the Christ in 2:11 (Unto you this day is born in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord); yet according to Acts 2:38 Jesus became the Lord and Christ at the resurrection (Let all the house of Israel therefore know that God has *made* him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.)

To that objection I think it would be safe to reply that Luke as an author seems in general to have been altogether casual, by our standards at least, in how he handled his christological ideas, and that he used various traditions available to him (e.g., in the speeches in Acts; but also in the accounts in the Gospels) that sometimes stood at odds with one another if pushed too hard. In Luke 10:1 Jesus is called the Lord during his ministry, even though Acts 2:36 indicates that he did not become the lord until the resurrection; so too Acts 13:23–24 designate Jesus as the savior during his lifetime but he is said to have been made the savior at the resurrection in Acts 5:31.

And so it’s not inconceivable to me that Luke himself created the christological tensions between the infancy narratives and the rest of his account. On the other hand, it may be that someone else tacked on the beginning to the Gospel, using traditions that to some extent coincided with those of the rest of the Gospel and to some extent conflicted with them. The effect, in any event, (whether or not that was the *purpose*) was to modify the adoptionistic possibilities of the text.

Other passages were certainly altered by someone other than the author of Luke himself. An obvious case in point is the voice at the baptism in Luke 3:22. Even though virtually all of our earliest witnesses attest the quotation of Psalm 2:7 “You are my son, today I have begotten you,” the vast majority of manuscripts (all of our

Greek ones apart from codex Bezae) give the other, more theologically innocuous and more synoptically harmonized rendering: "You are my beloved son, in you I am well pleased." Now rather than an adoption formula, the text gives an identification formula, in which Jesus is pronounced, rather than made, the son of God. This change must have been made sometime in the second or early third century, as it is found in our oldest Greek manuscript, P4; and it obviously became very popular very fast, as it came to dominate the textual tradition. No doubt its survival was not at all hurt by the circumstance that its words are precisely those of the parallel account in Mark.

The unknown scribe or scribes who altered this text were not doing something unheard of in the history of textual transmission. For we have a range of texts throughout the New Testament that were altered in an apparent attempt to undermine an adoptionistic reading or, the flip side of the coin, to promote an understanding of Jesus as himself divine. Sometimes this happened in passages where the divinity of Christ is already expressed, but where scribes felt it could be expressed yet more emphatically, such as in John 1:18, which originally spoke of the MONOGENHS UIOS (the unique son) who was in the bosom of the father, but which came to be changed by scribes in Alexandria to read MONOGENHS THEOS (the unique God) who was in the bosom of the father. The change in fact doesn't make very much sense, since if Christ is the MONOGENHS THEOS it's a bit hard to understand who the father is in whose bosom he resides; but the change became popular in modern times, especially among English translators of the text.

A similar motivation lay behind the change of the confession of 1 Tim 3:16, which in its oldest form speaks of Christ as the one WHO (OS) was made manifest in the flesh; but a scribe, simply by putting a vertical line through the omicron and drawing a super-linear line over the word, modified it so that now it speaks of "GOD" (THEOS) who was made manifest in the flesh.

There are numerous examples of the phenomenon that I don't need to go into here. But I should point out that there are other more subtle instances of such changes that occur in Luke's Gospel, with the same result of making it less susceptible of an adoptionistic reading.

These would include the passage I have already referred to, in which the voice at the transfiguration of Jesus in chapter 9 declares

This is my son whom I have chosen (EKLELEGMENOS). But *when* was Jesus chosen in this narrative? In the oldest form of the text, it was at his baptism. But scribes alert to the adoptionistic possibilities of that reading have changed not only the text in chapter 3 but also the one here in chapter 9, once again harmonizing it to Mark, so that now, in the majority of later witnesses, the voice speaks of “my son who is beloved” (AGAPHTOS).

A second strategy that could be used and was used by proto-orthodox Christians to constrain the reading of the text was by putting it in a canon of writings, a collection of texts with varying perspectives which, once placed together, affected how each one would be read. Again, I’ll not spend much time discussing this strategy, as it is familiar enough to all of us, as it was to early Christians such as the second century opponent of Marcionites and adoptionists alike, Irenaeus, who advocated a four-Gospel canon, all four of whose books needed to be read in conjunction with each of the others. And this is in fact an effective hermeneutical strategy, so that one who reads Mark and thinks that the baptism is when Jesus becomes the son of God is to read Luke in its final canonized form to see that in fact he was the son of God at his birth; and those who think that Jesus *became* the son of God at his birth need to read John to see that Christ was with God in the beginning. And so emerges the orthodox doctrine that Christ was the pre-existent word of God who became flesh by being born of the virgin Mary, a doctrine found in precisely none of the Gospels singly, but that emerges when four Gospels are put between the same hard covers, so to say, and made to be read in light of one another.

But there is yet a third strategy for constricting the reading of a text like Luke’s, or Mark’s, or any other one that could be readily taken to imply that Jesus was merely adopted by God to be his son, rather than the son of God by nature. And that is to propagate alternative narratives that counter adoptionistic views and support more orthodox ones. I think that some of the puzzles that have intrigued scholars about the apocryphal Gospel texts can be solved by seeing them in this light. The non-canonical narratives of Jesus’ birth, life, death, and resurrection no doubt had numerous functions. They were entertaining tales that may well have been meant to attract a Christian audience much the way pagan novels were meant to enter-

tain a pagan audience (somewhat like the *Left Behind* series that has made such an enormous impact in part by serving as a substitute for evangelical audiences who are not otherwise likely to pick up a science fiction novel). But were these apocryphal narratives meant to convey theological messages as well?

Scholars have long debated the issue, and have by and large found in nearly impossible to locate precise theological agendas in such apocryphal tales as the *protevangelium Jacobi*, or the infancy Gospel of Thomas. But possibly the problem has been that scholars have inadvertently missed the forest for the trees. It's possible that some of these apocryphal tales convey broader theological themes that may have been subtly useful for the proto-orthodox cause, implanted in narratives that for the most part were meant to be creative and entertaining.

The two apocryphal Gospels I've mentioned, for example, presume a familiarity with Luke's Gospel and yet contain narrative elements that work to counteract any kind of adoptionistic understanding it. Take the *Protevangelium* or *Proto-Gospel of James*. This was an extremely popular book in Christian late antiquity, down through the Middle Ages; it is responsible for a great deal of Christian art through the ages and for some of the fixed ideas that people still have about Joseph, Mary, and the birth of Jesus—e.g., the idea that Joseph was an old man when betrothed to Mary, or that Mary gave birth to Jesus in a cave near Bethlehem. As it turns out, the text of the *Protoevangelium* is more about Mary than about Jesus. Most of it deals with her own supernatural birth and childhood, and the legendary tales it relates are highly memorable and entertaining. But the author was clearly familiar with and dependent on Luke's Gospel, and in some ways the latter part of his account functions as a kind of midrashic exposition of Luke's infancy narrative. The midrash is not merely an expansion of the events narrated in Luke, however; the exposition guides the reading of Luke by providing both narrative details and theological ideas that lead one away from an adoptionistic interpretation of the events of Jesus' appearance into the world.

The miracle of Luke's Gospel involves the *conception* of Jesus: his mother conceives while still a virgin. It is the creative power of God that comes upon her, allowing her to bear a child. But there is nothing in the text to indicate that Jesus pre-existed this conception. His birth is when he comes into existence. That's why it is better to

speak of the virginal conception of Jesus rather than his virgin birth, when discussing Luke (or Matthew for that matter).

The Protevangelium develops both the story line and the theological emphasis of Luke's account. The story line itself is highly entertaining, especially the unforgettable moment when Joseph leaves Mary in a cave outside of Bethlehem and goes off to find a midwife to assist with the birth, and then, unexpectedly, watches time literally stand still as the Son of God comes into the world.

When he and the midwife return to the cave, a bright cloud overshadows it; when the cloud departs, the cave is filled with a bright light that blinds their eyes; as it dims, an infant appears—who walks over to Mary to nurse at her breast. This is no ordinary birth and no ordinary newborn. And one of the obvious points is that it was not just the *conception* of Jesus that was miraculous: his birth itself was a miracle. This is shown most notably by the best known incident of the account, when a second midwife, Salome, does not believe that a virgin could have brought forth a child into the world and decides to give Mary a postpartum inspection. That, as it turns out, was a very bad idea.

An angel of the Lord then appears and tells her to bring her burning hand to the child and to lift him up; she does so and is healed.

This account portrays not only a virginal conception but also a virgin birth. Even more, the infant Jesus is not simply a newborn, he is none other than God almighty. And already as an infant he is able to perform a miracle of healing.

A similar emphasis might be detected behind the entertaining stories of other infancy Gospels, including the one that is arguably the earliest, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas.

It's true that later authors like Irenaeus found this set of tales distasteful and even heretical; according to Irenaeus (assuming that he was referring to our Infancy Gospel of Thomas, which I think he was; Adv. Haer. 1:20) this was a gnostic text that inappropriately emphasized Jesus' gnosis at a young age, when confronting his teachers with supernatural knowledge. But there's little in the text itself actually to suggest a Gnostic origin. In fact, these stories about Jesus as a miracle-working Wunderkind may well have been popular tales told among the proto-orthodox who were interested in knowing what the miracle working Son of God was like as a child. What matters for

my purposes here is that Jesus is shown in these tales to have supernatural powers simply as part of his being. He brings clay pigeons to life, he withers his playmates, he strikes dead those who offend him; he raises people from the dead, he heals snakebite, he pulls off a handy miracle now and again in the home and in the carpenter shop. All of this is effortless and innate in his nature. Jesus is the miracle working son of God because of *who he is*, not because he has been chosen as a human to fulfill God's mission on earth, and not because some other divine power has come upon him from the outside enabling him to do miraculous deeds.

I stress this point because here again this set of tales is clearly dependent on Luke—the Infancy Gospel concludes with Jesus in the Temple as a twelve year old—and because in Luke's Gospel there is in fact an alternative explanation for how and why Jesus does miracles. Recall that in Luke Jesus grows and becomes stronger (2:40) and that he increases in strength and wisdom (2:52); recall that he does no miracles until after his baptism, when the Spirit comes upon him; recall that he himself indicates at the outset of his ministry that he preaches and heals because the Spirit of the Lord has come upon him in fulfillment of Isa 61; recall that in the later summary of Acts 10:37–38 that God was said to have anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, allowing him to do good and to heal. Reading Luke's two-volume work, one would naturally assume that Jesus was particularly endowed with the Spirit of God, which worked great deeds through him. But not that he was divine by nature. This stands in contrast with the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, which presumes knowledge of the account in Luke. Here Jesus isn't reliant on the Spirit bestowed at his baptism to do miracles. He is himself divine and innately able to work miracles, already from the tender age of five.

In other words, this is another alternative narrative that functions as a hermeneutical lens through which to read the account that was later deemed canonical.

It is possible, of course, that those who used this hermeneutical lens would take matters too far, and stress so much their point that Jesus was divine, that they compromised the equally proto-orthodox idea that he was simultaneously human. This was not only possible, in fact, but it is something that we know happened, and happened very early on in the Christian communities. But the point to stress is that the circles in which this occurred were by and large proto-orthodox. In my last lecture I pointed out that some members of

the Johannine community were so impressed by the exalted christology of the Fourth Gospel that they took it to what others considered to be an extreme, arguing that Christ was so much divine that he was not actually a flesh and blood human. So too argued the docetic opponents of Ignatius, whom he opposed in several of his letters, including the one to the Smyrneans. And so too did the ostensible adversaries of “Paul” in 3 Corinthians and of the eleven apostles in the *Epistula Apostolorum*—even such heresiarchs as Marcion. But what is striking is that all of these were believers who *started out* in proto-orthodox communities, who ended up taking the emphasis on the deity of Christ to an extreme that was then at a later stage deemed itself heretical.

And how was *that* problem to be dealt with? The same ways the problems of adoptionism were dealt with: (1) counter-exegesis of key passages of sacred writings (2) polemical treatises arguing that the opponents were stupid, blind, or demonic (3) alteration of the texts accepted as authoritative (4) formation of a canon comprising a range of theological perspective (5) popularization of alternative narratives that stressed, sometimes in subtle ways, the points of contention as a way to provide a hermeneutical lens through which to read the narratives popular in the churches.

And so the arguments moved back and forth—often simultaneously—as proto-orthodox Christians early on, but most pronouncedly in the second and third centuries, were embattled on different fronts simultaneously, for example by adoptionists on one side and docetists on another. What emerged from these conflicts, of course, was the paradoxical affirmations that became orthodox theology, the affirmation that Jesus really was divine (against the adoptionists) and that he really was human (against the docetists) but that he was only one being not two (against the gnostics). It is this paradoxical set of affirmations that eventually lead to a doctrine of the trinity and that created their own hermeutical lens through which later Christians would read and understand the texts that came to make up their sacred scriptures, including such originally adoptionistically open works as the Gospel according to Luke.

CHRIST IN EARLY CHRISTIAN TRADITION:
TEXTS DISPUTED AND APOCRYPHAL

CHRIST AGAINST THE JEWS¹

In my two previous lectures I looked at a variety of ways the Gospel of Luke could be read christologically: docetically and anti-docetically, adoptionistically and anti-adoptionistically. My overarching theses have been first, that texts do not compel their own interpretations, but enable the interpretations that readers bring to them, and second, that nonetheless early Christians did try to constrain the meaning of this text by three means: by changing what the text actually said, by joining it with other texts in a canon of Scripture, and by propounding alternative narratives that could provide hermeneutical lenses through which to read the text.

There is far more to an understanding of Jesus, though, than the traditional categories of christology—that is, than the question of whether he was divine, or human, or somehow both. In some ways, this set of questions itself comes to us not from a text such as Luke itself, but from outside the text, by later interpreters who are interested in finding their christological views already embedded in a text of Scripture. Luke itself, on the other hand, has no passages that directly address these questions, presumably because they were not central to the author's purpose in writing his Gospel. Other matters were more pressing for him, and a full study of Luke's Gospel would naturally want to uncover what those were and to see what he had to say about them. To do this adequately would require a set of about fifty lectures, but unfortunately I have just one left, and so I will have to make due with what I have.

In this lecture I want to address an issue that does seem to have been important to the author of Luke *and* to have continued in its importance in the years, decades, and centuries after his writing. This is the question of Jesus' relationship with Jews and the religion they embraced. As you may not be surprised to learn, my thesis here is comparable to the one I have been developing to this point.

¹ The Shaffer Lectures, delivered at Yale University, October 2004.

Luke's Gospel can be read as both pro-Jewish and anti-Jewish, and later Christians who wanted to promote one reading over the other occasionally took steps to secure that reading by sometimes changing Luke's text, adding it to a canon of Scripture, and telling alternative narratives that help inform the reading of Luke's account.

In both ancient and recent times, Luke has been read as an anti-Jewish Gospel. Indeed, in modern times some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that it is actually anti-semitic. I personally don't find that label either useful or enlightening when it comes to ancient texts. For an author to be anti-semitic, she or he has to have some concept of semiticism as an entity and of semites as a people, but prior to the development of post-enlightenment anthropological theories of race, these were unavailable even to the most anti-Jewish of authors. Luke may have had anti-Jewish sentiments—or he may not have had: that of course is one of the questions; but either way, to label him anti-semitic is to perpetuate a confused and confusing anachronism. And so I'll avoid that term in my discussion, and simply ask how Luke portrayed Jesus in relationship to Jews and Judaism.

As I've indicated, Luke has been read as an anti-Jewish Gospel, a reading that is all too understandable when one considers the full range of its narrative. It was certainly read this way in antiquity: if you'll recall, the first serious interpreter of Luke that we know about was Marcion, and Marcion was vehemently opposed to the Jewish God, the Jewish Law, the Jewish Scriptures, and, presumably (though less demonstrably) the Jewish people. For Marcion, the gospel of Christ was a Gospel that brought liberation from the harsh and vengeful God of the Jews, whose Law and Scriptures played no role in the faith or life of the true follower of Jesus. And this gospel had found literary expression in what we call the Gospel of Luke. Marcion, of course, was accused of excising those portions of Luke that he found to be unpalatable from the perspective of his own theology. But as we have seen, there are some instances (such as the opening two chapters of Luke) where Marcion may simply have been basing his views on the text as it came down to him, in somewhat different form from the text of Luke available to us today.

Even our text of Luke can easily be read as standing opposed to Jews, as modern exegetes have been none too slow to point out. Just consider the question that has driven masses of anti-Jewish sentiment over the centuries: who was responsible for Jesus' death? Modern

historians have been struck by the circumstance that Jesus was crucified, and that crucifixion was a Roman, not a Jewish, mode of execution. And so, most modern treatments of the historical circumstances surrounding Jesus' death have pointed the finger at the Roman prefect, Pontius Pilate, as the guilty party, the one who ordered Jesus' death and had it carried out. Luke doesn't disagree with this view, of course, as it is Pontius Pilate who tries Jesus and arranges for his execution. But Luke is striking, and, probably strikingly unhistorical, when he puts the actual blame for Jesus' execution not on Pilate but on the leaders and the people of the Jews, who vociferously demand it. In fact, in Luke's Gospel—unlike in his source, the Gospel of Mark—Pilate on three separate occasions actually declares Jesus innocent of the charges that the Jewish leadership brings against him. Moreover, in the midst of the trial Pilate learns that the Jewish king of Galilee, Herod, happens to be in town (this is a puzzling passage, which occurs only in Luke), and he sends Jesus off to be tried by him. Even Herod can't find any grounds for executing Jesus, and after (somewhat inexplicably) mocking him, sends him back to Pilate. Pilate wants to release Jesus, but the crowds demand a criminal, Barabbas, instead, crying out that Jesus should be crucified. Finally Pilate gives up on the defense and, as Luke puts it "he delivered Jesus up to their will" (23:25).

The next sentence is striking when read carefully. It begins: "And as they led him away . . .". Who is taking Jesus off to be crucified? In the Greek, the antecedent is "The chief priests, rulers, and the people." It looks as if it is not the Roman soldiers who lead Jesus off to be crucified, but the Jewish leaders and people.

In any event, the scene makes it quite clear that the blame for Jesus' death does not lie with Rome. It lies with the Jews. No surprise that a careful reading of this text could well lead to the hateful charge found in later centuries that Jews were Christ-killers. Here they are actually responsible for the deed. As suggested by this quick perusal of just one passage, it should be clear that Luke, in short, is open to an anti-Jewish reading.

At the same time, there are other indications in the text that Luke, and the Jesus he portrays, are not opposed to the Jewish people or the Jewish religion. Staying for just a moment in the passion narrative, it is quite clear that not *all* Jewish people are portrayed in a negative light. The chief priests and rulers don't come off well, but

there are others who do. On his way to be crucified Jesus sees a group of Jewish women wailing and lamenting him; he turns to them with the words, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children” (23:27–28). While being crucified, Jesus prays that God forgive those responsible for his death: “Father forgive them, for they don’t know what they’re doing.” [This notion that the Jews acted out of ignorance rather than willful malice will become a steady refrain in Luke’s second volume, the book of Acts, where the apostles urge Jews to repent in the face of Jesus’ resurrection, since it was in their ignorance that they acted against him.]

While on the cross, one of the two criminals—presumably also a Jew—has a conversation with Jesus, asking him to remember him when he comes into his Kingdom. Jesus then utters his famous reply, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.” Moreover, it is a Jew, Joseph of Arimathea, who arranges for Jesus’ burial. And we should never forget who it was who discovered his empty tomb: the Jewish women. And to whom he appeared after his death: the Jewish disciples. And what he told them once he was raised, that all the things that happened to him were a fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures, as God had fore-ordained.

Jesus here is hardly opposed to or opposed by Jews as Jews; and he is hardly opposed to the Jewish Law, which he claims to have been fulfilled at his own resurrection. Jews, and the religion they represent, can be seen in a positive light here, and throughout the Gospel of Luke, which portrays Jesus as a fulfillment of Jewish prophecies uttered by the Jewish prophets inspired by the Jewish God, who sent Jesus as a Jewish messiah to the Jewish people.

In short, it is possible to read Luke in a positive Jewish light as well as in a negative one. One could make the same point in any range of passages throughout the Gospel narrative.

With the passage of time, and for a number of important historical, social, cultural, and political reasons, Christianity as a whole became increasingly opposed to Judaism as a whole. I do not mean to say that all early Christians were necessarily anti-Jewish. But anti-Jewish sentiment among Christians is easily documented in our surviving sources after the time of Luke.

Probably at the root of the opposition to Jews and Judaism was the failure of the Christian mission to convert Jews to belief in Jesus

as the messiah. This was an ancient failure, of course. The first missionaries probably did win some Jewish converts, but already by the time of Paul, most Jews simply rejected the Christian message out of hand. And it is not difficult to see why. The very heart of the Christian proclamation, that Jesus is the messiah, struck most Jews as completely ludicrous. There were, of course, a range of expectations of what the messiah would be like in first-century Judaism. Many Jews may not have been looking for a messiah, any more than most Jews today are. But those who did have messianic expectations expressed them in a variety of ways: the messiah might be a future political ruler like King David, or a great priest who would interpret the law and rule over his people, or a cosmic judge over the earth who would destroy God's enemies. But however the messiah was understood, he was understood to be a figure of grandeur and power who would lead God's people against their enemies. And who was Jesus? Far from being a figure of grandeur and power, he was a relatively unknown itinerant preacher who got on the wrong side of the law and was unceremoniously executed as a criminal against the state, squashed like a mosquito by the mighty hand of Rome, a Rome that the messiah was to overcome.

It may be difficult for modern Christians to understand the scandal—as Paul calls it—of the claim that Jesus was the messiah. I tell my students that the emotional response of ancient Jews to this claim would be comparable to a claim today that David Koresh is the Son of God who rules the world. David Koresh? The guy who was killed at Waco? Yes, he's the Lord of all.

It's a ludicrous claim; and that's what most Jews felt about the Christian claims about Jesus.

Christians insisted, though, that Jesus really was the messiah, and that his ignominious death had been both foreordained and vindicated by God, who raised him from the dead and allowed him to ascend to heaven where he currently sits as lord of all, waiting to return to earth in a cataclysmic act of judgment. But frankly, it was a hard sell.

When Jews rejected this message—as they generally did—how were Christians to react? They believed their message about Jesus was from God; if that message was rejected, then it was God who was being rejected. The Jews who refuse to believe in Jesus have rejected their own messiah and have, in fact, turned their backs on their own God. Jews are portrayed then as a recalcitrant people,

who have never listened or obeyed God; but now they've gone too far in executing their own messiah. That, for God, was the last straw. God has now turned on those who were his people and chosen a new people, the followers of Jesus, mainly Gentiles, who are the true heirs of the promises that God gave to the Jewish forefathers. What about the Jews, descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? They have abandoned their heritage, and so God how has abandoned them.

This message gets played out time and again in our early Christian sources. Let me cite just two examples, one from about fifty years after Luke was written, another about fifty years after that.

The epistle of Barnabas was a very important text to many groups of early Christians; it was by tradition ascribed to Paul's companion Barnabas, even though it was in fact written long after Barnabas had died, probably around 130 c.e. It was an extremely popular document, however, as some Christians argued that it belonged among the books of the New Testament. It is actually included in the New Testament in one of our oldest surviving Greek manuscripts, the famous Codex Sinaiticus of the mid-fourth century.

Barnabas is written directly to deal with the relationship of Christianity and Judaism. Its thesis is actually rather simple: according to Barnabas, Judaism is and always has been a false religion. The Jews never have had a covenant with God, because as soon as God gave Moses the covenant in the tablets of the Law on Mount Sinai, the people of Israel sinned against him and Moses smashed the tablets, thereby shattering for all time the covenant, which was not then renewed. Because the Jews were not members of the covenant, and were in fact misled in their religion by an evil angel, they misunderstood the very laws that God had given them through Moses. What they failed to realize was that the laws of Moses were not meant to be followed literally, but figuratively. Being a hard-headed and stubborn people, the Jews thought that by following the literal prescriptions of the law, they would maintain a right standing before God, when all along they were constantly in violation of the Law.

Barnabas gives numerous, and curious, interpretations of the Mosaic laws by way of illustration of his overarching point. Just with respect to kosher food laws, for example, he argues that the law not to eat pork was not meant literally; the command was figurative: it meant not to live like swine, who grunt loudly to their masters when hun-

gry but are silent when full. Humans are not to act like that, praying to God their master only when in need but not heeding him when things are going well. The command not to eat scavenging birds meant not to live off the work of others but to work for your own food. The command not to eat the weasel (which by the way is not a command) means not to behave like that animal, which conceives its young through its mouth: do not, Barnabas instructs his readers, engage in oral sex.

Jews, according to Barnabas, have failed to understand their own laws, and have never been members of God's covenantal community. The covenant belongs to those who believe in God's messiah, Jesus; it is Christians, not Jews, who are the people of God and the Old Testament is a Christian, not a Jewish, book.

Some fifty years later the polemic is ratcheted up a notch, or more, in the writings of the proto-orthodox bishop Melito of Sardis. Melito's works were by and large not known through the ages until the twentieth-century discovery of a manuscript of a sermon that he preached on the occasion of the Jewish Passover. It's a highly eloquent sermon, and highly inflammatory in its discussion of Jews and their religion. According to Melito, Christ himself was prefigured in the passover lamb that was eaten by followers of Moses at the Exodus, and Jews who today continue to celebrate passover have seriously erred in rejecting precisely the lamb whose death brings about salvation. For Melito, Christ is the reality that the Old Testament Scriptures looked forward to. He likens the situation to an architectural model of a building: once the building itself is built, there is no longer any need for the model. It can be destroyed. So too, now that Christ has come, there is no need for the Jewish religion that was looking forward to his appearance. Quite the contrary, the old ways have been passed by now that the fulfillment has come.

More than that, in powerful but fearsome language, Melito lambasts Jews for rejecting this one whom they should have been expecting. For Jesus was not simply the Jewish messiah; he was himself God. By rejecting him, Jews have rejected their own religion, and worse, they have rejected God. Worst still, by killing Jesus, the Jews are guilty of killing God. This is the first recorded instance of the charge of deicide in a Christian source.

So far I have made two major points in this lecture: that the Gospel of Luke could be read as either favorable or unfavorable to

Jews, and that anti-Judaism became increasingly pronounced in Christian circles after his book was written. How could Christians try to constrain the meaning of Luke's text, so that readers took away from it an anti-jewish, rather than a pro-Jewish message?

Once again I'll consider three approaches: the textual, the canonical, and the narratival.

First, it is possible to alter the text itself, to eliminate passages that may be taken as favorable to Jews or Judaism and to interpolate passages that can be read as unfavorable to them. Both kinds of textual change are in evidence in the tradition.

I have already mentioned one of the passages that creates some uncertainty among modern exegetes over the question of Luke's view of the culpability of the Jews in the death of Jesus: Luke 23:34, where being crucified Jesus prays, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing." Modern readers may think Jesus is praying for the Romans, who are responsible for crucifying him. But it should be remembered that in Luke Pilate delivered Jesus up to "their" will—that is the will of the Jews—and that "they" then led him off to be crucified. Moreover, in the book of Acts it becomes quite clear that it was the Jewish people who were responsible for Jesus' death, even though they acted out of ignorance. In any event, we know from comments made by the Christian fathers that this is how the passage was read in the early church, as a prayer that God forgive the Jews for their involvement in the death of Jesus.

But what were early Christians to make of this prayer? For as I've already intimated in my comments on Barnabas and Melito of Sardis, there was a decided movement *away* from thinking that God would or should forgive Jews for what they did, as Christians became increasingly inclined to think of Jews as Christ killers. We know from other sources of the second and third centuries that Christians began blaming the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in 70 c.e. on the Jews themselves—not for a foolish uprising against the power of Rome, but for killing Christ, whose death was avenged by the destruction of the city and the slaughter of its inhabitants. What were such Christians to make of the fact that Jesus had prayed for the forgiveness of the Jews. Clearly they had *not* been forgiven. Was Jesus' prayer not heard? Or maybe he had never uttered the prayer in the first place.

It is interesting to consider the manuscript tradition of Luke 23 in light of these issues. For as it turns out, there is a textual prob-

lem with v. 34, the prayer of forgiveness. Starting with our earliest surviving manuscript, the third-century papyrus called P75, and continuing with some of our best known and most important witnesses, the prayer in fact is completely omitted by some manuscripts. In these witnesses, Jesus never asks God to forgive the Jews for what they are doing.

When confronted with a textual situation like this, scholars of course need to decide what Luke's Gospel originally said. In some manuscripts Jesus prays for the Jews to be forgiven, and in others he does not. Which is the original reading and which is the altered reading? In this case, some scholars have argued that it is the shorter text, without the prayer of forgiveness, that is actually original, and that scribes have added the prayer to Luke's account. But why would they do so? The most popular explanation is a bit complicated, but it goes something like this. In the book of Acts, the first Christian martyr is Stephen, who is stoned to death for his proclamation of his faith in Jesus. Immediately before he dies, Stephen prays, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." Stephen, Jesus' follower, was forgiving towards his executioners. Would Jesus himself be any less so? According to this theory, scribes who wanted to heighten the parallel between Jesus' death and Stephen's *added* the prayer to Luke 23. That's why it is found in some manuscripts but not in others.

This is a clever argument, but there are compelling reasons to reject it. For one thing, as interpreters of Luke and Acts have long observed, the many parallels between Jesus in the Gospel and his followers in Acts were put there by Luke himself. Jesus receives the Spirit at his baptism, and so do his followers; the Jesus is empowered by the Spirit to proclaim God's word, and so are his followers; Jesus heals the sick, casts out demons, and raises the dead, and so do his followers; Jesus is largely rejected by the Jewish people, and so are his followers; Jesus is opposed by the Jewish leaders and eventually executed at their instigation, and so are his followers. It is Luke himself who has created the many broad and specific parallels between Jesus in the Gospel and his followers in Acts. And so it seems likely that it is he who has adduced a prayer on behalf the executioners both by Jesus in Luke 23 and by Stephen in Acts 7.

Moreover, it is worth noticing that when Luke creates such parallels, he typically does so not by repeating the words of his Gospel in the book of Acts, but by expressing the parallels in *other* words. This matters because Stephen does not utter the same prayer as

Jesus, but a differently worded one with a similar meaning. What about scribes? We know that early Christian scribes often harmonized different accounts of the New Testament with one another. That is to say, when they ran across the same story in different places, they would make them word for word the same—for example, the Lord's prayer in Luke, which scribes changed so that it read exactly like the Lord's prayer in Matthew. In other words, scribes created harmonizations that were verbatim alike. The prayer of Luke 23, however, is not the same as the prayer of Acts 7. It appears, then, that it was not created by scribes wanting to harmonize the two accounts. It was put there by Luke himself.

The conclusion appears to be fairly secure, then, that Luke's Gospel originally portrayed Jesus as praying for forgiveness for those responsible for his death. Why then was the prayer omitted? It appears that scribes were uncomfortable with the idea that Jesus himself would forgive the Jews for what they were doing, and even more, that he would ask *God* to forgive them. For according to early Christian interpretations of the events of the year 70, God never did forgive the Jews. And how could he? They had killed his Christ. What was one to do with the fact that Jesus had asked God to forgive them? The easiest solution was to remove the prayer from Jesus' lips. And this is what scribes who copied Luke did, starting with our earliest surviving manuscript, P75.

Other passages were similarly altered in Luke's Gospel in order to make it less open to a friendly understanding of Jews and the Jewish religion. An example occurs much earlier in Luke's account of Jesus parable of the new wine and new wineskins. As in Mark's Gospel, which was the source for Luke, Jesus points out that no one puts new wine into old wineskins, because the new wine, as it ferments, will burst the already stretched old wineskins, spilling the wine and destroying the skins. But Luke's account adds a saying to what is found in Mark. According to Luke, Jesus continued by indicating that "No one after drinking old wine desires the new, for he says, The old is better." I think most of us would agree. I'll take a vintage Chateauf-neuf-du-Pape any day over the stuff I can buy at Krogers.

Scribes, however, were not so sure. If Jesus himself brings what is new in his proclamation of the good news of the kingdom of God—how can that not be better than what is old, the "Old" Testament, with its old laws for the old religion of the Jews? Surely

in fact the new replaces the old and is far superior to it in every way. That at least was the message of the New Testament authors such as Paul who believed that in Christ all things are new, and the author of the book of Hebrews, who maintained that Christ is the reality merely foreshadowed in the Jewish religion as found in Scripture. And recall the view of Barnabas, that the Old Testament cannot be understood apart from Christ, and the view of Melito of Sardis, that with the coming of Christ the old is not merely superceded but is fit to be destroyed. What then were scribes to make of Jesus' declaration found in this passage of Luke—and found only here in the New Testament—that the old in fact is superior to the new? Their befuddlement over the passage led to a natural result, as can be seen in our manuscript tradition. As early as the mid-second century, scribes began to deal with the passage by excising it. And so it is omitted in one of our best known witnesses, the famous Codex Bezae, in a range of Latin manuscripts, and, possibly, in such anti-Jewish authors as the heresiarch Marcion (to no one's surprise) and the heresiologist Irenaeus.

As a final example of an anti-Jewish textual change we might consider one of the more peculiar variant readings found *only* in codex Bezae, just five verses later in Luke. In Luke 6 there are two stories in which Jesus has a controversy with the Pharisees over sabbath observance, both of which are designed to show that human needs are more important than observing Pharisaic rules about the Sabbath, and to show, at the same time, that “the son of man is Lord of the Sabbath” (6:5). Between these two stories codex Bezae has inserted an additional account, that is both striking and puzzling. It reads as follows:

And on the same day, when Jesus saw a man working on the Sabbath he said to him, O man, if you know what you are doing, you are blessed; but if you do not know, you are cursed, and a transgressor of the law.

Many commentators are stumped by this reading and so do what interpreters normally do when they can't make heads or tails of something: they ignore it altogether. It may make sense for them to do so, since it clearly is not a passage that was original to Luke, but was added later. But what does the passage mean, that someone who violates the Sabbath is blessed if he knows what he's doing and cursed if he does not? Jesus' words may not make much sense in

the context of his own ministry, but maybe they make sense from a later Christian perspective. For later Christians, Who would know what they were doing while consciously violating the sabbath laws, who is blessed? One who believed that in Christ the law has come to an end. Who would not know (i.e., who is the one who is cursed)? One who had not yet experienced the liberation in Christ, that is, one still bound to follow the mosaic law. By breaking that law, without the freedom located in Christ, one stands under the curse of the law.

The passage appears to teach that the conscious violation of the Law is in fact a blessed activity for those who are in Christ. There could be hardly a more pronounced condemnation of the Law and all it stands for. This appears to be another anti-Jewish alteration of the text.

And so one way to constrain a reading of Luke's Gospel, to help assure that interpreters will not come away with a positive view of Jews or the religion they practice, is to modify what the text says. Another way to secure the same end is what I have called the canonical approach. What happens when you put Luke in a canon of Scripture with other writings that also, on your reading, betray an anti-Jewish bent? Recall that our earliest complete manuscript of the New Testament, codex Sinaiticus, includes as part of the New Testament the epistle of Barnabas. If Barnabas helps provide a key to the interpretation of Luke, what kind of reading results? According to Luke, the Jews acted out of ignorance when they urged Jesus' execution. But according to Barnabas, the *reason* they were ignorant is that they were a stiff-necked sinful people who always stood opposed to God and his purposes, who embraced a false religion in part because they followed after the teachings of an evil angel. If Barnabas provides scriptural warrant for your views of Jews and Judaism, then naturally you'll read Luke in the most negative light possible when it comes to understanding the reasons for Jesus' death.

But even if you don't have Barnabas as part of your canon, a similar reading results by including Luke's Gospel along with those of, say, Matthew and John. For these too heighten Jewish culpability for the death of Jesus. Matthew's is the only Gospel of the New Testament that includes the infamous scene of Pilate washing his hands to declare his own innocence in the decision to have Jesus executed. In Matthew 27, the chief priests and elders of the Jews

persuade the Jewish crowds to call out for Jesus' crucifixion. Realizing that his attempt to release Jesus is leading nowhere, and seeing that a riot was ready to start, Pilate calls for water and washes his hands, declaring, "I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it yourselves." And *all the people* (that is all the *Jewish crowd*) cry out, "His blood be upon us and our children," a cry, of course, that led to massive hateful results down through the ages, as it was taken to be evidence that Jews knowingly and willingly accepted the responsibility for killing Christ, and passed on this responsibility to their descendants.

When Matthew's account is placed in the same canon as Luke's, and they are read off against one another, naturally the anti-Jewish character of both is heightened. And it is heightened even further when the Gospel of John is thrown into the mix. In some ways, John's account is the most explicit of the three that it was the Jews who bear the responsibility for Jesus' death. John, as is well known, actually speaks of Jesus' enemies as "the Jews"—as if Jesus himself were not a Jew; when Pilate declares on three occasions that he has found Jesus' guilty of no crime, it is "the Jews" who cry out that they want him to be crucified. And strikingly, we are told that Pilate responded by handing Jesus over "to them" in order to be crucified. It is the Jews who actually do the deed in John's Gospel.

This negative portrayal of Jews is not limited to the trial and crucifixion narrative, of course. Throughout John's Gospel "the Jews" are Jesus' sworn enemies, and he theirs. It is when talking to the Jews that Jesus declares that God is not their Father—for if he were, they would love him, argues Jesus in chapter 8. Instead, he says "you are from your father *the devil*, and you long to do the desires of your father." Rather than being the children of God, "the Jews" are the children of Satan.

When Luke is placed next to John within a sacred canon of Scripture, how will its own more ambivalent view of Jews and their relationship to Christ be read? A second way to constrain a reading a Luke is to make it part of a larger collection.

The third way to try to control a reading of the text is to propagate alternative narratives that can serve as hermeneutical lenses through which to observe the canonical account. In my two earlier lectures, I discussed apocryphal accounts that were clearly proto-orthodox—that is, written by second and third century Christians who embraced theological views that were eventually to become

dominant and declared orthodox, accounts such as 3 Corinthians, the Epistle of the Apostles, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, and the Proto-Gospel of James. Here I would like to discuss a narrative that came to be condemned as heretical by orthodox Christians, but that at one time, I would argue, was actually a proto-orthodox production. This is the important and intriguing text known as the Gospel of Peter.

For centuries our only knowledge of this Gospel was from references to it in the writings of the fourth-century church Father Eusebius, the so-called Father of Church History. In his ten-volume account of the history of Christianity from the time of Jesus up to his own days, Eusebius mentions, discusses, and sometimes quotes numerous second and third century Christian writings that have no longer survived. In Book 6 of his Ecclesiastical History, Eusebius mentions a Gospel that was believed by some Christians to have been written by Peter, but which came to be condemned because it was thought to contain a docetic understanding of Christ.

Before its condemnation, however, the book was used and revered by at least one group of proto-orthodox Christians, who considered it a text of Scripture. Unfortunately the book itself did not survive the ravages of time for us to examine, until a partial copy of it was unearthed by a team of French archaeologists in Egypt in 1868, who found it buried with a Christian monk of the 8th century. Regrettably, this copy is fragmentary—it begins in the middle of a sentence and ends in the middle of a sentence, making it hard to know how much Gospel material it originally contained. The part that survives is a narrative of Jesus' trial, death, and resurrection, which is similar in many ways to the accounts that we find in the New Testament, especially in the Gospel of Matthew.

The most famous passage of the Gospel of Peter is one that is somewhat less relevant to this lecture than to my second one on adoptionistic understandings of Jesus as a mere man. As you know, the New Testament Gospels never narrate the actual resurrection of Jesus. They indicate that he was buried, and that on the third day his tomb was empty—but they provide no account of him actually emerging from the tomb. The Gospel of Peter does narrate the event however, and a spectacular event it is. While the guard at the tomb is watching, two angelic figures descend from heaven; the stone in front of the tomb rolls away on its own; they enter the tomb, and then to the amazement of the onlookers three men emerge from the

tomb. Two of them are tall as giants, with their heads reaching up to the sky; the third who is supported by them is even taller, with his head reaching up above the sky. And then there emerges behind them the cross. A voice comes from heaven asking, "Have you preached to those who are asleep." And the cross replies "Yes." Here we have a giant Jesus and a walking talking cross. It's a real pity the Gospel as a whole has been lost.

I say this is of greater relevance to my earlier lecture because clearly here Jesus is no mere mortal, as the adoptionists would have it. His incredible height is a sign of his divinity. He is in fact greater than the angels, he is himself a divine being.

Of greater relevance to the present lecture is the portrayal of Jews in this account. For even more than the Gospels of the New Testament, Jews are shown to be culpable in the death of Jesus, and to be responsible for their own punishment destined to come upon them from God. The narrative, as I indicated, begins in the middle of a sentence, but it is a telling beginning because it shows what happened immediately before the account and it sets the tone for the rest of the surviving narrative. The beginning is this: "but none of the Jews washed his hands; nor did Herod or any of his judges. Since they did not wish to wash, Pilate stood up." Obviously prior to this fragmentary beginning, the Gospel narrated the incident of Pilate washing his hands. But unlike in Matthew, here there is an explicit statement about the Jews on the scene. Unlike the Roman governor, they refuse to wash; in other words, the blood of Jesus is on their hands, and their hands alone.

In order to drive the point home, the next verse indicates that it is Herod, the Jewish king, who then orders Jesus to be taken away and executed. As the account continues there are additional comments that show the author's view of the Jewish culpability in the death of Jesus. We are told that Herod turned Jesus over "to the people" to be mocked, beaten, and crucified. We are told that "they (the Jews)" brought all things to fulfillment and completed all their sins on their heads." We are told that the Jews "were glad" when Jesus died. But then they realized what they had done and began to mourn, not because what they had done was evil, but because they realized that in view of their actions "The judgement and end of Jerusalem are near."

It is Jews who condemn Jesus, who kill Jesus, and who bear the guilt for the death of Jesus. For this Gospel, they have brought their

own condemnation upon themselves, and their destruction is a direct result of their willful act in killing Christ.

If this is one of the narratives that one accepts as a sacred authority, it is clear how its unambiguous message will affect the reading of other narratives, such as the Gospel of Luke. One of the ways to direct the reading of one narrative is to propound another, which can provide the interpretive keys.

Alternative narratives continued to be propounded even after the writing of the Gospel of Peter. One of the most fascinating aspects of early Christian retellings of the stories of Jesus' death is the way in which as time went on, Christians began to insist with increasing vehemence that the Romans, and Pontius Pilate in particular, were completely innocent. Some years later, around the year 200, the proto-orthodox Tertullian, mentions a report that Pontius Pilate had sent a letter to the Roman Emperor Tiberius, indicating that this one who had been crucified was in fact shown by his miraculous deeds to have been divine. Tiberius, Tertullian claims, was completely convinced, and brought a motion to the Roman senate to have Jesus declared a god; the senate proved recalcitrant however, so that even though the emperor acknowledged the divinity of Jesus, he was not allotted a place in the Roman pantheon. Pilate, in any event, was said to have converted after Jesus' resurrection, and thus himself became a Christian. This is all the stuff of legend of course, born out by no non-Christian source, about as plausible as George W. Bush becoming a card-carrying member of al Qaeda following his stint as president. But the point is that if Pilate was completely innocent, and in fact on Jesus' side, the guilt for his death falls on the Jews.

An entire literature surrounding Pilate eventually emerged within Christian circles, including a couple of versions of the letter that he reportedly sent to the emperor and several later, and lengthier, accounts of how the emperor reacted when he learned that one of his governors had executed the Son of God. He was not amused. According to a medieval account, called the "Surrender of Pilate" (*Paradosis Pilati*), the Emperor recalled Pilate to Rome and put him on trial: "By daring to do an evil deed you have destroyed the whole world!" Pilate responds, as one might expect: "Almighty King, I am innocent of these things; it is the multitude of the Jews who are reckless and guilty." Even so, the emperor orders Pilate's execution. Before placing his head on the chopping block, though, Pilate, now

a devout Christian, prays that Christ not blame him for yielding in ignorance to the machinations of the Jews. A voice comes from heaven' "All generations and families of the Gentiles shall call you blessed . . . and you yourself shall appear as my witness at my second coming" (v. 10).

In some parts of the church the exoneration of Pilate went even further. In the Coptic (Egyptian) church his death came to be seen as that of a Christian martyr; and eventually he came to be regarded there as a Christian saint.

All this has brought us a long way from the Gospel of Luke. But by retelling the stories of Jesus passion in such ways, early Christians determined how the canonical accounts would be read. Pilate is innocent. It is the Jews who are guilty.

I am now at a point where I can bring this set of lectures to a conclusion by taking a step back from them and briefly stressing my overarching point.

Christians have always worked to constrain the meanings of their sacred texts. This is not a new insight, but possibly it's one of those old insights that we need constantly to reassert for ourselves.

It is relatively easy to see how Christians of earlier periods worked to make the texts speak to their own situations, sometimes using interpretive strategies that today strike us as alien, or bizarre, or wrong headed. One can't help but see the biases at work in such interpreters as the heresiarch Marcion *and* in his proto-orthodox opponent Tertullian, not to mention others that I have not discussed, but who are familiar figures to anyone with a theological education, such exegetes as Origen in the third century or Augustine at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth. We readily see the hermeneutical power and limitations in such Reformation principles as "allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture." It is precisely this canonical notion that Scripture is its own best interpreter that has been called into question by modern historical-critical methods, which insist that Mark is not saying the same thing as Luke, or Luke as Matthew, or Matthew as Paul, or Paul as John. And so we have our own interpretive methods. I'm not denying the importance or the validity of these methods, as they are the methods that I myself work to follow in my understanding of these ancient texts.

But it is important for us to realize that we are all children of our own age. The methods we learn in exegesis classes and apply

to these texts are so logical and persuasive to us that they appear natural and obvious. So did the methods that earlier Christians used in earlier ages. These Christians were not less intelligent than us. Yet their approaches, and the resultant interpretations, were quite different.

If nothing else, this should teach us that despite our claims as historical critics, interpretation is not a matter of letting texts speak for themselves. Interpreters necessarily view texts in a certain light, whether they want to acknowledge it or not, and constraints are placed on our reading—on us—by our methods and approaches to texts. This is neither a good thing or bad, it is simply the reality of our, and everyone's situation.

There's a reason that this matters. The texts of the Christian Scriptures in particular are used and always have been used to promote certain aspects of Christian faith and practice. How these texts are read affects peoples lives. The texts of Scripture have been used to promote justice, fight poverty, oppose oppression, and work for peace. They have also been used to promote slavery and religious supremacy. They continue to be used to silence women, to restrict the rights of homosexuals, and to advance certain views on abortion, western hegemony, and religious imperialism.

I've used the examples drawn out in my lectures precisely because they are *not* issues most of us wrestle with today, although at one time they were salient issues in the thinking of Christians. Who is Christ? Is he human? Is he divine? Is he Jewish? Is he anti-Jewish? For most of us, the answers have been given to us in our traditions and we have clear views about them, even if they are not the most pressing of our concerns. But we do have other concerns, other salient issues that disturb us and drive us to consider the options provided us by our traditions. The texts of Scripture continue to speak to these issues. For that reason if for no other it is important for us to recognize the nature of these texts and to take care in how we approach them in our own attempts to constrain the ways they are read.

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